

We can make clear, however, that inhuman treatment and systematic violation of human rights will have a detrimental effect on the relations of the states in question with other states, including Canada.

I believe that international efforts to prevent or alleviate violations of human rights must be oriented towards seeking change. They should promote progressive and systematic evolution to a situation where the citizens of the country in question can live in greater dignity and security.

The value of multilateral action

In the long run the most effective means of promoting human rights internationally on a broad basis will lie through multilateral action under the auspices of the United Nations. Canada has been trying to expand UN mechanisms and make them more effective, in dealing with patterns of violations in given countries. We believe that UN action should be taken almost automatically, on the basis of a sound analysis of information received. This would eliminate to the greatest extent possible allegations of political motivation when the performance of a country is called into question. When, for example, the Human Rights Commission identifies a pattern of gross violations, it would dispatch a mission or a special representative to the country in question or request the good offices of a High Commissioner for Human Rights or of the United Nations Secretary General. The object of the action would be a full investigation with a view to proposing to the government concerned measures to correct the situation. The action would serve to bring international pressure to bear on the government concerned and put international opinion behind the corrective measures proposed by the investigating body.

The United Nations performance - dismal but a glimmer of hope

Over the past decade, the UN's performance in dealing with gross abuses of human rights has been dismal. There has been a lack of common will to take action in many serious situations. Differences of perceptions of human rights which I referred to earlier have been a factor. But more significantly a double standard has been in operation. Action has been taken