

LIBERTAS

“Resisting, Proposing, Together”

Second People's Summit of the Americas
April 16 to 21, 2001, in Quebec City

“Resisting, Proposing, Together” is to be the message of groups from throughout the hemisphere at the People's Summit, which will run in Quebec City from April 16 to 21, parallel to the Summit of the Americas. Rights & Democracy will be playing a key role. At a series of forums, public events and the final march, Rights & Democracy will be advocating for the primacy of the international human rights treaties ratified by Canada, and by most of the 34 states attending the Summit, over any free trade agreements that might issue from Quebec.

“The economic and political issues that are to be discussed in secrecy at the Summit of the Americas seriously impact the core of our mandate,” said Rights & Democracy's President, Warren Allmand. “We must ensure that any hemispheric free trade agreement does not compromise states' human rights obligations, as has been the case with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).”



A forum organized by the Quebec Network of Ecological Groups will examine how NAFTA rules have in some cases effectively prevented states from fulfilling their own environmental protection laws, and discuss ways to enforce protection of the environment throughout the hemisphere. Groups concerned about privatization of education will meet to draw up suggested measures to

protect this basic right. The Latin American Coordinating Committee of Peasant Organizations (CLOC) will be looking at the possible consequences of a free trade agreement on Latin America's rural smallholders, in the light of the Mexican NAFTA experience. Rights & Democracy is supporting the human rights forum organized by the Ligue des droits et libertés (Quebec's civil liberties union) on April 18 that will examine ways in which the Inter-American system can be strengthened.

Rights & Democracy is also a sponsor of a teach-in on how a free trade agreement could affect citizens' rights to water to be held at the Chapiteau, a large tent in Quebec's Old Port on Friday, April 20. The teach-in is the key event of the People's Summit and will present vignettes on agriculture, health, labour, youth and indigenous peoples of the Americas. The People's Summit is to conclude with a huge demonstration on Saturday, April 21. For more details, please contact Mary Durran at Rights & Democracy (mdurran@ichrdd.ca).



Rights & Democracy

International Centre for Human Rights
and Democratic Development

Rights & Democracy is a Canadian organization with an international mandate. It works with civil society and governments in Canada and abroad to promote human rights and democratic development through dialogue, advocacy, capacity building and public education. It focuses on four themes: democratic development, women's rights, indigenous peoples' rights, and globalization and human rights.

Canada-China Dialogue Falls Short

Despite ongoing economic reforms in China and the continuation of several bilateral human rights dialogues between western governments and China, China's record on human rights has deteriorated in the past year. Although Prime Minister Chrétien raised human rights during the Team Canada Mission to China from February 9 to 21, 2001, he stopped short of requesting specific commitments by China as requested by a coalition of Canadian NGOs.

"Increased Canadian investment in China needs to be linked to tangible progress on human rights issues," said Warren Allmand during a press conference in Ottawa on February 8, 2001, on the eve of Team Canada's departure for China. During the conference, several human rights groups, including Amnesty International and the Canada-

Tibet Committee, identified a number of specific, well-documented human rights abuses, including the case of imprisoned labour activist Xu Jian. NGOs also noted the use of torture, the crackdowns on freedom of expression and religion, and labour rights.



Alex Neve, Secretary General of Amnesty International Canada, and Warren Allmand listen to Irwin Cotler, Liberal MP and former board member of Rights & Democracy, talk to reporters on February 8 about human rights in China.

As the 57th session of the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) begins in Geneva, international pressure for return to a resolution on the situation of human rights in China is growing and Rights & Democracy has called on Canada to

co-sponsor the China Resolution. The US recently announced that it is set to sponsor the China Resolution, for the third consecutive year. The European Union General Affairs Council also admitted that "dialogue is an acceptable option only if progress is achieved on the ground." A UK parliamentary committee concluded that the dialogue policy with China had not achieved any "meaningful results."

