

But the Centre was well aware of what was happening in Rwanda, so why was the Centre itself so quiet? It appears that prior to May 4th 1994 and certainly prior to April 6th, the Centre like the HCHR, did not play an active role in informing decision makers involved with the establishment and evolution of UN Rwandan peacekeeping or humanitarian operations .

The Centre did of course have access to the human rights intelligence that had been gathered by various rapporteurs and other UN human rights bodies/mechanisms. For many of them, the Centre is actually integral to their functioning and progress. UN treaty bodies and rapporteurs such as Ndaiye on disappearances, who attempted human rights early warning on Rwanda, were largely ignored by the Centre and others in the UN human rights system.

In this regard it is worth digressing inasmuch as rapporteurs receive little support from the Commission or the Centre. Greater capacity on their part might well have enabled them to more effectively transmit their warnings. In this regard, a recent promising development is that Centre staff are now allowed to travel with rapporteurs on missions to aid them in their investigations.

This can only serve to facilitate the job of rapporteurs and create a greater awareness on the part of the Centre and the HCHR as to their findings and what practical implications they hold for the Centre.

Similarly, rapporteurs who are volunteers, only receive expenses if they are in Geneva or on mission. The rest of the time in addition for not being paid for their time, even work-related expenses such as telephone/fax costs or photocopying are not reimbursed. This forces them to rely on personal or organizational support (oft times their own personal resources). Such an imposition is particularly onerous for Southern candidates for such positions as they invariably cannot accept such burdens and often have to refuse to serve.

RECOMMENDATION

Canada should encourage the UN Centre for Human Rights to provide greater support for rapporteurs including the provision of mission staff and logistical support, and the UN should fully reimburse rapporteurs for reasonable expenditures directly resulting from them carrying out their tasks, such as photocopying, postage, and telephone/fax costs.

Apart from facilitating the functioning of rapporteurs and similar individuals, there is a need to look at how they can and should react amongst themselves and with the UN human rights centre. This type of debate has been proceeding for several years in an ad hoc way between treaty bodies⁹, and their recommendations could largely be applied to rapporteurs and others.

RECOMMENDATION

Canada should encourage the holding of annual meetings of special rapporteurs and individuals from other relevant UN human rights mechanisms to hear from them on how their skills can be better used in an enhanced human rights information gathering regime.

⁹ See the report of the fifth meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies that took place 19-23 September 1994