



SPECIAL PROCEDURES BULLETIN

SEVENTH ISSUE: OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2007

HIGHLIGHTS

[Statement by Special Rapporteurs on the occasion of the 60th anniversary year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights \(UDHR\)](#)

During the sixth session of the Human Rights Council from 10 to 14 December 2007, OHCHR commemorated Human Rights Day and the launch of the 60th anniversary year of the UDHR. The events featured a video message from United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, a declaration by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Louise Arbour, and a [statement](#) by the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, Mr. Miloon Kothari, on behalf of special procedures. In his contribution, the Special Rapporteur referred to the [joint statement of mandate holders](#) issued on the occasion of Human Rights Day, which focused on dignity and justice for all in the context of discrimination and exclusion.



UNTV GVA/JM FERRE.

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The quarterly Special Procedures Bulletin provides a general overview of the main activities of the 38 Special Procedures mandates. The next issue of the Bulletin will cover January - March 2008. The Bulletin is produced by the Information, Coordination and Management Team of the Special Procedures Division of the OHCHR.

How to send information on alleged human rights violations to Special Procedures

SPECIAL PROCEDURES DIVISION

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8-14 Avenue de la Paix
1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland

Fax : +41 22 917 90 06
E-mail : urgent-action@ohchr.org
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/chr/special/index.htm>

For further information on how to submit communications, please visit the OHCHR website under Human Rights Bodies/ Special Procedures. Communications should contain a factual description of the alleged violation and be submitted by individuals or organizations acting in good faith with direct or reliable knowledge of the violations they are reporting. They should not be politically motivated, abusive or based solely on media reports. Please specify which special procedure(s) mechanism the information is addressed to in the subject line of the e-mail or fax, or on the envelope.

How to find information on Special Procedures

To learn more about Special Procedures, consult Fact Sheet no. 27 (Seventeen Frequently Asked Questions about United Nations Special Rapporteurs) available at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/about/publications/factsheet27.pdf> (to be updated)

Or contact:

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The OHCHR website (<http://www.ohchr.org>) contains more information on specific mandates under Human Rights Bodies/ Special Procedures, with pages devoted to each Special Procedure, including details on the mandate, country visits, links to reports, press statements, how to submit information, etc.

For further information, or to submit information (other than specific information on alleged human rights violations), please contact: SPDINFO@OHCHR.ORG

COMMUNICATIONS

Some special procedures mechanisms intervene directly with Governments on specific allegations of human rights violations that fall within their mandates. The intervention can relate to a human rights violation that has already occurred, is ongoing, or which has a high risk of occurring. The process generally involves sending a letter to the concerned Government requesting information and comments on the allegation and calling for preventive or investigative action.

The decision to intervene is at the discretion of the special procedure mandate holder and depends on criteria estab-

lished by him or her, as well as the criteria laid out in the Code of Conduct. Criteria generally relate to the reliability of the source and the credibility of information; the details provided; and the scope of the mandate itself. Further information is frequently requested from sources. Communications should not be politically motivated, abusive or based solely on media reports. Mandate holders may send joint communications when the case falls within the scope of more than one mandate. The OHCHR's Special Procedures Division Quick Response Desk coordinates communications and keeps relevant databases updated.

2007 COMMUNICATIONS

1003 Total number of communications

49% Joint Communications

2294 Individual cases covered; 13% of these were women

128 Countries received communications

OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2007

230 Total number of communications

53% Joint Communications

367 Individual cases covered; 16% of these were women

80 Countries received communications

COUNTRY VISITS

ADEQUATE HOUSING

VISIT TO CANADA BY THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR

The Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, Miloon Kothari, visited Canada from 9 to 22 October 2007 to examine the status of realization of the right to adequate housing, particularly focusing on homelessness, women and their right to adequate housing, Aboriginal populations' adequate housing and affordability and speculation of land and property, including the possible impact of the 2010 Olympic Games on the right to adequate housing in Vancouver.

At the end of his mission, the Special Rapporteur made a number of preliminary recommendations to the Canadian authorities including the establishment of long-term funding and programmes to realize a comprehensive national housing strategy with particular funding directed to groups that have been forced to the margins, in compliance with concluding observations from United Nations treaty bodies; the implementation of a comprehensive and properly-funded poverty reduction strategy; access to potable water and proper sanitation to all households; funding and resources for a targeted national Aboriginal housing strategy – both on- and off-reserve – that ensures that Aboriginal housing and services are under Aboriginal control; and the establishment of an independent monitoring body to assist the Vancouver Olympic officials to improve the housing rights situation in the region where the Olympics will take place

BURUNDI

VISIT BY THE INDEPENDENT EXPERT

The Independent expert on the situation of human rights in Burundi, Mr. Akich Okola, carried out a mission to Burundi from 2 to 8 December 2007. During his visit, he met with Government officials, the UN country team and the diplomatic community as well as representatives of civil society organizations.

OHCHR WEBSITE PAGE ON SPECIAL PROCEDURES COUNTRY VISITS

<http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/chr/special/visits.htm>

Links to alphabetical tables of country visits by Special Procedures mandate holders since 1998 are available at this link as well as a list of all countries having extended standing invitations to all the thematic procedures. As of December 2007, 57 countries have extended standing invitations.

An annual compilation of recommendations of Special Procedures by country is also available at this link.

DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA

VISIT TO MONGOLIA BY THE SPECIAL RAPPOORTEUR

The UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Mr. Vitit Muntarbhorn, paid a visit to Mongolia from 15 to 21 December 2007. The purpose of the visit was to assess the impact of the human rights situation in the DPRK on Mongolia. This was the third time that the Special Rapporteur visited the country officially as part of his mandate.

The main impact relates to the influx of DPRK nationals in search of asylum elsewhere. Mongolia's policy towards the group has been based upon humanitarian considerations, offering them temporary asylum prior to durable solutions. It has abided by the international principle of non-refoulement (no forced return) of those who seek asylum and has worked closely with the UNHCR in the process.

The Special Rapporteur noted improvements concerning the facilities sheltering those who have sought asylum. A recurrent pattern of the life stories of this group is that they left the DPRK clandestinely. Their reasons for departure vary from political reasons, such as persecution and forced labour, to economic reasons, such as the quest for a new livelihood.

The Special Rapporteur welcomed Mongolia's consideration of accession to the Refugee Convention and its Protocol, and urged expeditious accession, complemented by effective implementation at the national and local levels. He also welcomed Mongolia's future accession to the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols on human trafficking and smuggling. The Special Rapporteur invited the Mongolian authorities to continue the policy of humane treatment to those seeking asylum, with the provision of facilities to meet their physical and psychological needs. The Special Rapporteur recommended a broad capacity-building process, in cooperation with civil society, to convey a positive image of asylum seekers in the country. He supported continued and strengthened cooperation between the Mongolian authorities and UN agencies, including the UNHCR, to promote and protect human rights, including the rights of those who seek asylum, in accordance with international standards.

