

CANADA'S PERIODICAL ON REFUGEES
REFUGE

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rather than on international organizations who could step in to deter genocide. In the contemporary world this usually means patrons, donors, and allies.

The rationality of the perpetrators is sometimes overlooked because of the often dramatic mobilization of fear, hatred, and aggression. Genocide is committed from many motives: ideological, retributive (to prevent or respond to a threat), and economic. Genocide is the calculated murder of a segment or all of a group defined as being outside of the universe of obligation of the perpetrator, in response to a crisis believed to be caused by the vic-

tims, or an opportunity seen to be impeded by them. Crises and opportunities may be a result of war, challenges to the structure of domination, the threat of internal breakdown, or social revolution and economic development. Since 1945, most genocides have been state responses to rebellions or challenges by ethnic groups excluded from power, i.e., challenges to the structure of domination. War was often a precursor or consequence of genocide (Fein 1993).

Rwanda is another example of a modal pattern. The perpetrators represent an elite or segment of the dominant ethnic group that felt threatened



***Letter to the Editor from the Jewish
Civil Rights Educational Founda-
tion of Canada***

In your August-September 1994 edition you quote the statistical summary of various countries' claims and status. I am absolutely outraged that 268 applicants would be or could be declared as refugees by Canada's Immigration and Refugee Board. I plain and simply reject the suggestion that Israel is a country from which there could be legitimate refugees. Any citizen of Israel is free to come and go as [s]he pleases. Israel is a democracy that respects the rule of law. There are human rights commissions, there is an Ombudsman and there is, of course, a highly sophisticated court structure to which all citizens and even non-citizens have access.

I have travelled to Israel many times and have participated in legal seminars and if there is one constant with which I have come away it is the total independence of the Judiciary and its absolute commitment to the preservation of individual human rights.

I served as Chairman for twenty years of Canadian Lawyers and Jurists for Soviet Jewry and have visited the Soviet Union on four occasions. From countless contacts with citizens of the former Soviet Union, Jewish and non-Jewish it was obvious to me that many

considered emigration to Israel as a convenient vehicle to get to the United States or Canada. That in no way diminished their legitimacy in wanting to escape anti-Semitism, persecution and the violation of fundamental human rights in the Soviet Union. Many that were successful in gaining entrance to Israel then simply fled to the United States or Canada for economic considerations but evidently persuaded certain members of the Immigration and Refugee Board that they were legitimate refugees.

It is important for the credibility of the Immigration and Refugee Board that its decisions are based on accurate, honest and factual criteria. It seems to me that those members who granted refugee status to 268 applicants could use a basic course about Israel's democratic institutions and perhaps some insight into the realities of what constitutes a totalitarian, autocratic, or racist regime. To equate Israel with countries such as Iran, Iraq and Sudan is not only odious but it is simply preposterous. In the process it demeans the high regard to which the Board should aspire and it mocks the true definition of a refugee.

Bert Raphael, Q.C.
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