

(except salons located in multi-floor buildings), and the director or the owner of the salon shall comply with the required health terms and safety measures; men may own a women's hairdressing salon in accordance with the conditions and regulations issued by the authorized locality but the salon must be administered by a woman; owners and directors of salons shall not employ any woman to work at the salon, except after getting assurances that she is of good conduct; the woman hired shall be technically qualified and hold a certificate from an authorized body; the age of the woman director of the salon shall not be less than 35 years; the licensing authority and public order police may enter hairdressing salons at any time for the purpose of inspection of the application of the provisions of the Act, provided that the inspection is made by women. Further, the Act states that any business whose dealing requires citizens to stand in queues shall separate men and women and the public shall comply with this practice; and anyone violating provisions of the Act shall be punished by one or more of the following punishments — imprisonment of not more than five years and/or a fine, flogging, confiscation of items used in the violation, or withdrawal of licence or permission or closing the business for a period of not more than two years.

The report recalls that the Human Rights Committee, following consideration of Sudan's second periodic report in 1997, stated that flogging, amputation and stoning, which are recognized as penalties for criminal offences, are not compatible with the ICCPR and must be abolished. The Committee also expressed concern about the practice of female genital mutilation and stated that it constituted cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Further, the Committee considered that such practices as customary arrangements through which a woman's consent to marriage is mediated by a guardian, and that recourse has to be made to the courts to override any prohibition within the family on a woman's choice of a husband, are incompatible with several articles of the International Covenant and should be repealed. The Committee also recommended that a minimum age for marriage be established in law. And finally, the Committee expressed concern at official enforcement of strict dress requirements for women in public places — under the guise of public order and morality, the inhuman punishment imposed for breaches of these requirements, and the restrictions on the liberty of women under the Personal Status of Muslims Act, 1992.

The report also summarizes an incident which took place in December 1997, in front of the UNDP office in Khartoum. The incident involved actions by the security forces and other uniformed individuals who disrupted a peaceful demonstration by a group of approximately 50 women who wanted to transmit, through the UNDP office, a letter of protest to the UN Secretary-General against the forced conscription of their sons and brothers into the Popular Defence Forces. The report states that according to information received from UNDP Khartoum, the police physically dispersed the group with force by aggressively beating the women, including elderly women, with sticks and rubber hoses and drag-

ging them into police cars. Reports later indicated that 36 women received 10 lashes each following a summary trial at which they were convicted for public order offences and one woman received 40 lashes, the additional lashes were allegedly inflicted because she was wearing trousers and a T-shirt.

On the issue of improving the flow of information between the government, the OHCHR and the SR and the independent verification of reports on the human rights situation the report notes that there should be: a direct and accelerated exchange of information between the Consultative Council on Human Rights and the OHCHR and the SR; a more timely transmission of replies to the communications received by the Consultative Council from the SR and the OHCHR, including provision of legal documents, statistics and other relevant documentation; the creation of the conditions necessary for impartial, professional, rapid and objective verification of the information and reports received regarding cases of violations of human rights; regular contacts between representatives of the OHCHR and the Consultative Council; and improved coordination between the OHCHR and other UN organs and agencies addressing, within their mandates, specific aspects of the situation of human rights in the Sudan.

Two approaches are offered as the means to achieve a better flow of information and verification: one, the establishment of periodic direct contacts in Khartoum between representatives of the OHCHR and the government in order to assess the possibilities for, and at a later stage to ensure the instant communication and verification of, any information or reports regarding the situation of human rights in the Sudan; and two, the placement, without delay and in cooperation with all parties concerned, of human rights field officers to monitor the situation of human rights in the Sudan with regard to the conflict zones, in the locations, under the modalities, and with the objectives suggested by the SR in earlier reports.

The section of the report describing conclusions notes that in April 1997 the Consultative Council for Human Rights established subcommittees to deal with human rights violations and abuses in a number of areas, including: detentions without trial, arrests, torture, lack of due process of law, religious persecution, forced displacement and bombardments, extrajudicial killings, access for relief organizations, humanitarian law, slavery, disappearances, the rights of women, the rights of the child, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, and the report of the Juba Commission.

Referring to the April 1997 Khartoum Agreement on fundamental human rights and freedoms, the report states that implementation of this Agreement, as well as constitutional decree No. 14/1997, is key to the success of the peace process and essential to achieve a significant improvement in the human rights situation. Concluding comments are also provided on the reports of the Special Committee on Allegations of Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and Reported Cases of Slavery and the Juba Report.