

Recommendation #3

It is recommended that the UN consider human rights intelligence and human rights operations, as key contributors to operational and tactical decisions by all components of a UN field operation, including military peace-keepers, CIVPOL, and political negotiators.

There are very real strategic and tactical benefits to UN operation doing everything in their power to avoid such a spiral of violation and counter violation. Keeping a conflict within acceptable behavioural bounds not only means that the UN will probably not have to be there for as long as it otherwise might, but also that UN field staff will be less at risk over the medium and long term.

The increased ferocity of fighting and hate as human rights violations increase, lowers personal and group inhibitions against using violence by appearing to legitimize such violence. Even implicit signals from the UN that individuals and leaders are not accountable for human rights violations, will hasten the break down of that mix of moral, ethical, and legal norms of behaviour. In the face of human rights violations, apparent inaction and unconcern by the UN, particularly UN field personnel, will imply continued impunity.

An increased level and degree of violence threatens the security of all, including UN personnel. Those with the guns find it easier to ignore both local rule of law and the international 'rules' of civilized behaviour. UN peace-keeping forces and other operation members will no longer be seen as inherently immune, and they and their resources start to become targets.

On the other hand, one cannot ignore the chance that monitoring human rights violations and taking action on them will increase short term dangers to UN staff such as human rights monitors, military peace-keepers, or CIVPOL. Also, UN human rights action can complicate the day-to-day negotiations of the political arm of a field operation. However, it is highly debatable as to whether short term security threats and temporary suspension of negotiations, are not more than counterbalanced by enhanced security and political concessions and solutions over the long term.

However, more than intuition and faith is required in this regard, particularly for military commanders concerned about their troops or for political negotiators trying desperately to achieve even temporary cease-fires and peace. There is a need for research and analysis of success stories resulting from human rights having been given a major policy and tactical role. In an equal and opposite sense, there is a need to look at the failures where particular human rights action were not effective.

An interesting operational analogy is made by Human Rights Watch when it applies the term blackmail to the UN agreeing to ignore human rights to secure various operational goals such as allowing relief convoys to pass. Certainly CIVPOL and others should identify easily with the position that "the necessity of succumbing to such blackmail would be vastly diminished if the UN made clear as a matter of principal that it will not bargain away its duty to criticize publicly gross abuses of human rights -- much as the world now largely accepts that one does