

Copy of your message that has been sent to Foreign Affairs Minister, The Hon. Peter MacKay:

04:35 PM 5/5/2006 5 *COPY* UN Human Rights Council: Making human rights a reality

The Honourable Peter MacKay
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Dear Minister:

In putting itself forward as a candidate for election to the new UN Human Rights Council, the Canadian government notes the leadership role that it has played 'in the establishment and implementation of norms and standards on key human rights issues.' (Human Rights Council: Canada's Commitments and Pledges, April 10, 2006)

I would like to urge Canada to use the historic opportunity of the first elections to the Human Rights Council to demonstrate clear leadership in ensuring that international human rights norms and standards are respected and fulfilled by:

- * supporting the candidacy of only those states with a strong human rights record and that have made specific and credible commitments to promote and protect human rights;

- * making a clear commitment to implement outstanding recommendations to Canada by UN treaty bodies and special procedures;

- *working to ensure that the historic first meeting of Human Rights Council demonstrates its effectiveness and credibility by bringing forward for adoption two critical and long overdue international human rights instruments, the draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the draft Convention on Disappearances.

In addition, I ask that Canada hold itself accountable by critiquing its human rights efforts to ensure that all forms of human rights violations that occur in Canada are addressed. For example, that Canada implement immediate changes to the Canadian Criminal Code to include torture committed by non-state actors becomes recognized as an emerging form of torture and a human rights violation. At present Canadian laws on torture only cites state actors torture as illegal.

Jeanne Sarson
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