Canada was one of the original sponsors of the first resolution on China's human rights situation proposed at the 1990 session of the UNCHR. It has co-sponsored six times in all, until 1997 when international support waned and Canada announced its withdrawal from co-sponsorship, explaining that the resolution carried no weight and that greater influence could be attained through bilateral dialogue.

Rights & Democracy has published an occasional paper entitled *The Bilateral Human Rights Dialogue with China: Undermining the International Human Rights Regime* which reviews Canada's and other government policies regarding China's compliance with international human rights standards. Copies are available at Rights & Democracy (ichrdd@ichrdd.ca) or visit our web site at www.ichrdd.ca.

International Human Rights Groups Call

for Genuine Reform in Haiti

Following the Haitian elections in February, human rights groups, such as Rights & Democracy, Human Rights Watch, the Washington Office on Latin America, and the International Human Rights Law Group, called on Haitian political leaders, particularly President Aristide, to end the use of violence for political gain, to develop an independent judicial system and encourage freedom of expression and association. They also called for an investigation of the murder of journalist Jean Dominique and the creation of a permanent electoral council to restore confidence in Haiti's electoral process.

In a written statement, these groups called on the international community to consider implementing a range of policy options such as providing foreign assistance only through non-governmental channels and excluding Haitian leaders from gatherings of the region's democratic leaders, should the government of Haiti fail to demonstrate a clear commitment to strengthening democracy and the rule of law. They, however, expressed concern that given the poverty of the majority of Haitians and the devastating impact of the 1990-1994 embargo, blanket economic sanctions would further damage the economy and aggravate the desperate conditions of the majority of Haitians.

Human Rights Situation Deteriorates in Tunisia

The trial to which Mr. Haroun M'Barek was subjected in February in Tunisia highlights the serious deterioration of human rights in that country. It is a situation that should motivate Canada to reexamine its process of analyzing the risks of return for Tunisians.

Mr. M'Barek arrived in Canada in 1994 and after being denied refugee status by the Immigration and Refugee Board in 1997, he was deported to Tunisia. Shortly after his return, he discovered that he had been sentenced in absentia to 12 years in prison. He was immediately jailed and tortured.

Lawyer Nathalie Blais was sent by Rights & Democracy, Amnesty International, the Ligue des droits et libertés, ATTAC and Alternatives to observe the trial of Mr. M'Barek. She explained at a press conference, held at the offices of Rights &

Democracy on March 1, that a just and equitable trial is impossible in Tunisia if it is a trial of a political nature. Mr. M'Barek's trial, which lasted 15 minutes at the most, took place in an atmosphere of total confusion.

"Under the circumstances, the Canadian embassy must attend all his court appearances, visit him in prison regularly, ensure that he receives the medical care he needs and insist on acceptable conditions of confinement," asserted Warren Allmand.

The human rights groups also called on Canada to adopt a firm position with respect to Tunisia at the next session of the UN Commission on Human Rights, claiming that the situation is serious enough to warrant the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on Tunisia.

Security Concerns at Quebec Summit:

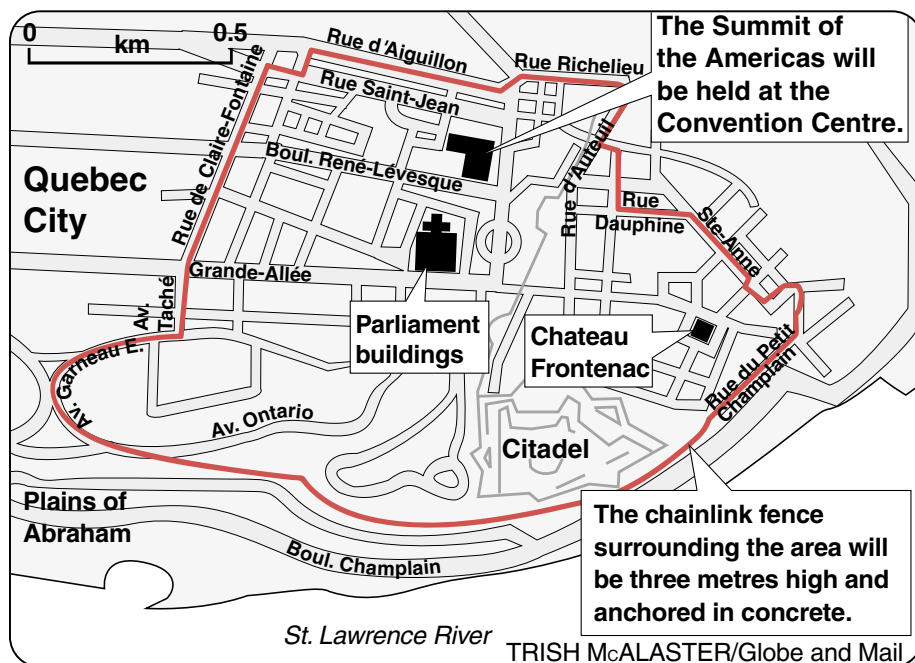
International Observers to Monitor Rights