EDUCATION

VISIT TO BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA BY SPECIAL RAPPOORTEUR

The Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Mr. Vernor Muñoz Villalobos, visited Bosnia and Herzegovina from 24 September to 2 October 2007. In a press statement issued at the end of his visit, he noted that the implementation of educational standards in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been quite slow. However, the Special Rapporteur noted considerable progress in some areas such as the production and distribution of text books in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska, the national strategy for the protection of the Roma population, the adoption of the framework law on pre-school education and the law on agencies for pre-school, primary and secondary education, the law on higher education. The key problem identified by the Special Rapporteur is the excessive politicization and decentralization of the educational system which prevents in-depth reform in the designing of curricula, the administration and management of the school system and the appointment and recruitment of staff.

In his statement, the Special Rapporteur made preliminary recommendations, including the establishment of mechanisms to guarantee the stable work conditions for educational staff, the harmonization of curricula in accordance with the contents of the Dakar Framework for Action and the Convention of the Rights of the Child, the development of a national program of educational indicators, the setting up of a national program for inter-cultural training for professional educators and the creation of a national independent organization for the defense of students.

FOOD

VISIT TO CUBA BY THE SPECIAL RAPPOORTEUR

The Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Mr. Jean Ziegler, visited Cuba from 28 October to 6 November 2007. He travelled extensively throughout the country. In a press release issued at the end of his mission, the Special Rapporteur welcomed the efforts the Government had made since the "Special Period" to increase agricultural productivity and decrease dependency on food imports with a view to guaranteeing availability and affordability of food. These endeavours are carried out under difficult external circumstances such as the United States-initiated economic and financial "blockade".



FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION

VISIT TO HONDURAS BY THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR

The Special Rapporteur on the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, Mr. Ambeyi Ligabo, carried out a visit to Honduras from 26 to 30 November 2007. In a press statement issued at the end of his visit, the Special Rapporteur welcomed the legislative reforms currently carried out by the Government as a response to various societal demands. The Law on Transparency (habeas data) represents a substantial progress vis-à-vis previous legislation. He noted that the authorities should be attentive to guarantee that it is not used as a political instrument, which could go counter to its original purpose. The Special Rapporteur also encouraged the civil society to keep monitoring and implementing this legislation in the future. In his statement, the Special Rapporteur noted four major impediments to the exercise of the right to freedom of opinion and expression in Honduras, namely (1) the rampant insecurity for journalists in the country and general fear amongst various professional groups, civil servants and ordinary citizens; (2) the lack of any substantive conclusions of investigations by the police in cases of violence against journalists; (3) the slow pace in adapting national legislation to international standards on freedom of opinion and expression in particular in relation to direct or indirect censorship; (4) the insufficient independence of the media. In his preliminary recommendations, the Special Rapporteur highlighted the importance of reinforcing protection programmes for journalists. He also called for fast investigations into crimes committed against journalists. According to the Special Rapporteur indigenous peoples, minority groups and other small ethnic communities should be given sufficient media outlets to express their views. Finally, the Special Rapporteur recalled the importance to reinforce the links between members of civil society, the Government, the judiciary, the police and the media in order to enhance the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression for all.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

VISIT TO ANGOLA BY THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR

The Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Ms. Asma Jahangir, carried out a visit to Angola from 20 to 27 November 2007. In a press statement issued on 28 November she welcomed the Angolan Government's commitment to transparency. While the right to freedom of religion or belief is enshrined in the 1992 Constitution, the Special Rapporteur noted concerns around the Law no. 2/04 on freedom of religion, consciousness and worship which discriminates against religious minorities as it is not in conformity with international standards to which Angola is a party. She recommended that the law be reformed and was encouraged by the openness of the Government to review the provisions of the law. The Special Rapporteur noted with concern the significant number of reports of violence, intimidation, harassment and arrests by State agents of individuals perceived to be associated with the crisis in the Catholic Church. She regretted that

Angola is also affected by a dominant global trend of associating Muslims with international terrorism. She reminded the Government of its obligation to promote tolerance and to prevent any official from making statements to the detriment of any religious community. The Special Rapporteur also expressed concern at the abuse and violence against children who are accused by their families of being witches. She praised the work of the National Children's Institute, together with UNICEF, to address this problem. She also noted that a number of religious communities were severely restricted by the authorities in the exercise of their freedom of religion or belief in Cabinda. In some cases violence, threats and intimidation were also used by the Government. In the detention centres the Special Rapporteur was able to visit, she regretted that ninety five percent of detained Muslims had no possibility to practice their religion.

HEALTH

VISIT TO INDIA BY THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, Paul Hunt, visited India from 22 November to 3 December 2007. During his visit, the Special Rapporteur focused on maternal mortality.

The Special Rapporteur noted that India today does not have an effective, reliable and comprehensive civil registration system for reporting maternal and other deaths. In many parts of the country, life-saving care is unavailable to women giving birth.

The Special Rapporteur strongly recommended that the Government establish, as a matter of urgency, a high-level, high-profile independent committee to prepare a report on human resources in health, both in the public and private sectors, with a particular focus on the needs of rural and underserved areas. The report should be wide-ranging and include the issue of posting and transfers of staff. In order to overcome the imbalance in services between the public and private health sectors, the Special Rapporteur recommended that autonomous Health Commissions be established at the Federal and State levels to regulate and monitor the private and public sectors to ensure that they deliver quality health services to all. The Special Rapporteur mentioned that his final report to the Human Rights Council will set out a human rights based approach to maternal mortality.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

VISIT TO BOLIVIA BY THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR

The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people, Mr. Rodolfo Stavenhagen, visited Bolivia from 26 November to 7 December 2007. The Special Rapporteur examined the situation of the rights of indigenous peoples in Bolivia, carried out visits to various departments of the country

and met with representatives of several indigenous communities.

In his press statement issued on 6 December 2007, the Special Rapporteur welcomed the fact that the Bolivian Constitution contains numerous provisions relating to the protection of indigenous peoples as reflected in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. However, the Special Rapporteur noted with concern the persistence of racism and discrimination against indigenous people and in particular against indigenous women in state institutions as well as in the media. During his visit, the Special Rapporteur looked into the obstacles to the implementation of the Law on Agrarian Reform and the difficulties encountered by indigenous peoples to access land rights. The Special Rapporteur also examined the situation of slavery faced by the Guarani community, the environmental industrial pollution affecting indigenous peoples in remote areas, and threats and attacks against many human rights indigenous leaders.

