

tural adjustment programmes and the high rate of unemployment in metropolitan and rural areas.

Areas of concern identified by the Committee included, *inter alia*: that neither the Constitution nor any other legislative provision makes clear or specific reference to the elimination of discrimination against women; implementation of only a few of the many programmes and projects to prevent discrimination against women; a discrepancy between legal provisions guaranteeing equal pay for equal work and the reality; that women continue to experience discrimination in the workplace and have no effective protection with respect to maternity leave and breast-feeding breaks; that women account for only 28 per cent of the economically active population; the 53 per cent illiteracy rate among women, the majority of whom are indigenous women; and that gender stereotypes persist, resulting in a large number of adolescent girls terminating their education at an early age to undertake domestic work.

The Committee expressed concern about: the reproductive health of women and an apparent setback in the treatment of the right to abortion in cases where the pregnancy is the result of rape; and the discriminatory treatment received by women engaged in prostitution, noting the government statement that a prostitute would find it difficult to seek legal redress in the case of rape since the Code still requires the victim in that situation to be "chaste and virtuous" in order to be able to institute legal proceedings.

The Committee recommended that the government, *inter alia*:

- ♦ revise all legislation to provide expressly for the elimination of discrimination against women;
- ♦ mount a major campaign to disseminate the principles of the Convention and provide education and training in them, especially among judges, lawyers, journalists and teachers, and Panamanian women;
- ♦ include, in the next report, gender-specific statistics so as to indicate the results of the various programmes proposed for the benefit of women;
- ♦ initiate a campaign to guarantee equality of treatment in the workplace; implement vigorously legislation on the right to maternity leave and breast-feeding;
- ♦ mount an aggressive educational campaign as a matter of urgency, designed to ensure that all girls and women have a full education and to reduce sharply the number of adolescent girls leaving school early to work in unskilled employment or to marry;
- ♦ take multi-disciplinary measures to provide special care to the victims of sexual violence and include legal and psychological assistance for the victim; grant to women whose pregnancies are a result of rape the opportunity to seek termination of such pregnancies;
- ♦ undertake training programmes for women political leaders and encourage large scale participation of women in decision-making; and

- ♦ include, in the next report, specific information on results obtained from the various anti-discrimination programmes and projects, as well as statistics disaggregated by sex so as to enable an evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures taken; and make a serious effort to amend relevant legislation and to eliminate entrenched stereotypes.

### Committee against Torture

Panama's third periodic report (CAT/C/34/Add.9, May 1997) was considered by the Committee at its May 1998 session. The report prepared by the government covers the period from 21 September 1992 to 19 May 1997 and contains information on, *inter alia*: relevant provisions in the Penal and Judicial Codes; constitutional protections related to human rights and due process; extradition, drug-related offences and laws; the Criminal Investigation Service and regulations related to the performance of duties by law enforcement personnel; conditions in prison institutions and relevant monitoring mechanisms; remedy and compensation; the probative force of evidence; and the post of Public Defender (legal aid). Annex I of the report provides examples from case law on the issues of torture and/or ill treatment.

The Committee's concluding observations and comments (CAT/C/PAN) noted that no recent allegations of torture had been received. The Committee welcomed the legislative measures aimed at the prevention of torture and ill treatment, the limit of 24 hours placed on detention before a person is brought before a judge, and the human rights component in police training and for personnel working in the prison system. The principal subjects of concern included the absence in law of a maximum period of preventive detention, the high number of persons being held in pre-trial detention, and the incidence of refoulement to neighbouring countries where the risk of human rights violations persists.

The Committee recommended that the government, *inter alia*, adopt all measures to ensure the safety of refugees from neighbouring countries and ensure that repatriation does not place any person at risk of human rights violations upon return.

## THEMATIC REPORTS

### Mechanisms of the Commission on Human Rights

**Extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary execution, Special Rapporteur on:** (E/CN.4/1998/68, paras. 12, 14, 39, 40, 44, 45, 64; E/CN.4/1998/68/Add.1, paras. 311–312)

An urgent appeal was transmitted to the government on behalf of approximately 400 peasants and their families, most of them from Unguía, Department of Chocó, Urubá, Colombia, who had fled to Panama during the fighting between guerrillas and paramilitary groups. Information indicated that the Panamanian authorities had begun the process of deporting them to Colombia. The Special Rapporteur asked the government to take the necessary steps