

We emphasize government cooperation for two critical reasons. First, it should be obvious that impartial investigation and fact-finding depend heavily on permitting on-site visits and the unfettered examination of evidence. Second, and perhaps more important, the more egregious violations of human rights which come to our attention are those in which governments are generally involved, either directly or implicitly. We are troubled by the persuasive evidence, which runs through all of the reports before us, indicating the direct involvement of state organizations, especially security forces, in such abhorrent practices as torture, summary executions, disappearances and other offences against human dignity. Our condemnation of these practices must be vigorous and unrelenting, and authorities in states with situations as diverse as Afghanistan, El Salvador, Chile and Iran must be called to account for their actions or acquiescence. State cooperation must therefore involve not only the assistance of states in the fact-finding process. It must involve as well state willingness to implement fully the recommendations contained in the reports of the Special Rapporteurs.

A second unifying theme is the universal applicability of international standards to these various situations. As the Special Rapporteur on Iran noted emphatically, there can be no partial adherence or selective acceptance of those standards which now form part of international law and practice. These are the standards which must be used by our special rapporteurs in preparing their evaluations, and they are the standards by which the success of our efforts should be assessed.

A third important theme, which applies to most of what is before this Committee, is the extent to which it involves the right to practice one's religion and the rights of minorities in general. My delegation is especially troubled at the sad history of this organization's continuing failure to face up to the issue of minority rights. Whether a conflict is based on differences of religion, race, culture or ethnic origin, whether it concerns the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, the Baha'i community in Iran or various religious communities in the Soviet Union, the issues must be confronted objectively and fairly. No one pretends that the adoption of a declaration on the rights of minorities would solve some of the more intractable problems. Yet such action would at least send a clear message to the world community, that the rights of minorities deserve increased attention within a framework designed to preserve the integrity of the state.