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

VISIT TO SRI LANKA BY THE REPRESENTATIVE

The Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, Mr. Walter Kälin, visited Sri Lanka from 14 to 21 December 2007.

The Representative stressed the primary responsibility of the Government of Sri Lanka for protecting and assisting IDPs, a responsibility that includes facilitating the conditions that enable durable solutions for the displaced. He noted the complexity of the problem of internal displacement in Sri Lanka. Despite the diversity of circumstances, he identified several key issues affecting all of the IDP and returnee communities with whom he met. The predominant concern among IDPs is physical security. Access to livelihoods is a second major concern of IDPs and returnees. The representative felt that increased information sharing and consultation by the Government with both the IDPs themselves and the international community and agencies would substantially contribute to reduce the prevailing sense of insecurity and facilitate reintegration in areas of return. The Representative further concluded that better access for agencies and NGOs working on protection would improve confidence among IDP populations as these agencies can identify and promptly facilitate the local resolution of individual concerns.

The Representative urged all relevant actors to find peaceful solutions to spare the population from new displacement in other parts of the country and, in the absence of such solutions, to consider the following: (1) that when displacement is unavoidable for the safety of civilians, safe exit routes be available to them, consistent with international humanitarian law; (2) that both military and civil actors be prepared to receive the displaced in conditions of safety and dignity, and that contingency plans be in place; and (3) that when conditions allow for return or relocation of the displaced, key international human rights standards as articulated in the *Guiding Principles on*

Internal Displacement must be followed to ensure that the choice among solutions is truly voluntary and informed, sustainable, and carried out in safety and dignity.

MYANMAR

VISIT BY THE SPECIAL RAPPOREUR

The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Mr. Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, carried out a mission to Myanmar from 11 to 15 November 2007.

The Special Rapporteur drew attention to the fact that this mission could not be considered as a full-fledged fact-finding mission. The conditions for an independent and confidential investigation mission would require a different framework. However, he noted the importance of the access he had to some of the detainees as well as to interview law enforcement authorities.

He requested crucial details from the authorities regarding, among others, detentions, conditions of detention, numbers of released people, whereabouts of those detained and causes of death. The Government provided the Special Rapporteur with a number of detailed records that responded partially to his requests. The Special Rapporteur also met with religious authorities and had discussions about the incidents that occurred during the demonstrations. While noting that this mission should be seen as a process, the Special Rapporteur expressed his hopes for the country's engagement with the international and the regional counterparts. In this regard he expressed confidence in the ASEAN mechanisms.

TORTURE

VISIT TO SRI LANKA BY THE SPECIAL RAPPOREUR

The Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Mr. Manfred Nowak, carried out a mission to Sri Lanka from 1 to 8 October 2007. In a press statement issued on 29 October 2007, the Special Rapporteur explained that since the Government insisted that the armed forces no longer kept detainees within their facilities and therefore no identifiable detention facilities existed, and also did not permit him to travel to Kilinochchi in order for him to conduct meetings with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) leadership and visit their detention facilities, he was not in a position to draw conclusions in relation to the practice of torture and ill-treatment in the particular context of the conflict. The primary focus of his findings therefore relate to torture, ill-treatment and conditions of detention in the ordinary context of the criminal justice system, including with respect to the Emergency Regulations. At the end of his visit, the Special Rapporteur issued a number of preliminary conclusions and recommended that the Government design and implement comprehensive structural reform of the prison system aimed at reducing the number of detainees, increasing prison capacities and modernising the prison

facilities; reduce the period of police custody under the Emergency Regulations; investigate corporal punishment cases at Bogambara Prison as well as torture allegations against the Terrorist Investigation Department (TID), mainly in Boossa, aimed at bringing the perpetrators to justice; abolish capital punishment or, at a minimum, commute death sentences into prison sentences; develop mechanisms for the protection of torture victims and witnesses; ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, and establish a truly independent monitoring mechanism to visit all places where persons are deprived of their liberty throughout the country, and carry out private interviews; establish a field presence of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights with a mandate of both monitoring the human rights situation in the country, including the right of unimpeded access to all places of detention, and providing technical assistance, particularly in the field of judicial, police and prison reform. The Special Rapporteur also encouraged the international community to assist the Government of Sri Lanka to follow-up on these recommendations.

VISIT TO INDONESIA BY THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR

The Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Mr. Manfred Nowak, carried out a mission to Indonesia from 10 to 18 November 2007.

The purpose of the visit was twofold: to assess the situation of torture and ill-treatment in the country, and to offer assistance to the Government in its efforts to improve the administration of justice, including the police and prison sector. The Special Rapporteur regretted that in a number of instances, his unimpeded access to places of detention was compromised including his ability to carry out private interviews with detainees, in contravention of his Terms of Reference.

Whereas he recognized positive steps taken by Indonesia in the last years to address some of the shortcomings, the Special Rapporteur recommended that the Government take the following measures to comply fully with its obligations under both its constitution and international law:

At the highest levels of Government, publicly condemn the practice of torture and ill-treatment by state officials, and state that such practices will not be tolerated; as a matter of priority, criminalize torture in full accordance with the definition contained in article 1 of the Convention against Torture, and impose appropriate penalties; establish an effective and independent criminal investigation mechanism against alleged perpetrators of torture and bring them to justice; introduce accessible and confidential complaints mechanisms within all places of detention and ensure that any complaints are followed up by independent investigations, and that complainants do not suffer any retribution; reduce the time limits for police custody to 48 hours in accordance with international standards; improve safeguards against torture by intro-

ducing effective habeas corpus, by providing access to courts, lawyers and independent medical examinations to all persons in detention, whether under the penal law or not; ensure that detention in social rehabilitation centres is subject to judicial review; ensure that independent autopsies be conducted following each death in detention; support the National Human Rights Commission (and the National Commissions for Women and Children) in becoming an effective player in the fight against torture, in terms of their monitoring role as well as in addressing impunity; ensure the separation of minors from adults and of pre-trial detainees from convicted prisoners; prohibit corporal punishment; establish effective mechanisms to enforce the prohibition of violence against women, including domestic violence; raise the age of criminal responsibility in accordance with international standards; accede to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, establish effective national mechanisms to carry out unannounced visits to all places of detention; and abolish the death penalty.

