OHCHR's approach to field work

Background

Supporting the work of human rights field presences is one of the main functions of OHCHR's Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division (FOTCD). The Division, in cooperation with other parts of the Office, oversees activities relating to field operations, including advisory services and technical cooperation.

OHCHR's country-level activities are based on dialogue with national counterparts and focus on the promotion and protection of human rights. To this end, OHCHR works to strengthen national protection systems and supports the implementation of effective remedies to overcome obstacles to the realization of human rights. In particular, OHCHR participates in efforts to establish or strengthen justice and accountability mechanisms at the national level, including through effective monitoring and investigation to ensure the provision of redress for victims of human rights violations. Equally, when OHCHR is required to respond to deteriorating human rights situations, the Office ensures the rapid deployment of monitoring missions or extends additional surge capacity to lend human rights assistance to UN operations on the ground.

As of the end of 2014, OHCHR was running or supporting 66 field presences and providing support to other members of the UN family through rapid deployments. The Human Rights Advisers to United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) in Ecuador, Maldives and Niger were discontinued during 2014 and the field presences in Kosovo[1] and Togo are expected to be closed in 2015. The peace mission in Burundi completed its Security Council mandate and closed down on 31 December 2014. OHCHR intends to open a stand-alone office in Burundi at the request of the local government.

Types of field presences

OHCHR maintains two types of field presences: stand-alone presences and collaborative arrangements. The first category is composed of country and regional offices which are under the direct supervision of OHCHR. The second category consists of field presences with double reporting

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[1] Reference to Kosovo should be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

A group of women in the Kalma IDP camp, South Darfur.

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lines, namely human rights components of peace or political missions who report to the Head of the mission and the High Commissioner and human rights advisers who report to the Resident Coordinator and the High Commissioner.

Country and Stand-alone Offices

OHCHR country and stand-alone offices are established on the basis of a standard agreement between OHCHR and a host government. A mandate typically includes human rights monitoring, protection, technical cooperation activities and public reporting and is tailored to a specific country situation. These offices are primarily funded through voluntary contributions.

OHCHR has 13 country or stand-alone offices which are comprised of 12 country offices in Bolivia, Cambodia, Colombia, Guatemala, Guinea, Mauritania, Mexico, the State of Palestine[2], Togo, Tunisia, Uganda and Yemen and one stand-alone office in Kosovo.

Regional Offices and Centres

Regional offices are similarly established on the basis of an agreement with a host government and in consultation with other countries in the region. These offices focus on cross-cutting regional human rights issues and support governments in their engagement with the UN human rights mechanisms, including the human rights treaty bodies, the special procedures and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The capacities of the regional offices have been strengthened in order to support efforts undertaken to engage and work with these mechanisms, particularly the treaty monitoring bodies.
The regional offices work closely with regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations and civil society. They also complement the expertise of OHCHR country offices by providing support on institutional and thematic issues. In addition to the regional offices, OHCHR has regional centres that are established in accordance with a General Assembly resolution and imbued with a specific mandate. Regional offices and centres are funded by the UN regular budget and voluntary contributions.

OHCHR has 13 regional presences which are comprised of 11 regional offices in East Africa (Addis Ababa), Southern Africa (Pretoria), West Africa (Dakar), South-East Asia (Bangkok), the Pacific (Suva), the Middle East (Beirut), North Africa (Beirut), Central Asia (Bishkek), Europe (Brussels), Central America (Panama City) and South America (Santiago de Chile), a subregional centre for human rights and democracy for Central Africa (Yaoundé) and a Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region (Doha).

Human Rights Components of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Special Political Missions

In 2014, as part of its responsibilities to support human rights integration in United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions, OHCHR collaborated with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and the Department of Field Support (DFS) to work on the mandate reviews, assessments of strategic priorities and mission restructuring exercises of a number of missions. OHCHR also contributed to the conceptualization, planning and staffing of the human rights component of the new peace mission in the Central African Republic and continued to support the strengthening of the UN's human rights capacity to implement peace mission mandates.

