

Department of External Affairs



Ministère des Affaires extérieures

Canada

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
FORTY-FOURTH SESSION

ITEM 12  
QUESTION OF VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS  
AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART  
OF THE WORLD

OBSERVER DELEGATION OF CANADA  
STATEMENT DELIVERED BY  
MR. GORDON FAIRWEATHER  
HEAD OF DELEGATION  
8 MARCH 1988

Mr. Chairman, this item is one of the central topics of discussion at each session of the Commission on Human Rights. In the ten minutes allotted to an observer delegation, we would therefore like to discuss some of Canada's major thematic preoccupations and the ways in which these considerations impinge upon a variety of country situations now before the United Nations.

I speak today aware of pressures exerted on the Commission from two diametrically opposed directions. On the one hand, a variety of organizations with excellent records in the field of human rights are arguing in favour of arriving at swift and open justice by naming a long list of countries and embarking upon a systematic evaluation of their records. On the other hand, many country delegations and some regional groups are urging caution, restraint and limited judgments, pointing to the sovereign equality of states and the complexity of drawing conclusions in an area as difficult and rife with ideological divisions as human rights. Our collective actions this year will probably fall short of expectations from both perspectives.

I make this point because, last year, my delegation indicated some preoccupation with questions of procedure and judgment. This year some of these points need to be repeated, although perhaps from slightly different perspectives. In the view of my delegation, the starting point for action in the delicate and controversial area of human rights must be the integrity of UN fact-finding procedures. Few would argue with the