

The vicious conflict in Sri Lanka, the displacement of people and abuse of human rights continue. Canada has consistently urged negotiations to resolve the ethnic conflict. We consider that all parties in Sri Lanka, including the LTTE, should respond positively to President's Kumaratunga's recent call for the negotiation of a lasting solution.

Mr. Chairman,

Canada sees a crucial role for the UN special rapporteurs, representatives and the human rights treaty system in assessing human rights violations and encouraging states to live up to their commitments. All governments, without exception, should cooperate fully with the Special Rapporteurs of the Commission on Human Rights and the UN's human rights treaty bodies.

As indicated in the last report of the Special Rapporteur for Iraq, gross violations of human rights continue unabated in that country, including government violence against the Shiites, the Kurds and other populations of northern Iraq. The Special Rapporteur has concluded that the Government of Iraq routinely carries out political killings and inflicts brutal punishments on its people. Above all, the refusal of the Baghdad authorities to avail themselves of SC Resolution 986, which would allow oil export proceeds to alleviate the humanitarian situation, creates untold hardship for all Iraqis.

In Iran, Canada remains concerned about arbitrary detention, lack of due process, ill-treatment of detainees, and summary or unjustified executions. We believe Iran should end these practices immediately and rescind the "fatwa" against Salman Rushdie. The situation of religious minorities -- Christians, Jews and Bahais -- is distressing. The systematic discrimination against the Baha'ais must be stopped. Canada welcomes Iran's invitation to the Special Representative for Iran, and considers it extremely important that the Iranian authorities take the necessary measures so that the visit takes place soon and without conditions.

Human rights violations continue on a massive scale in Burma. The release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was a welcome development, but it has not led to any improvement in the general situation. Thousands of political prisoners are still detained in deplorable conditions. Other gross abuses include extrajudicial killings, torture, forced labour and the denial of basic freedoms. We urge the SLORC to demonstrate a concrete commitment to national reconciliation and democratic reform and to adhere to the clear and substantive benchmarks to measure progress set by the international community.

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