

It is not only in situations of armed conflict that serious, systematic abuses of human rights take place. The UN Charter commitment to universal respect for human rights and the obligation to cooperate with the Organization to that end applies to all member states.

The government of Iraq continues to rule by terror, indiscriminate arrest, imprisonment and execution in order to maintain its grip on power. It has taken no steps to curb widespread human rights abuses, and has refused to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights.

In Iran, encouraging improvements in the areas of speech and media freedoms since last year's election were setback in recent months with the closure of several newspapers and magazines and arrests of journalists. Of great concern, is the heightened persecution of the Iranian Baha'i community, including executions and imprisonment, for practicing their religious faith. The full and equal enjoyment by women of their human rights remains one of the critical markers for the overall improvement of human rights in Iran.

The absence of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has long been a matter of concern for Canada. Now added are serious humanitarian concerns as the Pyongyang government's imposition of needless bureaucratic obstacles on UN agencies and international NGOs threatens distribution of food aid to the most needy recipients.

Burma's poor human rights record is of grave concern to Canada. We deplore the widespread detention of elected representatives and members of the National League for Democracy and other political parties. We call on Burma's military regime to release these detainees and to demonstrate a genuine commitment to national reconciliation and the restoration of democracy by entering into dialogue with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other representatives of the opposition and minority groups.

In Algeria, Canada remains deeply concerned by the security and humanitarian situation, particularly as events of major political and religious significance converge in the coming months. At the Commission on Human Rights this year, Canada joined others in encouraging Algeria's engagement on these concerns with the United Nations. The visit of the Panel of Eminent Persons was a most welcome development in this connection, and Canada hopes that this spirit of cooperation will, as the Panel has suggested, be extended to the human rights mechanisms of the UN.

In some countries of South East Asia the continuing economic crisis has placed stresses on the political and social fabric.

In Malaysia, concerns have been raised about the government's use of the Internal Security Act to detain political opponents and others without trial and to restrict freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. Canada is concerned about the treatment of former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and hopes that allegations of police brutality while in custody will be properly investigated.