

Current Canadian Position

The Canadian Government has repeatedly condemned Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and the human rights abuses committed by Soviet and Afghan forces. In the United Nations and other international forums, the Government has called for the withdrawal of Soviet troops and a political resolution of the conflict. The Government has also provided humanitarian aid to refugees living in camps along the Afghan-Pakistani frontier.

On 5 November 1986, the United Nations General Assembly considered a non-binding resolution condemning the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, and calling for the immediate withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan. Resolution 41/33 passed with a vote of 122-20-11. Canada voted in favour of the resolution.

Canada's Ambassador to the UN, Stephen Lewis, set out the Government's position in a strongly-worded speech on 5 November. Lewis condemned the Soviet Union for the human rights abuses described in the Ermacora report, calling the booby-trapping of children's toys and other items a practice suggesting "a sickness equivalent to depravity".¹ He expressed solidarity with Pakistan in the face of repeated border violations by Afghan and Soviet forces, and referred to the October Soviet troop withdrawal, saying:

It matters little whether this is an elaborate military sleight of hand, or an adroit reshuffling of tanks, or the actual removal of men and machines whose presence in Afghanistan may or may not have been useful. What matters is that over 110,000 men, and all of their collective apparatus of war, remain behind for the systematic purpose of pacification. The world needs more than tokens as evidence of good faith.²

¹ DEA, Statement and Speeches, 5 Nov. 1986, p. 3.

² Ibid., p. 4.