



Special Procedures of the Commission on Human Rights

Facts and figures on 2005 communications
(Urgent Appeals and Letters of Allegation)



Facts and figures on 2005 Special Procedures communications

One of the main activities* of most of the Special Procedures mandate-holders, also referred to as special rapporteurs, consists in taking action on individual cases. When a special rapporteur receives credible information on alleged human rights violations, s/he can send a communication transmitted through the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, to the Government concerned requesting information and comments on the allegation and that preventive or investigatory action be taken.

2005 communications

- Total communications sent: 1,049
- Joint communications: 53%
- Individuals covered: 2,545 -14% women-
- Communications sent to 137 countries
- Overall % of Government replies[†]: 46%

Source: Quick Response Database

Communications will usually take the form of either "urgent appeals" or "letters of allegation". Special rapporteurs may send joint communications when cases fall under the scope of more than one mandate.

"Urgent appeals" are used to bring to the attention of a Government information about a violation that is allegedly ongoing or about to occur. The intention is to ensure that the appropriate State authorities are

* The work of the special rapporteurs is usually organized around the following activities: submitting thematic reports to the Commission on Human Rights/Human Rights Council (and for some of them also to the General Assembly) at its annual session; undertaking country visits on which reports are submitted to the annual session of the Commission as addenda to the thematic reports; sending communications on alleged violations of human rights (urgent appeals and letters of allegation) to the Governments concerned; and issuing press releases on specific matters of grave concern.

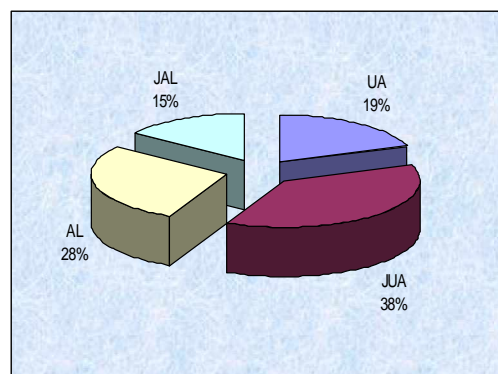
† Government replies received as of April 2006

informed as quickly as possible of the circumstances so that they can intervene to end or prevent a human rights violation.

"Letters of allegation" are a means of communicating information and request clarification about violations that are said to have already occurred. This kind of letter is used, for example, in cases where information reaches the special rapporteur after the human rights abuse has already been committed.

All communications sent and received are confidential and remain so until the end of the reporting cycle, when the Special Procedure mandate-holders submit a report to the Commission on Human Rights/Human Rights Council on communications sent and replies received from Governments on specific cases.