FOLLOW-UP VISITS

EXTRAJUDICIAL, SUMMARY OR ARBITRARY EXECUTIONS

FOLLOW-UP VISIT TO BRAZIL BY THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR

The Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Mr. Philip Alston, visited Brazil from 3 to 14 November 2007. In his press release, the Special Rapporteur expressed some key concerns regarding the very high homicide rates, and high rates of impunity, killings by vigilante groups, death squads, extermination groups, and militias, prison killings, killings of police and police killings, extrajudicial executions by on-duty police, extrajudicial executions by off-duty police, and prison violence. The Special Rapporteur examined the criminal justice system's response to extrajudicial executions and observed that the criminal justice system is in desperate need of large-scale reform and that such reform is completely feasible. Brazilian society should feel a sense of great urgency in making these reforms, but it should also feel confident that if it acts with urgency, it will succeed. The Special Rapporteur made recommendations regarding: increase in police salaries, effective investigations into police killings, increased resources for forensics, enhanced witness protection, independence of ombudsmen, central role for public prosecutors, enhanced prison monitoring and prison administration to ensure safety for prisoners.

FORTHCOMING VISITS

Argentina: IE economic reform policies and foreign debt, March 2008

Central African Republic: SR extrajudicial executions, Jan-Feb 2008

Democratic Republic of the Congo: RSG internally displaced persons, Jan-February 2008

Republic of Korea: SR on DPRK, January 2008

Equatorial Guinea: SR torture, February 2008 (postponed)

Guatemala: SRSG human rights defenders, February 2008, SR migrants March 2008

Israel and the OPT : SR freedom of religion, January 2008

Japan: SR on DPRK, January 2008

Mauritania : SR racism, January 2008; Working Group arbitrary detention, Feb-March 2008

Mexico: SR migrants March 2008

Saudi Arabia: SR violence against women, February 2008

Tanzania: SR toxic wastes, January 2008

United States of America: SR extrajudicial executions, March 2008

Venezuela: SRSG human rights defenders, February 2008

REQUESTED AND ACCEPTED VISITS

REQUESTS INITIATED BETWEEN OCTOBER AND DECEMBER 2007

Jordan: SR violence against women

Kyrgyzstan: SR violence against women

Myanmar: SR extrajudicial executions

Pakistan: SRSG human rights defenders, SR independence of judges and lawyers, SR freedom of expression

Philippines: SR counter-terrorism

Turkmenistan: SR violence against women

Uzbekistan: SRSG human rights defenders, SR violence against women

Venezuela: SRSG human rights defenders

REQUESTS ACCEPTED / INVITATIONS EXTENDED

Angola: SR freedom of expression (postponed)

Cote d'Ivoire: SR toxic wastes

Guyana: IE minority issues

Mauritania: Working Group arbitrary detention

Senegal: Working Group arbitrary detention

Spain: SR counter-terrorism

Tajikistan: SR violence against women (postponed)

Tanzania: SR toxic wastes

United States of America: Working Group arbitrary detention

Click [here](#) for a list of all country visits by special procedures mandate holders (undertaken, forthcoming, accepted by the Government or requested by the mandate holder).

HIGHLIGHTS

Human Rights Council continued from page 1...

REVIEW OF SPECIAL PROCEDURES MANDATES

At its resumed sixth session, the Council continued the process of reviewing, rationalizing and improving the special procedures mandates. On 13 December 2007, the Council conducted reviews of the mandates on **internally displaced persons, protection of human rights while countering terrorism, adequate housing, health, Liberia and Sudan**. Links to the summary records of the discussions held on these mandates are in the box to the right.

In general, States and other stakeholders expressed support for these mandates and called for their extension. Six resolutions on mandates were adopted by consensus. Resolutions on the mandates on **internally displaced persons, protection of human rights while countering terrorism, adequate housing, and health** provided for the extension of those mandates for a further three years. Resolutions on the mandates on **Liberia** and **Sudan** extended those mandates for a further year.

A resolution was also adopted by vote (29 yes votes and 18 abstentions) extending the mandate on **freedom of religion or belief** for a further three years. The review of the mandate had taken place during the first part of the sixth session in September 2007.

The relevant resolutions are available on the webpage of the [Human Rights Council](#).

The President of the Council distributed a non-paper entitled [rolling check-list for review, rationalization and improvement \(RRI\) of mandates](#) on 11 December 2007, which sets out some further guiding principles in addition to those already distributed at the earlier part of the session in September. The document notes that while addressing mandates individually, the process of RRI may also explore their interrelation with other mandates in cooperation with the co-sponsor(s) of the concerned mandates.

INTERACTIVE DIALOGUES

The Council held interactive dialogues with Mr. Rodolfo Stavenhagen, **the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people** and Mr. Martin Scheinin, **the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism**, on their respective annual and country visit reports. The links to the summary records of the interactive dialogues can be found in the box above.

<p>Links to Review of Special Procedures Mandates</p> <p>Internally displaced persons 14 December</p> <p>Counter terrorism 13 December</p> <p>Housing 13 December</p> <p>Health 14 December</p> <p>Liberia 14 December</p> <p>Sudan 14 December</p>	<p>Links to Interactive dialogues on Special Procedures Reports</p> <p>Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people 12 December</p> <p>Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism 12 December</p>
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ACTIVITIES OF THE COORDINATION COMMITTEE

The Chair of the Special Procedures Coordination Committee (CC), Ms. Gay McDougall, held meetings in Geneva on 4 and 5 December 2007 with the President of the Human Rights Council, and with members of the following regional groups: African Group, Asian Group, Eastern European Group, Latin American and Caribbean Group, Western European and Other Group. She also met with representatives of the European Union, the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and with NGOs. She indicated that the ongoing review, rationalization and improvement of mandates by the HRC should lead to an increased level of human rights promotion and protection and address protection gaps, take into account the interrelatedness of all human rights, maintain the independence of mandate holders as an essential feature of the special procedures system and provide an opportunity to special procedures to directly and effectively interact with the Council. On the selection procedure, the CC Chair mentioned that the CC sent a letter to all mandate holders, encouraging them to inform their contacts and networks about the Public List of candidates for special procedures mandates. She also stated that the CC would like to constructively en-

gage with the Consultative Group, which was established to suggest candidates to the President, as provided in resolution 5/1. She also informed interlocutors about an interim advisory procedure to review practices and working methods, which was adopted by the CC and will be discussed by all mandate holders during their 15th annual meeting in June 2008. She further noted that a task force of mandate holders is currently engaged in efforts to revise the draft Manual to reflect the comments made by various stakeholders during the public consultation process, and in order to bring it into consonance with the Code of Conduct.

