



## HUMAN RIGHTS PRIORITIES TODAY

Over the years, new forms of human rights challenges have appeared, reflecting the evolution of our societies. From the first steps taken against racial discrimination in the late 60s, to efforts to combat torture or modern forms of enslavement, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) seeks equality and justice everywhere. How better to address the connection between poor respect for human rights and today's complex challenges caused by impunity, poverty, discrimination, armed conflict and violence, lack of democracy and weak institutions, is the priority for OHCHR in 2006-2011.

### IMPUNITY

The failure to investigate seriously and prosecute persons for human rights violations encourages further abuse. National laws that call for the punishment of perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, must be enforced.

### POVERTY

People whose rights are denied – victims of discrimination or persecution, for example – are more likely to be poor. More than one billion people on our planet live with less than USD1 a day, and have little or no access to basic services and resources. Meanwhile, the poor in many societies cannot enjoy their rights to education, health, housing and food simply because these essential services are not made available to them at affordable rates or at no cost. Poverty affects all human rights.

### DISCRIMINATION

As discrimination leads to economic deprivation, poverty increases discrimination and exclusion. In many countries, the legal system or even tradition still accept discrimination, particularly based on gender and race or ethnicity. Unequal treatment on basis of race, colour, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, and national or social origin is contrary to international human rights standards.

### ARMED CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

Human rights violations such as killings, forced migration, rape, mass detention and disappearances are still today widespread in armed conflict. Under international humanitarian law, the persons who are not, or are no longer, directly engaged in hostilities must be protected against violence in times of armed conflict.

OHCHR condemns terrorism and recognizes the duty of States to protect those living within their jurisdictions from terrorism. However, measures taken to combat terrorism must conform to States' obligations under international human rights law.

### LACK OF DEMOCRACY AND WEAK INSTITUTIONS

Democracy is the only political model where all human rights can be respected, promoted, and enjoyed by all. Weak institutions, resulting from bad governance, greatly endanger this guarantee.

In order to better address these challenges, OHCHR has identified five priority areas that need re-enforcement:

- increased presence in countries;
- strengthened leadership role of the High Commissioner;
- closer partnerships with United Nations agencies and with civil society;
- strengthening the relation between OHCHR and UN human rights bodies;
- strengthening OHCHR's internal capacity.



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