

SPECIAL PROCEDURES BULLETIN

First Issue: January-April 2006

This is the first issue of the Special Procedures Bulletin aimed at providing a general overview on the main activities of Special Procedures. The Bulletin will be published three times per year.

COUNTRY VISITS

[Visit to Sweden by the Special Rapporteur on health](#)

The Special Rapporteur on the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health [visited Sweden](#) from 9 to 18 January. He focused on access to health care including for marginalized groups; sexual and reproductive health rights; and underlying determinants of health. He also focused on Sweden's international cooperation policies, including its development assistance and membership of international organizations, and how this affects the right to health in developing countries.

OHCHR WEBSITE PAGE ON [SPECIAL PROCEDURES](#) COUNTRY VISITS

<http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/chr/special/visits.htm>
An alphabetical table on Country visits by Special Procedures Mandate holders since 1998 is available on this page as well as a list of all countries having extended standing invitations to all the thematic procedures. As of April 2006, 53 countries have standing invitations.
A compilation of recommendations of Special Procedures by country is also available.

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How to send information to Special Procedures:

SPECIAL PROCEDURES BRANCH

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E-mail : urgent-action@ohchr.org
www.ohchr.org

Questionnaires on how to submit information and other useful information is available on OHCHR website under Human Rights Bodies/ Special Procedures.

Please specify which special procedure(s) mechanism the information is addressed to in the subject line of the e-mail or fax, or on the cover of the envelope.

How to find information on Special Procedures:

To learn more about Special Procedures you can consult Fact Sheet no. 27 (Seventeen Frequently Asked Questions about United Nations Special Rapporteurs) available in different languages upon request at the:

PUBLICATIONS UNIT

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A leaflet with main information on Special Procedures is also available in all languages upon request.

Some thematic mandates have also published a fact sheet containing information on the role and functioning of the mandate (e.g. Fact sheet n°29 on Human Rights Defenders, for the complete list of publications please refer to the publications unit)

On the OHCHR website under Human Rights Bodies/ Special Procedures you will find web pages devoted to each Special Procedure with details on the mandate, how to submit information, country visits, links to reports, etc.

IN THIS ISSUE

In this bulletin you will find the following sections:

COUNTRY VISITS

Including a summary of visits undertaken between January and April 2006 a table of visits foreseen for the next four months quarter and recent requests for visits

COMMUNICATIONS

Statistical information on communications sent

HIGHLIGHTS

Including highlights of main meetings, events and news on mandate related issues and press releases issued in the first trimester

CONTACT: SPBINFO@OHCHR.ORG

COMMUNICATIONS

Some special procedures mechanisms intervene directly with Governments on specific allegations of violations of human rights that come within their mandates. The intervention can relate to a human rights violation that has already occurred, is ongoing, or which has a high risk of occurring. The process, in general, involves the sending of a letter to the concerned Government requesting information and comments on the allegation and that preventive or investigatory action be taken.

2005 COMMUNICATIONS

1,049 Total number of communications sent

53% Joint Communication sent

2,545 Total number of individual cases covered

137 Total number of countries to which communications have been sent

The decision to intervene is at the discretion of the special procedure mandate holder and will depend on the criteria established by him/her. The criteria will generally relate to: the reliability of the source and the credibility of information received; the detail provided; and the scope of the mandate itself. Mandate-holders may send joint communications when the case falls within the scope of more than one mandate.

JANUARY- APRIL 2006 COMMUNICATIONS

347 Total number of communications sent

53% Joint Communication sent

1,099 Total number of individual cases covered

96 Total number of countries to which communications have been sent

COUNTRY VISITS

[Visit to Switzerland by the Special Rapporteur on Racism](#)

The Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, visited Switzerland from 9 to 13 January 2006. This was the first visit of a special procedure mandate holder to Switzerland. In his preliminary note, the Rapporteur underlined that the Swiss authorities, at both federal and cantonal level, while recognizing the existence of problems related to racism and xenophobia, expressed the view that they were not really serious. The Special Rapporteur also interviewed members of foreign communities and national minorities who reported deep-rooted and persistent manifestations of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia in Swiss society. The Special Rapporteur will base his own assessment of the intensity and depth of racism and xenophobia on three main considerations: the nature of and responsibility for manifestations of racism, the political will to combat such manifestations and the legal and juridical strategy deployed in the fight against racism and xenophobia.

