

The bilateral approach to human rights is equally important, and is an area of especially great public attention. Canada has not hesitated to speak out publicly and forcefully in many cases, for example with respect to human rights violations in Poland, El Salvador, Guatemala, South Africa, and Afghanistan. In keeping with our insistence on effectiveness, we have also used a variety of other channels, at different levels and on different occasions, to make known our concerns to the governments responsible.

Bilateral pressures can be effective. So, too, can concerted actions taken by a number of countries with respect to severe situations. But there are limitations and dangers, in any single approach, which have to be weighed carefully in advance.

Canada will not sell arms to any government whose human rights practices are wholly repugnant to Canadian values. Where gross violations of human rights or conditions of conflict make the provision of an aid program impossible, we are prepared to terminate or suspend our assistance, as we did in Uganda under Idi Amin and as we have done in El Salvador and Guatemala. But we do not break diplomatic relations, because it would serve only to deny us an important opportunity for contact and limit our abilities to make on-site assessments. Similarly, where our aid programs meet our principal objective of helping the poor, we cannot penalize the less fortunate for the errors of their governments. Cutting off trading relations by individual countries such as Canada is unlikely to be effective unless part of a concerted international approach to the problem.

To these two complementary approaches can be added another way in which Canada helps the cause of human rights, namely, humanitarian assistance. Although we can sometimes stop violations of human rights, it is frequently impossible to repair the damage to society, to groups or to individuals. Canada has responded generously to the victims of persecution. Our long-term commitment to those who are oppressed takes second place to no country. Our commitment continues, in the form of direct assistance to refugee organizations, in food aid and grants to non-governmental organizations, and in our acceptance into Canada of thousands of persons displaced by a variety of wars and tragedies.

Canada is determined to play an effective, responsible role in international human rights. Our policies are rooted in the values of compassion and concern which all Canadians share for the disadvantaged and the threatened. Our policies reflect a heritage which has always emphasized the primacy of rights and freedoms. They are a legacy of the more than 350 000 displaced persons who have found their way to Canada over the past 40 years in search of a country where principles of human rights are respected and honoured.

The commitment of the government in promoting human rights domestically and internationally is firm. Our record speaks for itself, and our willingness to co-operate

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