

between four days and one week before inhabitants were allowed to remove them; an assault on the Iranian Consulate causing the deaths of 10 Iranian diplomats and a correspondent of the IRNA press agency; messages broadcast by Taliban forces over loudspeakers and radio announcing that the population should inform the authorities of any Hazaras and weapons that were hidden; systematic house-to-house searches, resulting in the theft of money and other valuables; imprisonment of one person who was trying to prevent the arrest of a Hazara civilian; numerous summary executions; summary burial of victims in mass graves; the rape and abduction of a number of women and girls, although this form of violence against women was reported not to be widespread; confiscation of homes owned by Hazaras who had fled, were arrested or had been killed; arrest of all male Hazaras who had not been killed; and torture and ill treatment against male Hazaras, including being placed in metal containers that were left in the sun, causing suffocation in most cases.

The memorandum also included information on: summary detention of persons leaving Shia mosques; use of the loudspeakers of all mosques to call on the surviving members of the Shia Moslem community to convert to Sunni Islam and to attend prayers five times a day for their own sake, "unless they wanted to be treated like dogs and shot on the spot"; an apparent statement by the Governor of Mazar-I-Sharif (appointed by the Taliban) that Hazaras should stop following the religion of the Islamic Republic of Iran and become true Moslems; the use of the term "Iranians" to depict all Shia Moslems and not Iranian nationals; an apparent fatwa issued by the Taliban leader, stating that the killing of Shia Moslems is not a crime because they are kafirs (non-believers); segregation of prisoners according to their ethnic group, with Hazaras placed in the "political" section; establishment of numerous checkpoints to prevent people from leaving the city, with vehicles and luggage searched thoroughly; blockage of roads leading to Tajikistan; aerial bombing and rocket attacks against persons who had fled the city and reached the desert to the south of Mazar-I-Sharif; the looting of property belonging to Hazaras and distribution of their land to Pashtuns; and the looting of the premises of international aid agencies and confiscation of radio equipment and vehicles.

Commentary on events in Bamyan province and surrounding areas noted, *inter alia*: massacres of villagers, with men, women and male children shot, and baby girls kicked or beaten to death; and the internal displacement of some 5,000 families, with some 2,000 believed to be lacking food.

The short reply of the Taliban to the memorandum was issued by the Embassy of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan at Islamabad. The SR's memorandum was described as "imaginary", derived from anecdotes or baseless reports of the press or on the false stories of opponents. The reply did acknowledge the truth of reports of the killing and detention of military personnel, the collection of arms and the temporary evacuation of

some places, and criticized the SR for not having considered various crimes by "opponents of the Islamic Emirate".

In the section of the report outlining the conclusions, the SR stated that "silence cannot be the strategy of the international community" and the scale of violations in Afghanistan and suffering of the civilian population warrants urgent attention.

The SR called on all sides to put an immediate end to the armed conflict, to show restraint and respect for human rights, to refrain forthwith from any acts that may constitute violations of human rights of both the civilian population and combatants, including those based on ethnicity and religion. The SR recommended or urged, *inter alia*:

- ♦ release of all non-combatants detained by any party; the International Committee of the Red Cross be given unhindered access to all prisoners and detainees;
- ♦ restrictions be lifted that are currently placed on women and girls by the Taliban authorities;
- ♦ the international community to remain vigilant about respect for human rights in Afghanistan and the UN undertake to monitor more closely and systematically to report on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan through an enhanced human rights presence in the field; the UN to create greater awareness and knowledge about international human rights, including gender awareness, by establishing a human rights advisory capacity in the field;
- ♦ the UN to investigate the grave violations of human rights which have taken place in Afghanistan, including reports of mass killings;
- ♦ aerial photographs be taken of reported sites of mass graves in Afghanistan;
- ♦ all parties in the conflict cooperate fully with a neutral and objective investigation into violations of human rights; and
- ♦ those found responsible for the grave human rights violations committed in 1997 and 1998 be brought to justice in keeping with international standards of fair trial.

Resolution of the General Assembly

The 1998 session of the General Assembly adopted by consensus a resolution on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan (A/C.3/53/L.63). The GA, *inter alia*: recalled that Afghanistan is a party to the International Covenants on Human Rights and other instruments; strongly condemned the mass killings and systematic human rights violations against civilians and prisoners of war; noted with alarm the escalating cycle of mass killings; expressed its gravest concern at numerous reports of mass killings in the areas of Mazar-i-Sharif and Bamian by the Taliban; condemned the widespread vio-