
the rights of individuals to promote respect for human rights in their own countries. In this, we are concerned with the suppression of dissidents in Eastern Europe and in many other countries.

We do know that international opprobrium sometimes has an impact. Following the coup in 1973, large numbers of persons disappeared in Chile. Since 1977, however, no single disappearance has been documented by human rights organizations in that country. Although we cannot assume that massive international attention brought about this result, I believe it was a factor. Another case, however, is much clearer. Following the international pressures exerted on Vietnam at the 1979 Geneva Conference on Southeast Asian Refugees, that country did terminate its brutal, and frequently fatal expulsion of its Chinese minority.

But the failures are legion, and the international situation speaks for itself. If Canada wishes to have its views heard, we must ensure our credibility. We must continue to improve respect for human rights here in Canada, and ensure that we live up to the letter and the spirit of our own international undertakings. Some of you will know that federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for human rights met in Ottawa in February to reaffirm their common commitment to do just that. When we address the subject of human rights in other countries, we must be prepared to have them, in turn, address the state of human rights in Canada.

Canada's responsibilities

We have taken an important step in this direction by ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which permits Canadians themselves to challenge Canada's performance internationally. And several Canadians have done so. We believe that any government which pretends to respect faithfully the provisions of the Covenant should be prepared to make a similar undertaking. Yet only a small number have done so today, primarily Western democracies.

We also have other substantial international responsibilities in the human rights field. We know that severe under-development impedes the development of full respect for civil and political rights, and prevents the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights. And so we must be prepared to play our fair part in contributing to international development, and in encouraging a positive outcome to the North-South dialogue. These, too, are important to international human rights objectives.

But having once established our credibility, how can we make an impact on the worst human rights offenders?

Groups in Canada frequently urge the government to sever economic relations with regimes which are serious human rights offenders, or to suspend Canadian or international aid to them. We, of course, do not sell arms to countries engaged in conflict, or to countries, whose human rights practices are wholly repugnant to Canadian values, and in particular where they are likely to be used against the civilian population. This is a matter of principle and, frankly, one that can be costly in terms of exports and foregone employment opportunities.

The United Nations Charter does not envisage economic boycotts except when the
