

CANADIAN POSITION

Over the past year, Canada was an active proponent of human rights in the West Bank and Gaza. Canadian representatives have raised the broad range of human rights violations with Chairman Arafat, Deputy PLO Leader Abu Mazen and Speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Abu Ala. In several cases, the Embassy intervened on behalf of individual detainees such as academic, Dr. Fathi Subh, independent television producer, Daoud Kuttab, and a group of 30 union leaders. At the UNHCR debate on the Occupied Territories in May, Canada spoke out against the poor human rights record of the PA.

The Embassy has established a close relationship with the most important human rights groups and has used the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives to support their activities. For example, the Fund was drawn on to help launch the 'Human Rights Monitor' a new leading-edge human rights magazine.

The Canadian Fund for Dialogue and Development was established in 1992 to promote cooperation and dialogue between Arabs and Israelis. Priority areas for funding have included human rights. Projects have included human rights training for lawyers and an international colloquium on human rights.

The Embassy is developing a comprehensive plan of action for the support and promotion of human rights, good governance and democratic development in the Occupied Territories. It will include the setting up of an informal human rights advisory committee and the expansion of contacts between Canadian and Palestinian human rights NGOs.

In April, the Speaker from the Palestinian Legislative Council and an accompanying delegation are scheduled to visit Canada at the invitation of Mr. Gilbert Parent, Speaker of the House of Commons. The purpose of the visit will be to provide the group with an overview of the Canadian parliamentary system and offer concrete examples of democratic practices and good governance.

In Israel, Canada has undertaken demarches to the Foreign Ministry to raise Canada's concerns with the Government's response to the ruling of the UN Committee Against Torture, Israeli treatment of Palestinian detainees and settlement activities. Canada's rejection of the use of coercive interrogation techniques was reiterated to Israel at the September 1997 bilateral foreign policy consultations. In a letter to former Foreign Minister Levy, Minister Axworthy encouraged Israel to ease the closure of the Territories, noting the effects of closure on the Palestinians.