

Racism and racial discrimination, Special Rapporteur on: (E/CN.4/1998/79, paras. 74, 99–103)

The report refers to information provided by the government which: covers the historical background to the neglect suffered by the indigenous peoples of Guatemala until the Accord on the Rights and Identity of Indigenous People was signed; notes the main features of the Accord, including action to end the discrimination that still exists, legally and in fact; refers to commitments by the government to eliminate such behaviour; and, reports on the implementation of the Accord, which was acknowledged to be very limited because of the recentness of the Accord and the size of the tasks it entails.

Torture, Special Rapporteur on: (E/CN.4/1998/38, para. 106; E/CN.4/1998/38/Add.1, paras. 144–147)

The Special Rapporteur (SR) requested information on investigations that the government stated were conducted in cases transmitted in July 1996. New cases were also transmitted involving, *inter alia*: a 17-year-old boy who was living on the street and reportedly detained in March 1997 by two uniformed police officers who asked for his identity papers, beat him when he did not produce them, and then left, noting that the Office for Professional Responsibility of the National Police was said to have initiated an investigation; three workers at the Mi Kwang S.A. factory in Cantón Najarito, Villa Nueva, Department of Guatemala, who were reportedly detained in March 1997 by a group of armed men dressed in civilian clothes, taken to the police station, and interrogated for more than an hour about alleged theft at the factory, noting that they were subjected to ill treatment and, before being released, allegedly warned not to talk about what had happened; and an individual working on a human rights project co-sponsored by the European Union, who was reportedly detained in Quetzaltenango in April 1996 by National Police officers, shackled, kicked and beaten, driven from one police station to another and later taken to a hospital and kept there for three days because of his physical state and loss of blood, noting that when the person made a statement to the judge in hospital he felt intimidated by the presence of two police officers who were watching him, and was later released.

Violence against women, Special Rapporteur on: (E/CN.4/1998/54, Section I.A)

In the section summarizing cases of violence against women in times of armed conflict, the report refers to a woman trade union leader who: received death threats, was abducted, was raped, and suffered other physical injuries perpetrated by men who were heavily armed, and received a letter saying “whore we give you 48 hours to leave the country”. The report notes that despite the signing of the Peace Agreement between the government and the URNG, isolated incidents of violence against women still persist.

Mechanisms and Reports of the Sub-Commission

Systematic rape, sexual slavery and slavery-like practices during armed conflict, Special Rapporteur on: (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1998/13, para. 30)

Noting that the term “sexual” is used as an adjective to describe a form of slavery and not to denote a separate crime, the report refers to a study on the impact of armed conflict on children (A/51/306, para. 45) in which reference is made to the use, by rebel groups, of girls to prepare food, attend to the wounded, wash clothes and provide sexual services.

Traditional practices affecting the health of women and girls, Special Rapporteur on: (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1998/11, paras. 9–41)

The report refers to information provided by the government related to the implementation of the Plan of Action for the Elimination of Harmful Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children. The strategy was developed by the Presidential Commission for coordination of the Executive’s policy on human rights (COPREDEH). With regard to preference given to male children, a proposed amendment to article 253 of the Civil Code is noted. The amendment, *inter alia*, would make it an obligation for the father and mother to ensure that their daughters or sons are brought up so that each assumes a fair share of the household tasks and family decision-making, and participates in their community’s affairs, and in the political, cultural, economic and social life of their country.

The government also provided information on a draft national policy for the advancement and development of Guatemalan women – the Equality of Opportunity Plan 1997–2001. Other steps taken include: a proposal to amend the law on the minimum age for marriage, ensuring the same age for women and men; creation by the Minister of Health of a programme entitled “Women, health and development”; non-governmental education activities concerned with the sexual education of women and men, family planning and the prevention of venereal diseases, and provision of low-cost medical services that are accessible to people with a low economic level of living; organization of training programmes for traditional midwives in areas lacking welfare centres; creation of the Indigenous Development Fund which executes and finances economic, social and cultural programmes and projects that include the training of traditional midwives and the cultivation of medicinal plants; activities aimed at ensuring access to health services for migrant workers and their families, and particularly for migrant women; provision of means of contraception to women; dissemination of messages concerning reproductive health, in the principle languages of the region, in coordination with community leaders, couples and religious authorities; adoption of the “Law to prevent, sanction and eradicate violence in the family”; the holding of a Women’s Week every year in March, composed of a number of cul-