

Mechanisms and Reports of the Sub-Commission

Systematic rape, sexual slavery and slavery-like practices during armed conflict, Special Rapporteur on: (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1998/13, para. 30)

Noting that the term "sexual" is used as an adjective to describe a form of slavery and not to denote a separate crime, the report refers to situations in which women and girls are forced into domestic servitude or other forced labour. Citing the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women (E/CN.4/1998/54, para. 42), reference is made to information indicating that during the conflict in Liberia women and girls were forced by combatants into working as cooks and were also held as sexual slaves.

OTHER REPORTS

Children affected by armed conflict, Special Representative: (A/53/482, paras. 43, 49–51)

The Special Representative (SRep) visited Liberia from 11 to 13 March 1998 to assess the situation of children after a period of protracted civil war in the country. The report notes that the conflict has had a devastating effect on children, many of whom have known no other way of life. A serious erosion of local value systems has also taken place. The categories of children identified as having special protection needs include ex-combatant youth, refugee and internally displaced children, sexually abused girls and unaccompanied and street children.

The SRep identified the following key challenges requiring initiatives: empowering families, economically and socially, to resume their roles in bringing up and supporting children, thus moving away from a policy of heavy dependence on institutional care; carefully assessing and accrediting existing institutions such as orphanages; improving educational opportunities through reduced school fees, better infrastructure and reading materials and improving salaries for teachers; revitalizing primary health care, particularly through the revival of rural clinics, noting that a major child health issue is the need to promote adolescent reproductive health awareness and practice; dedication of a larger proportion of the national budget to the revitalization of social services, in particular health and education; improving the juvenile justice system, particularly by complementing the newly created juvenile court with facilities for the separate pre-trial detention and post-trial incarceration (if necessary) of minors; training for income-generating activities for all children affected by war, without differentiating between former combatants and those who were involved in conflict in other ways; reviving local values and support systems, such as the role of the traditional Sande and Poro "bush" schools, which is a traditional system in rural communities to inculcate local ethics in children; and supporting local advocacy efforts, by encouraging the formation of a group of local eminent persons willing to act as advocates for children in Liberia and by instituting a radio station

to promote issues related to the interests and rights of children.

FIELD OPERATIONS

The human rights field presence in Liberia (focal points) was established as part of the peace-building support office in Liberia which succeeded UNOMIL upon the expiration of the latter's mandate. The Secretary-General's recommended terms of reference for the support office were adopted by the Security Council in November 1997. The human rights focal points can be contacted through New York. Mr. Desmond Parker/Mr. Biang Deng, Human Rights Focal points, UN Peace Building Support in Liberia, c/o UNOMIL Liberia, P.O.Box 4677, Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10163-4677, USA; Phone: (1-212) 963-9927; 963-9928; Fax: (1-212) 963-9924.

The functions and mandate of the support office are to: engage all components of Liberian society in the development and implementation of promotional activities aimed at establishing confidence among them; provide advice and assistance to the government to help bring laws and institutional practices in line with international human rights standards; liaise with the relevant authorities in the armed forces and police with a view to assessing shortcomings and identifying needs for improvement as regards human rights standards; provide assistance in formulating legislative reform; develop projects which incorporate regular human rights training into the curricula of the armed forces and the police and organize training activities for experienced police and military trainers; maintain regular contacts with the judicial authorities to assist them in the rehabilitation of the justice system; ascertain the needs for rebuilding the judicial system and formulate projects for the training of judicial personnel; provide technical legal advice for the implementation of human rights standards in the administration of justice; and raise human rights awareness in public service and local administration to assist in developing mechanisms and procedures aimed at the promotion and protection of human rights.

The main activities carried out as of August 1998 included: facilitation, in collaboration with the Carter Center, of a public forum of civil society organizations on the need to review and revise the Act creating the Liberia Commission on Human Rights; training, in collaboration with the National Police Academy and ICRC experts, in the human rights aspects of police duties for members of the Liberia National Police; assistance to the Ministry of Education in the development of a national strategy within the school system in the context of a programme initiated by the Carter Center; provision of advisory services and programming support to civil society groups and human rights NGOs; work with the staff of the Liberia Commission on Human Rights to identify project proposals which would include training for the Commission's staff in human rights reporting and information gathering techniques; assistance to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with regard to various international human rights instruments that Liberia has yet to sign and ratify,