

Mr. President,

I thank you for this opportunity to be able to participate today. It is because we have respect for international law that we are able to meet here today. It is because 23 million Canadians are outraged by a violation of international law that I have asked to speak. Probably more than any other nation, Canada is aware of the enormity of feeling that the hostage situation in Iran has aroused in the American people. Perhaps, more than most, we are able to admire the restraint with which the American Government has acted in the face of such strong provocation.

On humanitarian grounds alone, the need to act is clear; indeed, it is compelling. For two months now, fifty ordinary men and women have been subjected to the grossest violation of their rights. Like all of us here, I am deeply concerned for these hostages, just as I am in every instance where people anywhere in the world are deprived of their human rights.

This ground alone would suffice to compel this body to act. But even more is at stake. As other speakers have made amply clear, the very foundations of international law and of civilized diplomacy are called into question by the situation in Iran.

Mr. President, it is not necessary for me to rehearse the sound and compelling arguments already made here. Nonetheless, no delegation in this council should lose sight of its responsibility before the world community, now and in the future, for the way it votes on this issue.

Rarely is a turning point in world history so clear to the people in whose hands a decision lies. To ignore this stark need for communal corrective action would be to threaten the fabric of the international community, and to risk a dark age of diplomatic anarchy.

But, Mr. President, what the Security Council faces today is more than just a decision on a matter of humanitarian rights or of international law. Members should all be conscious that their decision may substantially affect the relevance, the very usefulness, of the United Nations as an instrument for the maintenance of world order.

The Security Council has already called upon Iran to release the hostages it holds in Tehran, and has asked both Iran and the United States to take steps to resolve the remaining differences between them. The International Court of Justice, in an unanimous decision, has also called for such release. Clearly, those actions have not sufficed to convince Iran to live up to its international obligations.