

human rights and *developing* human rights. Whereas the former is concerned primarily with identifying, exposing and censuring human rights abuses, the latter attempts to strengthen those institutions and values that provide the only longer-run assurance that human rights will be respected.

Human Rights Protection

The main tradition in human rights policy is that of seeking to expose and, in one way or other, to end human rights violations. We believe that such an approach remains necessary and, indeed, in the case of Canada, should be made more vigorous. At the same time, we caution that the effectiveness of this approach is limited and that it depends on its international credibility. Among the necessary elements in a human rights protection policy are standards, credible investigation and sanctions.

As witnesses testified before the committee, the international promotion of human rights is exposed to a multitude of dangers, not least of which are frivolousness and politicization. On one hand there is the urge to become the scolds of the world, on the other the temptation to pursue political or ideological goals in the guise of human rights. The first requirement in avoiding these dangers is to establish human rights standards.

The committee believes that a basic standard is available to trigger and guide Canadian human rights policy, namely the appearance of a pattern of systematic, gross and continuous violations of basic human rights. In its brief to the committee, the Canadian Council of Churches described those rights.

The churches assume that all people everywhere, regardless of their ideological, cultural, or political system, wish to be free from disappearance, from arbitrary arrest, detention, torture and extra-judicial execution and from state-sponsored racial discrimination. (34)

Where such practices occur and can reasonably be ascribed to state policy, Canada should be actively concerned.

Almost nowhere in the world are gross and systematic violations of human rights proclaimed as state policy or practised in the light of day. As a general rule they are hidden and their existence is vigorously denied. Indeed much of the psychological horror of torture and disappearances arises from this hidden quality. It follows from this that one of the most valuable instruments in preventing or ending human rights violations is the spotlight of international attention. There are three main channels of investigation open or available to Canada.

The first channel is international human rights forums, the most important of which is the United Nations Human Rights Commission. Created by the General Assembly in 1945, the Commission deals with many of the major human rights problems in the world, as well as serving to develop human rights standards and conventions. We received testimony that Canada, as an elected member of the Commission from 1976 to 1984, gained the respect of other countries and was valued by non-governmental organizations, which relied on the Canadian delegation to raise their issues at Commission sessions and to lobby on their behalf. A brief submitted by Philippe LeBlanc, by contrast, expressed concerns that Canada's performance as an observer at the 1985 session was low-key and far less effective. (2) The committee joins witnesses in recommending that Canada seek re-election to the United Nations Human Rights Commission and, in any case, follow its work actively. Particular attention should be paid to protecting and strengthening the position of the Commission within