



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/HRC/8/NGO/29
28 May 2008

ENGLISH ONLY

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
Eighth session
Agenda item 3

**PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF ALL HUMAN RIGHTS, CIVIL,
POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, INCLUDING
THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT**

**Written statement* submitted by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC),
a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[23 May 2008]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Internally displaced persons

In 2007, the estimated number of people internally displaced as a result of armed conflicts and violence passed the 26 million mark. This is the highest figure since the early 1990s, and marks a six per cent increase from 2006. This increase resulted from the continued high level of new displacements (3.7 million) and a lower level of return movements (2.7 million) in 2007. Three countries had significantly larger internally displaced populations than any others: Colombia, Iraq and Sudan. Together they accounted for nearly 50 per cent of the world's IDPs.

With regard to the countries where the Representative of the UN Secretary-General on the human rights of IDPs conducted missions from January 2007, the Norwegian Refugee Council wishes to draw the attention of the Human Rights Council to the recent developments affecting IDPs and priority protection concerns.

Azerbaijan

In the absence of peaceful resolution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Azerbaijan continues to host one of the highest per-capita IDP populations in the world. In the context of the overall socio-economic development and increasing capacity and commitment of the government to tackle the IDP-related issues, most of the needs have shifted from emergency to development and durable solutions.

While significant efforts have been made by the government and the international community, several challenges remain. Following his mission to Azerbaijan in April 2007, the Representative encouraged the Government of Azerbaijan to prioritize the creation of livelihoods for newly resettled IDPs, to address the living conditions of urban IDPs, and to take action to end practices that might be perceived as discriminatory for example in the area of education. More specifically NRC sees the need to mainstream IDPs into general poverty-reduction programs. For urban IDPs, a comprehensive policy should be adopted to ensure the improvement of their living conditions and strengthen the search of durable solutions for those in various stages of reintegration. Similarly, an employment and income generation strategy is perceived as the only possibility to promote self-reliance and self-sustainability of the resettled IDPs and to eliminate their dependence on external assistance and remittances. The systematic involvement of IDPs themselves in all stages of planning and implementation of activities on their behalf is necessary and will ensure their relevance and sustainability.

Central African Republic (CAR)

As of April, 2008, a total of 197,000 people have been internally displaced in CAR as result of armed conflicts and violence. Since the Representative's visit in April 2007, there have been significant developments on the national and international fronts that have sought to improve the humanitarian situation and resolve the political crisis.

Although an inclusive political dialogue is underway and the government has taken steps to end human rights abuses, perpetrators have not been prosecuted for their crimes and armed forces are still using violence against civilians. The Representative's recommendation to address impunity remains therefore crucial. The Government of CAR should continue its efforts to end human rights abuses, and to investigate and prosecute those who are responsible for committing atrocities.

Security and lack of access to displaced communities continue to be the most important protection issue in CAR. Neither the European Union Troops (EUFOR) deployed in north-eastern CAR, nor the multinational force deployed by the Economic and Monetary Union of Central Africa (FOMUC) in the north-western part of CAR, have the mandate to allow them to engage road bandits, a major cause of insecurity in the country.

The Norwegian Refugee Council recommends that international donors continue to provide funding to guarantee the effectiveness of the security sector reform. The Government of CAR should properly train, arm and mobilize its armed forces to protect civilians from attacks by road bandits.

The international community has accepted the idea of a spill over effect of the Darfur crisis into CAR, ignoring the domestic causes of the conflict and the responsibility of CAR armed forces for many human rights violations committed in the north of the country. EUFOR troops will only be deployed to the northeast of the country, bordering Darfur; whereas the majority of IDPs and the bulk of humanitarian projects are located in the northwest of the country, bordering Chad and Cameroon.

The Norwegian Refugee Council recommends that the European Union prioritize the training of defence and security forces in CAR for the protection of civilians and humanitarian workers in the northwest of the country, and for securing areas where humanitarian assistance is to be distributed.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Since the Representative's visit in February 2008, the situation in eastern DRC has not really improved. Most of the people who had fled in 2007 due to fighting remain displaced and new displacements continue to occur. In January 2008, a Conference for Peace, Security and Development in Goma and a subsequent ceasefire established reduced considerably the intensity of hostilities in eastern DRC, but this has not translated into any tangible improvement for the hundred of thousands of IDPs in North and South Kivu provinces. As of the end of March 2008, at least 1.31 million people remained displaced in the DRC, two-third of them in North Kivu.

One of the Representative's key recommendations is to strengthen the support to families hosting IDPs. Indeed, despite a great tradition of hospitality in the region, IDPs have more and more often to resort to move to camps or spontaneous sites, as host families cannot cope with the burden of supporting the displaced. Displaced children and adults in spontaneous sites are extremely vulnerable to human rights violations, such as rape and forced recruitment.

Another main recommendation is to continue to support assistance and protection programmes for IDPs. At the national level, the government should appoint a focal point on internal displacement and develop a policy on displacement. At the international level, a senior independent adviser on human rights for eastern DRC should be appointed. The senior adviser should monitor the respect of human rights law and humanitarian law by the parties to the conflict and also play a role in monitoring the Amani programme, set up to follow the implementations of the engagements taken during the conference in January.

Finally, the Representative recommends to take all necessary measures to allow the participation of IDPs to local elections planned for the second half 2008. This is indeed essential, since in the 2006 national elections, the lack of electoral cards for IDPs or their difficulty to register prevented most of them to vote.

Sri Lanka

In eastern Sri Lanka, 124,000 or more IDPs have returned to their villages since March 2007, but have been facing problems in accessing livelihoods. However, they are likely to benefit from economic recovery and increased assistance following the provincial elections there in May 2008. Many displaced people have been unable to go back to their villages for reasons such as their areas of origin being designated a high security zone. While there have been some improvements in the overall conditions for return in the east, such as demilitarization, concerns remain about the government's failure to provide IDPs due notice of their return, and its restrictions on agencies from making pre-return assessments in the IDPs' area of origin.

In line with the Representative's recommendation, the Norwegian Refugee Council urges the Government of Sri Lanka to prioritize finding durable solutions for displaced persons in full consultation and with the complete involvement of IDPs. The Government is also encouraged to grant unfettered access to humanitarian agencies to monitor and ensure that conditions are in place for the returns to proceed.

The largest group of IDPs in Sri Lanka at present, numbering more than 102,000, is in the Vanni area which is under the control of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and which has not been visited by the Representative. The IDPs are facing a number of protection concerns. These include forced and underage recruitment, severe restrictions on freedom of movement out of the Vanni, and physical insecurity caused by aerial bombardments and shelling during the fighting between the LTTE and the army. The humanitarian situation of the IDPs is critical with access to services, especially water/sanitation and medical, being extremely limited. Security restrictions have allowed only a limited number of humanitarian personnel and supplies to enter the Vanni. The present level of supplies will last just another three to four months.

The Government of Sri Lanka is urged to reduce the restrictions on humanitarian supplies and aid workers to the Vanni. The supplies will assist a very vulnerable IDP population and larger number of aid workers in the Vanni will be in a position to monitor the protection situation.
