

understanding of this phenomena and take appropriate measures to reduce the suicide rate;

- ▶ take all appropriate measures to prevent and combat corporal punishment, sexual abuse and exploitation and ill-treatment of children, including in institutions and in detention centres;
- ▶ by civil legislation, prohibit corporal punishment, ensure that appropriate legal measures be taken to combat sexual abuse and exploitation of children, ensure that cases of abuse are properly investigated, sanctions applied to perpetrators and publicity given to the decisions taken in those cases;
- ▶ take further measures to ensure the physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of the victims of abuse, neglect, ill-treatment, violence or exploitation;
- ▶ take steps to harmonize fully law and procedures on adoption on both the national and international levels;
- ▶ take appropriate measures to prevent drop-outs and reinforce the current programmes to keep children in schools;
- ▶ review school curricula with a view to promoting respect for the Convention and develop vocational training on the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- ▶ adopt all necessary legal and other appropriate measures to protect children from economic exploitation through labour, including in the informal sector;
- ▶ consider undertaking a comprehensive reform of the system of juvenile justice and pay particular attention to the right of children to prompt access to legal assistance and to a judicial review;
- ▶ organize training programmes on relevant international standards for all professionals involved with the juvenile justice system; and,
- ▶ establish specialized courts as a matter of priority.

## THEMATIC REPORTS

### *Mechanisms of the Commission on Human Rights*

**Extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary execution, Special Rapporteur on:** (E/CN.4/1997/60, paras. 16, 18, 19, 32, 33, 57, 58, 59; E/CN.4/1997/60/Add.1, paras. 71–78)

The Special Rapporteur (SR) noted that, in May 1995, Bulgaria's Minister of the Interior stated that 17 people had died in suspicious circumstances in police custody during the previous 14 months. The SR also noted that no information was given on how many of these deaths were reportedly investigated or on the results of such investigations. The SR was also informed that official statistics on deaths in custody are not made public. The SR transmitted allegations of deaths in custody concerning five identified persons.

The government replied to most of the cases transmitted by the SR during 1995 and 1996. The explanations provided indicated that: in the case of the individual who had died from traumatic shock as a result of receiving multiple traumas on the head, torso and limbs, the preliminary proceedings had not been completed and the perpetrator of the crime not yet been identified; concerning a case where a detainee was shot to death by a police officer, the police officer had fired a

warning before shooting at the suspect in self-defence; in other cases, investigations and prosecutions had resulted in the conviction of the police officers responsible and prison terms of 18 and 20 years; and with respect to still other cases, investigations were proceeding.

The SR stated his concern that, in most of the cases brought to the attention of the government, the perpetrators had not yet been brought to justice. He called on the government to take all necessary measures to reduce the number of deaths occurring in custody and to make every effort to ensure full respect for international norms and principles which prohibit any form of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. The SR also urged the government to provide adequate compensation to the families of the victims.

**Racial discrimination, Special Rapporteur on:** (E/CN.4/1997/71, para. 28)

The Special Rapporteur (SR) notes that street children in Bulgaria, most of them Romany, often fall prey to attacks by skinheads. They may be called "dirty Gypsies" and beaten with chains or baseball bats under the indifferent gaze of the police, who sometimes ill-treat the children themselves.

The SR's interim report to the General Assembly (A/52/471, paras. 22, 25) refers to information received related to acts of violence and atrocities against Roma as well as newspaper reports on the deaths of three Roma children from starvation in the town of Stara Zagora. The report states that in February 1997, following an increase in the price of bread, 2,000 Roma demonstrated in the centre of the town of Pazardzhik in protest against the "discriminatory policies of the central government and the local authorities".

**Religious intolerance, Special Rapporteur on:** (E/CN.4/1997/91, paras. 9, 17, 19, 23, 26, 30, 41, 66)

The report notes that religious discrimination in Bulgaria is evident with regard to Christians and Jehovah's Witnesses. Authorities may refuse to grant official recognition to religious groups such as the Bulgarian Evangelical Alliance, Christian missions, independent churches and theological institutes and they may close down places of worship.

Information provided by the government refers to legislation and policy, with the emphasis placed on the conformity of national legislation with international human rights law. On the subject of the registration of religious communities, the government pointed out that, by the end of August 1996, 30 denominations and some 70 religious communities and foundations were registered, compared to four denominations and no foundations in 1989. The government also reported that 22 communities and foundations had not been approved for registration, including the Jehovah's Witnesses, on the grounds that the prohibition of blood transfusion represented a danger to health and the refusal to swear allegiance to the national flag infringed national security and the law on military service. According to the government, it was essential that the religious communities not be at variance with national legislation.

The Special Rapporteur's interim report to the General Assembly (A/52/477, paras. 21, 25, 28, 31, 33, 34, 36, 38) notes that communications were sent to the government related to violations of religious freedom against Jehovah's