

President Serrano, made a strong verbal attack against the head of the Archbishop's Human Rights Office.

Although peace talks between the Government and the insurgent guerrilla group URN continue they are stalled.

A positive development in the past year was the signature, in October, of an agreement between the representatives of Guatemalan refugees living in Mexico and those of the Guatemalan government to allow the return and resettlement of the refugees. Another important event was the award of the Nobel peace prize to Rigoberta Menchu, an indigenous woman who has worked hard on behalf of her people.

CANADIAN POSITION

The Canadian Government deplores the continuing violations of human rights in Guatemala. We believe that the government is committed in principle to improving the human rights situation. However, it has so far not persevered in the face of powerful vested interests with pursuit of the far reaching reforms necessary to bring about greater equity in society and a sharp decline in human rights abuses.

Canadian officials, both in Ottawa and Guatemala, therefore regularly register our deep concern about the human rights situation to the Government of Guatemala, and often discuss specific cases.

Canada provides aid to a number of Guatemalan non-governmental human rights organizations.

At CHR 47, a resolution on the situation in Guatemala had been adopted under the Advisory Services on the agenda. At CHR 48, the Canadian delegation believed the human rights situation in Guatemala was serious enough to warrant more intensive scrutiny under item 12, and made this clear in Canada's item 12 statement. Despite the efforts of Canada and several other countries, and a report of an independent expert citing serious human rights violations in Guatemala, there was not sufficient support among other delegations to move consideration of Guatemala to item 12. Instead, Canada worked to negotiate a stronger resolution under Advisory Services. In addition to renewing the mandate of the independent expert, the resolution recognizes the persistence of serious human rights violations in Guatemala and opens the door to its consideration under item 12 this year.

The Canadian Government, through its embassy in Guatemala, has been active in facilitating the return of refugees from Mexico. This is being carried out through Canadian membership, with three other countries, France, Mexico and Sweden, in the International Consultation and Support Group for the Return of the Guatemalan Refugees (Spanish acronym: GRICAR).