

News Release

Secretary of
State for
External Affairs



Communiqué

Secrétaire d'État
aux Affaires
extérieures

No. 158

August 19, 1993

BEATTY CALLS ON NIGERIA TO RESTORE DEMOCRACY

External Affairs Minister Perrin Beatty today expressed deep concern that the military régime of General Ibrahim Babangida was not acting to fulfil its pledge to complete Nigeria's transition to democracy by August 27.

"Canada has called on General Babangida to hand over power next week, as promised, to a democratic civilian government, free of military interference and acceptable to the Nigerian people as a whole," Mr. Beatty said. "The continued manoeuvring on interim arrangements and the harsh crackdown on human rights leaders and the free press indicate that this call has not been heeded."

The Minister stated that Canada has underlined its concern to the Nigerian government and has called on the régime to allow immediate access to political detainees. In addition, Canada has suspended Nigerian eligibility for military and police training, and has cancelled a visit to Canada, scheduled for September, by Nigerian military and civilian officials from a strategic studies institute. Further measures may be taken on both the bilateral and multilateral levels.

After well-conducted state and legislative elections, presidential elections were held in Nigeria on June 12. Foreign observers including Canadians considered these to be the most successful since Independence in 1960. Chief Moshood Abiola won a convincing majority of the popular vote and of federal states. The military régime annulled the election -- a decision that Canada strongly condemned at the time.

Canadians have been advised to defer all travel to Nigeria.

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