CONSULTATIVE GROUP AND SELECTION PROCEDURE OF MANDATE HOLDERS

Resolution 5/1 adopted by the Human Rights Council in June 2007 establishes a Consultative Group (CG) whose function is to propose to the President, at least one month before the beginning of the session in which the Council would consider the selection of mandate-holders, a list of suitable candidates who meet the general criteria and particular requirements. The CG will consider candidates included in the public list (however, under exceptional circumstances and if a particular post justifies it, the Group may consider additional nominations with equal or more suitable qualifications for the post).

The Human Rights Council, at its sixth session, in decision 6/102 of 27 September 2007, approved technical and objective requirements for eligible candidates for special procedures mandate holders, and decided that the Secretariat may provide a standardized form, on the basis of the technical and objective requirements for candidates to fill in, so as to facilitate the selection of relevant candidacies from the public list as soon as appointments for particular mandates are necessary. The Secretariat has prepared a standardized form that is currently available at: <http://www.ochchr.org/english/bodies/chr/special/nominations.htm>

Those entities which may nominate candidates as special procedures mandate-holders according to Council resolution 5/1, Annex, are: (a) Governments; (b) Regional Groups operating within the United Nations human rights system; (c) international organizations or their offices (e.g. the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights); (d) non-governmental organizations; (e) other human rights bodies; (f) individual nominations.

Candidatures to special procedures mandates may reach the Secretariat at the following address: hrcspecialprocedures@ohchr.org or HRC Secretariat, c/o Orest Nowosad (Mailing address: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Room 4-093, Palais des Nations, 8-14 avenue de la Paix, CH-1211, Geneva 10; Tel: +41 (0)22 917 9223; Fax: +41 (0)22 917 9011).

A list of current or upcoming vacancies is available at the Extranet at: http://portal.ohchr.org/extranet/docs/SP%20list%20of%20vacancies-%20last%20review-5_12_07_pm.pdf.

The deadline for submitting nominations of candidates to be considered for appointment during the March session of the Council is **28 January 2008**. All other nominations will continue to be considered for inclusion in the public list and their inclusion for consideration for appointment during subsequent sessions.

The Public List of current candidates in a standardized format (including personal data, areas of expertise and professional experience) is also available on the Extranet at: http://portal.ohchr.org/extranet/docs/Pblist_fulldata.pdf

This list will be continuously updated.

EXPERT MECHANISM ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

In December 2007, the Human Rights Council decided to establish the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, with the objective of providing the Council with thematic expertise regarding the human rights of these peoples. The Expert Mechanism will focus mainly on studies and research-based advice and suggest proposals to the Council for its consideration and approval. The Expert Mechanism will consist of five independent members and will meet once annually for five working days. The Special Rapporteur on the situation on the rights of indigenous people, along with the Chairperson of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, will be invited to participate in its annual meetings and to cooperate with its activities.

GROUP OF EXPERTS ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN DARFUR

Resolution 6/35 on the Group of Experts on the situation of human rights in Darfur urged the Government of the Sudan to continue and to intensify its efforts to implement the recommendations identified by the Group of Experts in accordance with the specified time frames and indicators. It mentioned particular concern with regard to the fact that perpetrators of past and ongoing serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in Darfur had not yet been held accountable for their crimes and urged Sudan to urgently address this situation. The resolution did not extend the mandate of the Group of Experts. The Group issued a [press release](#) on the occasion of its final report on 11 December 2007.

MYANMAR

The Council adopted Resolution 6/33 on Myanmar, urging the Government of Myanmar to follow up and implement the recommendations contained in the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar and requesting the Special Rapporteur to conduct a follow-up mission to Myanmar before the Council's seventh session in March 2008. The Council also urged the Government of Myanmar to cooperate fully with the Special Rapporteur and other Human Rights Council mechanisms.

THEMATIC EVENTS

INDEPENDENT EXPERT ON MINORITY ISSUES HOLDS EXPERT CONSULTATION,

From 6 to 7 December 2007, the Independent Expert on minority issues, Ms Gay Mc Dougall, held an expert consultation, with the support of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, on issues related to minorities and the denial or deprivation of citizenship. It brought together minority representatives, academics and other experts in the field of minorities and citizenship from all regions, representing inter-governmental and non-governmental bodies as well as United Nations offices, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Examples from all regions demonstrate that the denial or deprivation of citizenship to certain minority groups has been used as a means to exclude minorities from rights, entitlements or reasonable participation, with consequences experienced over generations. The consultation helped to reveal the extent and nature of the issues; provided an opportunity for analysis of State practices in addressing minority issues and citizenship, and the denial or deprivation of citizenship; and considered recommendations for States and international institutions and agencies. Participants included the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Mr. Doudou Diène; a member of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), Mr. Alexei Avtonomov; the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Mr. Knut Vollebaek; and the Head of Statelessness Unit of UNHCR, Mr. Philippe Leclerc.

OHCHR WORKSHOP ON “STRENGTHENING THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN FROM TORTURE”

On 24 September 2007, the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Mr. Manfred Nowak, participated in a one-day expert workshop, organized by the OHCHR, on “Strengthening the Protection of Women from Torture”. Discussions focused on which types of treatment that typically target women amount to torture and/or ill-treatment, how a broader, gender specific understanding of torture would affect criminal procedure norms, and which women-specific concerns would have to be taken into account in relation to reparation and rehabilitation. As a result of the workshop, recommendations for the mandate, but also for other anti-torture mechanisms will be developed and a chapter summarizing relevant issues and challenges will be included in the Special Rapporteurs forthcoming report.

EXPERT SEMINAR ON “THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS UNDER STATES OF EMERGENCY, PARTICULARLY THE RIGHT TO A FAIR TRIAL”

An Expert Seminar on “The protection of human rights

under states of emergency, particularly the right to a fair trial” was held from 3 to 4 December 2007 in Geneva. This seminar was organized by Geneva OHCHR upon a recommendation by the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, Mr. Leandro Despouy. Participants had very rich exchanges on recent developments concerning universal, regional and national norms and jurisprudence regarding the protection of human rights under states of emergency, particularly in the context of the right to a fair trial. They made suggestions concerning strategies to enhance the legal protection of human rights in times of emergency. The conclusions and recommendations of the seminar will be included in the Special Rapporteur’s next report to the Human Rights Council. The recommendations of the seminar include the need to undertake a study in order to systematize the rich variety of recent norms and jurisprudence concerning states of emergency that exist at the universal, regional and national levels, with the perspective of convening a Working Group that could draft an instrument of a declaratory nature on the basis of the main principles identified by the study. It was also recommended that the Human Rights Council may give greater attention to states of emergencies’ situations, and may invite all special procedures to pay particular attention to violations occurring under states of emergencies in the framework of their mandates.

