

CANADIAN POSITION

Canada hopes that Syria will take additional steps to demonstrate its adherence to international standards for human rights. In spite of some recent improvements with regard to the release of prominent political prisoners, there still remains room for improvement in many important areas.

Canada continues to voice its concern over human rights in Syria. Canadian officials have made enquiries on the conditions of detention of individuals. Repeated representations were made concerning the right of members of the Syrian Jewish community to travel abroad.

In November, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, André Ouellet, in a letter addressed to the National Task Force for Syrian Jews, noted that: "Because of our concern for the human rights situation in Syria, Canada has actively urged the Syrian Government to improve the record on due process issues... Canadian representations to the Syrian authorities, on humanitarian grounds, will not cease as long as members of the Syrian Jewish community are prevented from travelling abroad".

In her address before the Third Committee of the 48th session of the UN General Assembly, and in the context of the recent development in the Middle East Peace Process, Canada's Permanent Representative stated the following: "Syria, of crucial importance to regional stability, should be urged to improve respect for due process of law and for the rights of religious minorities. We welcome recent releases of additional political prisoners, and we hope that Syria will honour recent laudable plans to eliminate barriers to travel abroad by Syrian Jews".

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