[Visit to Germany by the Special Rapporteur on education](#)

The Special Rapporteur on the right to education visited Germany from 13 to 21 February. The purpose of the visit was to consider how Germany endeavours to implement the right to education, the measures taken both for its successful realization and the obstacles encountered both at the national and international level. Several key issues were addressed during the course of the visit, including the impact of the German federal system, taking into account the effects of the reunification, on a coherent and uniformed education policy. The Rapporteur called for a reinforced rights-based approach to education that would ensure that the education processes and structures are non-discriminatory, therefore instrumental for social equal opportunities. He recalled that education should be

a vector of full inclusion of disadvantaged groups, such as socially disadvantaged persons, migrants, refugees, undocumented persons, Roma people and persons with disabilities, within the education system and the society as a whole.

[Visit to Liberia by the country Independent Expert](#)

The Independent Expert for Liberia visited Liberia from 19 to 26 February. The purpose of the visit was to update the information on the situation of human rights since the Presidential elections.

[Visit to Côte d'Ivoire by the Special Representative on Internally Displaced Persons](#)

The Representative of the Secretary General on Internally Displaced Persons visited Côte d'Ivoire from 17 to 24 April. At the end of his visit he issued a [press statement](#) containing a first assessment of the situation. He expressed his preoccupation with the state of destitution in which many of the displaced persons are forced to live. These difficulties are mainly linked to obstructed access to food, education and to health services. The vulnerability of the internally displaced is heightened by the fact that in many cases they do not have documents to prove their identity and are often victims of racketeering and corruption. The Representative also pointed out that he was worried that too many children were facing particular difficulties, for instance in receiving birth certificates. He had also been made aware of cases of children exploited for prostitution or as agricultural labor in the plantations. He called on the authorities and the humanitarian organizations to draft a comprehensive strategy to address the challenges of internal displacement in the country and the donor community to support it.

COUNTRY VISITS

[Visit to Azerbaijan by the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion](#)

The Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief visited Azerbaijan from 26 February to 5 March 2006. In [a press statement](#) issued on 8 March she noted that the Government generally respects freedom of religion or belief but this respect is not uniformly observed in all regions of Azerbaijan. She noticed that, in some cases, the concerned authorities may have blurred the thin line that distinguishes facilitation of religious freedoms from control. In particular, certain situations related to the different aspects of this control have resulted in actual limitations of the right to freedom of religion of religious communities: difficulties in registration, restriction on religious literature, methods of appointment of clergy or obstacles for non registered religious communities.

[Visit to Ecuador by the Working on Arbitrary detention](#)

The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention visited Ecuador from 13 to 23 February 2006. On 24 February, the Chairperson of the Working Group and one its members issued a [press statement](#) to make public the first impressions of the working group and raise some issues of concern at an initial stage. The Working Group commended the recent efforts undertaken by the Government of Ecuador to resolve the crisis caused last year by the dissolution of the Supreme Court, the Constitutional Tribunal and the Electoral Tribunal, which then led to a change of President and Government. It identified three main areas of concern: The gap between the international standards set forth in the Constitution and the law and practice observed, the lack of implementation of the accusatorial system affecting the right to defense of the most vulnerable and the ineffectiveness of remedies against arbitrary detention.

[Visit to Turkey by the Special Rapporteur on counterterrorism](#)

The Special Rapporteur on human rights and counterterrorism [visited Turkey from 16 to 23 February](#). During the meetings held with officials and civil society actors in Ankara and Diyarbakir, issues relating to the definition of terrorism, proscription of terrorist organisations and the situation in the South East were addressed. At the centre of these discussions was the definition of terrorism as contained in art. 1 of the Anti-Terror Act of 1991, which defines terrorism based on its purpose or aims rather than referring to specific criminal acts. In this regard, the Special Rapporteur offered to engage in further dialogue concerning new draft legislation in advance or during its consideration at the Parliament. The Special Rapporteur noted with great satisfaction the efforts undertaken by the Government in the area of human rights, such as intensified human rights training, a zero-tolerance policy vis-à-vis torture, a significant improvement in physical conditions of places of detention, and the enactment of a Compensation Act. He recommended that Turkey takes further steps in strengthening available domestic and international procedures for the protection of human rights and for countering any remnants of impunity. The Special Rapporteur also commended the law on compensation of the victims of terrorism. He considered the existence of such a law and the fact that it extends to victims of acts as terrorism as well as to victims of counter-terrorism operations by the State an example of "best practice" to be followed by other States.

