

beginning of the year. Although ongoing, political dialogue appears to have yielded few concrete results, and popular frustration with deteriorating social conditions contributed to a bitter and violent civil service strike in the spring and riots about transportation fare increases in the fall. Freedom of the press is becoming more fragile with threats and physical attacks against journalists increasing. Conservative political elements, nostalgic for the "peace and order" maintained under past dictatorships, seem to be on the rise, as illustrated by the electoral success of the Guatemalan Republican Front (FRG) in the Congress and, in particular, Ríos Montt, who was recently elected President of the Congress. Finally, despite several attempts by the UN to get them restarted, peace negotiations have stalled since June on the item of indigenous rights.

CANADIAN POSITION

Respect for human rights remains Canada's main concern in its relations with Guatemala. We continue to follow the situation closely and to express our concerns openly to the Guatemalan authorities and their representatives at the Guatemalan Embassy in Canada.

Canada also continues to support various non-governmental human rights organizations through Canadian NGOs and through the Canadian Embassy. Despite our access to the President, the problems of governance in Guatemala have limited Canada's real influence on the situation.

CIDA has funded a \$1.5 million project, managed by *le Centre d'études et de coopération internationale* (CECI), to assist democratic development in Guatemala by providing financial support to Guatemalan NGOs. In spite of the present difficulties, Canada will also continue to support the repatriation of refugees from Mexico to ensure full compliance with the 1992 accords, including the right of unhindered international accompaniment. Canada will also maintain its support for Canadian NGOs involved in the process. Finally, the Government of Canada will continue to explore ways to re-invigorate the peace process.

At the 51st session of the Commission on Human Rights, Canada will consult with other like-minded countries to determine how Guatemala should be treated in the Commission's agenda. Canada remains supportive of the work of the independent expert appointed under Item 19.