

Response

The government agrees that gross or systematic violations of human rights must be given proper weight in Canadian development assistance policy. It also considers that economic development is a fundamental element in promoting the human rights of the poor in developing countries. Therefore, in taking human rights into account, the government would not wish to give undue weight to human rights violations where these did not fundamentally jeopardize the delivery of assistance to those most in need. The government has, in the past, suspended or not commenced assistance where gross violations have been accompanied by serious security problems, as in Uganda and Guatemala. It will continue to follow this approach. The government will also seek to support the victims of human rights abuses through appropriate international organizations, and where it is more effective the government has and will channel assistance through Canadian non-governmental organizations.

Careful consideration will be given to whether and, if so, how the government could work productively through non-governmental organizations involved in maintaining and protecting civil and political rights. The government agrees that eligible countries, such as the Philippines, that have improved human rights records should be encouraged through increased development assistance.

Conclusion/Recommendation

84. We recommend that Canada use its voice and vote at meetings of international financial institutions to protest systematic, gross, and continuous violations of human rights. (page 103)

Response

The government is examining this recommendation carefully. The key issue is how to further fundamental human rights interests without seriously impairing, through further politicization, the effectiveness of multilateral financial institutions in their critical task of bringing about needed development and adjustment in developing countries. These institutions must be sensitive to the impact of human rights situations on prospects for social-economic development, and take fully into account the potentially positive effect of development projects in improving conditions for vulnerable groups. The government would welcome a detailed examination of the issues involved by the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade and the Standing Committee on Human Rights.

Human Rights Development

Conclusions/Recommendations

85. The committee is convinced that, while strengthening its approach to human rights protection, Canada should move forward and create a positive human rights development program as well. Through cooperative programs of financial support, exchange, research and technical assistance, Canada should contribute to the long-term development of political, civil and cultural rights as it now contributes to long-term economic and social development through the aid program. (page 103)

86. Canada is not – and should not be – in the business of exporting its own institutions. It can and should be equipped to share its experience and to cooperate with others as they develop their own institutions. Such programs would enjoy the active support, or at least the acquiescence, of partner country governments and peoples. (page 104)