

that do occur and works with governments to remedy such problems.

The UNHCHR also serves as Co-ordinator for the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (1995–2004), which was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly to highlight the importance of improving the situation of Indigenous peoples worldwide. A major objective of the International Decade is adoption of a declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples. Another UN initiative is the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, created by the Commission on Human Rights in 1982 to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Indigenous peoples; this meets annually in Geneva.

The Commission on Human Rights is the only body that, when breaches of basic rights are brought to its attention, examines them in public sessions. Through its Special Rapporteurs, the Commission also studies the situation in all member states and monitors more closely the conditions in certain of them.

Canada has played a leading role in the development and adoption of most of these conventions and instruments. Indeed, the protection and promotion of human rights has long been a basic and integral component of Canadian foreign policy. Canada feels that multilateral bodies, such as the United Nations, are often the most effective instruments for influencing governments and advancing the cause of respect for human rights in the world.

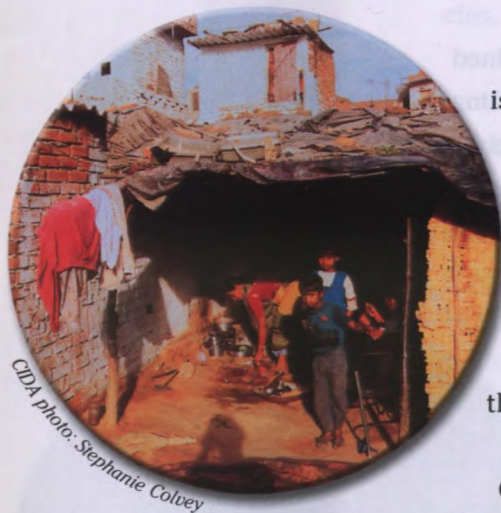
When very serious violations occur, the UN has special tools at its disposal. For example, in 1993 the Security Council created an international tribunal to try persons accused of committing war crimes during the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. A similar tribunal was set up for Rwanda in 1994. Up to September 1999, a Canadian, Louise Arbour, was the chief prosecutor of both courts.

With substantial Canadian leadership, global efforts are under way to implement the newly established International Criminal Court, which will provide a permanent tribunal for prosecuting cases of genocide, crimes against humanity and other war crimes.

Humanitarian affairs

When a country is struck by war, famine or natural disaster, the UN and the agencies that belong to the UN system furnish assistance to the population. Under the United Nations Emergency Relief Co-ordinator, who directs the UN's Humanitarian Affairs Department, organizations such as the World Food Programme, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Health Organization and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees work together and deliver part of this assistance directly.

In recent years, for example, the UN and the agencies of the extended UN family have assisted tens of millions of people who were victims of conflicts or natural



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