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## COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS BEGINS CONSIDERATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD

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Yvon BEAULNE (Canada) observed that massive and systematic violations of human rights were persistently committed in all parts of the world and that some governments "knew not, could not or simply did not wish to comply with the existing resolutions of the Commission". He referred to the situation in Afghanistan and Kampuchea where people were denied the right to self-determination because of foreign occupation.

He also referred to "the tragic events" in Guatemala and regretted that this government refused to receive, as promised, the representative of the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights. As to El Salvador, the role of the Commission was not to encourage the peoples of El Salvador to kill each other but to lay down arms. As far as Bolivia was concerned, his delegation hoped that the authorities would allow the Commission to consider the human rights situation prevailing in the country.

Canada, he stated, would propose the elaboration of an international declaration confirming the responsibility of individuals and groups as well as of governments in insuring the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

He called on the Commission to consider the allegations of discrimination made by the Baha'i Community which, he thought, were well founded and could not be simply discarded by the representative of Iran.

Paying tribute to anonymous defenders of human rights in eastern Europe, Africa, Asia, Central and South America, the representative of Canada singled out the case of Andrei Sakharov.

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O.L. DAVIS (Australia) said evidence from any country in the world of the systematic suppression of the right of individuals to defend human rights was of concern to the Australian Government. In certain countries, the suppression of freedom of speech and of assembly had given rise to what have become known as dissident movements. "An act of dissent from the prevailing state ideology is treated as a crime. In certain circumstances those with dissenting views are committed to psychiatric hospitals, or to some form of political ~~crime~~".

"This Commission will also be obliged to take up other situations which involve reports of the breakdown of law, order and public morality of such magnitude that the Commission cannot but respond".

A notable example of the recent use of the public procedures of the Commission he said, had been the decision of ECOSOC to authorize a public investigation of the situation in Equatorial Guinea under the dictator Macias. The consequent study by Professor Fernando Volio Jimenez stood today as an example of the range of the Commission's possibilities and his second report, which was before the Commission demonstrated more clearly than any words which the essential value of the Commission's work in this kind of circumstance expressed.

Mr. Davis deplored the violations of human rights in Guatemala, the events in El Salvador and the heavy losses of life which were occurring there.

One of the more neglected problems on which the Commission should act was, he said, that connected with flagrant violations of the right of people to hold a religious belief. One of the most distressing aspects of these violations was the persecution of religious minorities in Iran. He referred particularly to the persecution in that country of members of the Baha'i faith who were not only denied the rights of a recognised religious minority under the constitution but were systematically harassed.

Gerald KNIGHT (Observer from Baha'i International Community) drew the attention of the Commission to the persecution of a religious minority in Iran. He said the 300,000 member Baha'i Community was the largest religious minority in that country and yet was not recognized under the Constitution. This non-recognition had led to a serious violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms, in disregard of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, a human rights instrument signed and ratified by Iran.

The omission of the Baha'i Community of Iran from the religious minorities mentioned in the present Iranian Constitution had made the situation of the Baha'i Minority very precarious. The Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian minorities were afforded protection of their human rights under the laws of the Islamic Republic of Iran. But the deliberate omission of the Baha'i had left the way open to intensified denunciations, summary arrests and trials, murders, and destruction of property and holy places, with almost complete assurance of impunity for the perpetrators.