

comprehensive political solution leading to the cessation of armed confrontation and the establishment of a democratic government elected through free and fair elections; urged all parties to ensure that UN programmes are carried out without discrimination against women as participants or as beneficiaries; demanded that all the Afghan parties fulfill their obligations and commitments regarding the safety of all personnel of diplomatic missions, the UN and other international organizations, as well as of their premises in Afghanistan; urged all parties to provide efficient and effective remedies to the victims of grave violations of human rights and of accepted humanitarian rules and to bring the perpetrators to trial in accordance with internationally accepted standards; urged all parties to halt the use of weapons against the civilian population, refrain from storing munitions in residential areas, prohibit the drafting and recruitment of children as para-combatants, ensure their reintegration into society and stop the practice of using people as human shields; invited all parties to support the ICRC, provide access to all prisoners and release all non-criminal civilian prisoners; expressed deep concern that new landmines have been laid and appealed to all parties to stop deploying such devices; expressed deep concern at reports of the deterioration of Afghanistan's cultural heritage and noted that all the parties share the responsibility to protect and safeguard this heritage; requested UN members to take appropriate measures to prevent the looting of cultural artifacts and ensure their return to Afghanistan; and urged all parties to extend their cooperation to the Commission on Human Rights and its Special Rapporteur.

SECURITY COUNCIL

The reports of the Secretary-General (S/1997/240, 16 March 1997; S/1997/482 16 June 1997, S/1997/719-A/52/358, 17 September 1997) contain information on the military, political and humanitarian situations and note: the rival sides continued to seek political legitimacy for their military activities; the Taliban had persistently demanded formal recognition by the international community as the effective Islamic government of Afghanistan, entitled to occupy the Afghan seat in the General Assembly; both the Taliban and SCDA were widely believed to have been receiving material and financial support from external allies, while each side blames the other for encouraging foreign interference in the internal affairs of the country.

Among the difficulties and problems noted were: displacement and forcible displacement; incidents in which foreign nationals working with humanitarian organizations were detained; the fact that the conflict was increasingly being fuelled by strong ethnic feelings between the predominantly Pushtun Taliban on the one hand and the Tajiks, Hazaras and Uzbeks, who comprise the opposition camp, on the other; the fact that in some instances the fighting had led to chaos and looting in the areas affected, including instances of looting of the local offices of UN programmes and agencies; the fact that the continued factional fighting north of Kabul and elsewhere resulted in an increase in the number of internally displaced persons, many of whom had been forcibly removed from their homes and in some cases arrested merely for suspected sympathy with the anti-Taliban forces; the need for emergency food aid continued; and, nearly 777

km in the country had been contaminated by landmines, with some 322 km in residential, commercial, agricultural and other areas.

Statements by the President of the Security Council (S/PRST/1997/20, 16 April 1997; S/PRST/1997/35, 9 July 1997;) *inter alia*: expressed grave concern at the continued fighting in Afghanistan and its intensification; reiterated that the continuation of the conflict was preventing the formation of a fully representative and broad-based government able to address effectively Afghanistan's acute social and economic problems; called on all states to end immediately the supply of arms and ammunition to all parties to the conflict in Afghanistan; expressed deep concern at the worsening of the humanitarian situation including the displacement of the civilian population, discrimination against women, and other violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law; and deplored the mistreatment of personnel of international humanitarian organizations.

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BAHRAIN

Date of admission to UN: 21 September 1971.

TREATIES AND REPORTS TO TREATY BODIES

Land and People: Bahrain has not submitted a core document for use by the treaty bodies.

Racial Discrimination

Acceded: 27 March 1990.

Bahrain's initial and second through fourth periodic reports were due 26 April 1991, 1993, 1995 and 1997 respectively.

Reservations and Declarations: Article 22.

Rights of the Child

Acceded: 13 February 1992.

Bahrain's initial report was due 12 March 1994.

THEMATIC REPORTS

Mechanisms of the Commission on Human Rights

Arbitrary detention, Working Group on: (E/CN.4/1997/4, paras. 4, 5, 14, 15, 17, 21; E/CN.4/1997/4/Add.1, Decisions 21, 22, 23, 35, 38)

The main report notes that various communications were sent to the government related to 59 cases and three urgent appeals. The government responded to a number of the cases and decisions taken by the Working Group (WG), variously indicating that the persons concerned had been released, had never been detained or were still in detention.

The WG reported on five decisions concerning Bahrain which involved a total of 557 people.

Decision 21 concerns events in November 1995 when as many as 200 secondary school students were arrested for participating in a protest against the death sentence allegedly pronounced on a 27-year-old prisoner. The students were reportedly taken by the police in five buses to an unknown place; the authorities allegedly refused to reveal the names or whereabouts of those detained; and they denied the children access to family members. The WG specifically took up the