

the groups; and, attack and murder local administrative officials.

In the section dealing with obstacles to democratization, the report acknowledges the willingness of the authorities to look at the problems and issues contributing to the situation in Burundi, and to remedy the most flagrant shortcomings. The report also states, however, that a number of obstacles remain to the process of democratization, including: inertia in the current regime, impeding the needed institutional reforms; the continuing warfare in a number of provinces, and clashes between rebels and troops around the capital; the absence of a cease fire or of any obvious willingness on the part of the belligerents to conclude one and engage in serious negotiations; the deadlock that resulted from the initial efforts to mediate an end to the conflict inside and outside the country; the fact that controversial topics such as genocide are blocking discussion within the country itself; and the fact that the National Assembly has examined a bill on genocide, but no law has yet been adopted.

On efforts to resolve the conflict, the report acknowledges that a dialogue had been initiated, and was continuing, between Major Buyoya, the President of the National Assembly, and the leaders of the Front pour la démocratie au Burundi (FRODEBU). The dialogue has led to the establishment of a joint commission made up of representatives of the government, the Union pour le progrès national (UPRONA), and FRODEBU, to promote dialogue within the country and abroad. At the same time, the report notes that parliamentarians still ran considerable risks when trying to discharge their mandate, causing some to take refuge abroad and others to go into hiding following death threats. The report further notes that a number of leaders, or members of political parties, were still being harassed in ways that restrict their freedom of movement and action. The SR stated that in some cases the Burundian authorities had acted against political leaders or groups in the hope of curbing extremism, and noted that there cannot be any genuine national debate in Burundi while certain political movements are harassed or prevented from contributing to it.

Problems impeding more consistent action to combat impunity and promote human rights are noted in the report as arising from difficulties related to the administration of justice. The report also notes that judicial guarantees are not systematically granted to all detainees, and failings are reported to have included arrest without warrant, and trial without assistance of counsel.

Addressing initiatives aimed at the promotion of human rights, the report notes a number of developments, including the appointment, in the summer of 1997, of the new Minister for Human Rights, Institutional Reform and Relations with the National Assembly, and the stated intention of the Minister for Human Rights to promote Burundian values based on respect for human life, justice, equity, tolerance, and honour as embodied in the traditional institution of Ubushingantahe.

Summary comments on conditions and the situation in the country generally note, *inter alia*, that: security varies from province to province, and various components of society do not benefit from it to the same extent; in Bujumbura, a more substantial police presence in several districts of the city, day and night, has considerably eased the movement of people and goods; the main routes into the capital are closely controlled by numerous military and police checkpoints, which are sometimes attacked by rebel groups; populations of the urban centres, like Bujumbura and Gitega, are better protected than those of the collines which often lack basic community infrastructures around which people can group; the dispersed settlement of the collines makes it extremely difficult for the provincial civilian or military authorities to protect the peasants in the event of disturbances or attacks; and, the security of the people in the camps is very precarious, given the rudimentary and makeshift nature of their accommodation and the inadequate resources available to the army to protect them from rebel attacks.

The SR also noted that: the most serious human rights violations take place in the course of military operations or rebel attacks, or following clashes between the army and rebels in the provinces of west and south Burundi, although the number of massacres seems to have declined; military operations in the collines have become more frequent and people are still being killed; rebel activities had increased because of dissension within the various rebel groups, particularly the Front pour la défense de la démocratie (FDD), PALIPEHUTU, and the Front de Libération nationale (FROLINA); the government has tried to enrol large numbers of young men and women who are about to complete their higher studies in a mandatory civic service scheme which has reduced the hold of extremist groups over young people; this civic service, however, seems to bear a military stamp more so than a civilian one; authorities were trying to include a more specifically human rights-oriented component in the mandatory civic service to prevent a situation where militarization of society, particularly of young people, becomes the price to be paid for combatting extremism; and, difficulties remain in recruiting for this mandatory civic service, to ensure a more balanced representation of the two major ethnic components of the population.

Additional points noted include that: the measures taken by the civilian and military authorities to involve the population more closely in the night-time patrols in towns and on the earth roads of the collines endanger the population when the military authorities ask civilians to take part in military-type activities; the population increasingly fears direct contact with the rebels and prefers in some cases to cooperate with the army or the civilian administration in order to be better protected. The report also notes that various forms of restitution of the goods pillaged during the 1993 events had been established; the economic sanctions imposed by the countries of the sub-region were having a disastrous effect on the general population of Burundi and increased the country's dependence on international humanitarian assistance; and bearing in mind the fate of the victims of the conflict in