STATUS OF VISITS

VISIT REQUESTS

January-April 2006

India, Mauritania, Nepal, Pakistan (Racism)
 Algeria (violence against women)
 Australia, Bahrain, Canada, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Republic of South Korea, South Africa and United States of America (migrants)
 Afghanistan, Fiji, Iraq, Jordan, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Papua New Guinea, Saudi Arabia and Yemen (torture)
 India and Thailand (sale of children)
 Chile, Fiji, Honduras and Papua New Guinea (mercenaries)
 Nigeria (trafficking)

RESPONSES /INVITATIONS

January-April 2006

Algeria (violence against women)
 Australia (adequate housing, migrants)
 Belarus (trafficking)
 Guatemala (freedom of expression)
 Honduras (freedom of expression)
 Hungary (minorities)
 Republic of Korea (migrants)
 Russian Federation (Toxic Waste)
 Sri Lanka (freedom of expression)
 Sudan (freedom of expression)
 Sultanate of Oman (trafficking)
 Ukraine (freedom of expression)
 United States of America (migrants)

FORTHCOMING VISITS

May-July 2006

Colombia (IDP) 13-28 June
 Honduras (arbitrary detention) 23-31 May
 Hungary (minorities) 26-30th June
 Jordan (torture) 24 June- 1 July
 Netherlands (violence against women) 2-12 July
 Nigeria (IDP) 18-25 April
 Nicaragua (arbitrary detention) 29 May-2 June
 Russian Federation (racism) 13-18 June
 Sweden (violence against women) 11-21 June
 Turkey (violence against women) 22-29 May
 Uganda (IDP) 27 May-4 June
 Uganda (children) 4-10 June

HIGHLIGHTS

International day for the elimination of racial discrimination (21 March)

In the context of the observance of the international day for the elimination of racial discrimination, the Special Rapporteur, M. Doudou Diène, participated in a number of events. On 17 March, he participated as moderator in the panel "Voices of the victims" organized by OHCHR Anti-Discrimination Unit and held a press conference in the Palais des Nations. On 18 March, he gave an inaugural speech entitled "Anti-Black racism in the Era of globalization: Issues, Challenges and Post-Durban perspectives" at the 1st European Conference on Anti-Black Racism in Geneva. On 20 March, he participated in a conference entitled "Racisme, antisémitisme, et répercussions des conflits internationaux sur le vivre-ensemble en Europe" in Paris.

Introducing the new mandate on Minority issues

[The independent expert on minority issues](#), Ms Gay McDougall, visited Geneva between 28 March and 5 April engaging in numerous meetings with OHCHR, States and NGOs.

Two events were organized at Palais Wilson open to OHCHR staff and invited NGOs and experts. On Monday 3rd April a roundtable event 'Emerging Human Rights Issues and UN Reform' was well attended. On Tuesday 4th April, a seminar 'Minority Rights and Social Cohesion: Considerations for Programming' considered how to include minority issues in field activities of the UN and NGOs.

International Women's Day (8 March)

On 8 March, the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Ms. Yakin Ertürk, gave a presentation on the occasion of the opening of the exhibition "Broken Bodies, Broken Dreams" in Dublin, Ireland, organized by a consortium of Irish non governmental development, humanitarian and human rights agencies in collaboration with Development Cooperation Ireland for the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and the United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks, IRIN.

New Special Representative on Children and Armed conflict

On 7 February 2006, the Secretary-General appointed Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, now the chairperson of the Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission, as his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. Ms. Coomaraswamy served as the UN's Special Rapporteur on violence against women from 1994 to 2003. Ms. Coomaraswamy replaces Olara Otunnu who left the position last year. More information

Follow up on trafficking in Lebanon

As a result of a follow-up seminar organized jointly by OHCHR and ILO, the Government of Lebanon has taken steps to implement some of the recommendations included in the report of the Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in persons, Ms. Sigma Huda on her mission to Lebanon. Such measures, include the issuance of a decree by the Ministry of labour establishing a Steering Committee that will work on developing a national plan of action to, inter alia, address the shortcomings of the legal system for the protection of migrant domestic workers in Lebanon.

PRESS STATEMENTS

[CONTROVERSY OVER REPRESENTATIONS OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD](#)

8 February 2006, the Special Rapporteur on racism, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, and the Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression issued a joint statement to call for tolerance and dialogue in wake of controversy over representations of prophet Muhammad

[RISK OF FAMINE IN THE HORN OF AFRICA](#)

On 20 February 2006, the Special Rapporteur on the Right to food issued a statement to express his deep concern about the risk of famine in the horn of Africa. Approximately 11 million people are currently threatened by starvation in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Tanzania.

