

Violations, unless addressed early and openly, also start to take on mythic qualities. This is where independent and unbiased monitoring by an HRO could play a particularly important role. The ability to discern the truth rapidly disappears as time passes, and the saying that truth is the first casualty of war is nowhere more evident than in virulent civil wars. The former Special Rapporteur on the Former Yugoslavia, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, stated forcefully that "there is ... a great deal of disinformation, rumour and propaganda which, on investigation by objective international monitors, has been disproven. The dissemination of such falsehoods only serves to dehumanize the enemy, deepen the persecution complex, fuel the flames of ethnic hatred and, ultimately, prolong the conflict."<sup>12</sup>

A better understanding of the "continuum between human rights abuses and increasing violence which, unless broken, in many cases leads to armed conflict,"<sup>13</sup> will lead to a better understanding of the operational imperative for UN operations to take human rights seriously. The operational imperative for UN field operations to deal with human rights has commensurate operational pay-offs including increased effectiveness in almost all aspects of a UN field operation, including strategic and tactical peace-keeping operations.

## **2.2 Strategic and Tactical Benefits**

In a perfect world, the goal of protecting the innocent and the vulnerable would provide sufficient grounds for UN field operations to protect human rights. None of us should be so sanguine as to expect an argument to win many debates in the Security Council or the General Assembly. It is often more persuasive to argue the strategic and tactical benefits that accrue to a UN operation by protecting the rights of others.

Despite the increased recognition of human rights causality and that "human rights abuses often play a critical part in fuelling armed conflict and aggravating humanitarian crises, they have been given a low priority by officials who oversee UN field operations. ...The cost of this inattention to human rights is anything but academic. It can be measured in damaged credibility, operational missteps and impaired effectiveness."<sup>14</sup>

Determining the true cause of any particular conflict has important strategic and tactical implications. If the UN does not know what is driving the conflict, then it seems fairly likely that the ways in which the UN decides to address it will be less than effective. In situations where human rights are not only a causal factor, but a key causal factor, a failure to be informed of past and present human rights violations will fatally flaw any UN response. This is not to imply that even a full understanding the human rights issues is sufficient to understand the underlying causes of any conflict. Human rights is but one factor, albeit a critical factor.

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<sup>12</sup> SR report to the GA, A/47/666, 17 Nov 1994, para 5.

<sup>13</sup> p.1, Rachel Brett, Discussion paper on *Ways of Improving the Implementation of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law*, Geneva Quaker Office, 10 January 1994.

<sup>14</sup> p.1 *Human Rights and UN Field Operations*, Human Rights Watch, op.cit.