

The UN General Assembly 3rd Committee has again passed a resolution, co-sponsored by Canada, expressing concern at continuing grave violations in Nigeria and calling on the Government of Nigeria to meet its obligations and ensure the observance of fundamental human rights and freedoms. At the 53rd session of the Commission on Human Rights, Canada co-sponsored a resolution which approved, by a vote of 28 to 6 with 19 abstentions, the creation of a UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Nigeria. The new Special Rapporteur, Mr. Soli J. Sorabjee, was appointed in October, 1997. He has written twice to General Abacha to arrange a visit, but has not yet had a positive response.

CANADIAN POSITION

Canada continues to be a member of the CMAG and has played a leading role in urging the Commonwealth to maintain a firm stance on Nigeria's human rights performance. We have implemented the full range of non-economic sanctions authorized by CMAG and have now closed our High Commission in Lagos, albeit for security reasons. Although we now have no diplomatic representation in either capital, we nonetheless are trying to engage the Nigerian regime in a dialogue.

Although suspended, Nigeria is still a Commonwealth member and a signatory to the 1991 Harare Declaration. It is also a signatory to the International Covenants on Human Rights and other human rights instruments. Canada will continue to press Nigeria to meet its international obligations. Our \$2.2 million Democratic Development Fund will continue to be used to support non-governmental organizations in their quest to strengthen civil society.