

summarizes information on the violations of women's rights as recorded in the reports of various human rights mechanisms. Within the context of heightened risk faced by women in situations of armed conflict, the report notes that 1996 report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation in Burundi referred to abuses committed by soldiers in the commune of Gasorwe, particularly in the Kizi sector, leading to the death of approximately 200 civilians, most of whom were women and children. There is also a reference to military operations where the population of Kamenge and Kinama was hunted down and more than a hundred people, again mostly women and children, were slaughtered.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

The report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women (E/1997/64, para. 47) referred to resolutions adopted at the 1997 of the Commission on Human Rights and noted that the resolution on Burundi; urged all parties to the conflict to end the cycle of violence and killing notably, the indiscriminate violence against refugees, women, children and the elderly — and requested the Special Rapporteur to apply a gender perspective in his work.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Report of CHR Special Rapporteur: (A/52/505)

The report, covering the period from 15 April to 31 August 1997, is based on recent developments in the crisis in Burundi and, in its introduction, cites media accounts stating that the government had asked the representative of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to end the mandate. The report notes that the mandate was established by the Commission on Human Rights and remains the prerogative of the Chairman of the Commission.

A review of the overall situation in Burundi since mid-April 1997 confirmed the trend described in the addendum to the main report to the 1997 session of the Commission. Specific elements in the general situation were identified as, *inter alia*: the fact that the government had had to meet challenges on various fronts, including by relying on the armed forces, negotiating with representatives of the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD), and coming to terms with the demands of neighbouring countries such as Rwanda and Uganda; a new impetus to political life, although not a restoration of democracy, as a result of the partial lifting, in April 1997, of some of the sanctions against Burundi; the launch by the government of a wide-ranging awareness and information campaign, via television, to try to convince various sectors of civil society throughout the country of the validity of the negotiations undertaken with the CNDD and of the need to pursue them; focus in the information campaign on three main elements — pursuit of the national debate within the country with a view to the rapprochement and reconciliation of the people of Burundi, organization of peace conferences involving nationals of Burundi from both inside and outside the country, and early initiation of negotiations open to all parties concerned with the Burundi conflict in the

Great Lakes region; in May, the second hearing before the Supreme Court of Bujumbura, in the trial of the 53 military officers accused of having participated in the failed coup d'état of 1993; the fact that the willingness of the government to hold peace negotiations with all parties to the conflict, including armed factions, and the talks subsequently held, set off a wave of discontent and protest, especially among the students of the University of Burundi in Bujumbura; clashes between rebels and soldiers in several provinces resulting in civilian deaths; relocation of tens of thousands of people to regroupment camps where they were cut off from all humanitarian assistance and exposed to cholera, malaria and dysentery epidemics; in June, conclusion of the parliamentary session of the National Assembly without having been able to pass a single law for lack of a quorum; an apparent lessening of intensity in the confrontations between soldiers and rebel groups in June 1997 in some areas; an announcement by the government that the regroupment camps would be dismantled and the launch by the authorities of an initial operation to return displaced populations to their *collines* of origin; in July 1997, the reopening of the frontier between Burundi and the DR Congo as a first step in normalizing relations between the two countries; the fact that the country's main political forces, FRODEBU and UPRONA, were still torn by internal divisions, while the extremist groups at both ends of the political spectrum were extending their influence; the fact that the same kinds of internal divisions existed among rebel groups, as demonstrated by frequent confrontations between members of the Front pour la défense de la démocratie (FDD), the armed wing of CNDD, and the Parti pour la libération du peuple hutu (PALIPEHUTU); in July, the execution by hanging of six people sentenced to death following trials in which basic rights — such as that of the presence of a lawyer — had not been respected; serious breaches of the right of prisoners to physical integrity; and, reports of enforced disappearances.

Commentary in the report on the effects of the war and the embargo notes: some 600,000 Burundians were displaced; more than 100,000 displaced children were receiving no assistance whatsoever; the vast majority of these populations do not have the minimum foodstuffs to avoid malnutrition and diseases; in some areas the lack of security has forced many undernourished people to turn to public health outlets for medical assistance and food aid, often after hiding for months in the forests; the average cost of foodstuffs has risen by 40 to 50 per cent as compared to the beginning of 1996; the most serious typhus epidemic to hit Burundi since the Second World War has been detected; the most tangible effect of the sanctions can be seen in the substantial overall increase in the prices of goods and services, which vary from one region of the country to another; the sanctions have affected all sectors, including education, agriculture, light industry and health services; the country's balance of payments has shown an increase of about 20 per cent in the deficit, although the government continued to pay its foreign debt servicing, thus reducing the country's hard currency reserves.

The section of the report dealing with the human rights situation provides some detail on: violations of the right to life and physical integrity related to massacres, looting, arson,