

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

The report refers to a case in which the High Court addressed the issues of rape and gender-specific violence as a basis for asylum for citizens of Sierra Leone. The report notes that, although the case was dismissed, one of the Justices stated that if there was systematic rape as part of an envisaged policy of an organization or group within a country — that included rape as one of its activities — it would be a reason under the Convention on the Status of Refugees for granting asylum.

Mechanisms and Reports of the Sub-Commission

Traditional practices affecting the health of women and girls, Special Rapporteur on: (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1998/11, paras. 42–54)

The report refers to information provided by the government related to, *inter alia*: action taken by the Department of Health in favour of the black and ethnic minorities living in the U.K.; steps taken to improve the access of women and children, including girls, to health care; programmes directed towards the needs of women belonging to ethnic minorities, for example, a study to gain understanding of certain health problems experienced by Asian women, and to find solutions; inclusion of the questions of suicide and mental health in programmes to achieve the goal of “a healthier nation”; a large-scale survey of the current infant feeding practices in the Asian community which revealed a number of problems in the methods of infant feeding; and financial support by the Department of Health for a large number of black and ethnic minority community organizations, some of which are set up for women to address problems relating to domestic violence, suicides and children.

Concerning the issue of female genital mutilation (FGM), the government indicated that in 1980 it was discovered that female circumcision was practised in the U.K. by migrants and refugees from African countries. In 1985, legislation was enacted prohibiting female circumcision — any person who contributes in any way to the carrying out of this practice, or who has agreed to be its victim, has committed a punishable offence under this law. The government also referred to the Children’s Act of 1989 that entitled local authorities to intervene, if necessary, to prevent causing harm to children. The law does not allow parents to have their girl child undergo excision outside the U.K. unless this is with the consent of the courts. Since 1991, specific information on FGM has been provided to the local authorities, police, schools, the health authorities, the medical corps and a large number of organizations concerned with child welfare. The Department of Health has worked closely with the Foundation for Research on Women’s Health and Development, to identify a model for prevention of FGM.

The government also provided information on the Department for International Development and the policy adopted regarding traditional practices affecting the health of women and girls, including FGM. This

Department’s policy is aimed at persuading the countries where FGM takes place to adopt measures that will reduce it and eventually eliminate it. Financial and technical assistance are given to governments that have developed national programmes for the elimination of FGM, and support is provided to women wishing to develop awareness among the populations concerned.



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Date of admission to UN: 24 October 1945.

TREATIES: RATIFICATIONS AND RESERVATIONS

Land and People: The U.S. has submitted a core document (HRI/CORE/1/Add.49) for use by the treaty bodies. The report prepared by the government contains demographic and statistical data as well as commentary on the republican form of government, the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government and state governments. The report also includes information on the system of government in the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, Guam, and the Northern Marianas and notes that other U.S. dependencies include Wake Island (and Wilkes and Peale), Midway Islands, and various uninhabited atolls and islands in the Pacific region.

The section on the general framework for the protection of human rights includes information on the federal and state Constitutions, statutes, derogation and states of emergency, responsible authorities and remedies. In the United States, duly ratified treaties are the supreme law and equal with enacted federal statutes. Provisions of treaties may be displaced by federal law that is subsequently adopted to the extent of any inconsistency between the two.

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Signed: 5 October 1977.

Civil and Political Rights

Signed: 5 October 1977; ratified: 8 June 1992.

The U.S.’s second periodic report was due 7 September 1998.

Reservations and Declarations: Articles 7 and 20; 1 of article 15; paragraphs 2 (a) and (b) and 3 and of article 10; paragraph 4 of article 14; paragraph 1 of article 4; paragraph 5 of article 9; paragraphs 3 (b) and (d) and 6 of article 14; paragraph 3 of article 19; article 47; declaration under article 41.

Racial Discrimination

Signed: 28 September 1966; ratified: 21 October 1994.

The U.S.’s initial and second periodic reports were due 20 November 1995 and 1997 respectively.