WORKING GROUP ON THE USE OF MERCENARIES CONVENES REGIONAL CONSULTATION IN PANAMA CITY

On 17-18 December 2007, the Working Group on the use of mercenaries convened a regional consultation for Latin America and the Caribbean on the “Effects of the Activities of Private Military and Security Companies on the Enjoyment of Human Rights: Regulation and Oversight” in Panama City. The workshop was attended by government representatives, regional organisations, experts and representatives from the private military and security company industry. The objective was to gather a regional perspective about the current practices in recruiting personnel to be deployed in armed conflict, to review steps taken by States to regulate and monitor the activities of Private Military and Security Companies (PMSC), and to attempt to develop regulatory options and best practices



aimed at ensuring that PMSC activities are in conformity with international human rights standards. Following GA resolution 62/145, consultations will be organised in other parts of the world in order to eventually draft international guidelines to regulate activities of PMSCs.

PRESS RELEASES

SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF MIGRANTS AND CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF ALL MIGRANT WORKERS AND MEMBERS OF THEIR FAMILIES MARK INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS' DAY

On 18 December 2007, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Mr. Jorge Bustamante, and the Chairperson of the Committee on the protection of the rights of all migrant workers and members of their families, Mr. Prasad Kariywasam, issued a statement on the occasion of International Migrants Day. The experts celebrated the contribution migrants make to the development of economies and societies both in their countries of origin and in the countries where they live and work. At the same time, they stressed that migrants are still subjected to human rights violations on a daily basis.

The human rights experts called on member States to harmonize domestic migration policies and legislation with the international human rights framework which protects the inherent dignity and rights of all persons, regardless of their status in a country. They encouraged member States to take appropriate measures to protect women domestic workers in irregular situation. They encouraged member States to take appropriate measures to ensure that access to education is guaranteed to all migrant children in their country, irrespective of their migratory status, and to intensify their efforts to prevent that these children fall victim to any kind of exploitation, and notably economic or sexual exploitation. The experts stressed the importance of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. They also reiterated their call to all States that have not yet done so to accede or ratify the Convention for the sake of the dignity and protection of the human rights of millions of women, men and children who have abandoned their homes in search of a better life.

SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN CAMBODIA ISSUES CLARIFICATION

On 17 December 2007, the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Human Rights in Cambodia, Mr Yash Ghai, issued a press release clarifying his role, status and functions as Special Representative. The Special Representative indicated that he did not intend to dialogue with the Government through the media. He had sought meetings with several ministers well in advance of his visit. They either did not respond or refused to meet him. In the absence of such meetings, he described pub-

licly his main concerns which will be addressed in detail in his forthcoming report. He hoped that the Government would respond to the substance of his assessment. He was ready to ensure a dialogue with the Government and would pursue his efforts in this direction. The Special Representative stressed that he did not call for the international community to cut its support to Cambodia. Rather, he encouraged Member States, as bound by the Charter of the United Nations, to pursue their assistance efforts, while playing a more critical role in recognising human rights realities in Cambodia, to the understanding of which the Special Representative mandate aims at contributing.

UNITED NATIONS EXPERTS MARK INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY WITH CALL FOR STATES TO INTENSIFY EFFORTS TO COMBAT DISCRIMINATION AND EXCLUSION

On International Human Rights Day, 10 December 2007, the Special Procedures mandate holders of the United Nations Human Rights Council highlighted the need to intensify efforts to combat discrimination and exclusion, which infects societies in every region of the world and is a root cause of many human rights violations. In civil and political as well as economic, social and cultural spheres, the extraordinary impact of discrimination on human rights forms a common thread between Special Procedures' mandates.

The mandate holders emphasized that the year ahead also marks the 60th anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and was fitting to recall that Articles 1 and 2 of the Declaration establish that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms in the Declaration without distinction of any kind.

The experts stated that they must be vigilant in identifying problems stemming from discrimination in order to craft appropriate responses, and ensure that institutions, including political structures, the police, and the judiciary better reflect the diversity and multiculturalism, which are increasingly a feature of all societies in all regions. Recalling the 2001 Durban World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, the experts reiterated their commitment to work with States to eliminate discrimination and exclusion on all grounds, in an effort to prevent human rights abuses and conflict, to redress ongoing and past violations, and to design appropriate legislative and policy responses.

INDEPENDENT EXPERT CONCERNED ABOUT THREATS TO MEDIA IN SOMALIA

On 7 December 2007, the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia, Mr. Ghanim Alnajjar, issued a press statement expressing concern about recent reports that "Somaliland" authorities have ordered twenty-four journalists to leave within the next few days. The journalists reportedly fled Mogadishu earlier this year, in response to threats and intimidation and sought refuge in

a safe house in Hargeisa with the approval of the authorities. The Independent Expert stated the media must be allowed to perform its duties without apprehension. He called upon the "Somaliland" authorities to reconsider their decision to order the expulsion of the journalists.

According to the Independent Expert, threats to journalists and media outlets constitute serious violations of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. He condemned such acts and called for investigations into all threats, attacks and killings against the media and the prompt re-opening of the closed media organisations. The expert finally called upon all Somali authorities to respect the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and to ensure the safety and security of all, including journalists and other media professionals, human rights defenders and humanitarian workers.

SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON COUNTER-TERRORISM INVITED TO OBSERVE MILITARY COMMISSION HEARING AT GUANTANAMO BAY

On 3 December 2007, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, Mr. Martin Scheinin, issued a press statement welcoming the invitation extended by the Government of the United States of America to attend and observe military commission hearings scheduled to commence on 5 December 2007 at Guantanamo Bay.

This official trip was in follow up to the Special Rapporteur's country visit to the United States in May 2007. The Special Rapporteur stated that he would observe an evidentiary hearing regarding the case of United States v. Hamdan. Mr. Hamdan, a Yemeni national, was captured in Afghanistan during hostilities in 2001. He has been held at Guantanamo Bay since 2002 and has been charged under the Military Commissions Act with conspiracy and providing material support for terrorism.

UNITED NATIONS INDEPENDENT EXPERTS CONCERNED ABOUT CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM IN VENEZUELA

On 30 November 2007, the Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Mr. Ambeyi Ligabo, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Human Rights Defenders, Ms. Hina Jilani, and the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, Mr. Leandro Despouy, issued a press statement to express their concerns about some provisions of the constitutional reform approved by the National Assembly of Venezuela on 3 November 2007.