[WOMEN'S DAY](#)

The Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences and the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing issued a joint statement. The Special Rapporteur on Right to food, expressed concern about impact of desertification on women's rights and the Independent Expert on minority issues stated that new and urgent attention must be given to the rights of women facing multiple forms of discrimination, exclusion and violence.

[RELEASE OF A UNICEF MEMBER](#)

On the 6 March, the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia issued a statement to welcome the release of UNICEF staff member, Robert McCarthy, in Somalia on 2 March 2006.

PRESS STATEMENTS

[AWARDS CEREMONY IN HONOUR OF DISAPPEARED THAI LAWYER](#)

On 3 March, a statement was issued by the Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances on the occasion of the annual Asian Human Rights Commission Asian Human Rights Award, in honour of the disappeared Thai lawyer, Somchai Neelaphaijit. The awards ceremony will take place on 11 March 2006.

[APPEAL TO RELEASE PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE](#)

On 11 March 2006, the Special Rapporteur on Myanmar issued a statement to appeal on the Government of Myanmar to release U Win Tin and all remaining prisoners of conscience.

[ESCALATION OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN BELARUS](#)

On 15 March 2006, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights in Belarus issued a statement to condemn the escalation of violations ahead of polls.

On 29 March 2006, seven special procedures issued a joint statement to express their concern over the deterioration of the human rights situation before, during and after the recent presidential election in Belarus

[POLITICAL KILLINGS IN SRI LANKA](#)

On 27 April, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial summary or arbitrary executions issued a press statement calling for urgent measures to end political killings and to strengthen protection for human rights in Sri Lanka.

[IMPACT OF WORKS ON DAM IN INDIA](#)

On 13 April, the Special Representative on human rights defenders, the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing and the Special Rapporteur on indigenous people issued a joint [statement](#) expressing concern about the recent decision of the Narmada Control Authority (NCA) in India to further raise the height of the Sardar Sarovar Dam on the Narmada River from the present 110.64 metres to 121.92 metres and reports indicating that this will result in the submergence of villages and displacement of over 35,000 families.

[ATTACK ON SCHOOL IN AFGHANISTAN](#)

On 19 April, the Special Rapporteur on the right to education issued a statement condemning the terrorist attack by rocket on the Salabagh School in the Kunar province of Afghanistan. The Special Rapporteur also expressed concern that schools, especially girls' schools, seem to be systematically targeted by terrorist groups. These attacks are leading to the closure of schools.

[TREATMENT OF FOLLOWERS OF BAHÁ'Í FAITH IN IRAN](#)

On 20 March 2006, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief issued a press statement expressing her concern about the treatment of followers of Bahá'í faith in Iran.

[RELEASE OF JOURNALIST AND WRITER IN IRAN](#)

On 23 March 2006 the Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression issued a press statement to welcome the release of the journalist and writer Akbar Ganji, he had met in November 2003 during his visiting to the Islamic Republic of Iran. Mr. Ganji was arrested in April 2000 on charges of attempt on State's security, propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran and its values, participation to an international conference, and ultimately convicted to six years of detention.

[FORCED EVICTIONS IN ANGOLA](#)

On 30 March, the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing issued a statement to express serious concern about the persistent practice of forced evictions in Angola.

[WORLD HEALTH DAY](#)

On 7 April, the Special Rapporteur on adverse effects of the illicit movement and dumping of toxic and dangerous products and wastes on the enjoyment of human rights, issued a [statement](#) urging governments to take serious and concrete measures to counter the harmful effects of chemicals from household and food products on the human rights of their populations; and to assure that the victims of human rights violations arising from actions or omissions by transnational corporations are allowed to seek redress

[VIOLENCE DURING DEMONSTRATIONS IN NEPAL](#)

On 20 April, the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Human Rights Defenders, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the Special Rapporteur on Torture and the Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention issued a joint statement expressing their grave concern at the escalating wave of violence surrounding pro-democracy demonstrations throughout Nepal in recent days.

On 24 April, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial summary or arbitrary executions issued a press statement calling on the Nepalese Government to immediately repeal its "shoot-on-sight" policy for dealing with demonstrators. He also asked for an independent investigation to be undertaken as soon as possible.