

Chapter 10 Doctrine, Operational Procedures, Lessons Learned Mechanism

Doctrine combined with comprehensive written operational procedures, both of which are regularly debated and revised in light of lessons learned in the field, are critically important in efforts to improve UN operational effectiveness and accountability. UN human rights operations have evolved without such clarity of purpose, and it is important that the UN set about to resolve these gaps.

In a hierarchical sense, doctrine or policy ranks first, with operations procedures spelling out the detailed operational application of that doctrine. In reality, individuals evolving new roles and procedures in the field, create the need for doctrine to unify and 'legitimize' such operational practices. What evolves is more of a symbiotic relationship where field experiences inform doctrine which in turn guides the codification or revision of set operational procedures. Lessons learned from past operations, if acted upon, provide a critical and ongoing link to reality for both doctrine and operational procedures.

This chapter will examine all three, proceeding from doctrine through operational procedures, to lessons learned mechanism.

10.1 Doctrine

There is little official doctrine or set of principles on the role of human rights in UN field operations. This is not surprising inasmuch as a number of UN member states would strongly resist attempts in either the Security Council or the General Assembly to clarify the principles underlying the UN's human rights duties and roles in UN field operations.

In part this UN resistance is driven by some member states whose opposition to human rights is deep-seated and unlikely to change in the near future. On the other hand, there is a sizable minority of states whose reticence stems more from a fear of unknown implications rather than any concrete concerns. Often the best way of resolving such fears is through continued gradual and ad hoc, yet concrete, operationalization of international human rights norms in a variety of UN operations.