

The Special Rapporteur (SR) referred cases to the government based on numerous reports he received indicating that members of the armed forces continue to violate the right to life of persons of Chakma ethnic origin. Some of the violations are alleged to have occurred within the context of police action during public demonstrations. Investigations into these cases were due to be completed in the latter half of 1996. The SR informed the government of his continuing interest in visiting Bangladesh and expressed his hope that the authorities will reconsider their refusal to extend him an invitation.

**Religious intolerance, Special Rapporteur on:** (E/CN.4/1997/91, para. 9, 17, 20, 25, 41)

The Special Rapporteur notes that he has received communications alleging violations of the religious freedom of both Christians and followers of Islam. He also makes brief reference to victims of religious extremism—primarily women, but also members of some religious minorities.

**Sale of children, child prostitution, child pornography, Special Rapporteur on:** (E/CN.4/1997/95, para. 39)

The report refers to the ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) and notes that in South Asia Bangladesh is one of the countries in which child trafficking is rife.

The Special Rapporteur's interim report to the General Assembly (A/52/482, para. 23) refers to information indicating that child abandonment, kidnapping, trafficking for labour bondage and children in prostitution continue to be widespread, with UNICEF estimating that there are about 10,000 child prostitutes in Bangladesh. Other information indicates that officials often ignore the existence of phenomena such as child prostitution or even profit from them.

**Torture, Special Rapporteur on:** (E/CN.4/1997/7, Section III; E/CN.4/1997/7/Add.1, paras. 17–19)

The Special Rapporteur (SR) transmitted 29 cases and one urgent action appeal to the government. Some of these arose from a police raid at Dhaka University in January 1996, which involved some 700 members of the police and Bangladesh Rifles, and resulted in injuries to approximately 200 students. The government claimed the raid was conducted to recover illegal arms; the students maintained it was an attack on student supporters of the opposition Awami League. Actions by police allegedly included beatings with batons and rifle butts, threats of death at gunpoint, pushing students out of windows, and wounding them in the legs. The SR urged the government to institute an independent inquiry into the incident. Other cases referred to incidents involving members of the army at various military camps in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). The reported forms of torture and ill-treatment included rape at gunpoint and arrest followed by severe beating. The report notes that, since the SR continued to receive allegations that the military was abusing people living in CHT, he was recommending that the government establish an effective and independent means to monitor the army's counter-insurgency methods in that area.

**Violence against women, Special Rapporteur on:** (E/CN.4/1997/47, Sections IV, IV-B and V-B; E/CN.4/1997/47/Add.4, para. 4)

In the section of her report on trafficking in women and forced prostitution, the Special Rapporteur (SR) draws attention to the fact that, in many societies, the recruitment of women for prostitution is often achieved with the complicity of the family. Among the countries mentioned in this context is Bangladesh, where some of the poor may sell their daughters and, often unknowingly, force the girls to work in debt bondage. According to the SR, this subversion of the family is increasing at an alarming rate as poor families often have very few options for survival. The use of marriage as a method of recruitment for trafficking is also mentioned in, for example, the trafficking of women to Pakistan. The report notes that, in such cases, Bengali traffickers or their networking partners are required to marry their victims in order to protect themselves from being prosecuted under Islamic Hudood laws. Some 2,500 Bangladeshi women and children are currently being detained in Pakistan under these laws, charged with illegal entry and for having "illegitimate sex". The report expresses particular concern that trafficked women report high levels of state participation and complicity, for example, by the Bangladesh police and border officials. The report also cites information about migrant women prostitutes in Bangladesh who were compelled to offer "free sexual services" to police and immigration officials who took advantage of the women's undocumented status, language deficiencies and lack of legal literacy. The report recalls that in 1982 the government banned "solo foreign labour migration" by Bangladeshi women out of a concern for the "low moral standards" of domestic workers. According to the SR, the resulting gap was quickly filled by agents who arranged sham marriages to Bangladeshi men, who then escorted the women out of the country. (At the request of Kuwait the ban was lifted in 1991.)

Finally, the SR referred the government to the case of the abduction and disappearance of the Organizing Secretary of the Hill Women's Federation (see above), noting that the incident could potentially involve violations of the right to liberty and security of person and due process of the law—articles 4 and 9 (1) of the ICCPR and article 1 of the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

#### *Mechanisms and Reports of the Sub-Commission*

**Contemporary forms of slavery, Working Group on:** (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1997/13, para. 32)

The Sub-Commission's Working Group on contemporary forms of slavery has decided that the question of migrant workers, particularly female domestic workers, will be a priority topic at its next session; within the context of Southern Asia, the situation in or related to Bangladesh will be considered.

#### *Other Reports*

**Periodic and genuine elections, Report of the S-G to the GA:** (A/52/474, Annex)

The report of the Secretary-General notes that the UNDP sent a Chief Technical Advisor to Bangladesh to assist electoral authorities prior to the June 1996 elections. The expert remained in the country after the elections to assist in preparation of a UNDP project document on recommendations for future democratic elections.