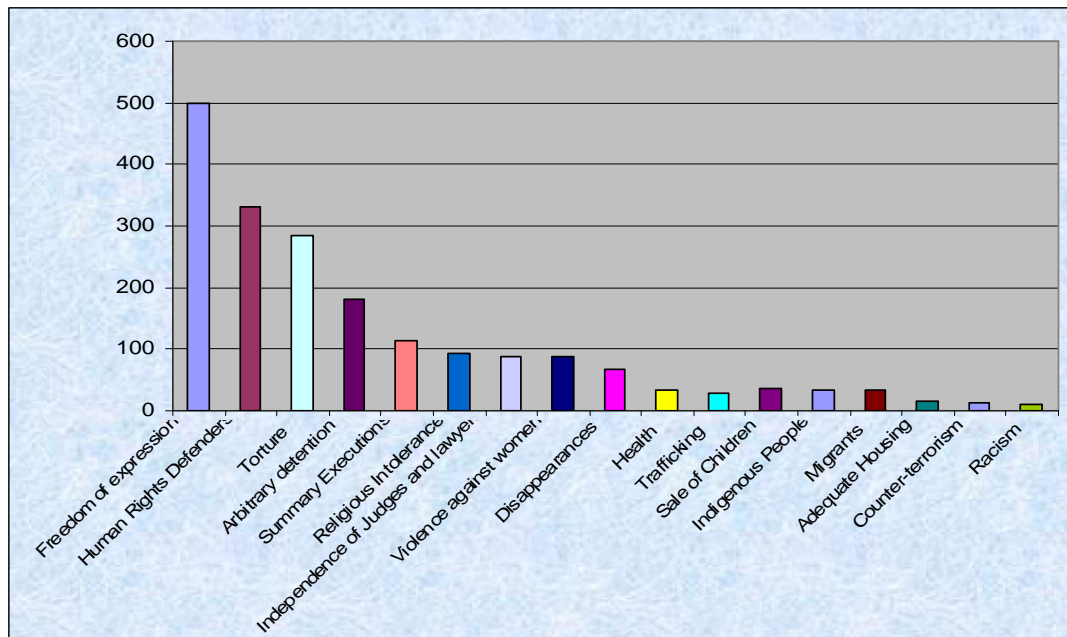
Types[‡] of communications sent in 2005



Source: Quick Response Database

‡ AL (Letter of Allegation)
JAL (Joint Letters of Allegation)
UA (Urgent Appeals)
JUA (Joint Urgent Appeals)

Thematic issues addressed in communications



Source: Quick Response Database

2005 facts and figures on some of the mandates

- The Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression and opinion sent both jointly with other mandates and individually: 310 urgent appeals to 84 countries and 179 letters of allegation of violations of the right to freedom of expression to 65 countries.
- The Special Rapporteur on torture sent both jointly with other mandates and individually: 190 urgent appeals on behalf of individuals who were at risk of torture or other forms of ill-treatment to 55 countries and 93 communications on torture allegations to 47 countries.
- The Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, arbitrary or summary executions sent both jointly with other mandates and individually: 55 urgent appeals on cases in which individuals were at risk of imminent extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions to 30 countries and 58 communications on alleged cases of violations of the right to life (upon which the SR takes action) to 35 countries.
- The Special Representative on human rights defenders sent both jointly with other mandates and individually 254 urgent appeals to 66 countries and 73 letters of allegation to 35 countries. Communications concerned reported violations against 799 human rights defenders and 316 NGOs in connection with their human rights work.
- The Working Group on arbitrary detention sent both jointly with other mandates and individually 178 urgent appeals to 53 countries and adopted 48 opinions concerning 115 individuals in 30 countries.
- Special Rapporteur on violence against women transmitted both jointly with other mandates and individually 35 urgent appeals to 20 countries and 52 letters of allegation to 24 countries.

Human rights stories

The following "human rights stories" are examples of cases upon which Special Procedures acted, engaging in a constructive dialogue with concerned Governments and sources, in order to clarify the situation; prevent the violation and protect the human rights of those involved.

In February 2005 a communication was sent jointly by the SR on summary and arbitrary executions and the SR^s on Torture concerning the situation of a boy who was reportedly severely tortured by the then Officer-in-Charge and other officers of a Police station when he was aged 14. Allegedly after he filed a complaint and the investigations started, the police officers have been constantly threatening him and his family.

The Government replied stating that the police officers responsible for committing torture have been indicted under the relevant national laws, namely the Convention Against Torture (CAT) Act.

In June 2005 the SRSG^{**} on human rights defenders sent a communication concerning the killing of two human rights activists in relation to their work in defence of workers rights.

The Government informed that two individuals responsible for the killing had been identified and arrested. Investigations were continuing to identify if others were involved.

In June 2005 the SR on Freedom of expression, the SRSG on Human Rights Defenders and the SR on Violence against sent a communication concerning the case of a women's human rights activist against whom defamation charges were brought in three separate cases for having publicly criticized family court judges.

The source informed that the High Criminal Court had dropped the case against women's rights activist saying it was brought against her illegally by the Public Prosecution.

In October 2005 the SRs on Migrants and Violence against women sent a joint communication concerning the alleged ill-treatment and abuse of a migrant domestic worker.

The Government replied that the Consular Office was informed of the events and visited her in hospital. Representative of the Consular Office and the work agency reported the case to the police. The victim was visited by two female police officers and a formal complaint was filed against the employer. The Consulate has given support to the victim to get in touch with her family and to make sure she is reimbursed for her past salaries and see that her employer is punished in accordance to the laws of country where the victim was working.

For more information on urgent appeals and letters of allegation and how to submit a case to the Special Procedures of the Commission on Human Rights please find more information at:

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

For more information concerning the different special rapporteurs please visit their web-sites which can be accessed at:

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

^s SR stands for Special Rapporteur

^{**} SRSG stands for Special Representative of the Secretary General