

What does remain a basic problem in the administration of justice is impunity before the law. Few perpetrators of major human rights abuses are arrested; fewer are convicted. It is estimated that no more than 8 per cent of murder cases ever go to trial. A telling example of legal impunity is the history of the infamous "Candelaria massacre" of July 1993, in which 8 street children were murdered while sleeping on the steps of Rio's most fashionable church. It is widely believed that police killed the children. To date no one has gone to trial due to a combination of factors: an overburdened court system; poorly educated and paid law enforcement officials; endemic corruption; and an unprotesting populace which, on the whole, is more concerned for its own day-to-day security than with basic human rights issues. Although conditions vary from state to state, it is fair to say that a case which does make it to court will be dealt with in a manner acceptable to the norms of international criminal justice.

CANADIAN POSITION

The Canadian Government, through its Embassy in Brasilia, has been very active in providing support to vulnerable groups by assisting small, community-based projects through the Canada Fund. In fact, 50 per cent of the Canada Fund in Brazil is targeted to social projects directly related to street children.

At the request of PEN International, the Embassy has made enquiries on specific cases alleging the maltreatment of journalists and writers. It has also requested local authorities to provide information on alleged threats made against a Canadian missionary.

The Canadian Government has also developed a productive dialogue with all parties involved in human rights issues in Brazil. We have also noted a greater openness on the part of the Brazilian Government to discuss human rights. Canada was pleased with the cooperation of the Brazilian delegation during the 50th CHR. A further example of this openness is the Human Rights Roundtable, co-hosted by the Embassy of Brazil and the University of Ottawa in November 1994, duplicating a similar event in London, UK, earlier in the year.