

Other HRO early warning tools include the translation of public information into the local language(s), or feedback to military peace-keepers, CIVPOL, and others who are providing human rights information so as to assure them that their efforts are both important and are being acted upon.

In deciding what is operationally possible or appropriate, human rights issues regularly compete with what often appear to be conflicting UN operation objectives. There is a constant danger that other operational objectives are too easily allowed to override even the raising of human rights violations in negotiations, much less active intervention to protect individuals and groups. There are two partial solutions to this.

The first partial solution is the education of all UN operation staff as to appropriate and effective operational responses. There is a whole spectrum of actions that can have an effect on the protection of human rights. In the past, particularly field partners like the military or political negotiators, saw human rights action as rather black and white. In fact, the spectrum of responses includes a myriad of human rights protection options that can be woven into military and political operations.<sup>169</sup>

*Recommendation #49*

**It is recommended that all UN field operation components be aware of the spectrum of options available to them in responding to human rights violations or the threat of violations.**

The second partial solution as set out in the next section, is the setting of automatic and at times obligatory responses premised upon the legal obligations of the UN and its member states.

#### **7.4 Automatic and Obligatory**

It is inevitable and perhaps understandable that when human rights violations are reported, there is usually some pressing political or military objective that appears more critical. At the political level, UN member states themselves are reticent to take action so as to show solidarity with allies and friends being critiqued, or to avoid setting precedence and run the danger of being targeted themselves at some latter time. At the tactical level, components of the larger UN operation which are pursuing non human rights objectives, feel that raising human rights will only serve to deny them their primary objectives.

While HROs are extremely important, their abilities are limited particularly in the face of active and even armed opposition from local government or rebel groups. There is the danger that HROs "may be seen as a panacea where the unfortunate reality of endemic human rights violations can only be addressed by more forceful interventions, be they military, economic,

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<sup>169</sup> See the roles of different UN field partners in Chapter Five.