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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS
IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL
AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Human rights and massive exoduses

Note by the Secretary-General

Corrigendum

Replace Annex III by the following:

United Nations agencies or departments

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

29 March 1983

The study initially focuses on the absence or breakdown of the rule of law and the attendant violation of human rights as the cause of these mass movements. In many parts of the world, States still bear the scars of their birth from colonialism and as governments strive to forge cohesion among diverse ethnic groups in the drive towards socio-economic development, their attempts to curb these ethnic centrifugal forces produce conflicts between the State and the individual. Colonialism also frequently favoured particular groups and implanted them in politically and economically dominant positions. Perpetuation of such iniquities is antithetic to the concept of human rights; yet its eradication may entail the violation of the rights of the beneficiaries of this legacy.

The report recognizes the inhospitable conditions for human rights in the developing countries which suffer from the economic woes of population growth, food scarcity, rising inflation and unemployment, and ecological deterioration. Vented economic frustrations have shaken the social structures and eroded their bases, undermining the institutional buttresses of human rights. Authoritarian forces tend to corrode or even supplant the fragile social structure. Strengthening these repelling forces in the country of origin are the external gravitational forces, notably the alluring visions of plentitude and comforts in the more affluent countries of the world conjured by transistor radios and television, which have penetrated the developing countries.

Abuse of the right to asylum, with exaggerated numbers classified as refugees, has resulted from a variety of motivations. Aware that the backlash has eroded this principle to the detriment of genuine refugees, this report proposes the updating of refugee, nationality, and labour laws, the impartial execution of censuses, and the formation of a United Nations corps of humanitarian observers to monitor such mass movements first-hand.

Refugee movements strain both the economic resources and the social fabric of the recipient countries. The burden of handling these movements has fallen more upon the developing countries, whose scarce resources compel international assistance. Even though its provision often suffers from wasteful misdirection and duplication of efforts as well as geographical maldistribution, the availability of aid itself has acted as a powerful pull factor. With these criticisms in mind, the report urges the adoption of a bi-multi approach, integrating the two types of assistance, and the standardization of criteria for material assistance. The report counsels a greater emphasis on a multi-disciplinary preventive approach, as opposed to the current ad hoc curative approach, in advocating the identification of possible mass outflows and the direction of international assistance to the potential countries of origin.

There are some forms of mass movement which have a deleterious impact on the countries of origin. The current economic malaise, among other things, threatens the migrant labourers in the Western industrialized countries with repatriation, aggravating the plight of the developing countries. Smaller in scale, but of equal damage at least, is the brain drain, the outflow of vital expertise, such as doctors and engineers, from the developing countries to the Western industrialized countries, attracted by better rewards.

It may be pertinent to observe here that mass movements of people, whether by political or economic motivations, are not unknown in the ESCAP region. On the contrary, this phenomenon affects nearly every country in one way or another.

As to outflows within the region resulting from internal conflicts, the political implications and ramifications preclude the pursuit of a preventive approach advocated in the study. Current international assistance to displaced persons has sometimes given rise to charges of interference in national interests and has consequently been constrained. The prevailing economic problems inter alia have dampened the industrialized countries' receptivity towards the resettlement of refugees there, threatening to leave a permanent burden on the developing countries that granted an asylum.

These and other problems of mass exodus from and to the ESCAP region call for more extensive attention and action on the part of all concerned United Nations bodies and agencies.

The mass movement of people in many parts of the world is a painful symptom of the existing political and economic imbalances. The study examines this human affliction from all perspectives, clearly analyses its multifarious roots and ramifications, and presents practical recommendations for its alleviation.