

We accept international sanctions as the only really meaningful and potentially-effective measures against repressive regimes.

Although we receive numerous requests to take action in cases of varied gravity, importance to Canada and humanitarian concern, we must necessarily consider the possible consequences of our action on future cases, in the hope that we can continue to be effective in human-rights issues.

We have a responsibility, too, to consider the long-term implications of our representations, especially if they give rise to hopes which we cannot fulfil. If, through our actions, we encourage unwarranted expectations, so that the pressures generated by dissidents become intolerable to a given regime, what guarantees can we provide for their safety, or for the stability of their whole societies, in the event of massive upheavals in their states, such as occurred in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968? There are other implications that must be taken into account before determining a course of action.

We may have other humanitarian interests -- for example, our refugee program in Chile -- which we would wish to safeguard by remaining on at least proper if not cordial terms with the other country concerned.

I have spoken frankly this evening about the problems and the types of considerations that govern our attitude to human-rights issues.

As most of you consider human rights a matter of utmost priority, I hope, nevertheless, you will agree that the way in which we seek to deal with human-rights violations is delicate and difficult and is subject to numerous considerations. The question of human rights is one of the most complex issues in foreign policy because it strikes to the root of our traditions and therefore constitutes a potential challenge to other societies whose traditions may essentially be different. Despite the need for delicacy and balanced judgment, Canada will continue to uphold internationally the course of human rights, in the legitimate hope that we can eventually ameliorate the conditions of our fellow man.

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