According to the experts, the elimination of the Supreme Court's authority to oversee and approve state of emergency declarations and the abolition of time limits for such states are inconsistent with the commitments taken by Venezuela under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The experts stated that provisions of the constitutional reform will curtail a set of fundamental rights that should be enjoyed at all times, including

during states of emergencies, such as the right to freedom of expression and the right of access to information. The Special Rapporteurs further expressed their concern about the proposed reform of access to national funding for associations, which might negatively impact on human rights defenders organizations by preventing them from receiving international funding. They added that the constitutional proposal to dismiss the Supreme Court's judges by a simple majority vote of the National Assembly, instead of the two-thirds majority as currently provided in the Constitution might harm the independence of the judiciary.

WORKING GROUP ON DISAPPEARANCES CONCLUDES EIGHTY-THIRD SESSION

The United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances concluded its 83rd session, which was held from 21 to 30 November 2007 in Geneva.

The Working Group examined 20 reported cases under its urgent action procedure. The Working Group also reviewed 540 new cases of enforced disappearances as well as recently submitted information on previously accepted cases from 38 countries.

The Working Group also examined allegations submitted by non-governmental organizations regarding obstacles encountered in the implementation of the Declaration in their respective countries, and decided to transmit seven general allegations to governments in Africa, Asia, Europe and North America.

The Working Group adopted a revised version of its methods of work. The Working Group introduced a section on situations of vulnerability of certain persons, such as women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. In addition, the Working Group refined the terminology regarding the clarification of cases. As from the 84th session, the Working Group will consider cases clarified when the fate or whereabouts are clearly established

The Working Group finalized and approved its 2007 annual report. It includes chapters on 81 countries, presenting all cases of disappearance currently under consideration, and contains the Working Group's main concerns and observations.

WORKING GROUP ON ARBITRARY DETENTION CONCLUDES ITS FIFTIETH SESSION

The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention concluded its 50th session, which was held from 21 to 30 November 2007 in Geneva.

The Working Group adopted its 2007 annual report as well as its report on its mission to Angola. The annual report contains a description of the activities carried out by the Working Group, the urgent appeals and the Opinions adopted on the individual cases of detention transmitted to governments through its regular procedure. Regarding its follow-up procedure, it contains information provided

by the Governments of Belarus and Latvia on the implementation of the Working Group's recommendations after its 2004 visits to those countries. Particular consideration is given to the question of the administrative detention of non-citizens; to groups in detention vulnerable to sexual abuse; to the recourse to detention in the context of counter-terrorism measures and states of emergency, and to the issue of adequate detention registries.

During the session, the Working Group adopted 21 Opinions on individual cases of detention. Meetings were held with representatives of Governments and non-governmental organizations. During the session, the Governments of Mauritania and of the United States of America confirmed invitations extended to the Working Group to visit their countries.

SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS RELEASES FINAL REPORT ON HIS FACT-FINDING MISSION TO THE PHILIPPINES

In a press release issued on 26 November 2007, the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Philip Alston, presented the main findings on his fact-finding mission to the Philippines. He concluded that a significant number of the hundreds of extrajudicial executions of leftist activists in the Philippines over the past six years are the result of deliberate targeting by the military as part of counterinsurgency operations against the communist rebels.

While he was encouraged by various measures adopted recently by the Government, the Special Rapporteur observed that only concrete results in terms of eliminating killings, and prosecuting and punishing those responsible could make a real difference. He also investigated the extrajudicial executions in western Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago where there is armed conflict involving a number of insurgent and terrorist groups. He noted that witnesses in these areas live in enormous fear and that responsibility for abuses is often difficult to determine. He concluded that greatly improved human rights monitoring was needed to protect the civilian population in these areas. The Special Rapporteur investigated the death squad killings of street children and petty criminals in Davao City and concluded that Mayor Duterte should be stripped of his control over the local police, and the national Government should assume responsibility for dismantling the death squad and prosecuting its members. .

SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS CALL FOR WOMEN'S FULL PROTECTION FROM ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AND FOR THEIR ACCESS TO ALL AVAILABLE REMEDIES

On the occasion of the International Day on the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November), the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Ms. Yakin Ertürk, and the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Mr. Manfred Nowak, issued a press statement noting that although much has been to make the scale of violence against women widely known and develop legal and practical instruments to strengthen the protection of women from violence, significant gaps in protection remain. On the one hand, many countries fail to recognize some forms of violence against women as crimes and invoke cultural or religious paradigms to condone them. On the other hand, the application of international instruments and the development of strategies to condemn and punish torture have been slow to take into account gender-based aspects of torture.

The Special Rapporteurs noted that progress has nonetheless been seen in recent years, with an increased and explicit recognition of some forms of violence against women in international and national courts as amounting to torture and ill-treatment, the best known examples being rape by private or public actors in conflict or in custodial settings. Others forms of violence, such as female genital mutilation, may be considered torture or ill-treatment. The Special Rapporteurs underlined that the term "torture" carries a strong protection potential since it triggers well-established international legal obligations for the State, while international standards to combat violence against women, contain an obligation to condemn and prevent all forms of violence against women, independently of whether acts are perpetrated by the State or a private person. These sets of instruments and standards should be used more systematically to inform and strengthen one another.

The human rights experts appealed to the international community, to States, and civil society to make full use of all existing instruments and mechanisms in a comprehensive fashion, in order to ensure women the full protection from all forms of violence and their access to all available remedies.

EXPERTS URGE PAKISTAN TO RESTORE THE CONSTITUTION AND THE RULE OF LAW

In a press statement issued on 8 November 2007, Ms. Gay J. McDougall, Chair of the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures, expressed grave concern at the imposition of the state of emergency in Pakistan and condemned the suspension of fundamental freedoms, including the right not to be deprived of one's liberty, freedom of movement, peaceful assembly and freedom of expression. The experts condemned the imposition of the state of emergency as it represents an attack on the independence of the judiciary. They also condemned the retaliation measures, including the abuse of the notion of

terrorism, against those who are expressing their dissent against the imposition of the state of emergency.

In particular, they were extremely concerned about the detention and house arrest of leading judges, lawyers and human rights defenders. This includes the United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Ms. Asma Jahangir, who was been placed under house arrest for a period of 90 days, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and other members of the Supreme Court who were also placed under house arrest when they refused to take the oath of allegiance to the Provisional Constitutional Order. The experts were alarmed that a detention order remained in place against Ms. Hina Jilani, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights defenders. They called for their immediate and unconditional release. Finally the experts urged Pakistan to return to democratic rule and to stop the ongoing escalation of human rights abuses.