Rights & Democracy is sponsoring two human rights activists from the Americas to take part in an international observation mission monitoring human rights and civil liberties during the April Summit of the Americas in Quebec City.

Pierre Espérance, Director of the Port-au-Prince office of the National Coalition on Haitian Rights, will be part of the international observa-

squads, will be on hand for what has been billed Canada's largest ever security operation. A three-metre fence of almost 4 km will surround the Summit site, completely isolating the 34 heads of State slated to attend.

In letters sent to Quebec's Public Security Minister and the federal government's minister responsible for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police — Solicitor General Lawrence MacAulay —



tion mission organized by the Ligue des droits et libertés (Quebec's civil liberties union). The mission will include a representative of Human Rights Watch, the Fédération internationale des droits de l'homme and Amnesty International as well as several prominent Canadian lawyers.

"We all want the meetings of the Summit of the Americas to go smoothly and without excessive police intervention. It's important for the safety of all participants, and Canada's reputation abroad is also at stake," Warren Allmand said.

Rights & Democracy has joined several human rights and civil liberties groups in Canada in protesting against the massive security measures planned for the Summit of the Americas. As many as 5,000 police officers, including five RCMP riot

Mr. Allmand strongly argued against turning the historical city into an armed camp.

"It is ironic that we are spending so much time defending political and civil rights in Canada which claims to be a leading example to the rest of the world in this regard," he wrote. "For Canada to show a truly positive image in Quebec City we must allow demonstrations to take place without intimidation or interference. We must also welcome dissent as an expression of democratic values, values which Canadians hold dear and will not easily relinquish."

At the same time, Mr. Allmand condemned those who would use violence and illegal obstruction to stop the summit and prevent legitimate participation.



Rights & Democracy President Warren Allmand attended the annual meeting of the International Human Rights

Funders Group in **New York** on January 16 and 17. Globalization and Human Rights Coordinator Diana Bronson attended the World Social Forum in **Porto Alegre, Brazil** from January 24 to February 2. Madeleine Desnoyers attended the Americas Policy Group of the Canadian Council on International Cooperation in **Ottawa** on January 29 and 30. Regional Officer for **Asia**, Micheline Lévesque, attended the Canadian NGO Committee on **Burma** meetings in **Ottawa** on January 29 and 30 and travelled to the annual **Burma** Donors Meeting in **Stockholm** from February 15 to 22. Warren Allmand and Alex Neve of Amnesty International Canada met in **Ottawa** with Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's personal representative on the Summit of the Americas, Marc Lortie, to discuss Canada's ratification of the American Convention on Human Rights and the massive security measures planned for the April meeting. Director of Programmes Iris Almeida attended the Organization of American States Conference in **Washington** from February 10 to 21. Regional Officer for **Africa** Akouété Akakpo-Vidah travelled to **Niamey, Niger** from February 18 to 26 to attend a regional meeting on the peace process in **Congo-Kinshasa**. Mr. Allmand and Indigenous Peoples' Rights Programme Coordinator Marie Léger attended the Canadian government's consultations in **Ottawa** on February 23 and 24 in preparation for the UN Racism Conference to be held in **South Africa** this summer. Several staff members participated in the annual Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade consultations in **Ottawa** leading to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Women's Rights Programme Coordinator Ariane Brunet, Ms. Lévesque and Mr. Allmand travelled to **Geneva** in March and April to lobby on key issues, such as women's rights, indigenous peoples' rights, and to address a number of countries' poor human rights record, including **Burma, China, Afghanistan** and **Colombia**.

