

In October and November, Canadian officials repeatedly raised human rights issues with the Iranian Embassy in Ottawa and officials in Teheran, including the plight of religious minorities such as the Bahais and the case of Mr. Salman Rushdie. Canada demonstrated its concern at UNGA 47 by co-sponsoring a resolution calling on Iran to improve its record. In its human rights address before the Third Committee, Canada joined the Commission's Special Representative in calling on the Assembly to demand improved co-operation with the Commission and greater respect for the rights of Iran's citizens.

The matter will be raised again at the UNCHR in Geneva in February. Canada, as a traditional cosponsor of the Iran resolution at the UNCHR, expects to play an important role again in 1993.

On the question of the 1989 fatwa against Salman Rushdie, Canada's position has been publicly expressed by the Prime Minister: "Our condemnation of this type of activities is total. The suggestion that a contract should be put on the head of a citizen living in a free country or anywhere is an absolute outrage. It violates everything that Canada stands for and we consider it a threat, reprehensible and unacceptable". With the recent increase of the bounty for his murder, the Prime Minister reiterated that the Canadian Government will not back away from principles such as freedom of expression, especially in the face of threats. The Secretary of State for External Affairs also stated that Canada would be prepared to take the case to the U.N.

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

- What would be the aims and the most effective means of addressing the Rushdie question at CHR, while sustaining broadly-supported pressure on the general human rights issue.