HUMAN RIGHTS IN HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY RESPONSE:

A contribution from the Special Procedures mechanisms

Further information

For additional information on the Special Procedures, please visit the website of the Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights:

http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/migration/rapporteur/

CONTACT

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OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
In humanitarian emergencies, human rights considerations are often neglected and their relevance questioned as an immediate priority in the planning and implementation of relief operations.

Nevertheless, with an increased recognition of the crucial role of human rights in ensuring long-term and durable solutions, measures to ensure the protection of the human rights of people affected by humanitarian emergencies are increasingly integrated in preparedness, relief, recovery and reconstruction efforts.

It is essential to address - from the very beginning of the emergency response - the specific needs of groups in vulnerable situations such as internally displaced persons, unaccompanied and separated children, persons with disabilities, the elderly as well as victims of transnational organized crime (human trafficking, sale of children) and contemporary forms of slavery and other marginalized groups in order to ensure that they fully enjoy their rights.

Also, it is crucial to include human rights principles and standards in early recovery, and reconstruction work to re-establish the livelihoods of the local population, ensure access without discrimination to food, water, sanitation and housing and to consult the local population on all decisions affecting them.

Recently, with the occurrence of major natural disasters, some of the special procedures of the Human Rights Council have drawn international attention to the human rights dimension of relief and rehabilitation efforts.

One year after the Asian Tsunami, several Special Rapporteurs recalled that human rights should be upheld and guide all rehabilitation and reconstructions efforts. More recently, following the Human Rights Council Special Session on Haiti held on 27 and 28 January 2010, the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council were called upon to collaborate with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights “to identify, in collaboration with the Haitian government, areas for cooperation and technical assistance with Haiti, on the basis of the expertise and the presence of the U.N. system on the ground”.

Drawing on lessons learned from Haiti, this side event will explore how mandate-holders support humanitarian emergency responses with a view to contributing to durable solutions grounded in human rights. This side event also aims to contribute to the debate on the relevance and added value of the work (and working methods) of Special Procedures in relation to relief, recovery and reconstruction.

**OBJECTIVES**

The side event aims, *inter alia*, at:

- Providing suggestions on how to create stronger institutional links between human rights mechanisms and humanitarian actors;

- Raising awareness about the specific protection needs of groups in vulnerable situations, that would need to be addressed in relief efforts as well as in the recovery and reconstruction planning efforts.

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1Relief and rehabilitation efforts remain problematic one year after asain tsunami, say UN experts, United Nations Press Release, 19 December 2005. Available from:  
2A/HRC/S13/2, para. 12.

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What are the Special Procedures Mechanisms?

The special procedures are experts commonly called special rapporteurs, special representatives, independent experts or working groups and whose mandates are provided by the Human Rights Council (formerly the Commission on Human Rights). Although the titles of the special procedures vary, there are no major differences in their general responsibilities and methods of work. The experts are entrusted with the mandate to examine, monitor, advise and publicly report on human rights situations in specific countries or on major human rights related themes worldwide. They submit thematic reports to the Human Rights Council (with some also reporting to the General Assembly); undertake country visits and report on these to the Human Rights Council; send communications on alleged violations of human rights (urgent appeals and letters of allegation) to the Governments; and issue press releases on specific matters of grave concern.

**List of Special Procedures Mechanisms**

**THEMATIC MANDATES**

- **Independent Experts on:**
  - minority issues
  - cultural rights
  - the issue of human rights obligations related to access to safe drinking water and sanitation
  - human rights and international solidarity

- **Working Groups on:**
  - arbitrary detention
  - enforced or involuntary disappearances
  - the use of mercenaries as a means of impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination
  - people of African descent

- **Special Representatives on:**
  - human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises
  - the human rights of internally displaced persons