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## CANADA CALLS FOR CALM IN INDIA

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Barbara McDougall, today supported calls for calm by all parties to the Ayodhya controversy in India and a return to peaceful negotiations. Mrs. McDougall was commenting on the destruction of the Babri Masjid mosque in Ayodhya on December 6 by Hindu extremists and the resulting inter-communal violence.

Fundamentalist Hindus claim that the mosque, built in 1528 during the reign of the first Muslim Mogul emperor, was erected over the birthplace of Lord Rama, a Hindu god.

"Competing claims over the site of the mosque in Ayodhya have been a divisive and emotional issue in India for some time," said Mrs. McDougall. "Canada supports the Indian government's efforts to have the dispute resolved through negotiation and the court system."

Mrs. McDougall said the violence and death resulting from the wanton destruction of the mosque is a tragedy for affected families and a matter of deep regret, not only in India but around the world. "We deplore attempts to resolve such disputes through the use of force," the Minister said.

The Canadian High Commission in New Delhi has advised Canadians in India to exercise caution and to avoid Old Delhi and the states of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. There are no reports of any Canadians being directly affected by the violence.

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