2001 John Humphrey Freedom Award

Rights & Democracy is now accepting nominations for its annual John Humphrey Freedom Award. The deadline for submissions is May 1, 2001. The Award, which includes a \$25,000 grant and a speaking tour of Canada, is presented each year to a frontline human rights activist or organization. For eligibility requirements or a copy of our brochure, please contact Augie van Biljouw (avbiljou@ichrdd.ca) or visit our web site (www.ichrdd.ca).

Internships for Young Canadians

Under a programme sponsored and financed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Rights & Democracy is offering five internships with NGOs in Hong Kong, India, Panama, and Thailand (Chiang Mai and Bangkok). The deadline for applications is May 31, 2001. For more information on eligibility requirements, please visit our web site or contact Danielle Slawter (dslawter@ichrdd.ca).

Friends of Rights & Democracy

The "Friends of Rights & Democracy" was established last year to enable the general public to get involved in the promotion of human rights and democratic development around the world whether through donations and/or as volunteers. Whether your interests lie in democratic development, women's rights, globalization and human rights or indigenous peoples' rights, we would welcome your support in our international activities. For a registration form, please see our web site or contact dslawter@ichrdd.ca.

Network of Academics

Rights & Democracy continues to build its contact list of academics which brings together the expertise of the Canadian academic community in the area of human rights and democratic

development. This list, which is now over 100 strong, helps to mobilize academics to contribute to policy development and advocacy with governments and UN bodies, and allows them to contribute, on a voluntary basis, to the goals pursued by Rights & Democracy. For more details, please contact Danielle Slawter (dslawter@ichrdd.ca).

Infodroits:

French Language Database on Human Rights

Quebec's Human Rights Commission has a unique web database — Infodroits — where

125 sites are indexed and categorized, providing access to French language versions of national (charters, codes, laws) and international (declarations, covenants, conventions) human rights instruments. Subjects covered include women's rights, indigenous peoples' rights, rights of the handicapped, discrimination, privacy, children's rights, etc. Web sites offering interactive teaching/learning tools are identified, making Infodroits an interesting and practical resource for human rights educators and teachers of French as a second language. The Commission also moderates a human rights mailing list (Infodroits: www.cdpcj.qc.ca/scripts/infodroits.dll; Mailing list: www.cdpcj.qc.ca/troisD/liste.htm).



PHOTO: JEAN-F LEBLANC/AGENCE STOCK

Free Min Ko Naing of Burma

Sherbrooke student Véronique Guenet spent a couple of hours in a cage in front of the Burmese embassy in Ottawa on March 22 in solidarity with political prisoner and John Humphrey Freedom Award winner Min Ko Naing of Burma. Students from Quebec and Ontario brought more than 7,000 signed postcards calling for Min Ko Naing's release to the diplomatic representatives of the junta, who refused to receive them. They also gathered at the University of Ottawa where they were addressed by Rights & Democracy's President Warren Allmand and by Nigerian author Ken Wiwa, best known for his work for the rights of the Ogoni people of the Niger Delta, including those of his executed father Ken Saro-Wiwa (see our web site for Mr. Wiwa's speech). All present called for a reopening of Burma's universities and an end to the repression of the student movement. Student leader Min Ko Naing has been in prison for over 12 years for his peaceful protests during the pro-democracy uprisings in Burma in 1988. The postcard campaign will also be launched this year throughout Europe, the US and Asia, and will be directed at the embassies of the military junta in each country.

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Rights & Democracy's Documentation Centre is open to the public. Call (514) 283-6073 for an appointment.

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