

Canada welcomes the recent elections in Guatemala, and the historic transfer of power from one democratically-elected president to another. We are encouraged also by the progress of talks aimed at achieving reconciliation among opposing political forces.

Nevertheless, worsening violence against street children, peasants, human rights workers and trade unionists continues to be a cause of great distress. Canadians were deeply shocked by the massacre of villagers at Santiago Atitlan in December 1990, and earnestly hope the Government of Guatemala will act speedily to bring to justice the perpetrators of this and other crimes. The human rights procurator deserves commendation for his efforts to bring abuses to light.

At this critical juncture in Guatemala's history, it is more important than ever that Guatemala's record on human rights be kept under close scrutiny and that measures to improve the situation be encouraged.

Canada welcomes the recent decision by the Government of Cuba to grant exit visas to the family of a Canadian resident. It is our hope that the resolution of this long-standing family reunification case will encourage the swift settlement of others which remain outstanding.

We are nonetheless concerned about the apparent deterioration of the overall human rights situation in Cuba over the last year. The imprisonment of Cuban citizens for peacefully exercising their civil and political rights, as in the case of the members of the movement for democratic integration, as well as the inhumane treatment of political prisoners shows a disturbing disregard for the obligations Cuba has assumed under international law. We call on the Government of Cuba to take steps to honour these obligations.

Canada deplores the violence being perpetrated in certain countries of the Andean region by guerilla movements, military, para-military and self-defence groups, and especially by drug traffickers. Such mindless violence is a direct threat to the democratic institutions of the region.

In this respect, we reiterate our concerns over the situation in Peru, a signatory to the main conventions concerning the protection of human rights, and we again encourage the Peruvian Government to continue its efforts to improve this situation.

Mr. Chairman,

While it is easy to be discouraged by the extent and pervasiveness of the human rights violations we have outlined in various parts of the world, there are other situations that give us cause for hope, cases that clearly demonstrate that effective progress in the area of human rights can indeed be realized.

One such case is Haiti. In recent months, we have seen encouraging political developments in Haiti. The international community was pleased with the orderly elections in which, for the first time, the people were able to freely and democratically choose those whom they wished to have as their leaders.

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