



## PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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The following is an extract of the statement delivered to the Australian Permanent Representative at the United Nations, Geneva, H.E. Mr. R.H. Robertson, to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, 5 December 1986.

"Human rights violations in Eastern Europe are of great concern to the Australian Government and people. A number of minority and ethnic groups, notably those in the Baltic area of the Soviet Union, have been subjected to repressive measures for the non-violent expression of their cultural and religious convictions. The Australian Government believes firmly that the basic right of freedom of expression should be available to all peoples.

Similar principles are at issue in relation to the Jews in the Soviet Union who are denied the right to emigrate to Israel. We have noted with satisfaction the release of Anatoly Shcharansky, but consider that this should not distract attention from the need for the Soviet authorities to adopt a more flexible and humane approach to Soviet Jews wishing to emigrate, a fundamental right of all citizens.

We also cannot overlook the systematic harassment in Eastern Europe of certain groups whose views differ from those of the authorities. Charter 77 of Czechoslovakia and similar groups in the Soviet Union whose stated aim is to monitor violations of the Helsinki Accord in their own countries are cases in point, as too are academics and trade unionists in Poland.

The continuing violations of human rights in Afghanistan which have resulted from the efforts of the Soviet Union and the present Afghan Government to subjugate that country's people are of great concern to this delegation. The description of the human rights situation in that country contained in the interim report of the Special Rapporteur prepared for the 40th session of the General Assembly, is deeply disturbing. It is regrettable that the Afghan

authorities have so far refused to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur in his work. We find particularly disquieting reliable reports we have received of cases of torture and imprisonment for lengthy periods of alleged political opponents of the incumbent regime. We note and share the Special Rapporteur's conviction that the prolonged nature of the conflict increases the seriousness of the gross and systematic violations of human rights in Afghanistan."