WORKING GROUP ON MERCENARIES CONCERNED BY PRIVATE SECURITY COMPANIES ENGAGING IN NEW FORMS OF MERCENARY ACTIVITY

In a press statement issued on 6 November 2007, the Working Group on mercenaries disclosed the conclusions of its second report stating that a number of private security companies operating in zones of armed conflict are engaging in new forms of mercenarism. According to the Working Group, there has been a significant increase in the number of private security companies operating in conflict-ridden areas, notably in Afghanistan and Iraq. They represent a new form of mercenarism, similar to "irregular combatants", itself an unclear concept, the Group adds.

The Working Group warns that States that employ these services may be responsible for violations of internationally recognized human rights committed by the personnel of such companies. Such violations are furthermore attributable to those States if the private military and private security companies are empowered to exercise elements of governmental authority or are acting under governmental direction or control.

The Working Group expressed its concern that only 30 States have ratified the International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries. It was also concerned by the lack of regulation at the regional and national levels regarding private military and security companies which operate without oversight and accountability.

SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON SALE OF CHILDREN EXPRESSES CONCERN AT ATTEMPT TO ABDUCT CHILDREN IN EASTERN CHAD

The Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, Mr. Juan Miguel Petit, issued a press statement on 6 November 2007 expressing concern at the recent incidents in Abeché, eastern Chad, leading to the arrest on 25 October 2007 of some members

of an NGO called "Arche de Zoé/Child Rescue" following its alleged attempt to abduct and transfer 103 children to France for alleged adoption.

The Special Rapporteur called upon both Chadian and French authorities to fully investigate and shed light on the circumstances surrounding the capture of the children. Those found responsible for violations of the rights of the child must be brought to justice and tried in accordance with international fair trial standards.

At the same time, the Special Rapporteur commended the efforts deployed by many international humanitarian and national agencies on the ground which are deploying remarkable efforts to ensure the protection of the children involved, including the immediate provision of basic humanitarian assistance.

UNITED NATIONS AND COUNCIL OF EUROPE EXPERTS SAY GOVERNMENT SHOULD TAKE POSITIVE STEPS TO PROTECT HOUSING RIGHTS OF ROMA IN EUROPE

The Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Thomas Hammarberg, and the Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing of the United Nations Human Rights Council, Mr. Miloon Kothari, issued a press release on 24 October 2007 stating that their offices in several parts of Europe have received an increasing number of complaints about abuse of housing rights of Roma. Most of these communications have reported evictions of Roma communities and families which have been carried out in violation of human rights standards, especially as regards the right to adequate housing and privacy, procedural guarantees and remedies. In recent years, the experts acknowledged that there has been an undeniable growth of anti-Romani sentiment or "anti-Ziganism" in Europe.

The experts reminded Governments that concerted efforts are required at national, local and pan-European level to end the housing crisis of the Roma in accordance with the major international human rights instruments codifying the right to adequate housing, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Revised European Social Charter, the European Convention on Human Rights and EU legislation in the field of non-discrimination.

SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE RIGHT TO FOOD DEPLORES INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE SUFFERING FROM HUNGER

On 16 October 2007, the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Jean Ziegler, issued a press statement on the occasion of World Food Day. The expert regretted that he was unable to report a reduction in the number of persons suffering from violations of the right to food. On the contrary, despite real advances in different countries, the Rapporteur stated that the number of people suffering from hunger has increased every year since 1996. This number has now reached an estimated 854 million people, despite Government commitments at the 2002

World Food Summit and at the 2000 Millennium Summit to eradicate hunger. Every five seconds, a child below ten dies from hunger and malnutrition-related diseases.

The Special Rapporteur recalled that hunger and famine are not inevitable. He added that according to the Food and Agricultural Organization, the world already produces enough food to feed every child, woman and man and could feed 12 billion people, double the current world population. The Special Rapporteur explained that the key problems that remain are the lack of coherence within the international community between the positive developments being made by some sectors of the system, for example evidenced by the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food, and the way in which the policies and practices of States at agencies such as the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and the World Trade Organization, undermine the protection of the right to food. The Special Rapporteur added that State policies that relate to the right to food also show similar patterns of inconsistency. While all States have recognized the right to food in the World Food Summit Declarations, more than 150 States are parties to the ICESCR, and 192 have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, they engage at the same time in trade policies that have harmful negative consequences for the enjoyment of human rights in other countries. Other important issues still remain to be addressed, including the exclusion and discrimination of the most vulnerable, especially women and indigenous peoples, the increasing uncontrolled power of transnational corporations over the food system, desertification, armed conflict and agrofuels.

The Rapporteur recalled that the fight against hunger must therefore continue more forcefully as ever. The right to food must be respected by all States, by all intergovernmental organizations and by all non-state actors including transnational corporations.

STATEMENT BY SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON ADEQUATE HOUSING ON WORLD HABITAT DAY

The Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, Mr. Miloon Kothari, issued a press statement on 1 October 2007 on the occasion of World Habitat Day.

The Special Rapporteur noted that the theme selected by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN HABITAT) for this year's World Habitat Day is "A Safe City is a Just City." While the focus of this year's theme is primarily urban, it must also concern the over three billion people who still live in rural areas and who are deprived of the most basic services.

According to the Special Rapporteur the disturbing growth in forced evictions poses a direct threat to the safety of both urban and rural inhabitants, with an increased impact on marginalized groups. The right to adequate housing requires States to ensure security of tenure. The international community must focus on the broader structural cause of evictions such as the lack of agrarian reform, displacement induced by large development projects, "city beautification" drives, large sporting events, or real estate speculation.

The Special Rapporteur stated that in his 2007 report to the Human Rights Council, he elaborated some Basic principles and guidelines on development-based evictions and displacement which, if incorporated in national law and policy, would help minimize displacement and ensure that international human rights standards are upheld and resettlement is completed in a just and adequate manner. The Special Rapporteur called on the international community to move closer to the goal of realizing the human right to adequate housing for all.

"Special procedures" refer to the mechanisms established by the former Commission on Human Rights, and assumed by the Human Rights Council, to examine, monitor, advise and publicly report on a human rights situation in a specific country (country mandates) or on a thematic issue (thematic mandates). Currently, there are 38 special procedures, 28 thematic mandates and 10 country mandates, including special rapporteurs, special representatives, independent experts and working groups (all known as "special procedures mandate holders"). Twenty-five thematic mandates are serviced by the OHCHR Special Procedures Division. A new mandate on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences was created in September 2007 and will be serviced by the Special Procedures Division once the mandate holder is selected in 2008. All country mandates are serviced by the Capacity Building and Field Operations Division and three thematic mandates are serviced by the Research and Right to Development Division. For more information, please visit

<http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/chr/special/index.htm>