OHCHR invested significant efforts regarding the crisis in the Central African Republic and to the transition from a special political mission to a full-fledged peacekeeping operation while also deploying human rights protection and monitoring capacity during the start-up phase of the operation. OHCHR advised on the drafting of the mandate to ensure that protection of human rights was at the core of the priorities of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic. It also worked jointly with DPKO and DFS to plan the operationalization of the mandate and supported the development of the mission strategy on the protection of civilians. OHCHR participated in the mission reconfiguration for the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and in the closure of the United Nations Office in Burundi. Moreover, OHCHR engaged in the DFS-led civilian staffing reviews exercise mandated by Member States for the human rights components of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, MONUSCO and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and provided assistance with the mandate reviews for MINUSTAH, the United Nations Multidimensional

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2   Reference to the State of Palestine should be understood in compliance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 67/19.

Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), MONUSCO, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei.

OHCHR contributed to briefings on South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) for Security Council Members of the Informal Expert Group on Protection of Civilians and provided advice on the development or revision of protection of civilian strategies and operations to the United Nations Mission in Liberia, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, MINUSMA and the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan.

In the course of 2014, 14 UN peace missions maintained a human rights component and incorporated human rights promotion and protection into their mandated work, namely Afghanistan, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Iraq, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan (Darfur). The peace mission in Burundi completed its Security Council mandate and was discontinued on 31 December.

Human Rights Advisers in United Nations Country Teams

Human rights advisers are deployed at the request of Resident Coordinators on behalf of the United Nations Country Teams or at the request of Regional Teams of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG). Advisers assist the Resident Coordinators, Heads of UN agencies and members of UNCTs to integrate and implement human rights through their programming strategies and their implementation and help build and strengthen national human rights capacities. Other functions include advising and providing training to independent national human rights institutions and other stakeholders; advising State actors on the promotion and protection of human rights and other UN norms and standards; building networks with and providing practical support to civil society actors; providing operational support to human rights training and/or national capacity-building activities; promoting engagement with the international human rights mechanisms; and advising on integrating human rights in humanitarian response and post-crisis recovery processes as applicable.

Human rights advisers are funded through extrabudgetary contributions. In some past instances, cost-sharing agreements were concluded with UNDP or relevant UNCTs and other UN entities at the country level. In 2014, new deployments were

funded through a multi-donor trust fund established under the UNDG's Human Rights Working Group, chaired by OHCHR, to support the implementation of the 2012 UNDG strategy for the deployment of new human rights advisers.

As of 31 December 2014, OHCHR had deployed 26 human rights advisers in Bangladesh[3], Chad, Dominican Republic[3], Honduras, Jamaica[3], Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi[3], Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, the Philippines[3], Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Serbia, Sierra Leone[3], the Southern Caucasus (based in Tbilisi and covering Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia), Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Tanzania[3], Timor-Leste[3], the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine and Zambia[3] as well as for UNDG regional teams in Bangkok[3] and Panama[3]. The posts of Human Rights Adviser in Ecuador, Maldives[3] and Niger were discontinued during 2014.

Engagement in Humanitarian Action

The Office sustained strong engagement in humanitarian action at the global and field level. This ensured that the protection of human rights was maintained as a central tenet of humanitarian action in line with the UN's Human Rights Up Front Action Plan and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action agenda.

To this end, OHCHR engaged with relevant policy, strategy, decision-making and operational fora, particularly at the global level, through consistent dialogue with and contribution to the IASC Principals, Working Group and Emergency Directors Group, as well as with Humanitarian Coordinators, Humanitarian Country Teams and Protection Clusters at the field level. Furthermore, OHCHR placed 26 human rights officers at the disposal of the Inter-Agency Rapid Response Mechanism to strengthen the system's operational protection capacity to respond to major crises. With InterAction, OHCHR maintained its co-chair role of the Global Protection Cluster Task Team responsible for facilitating implementation of the IASC Protection Priority, thereby contributing to the roll out of an independent whole-of-system review of protection in humanitarian crises. A key element of the implementation of the OHCHR strategy on engagement in this field included the training of 24 additional staff members on OHCHR's

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3   Deployed through the UNDG Human Rights Working Group.

role in humanitarian preparedness and response efforts. A lessons-learned exercise was also initiated to review and build on OHCHR's engagement in the Philippines in the immediate aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan.

The Office's rapid and surge deployments in the context of humanitarian action increased exponentially in 2014, including through missions dispatched to: the Philippines following Typhoon Haiyan; Rakhine State in Myanmar; the Central African Republic in the context of the declaration of the Level 3 crisis; Gaza following the upsurge of conflict in July; Ukraine in support of OHCHR's role as co-chair of the protection sector and its broader engagement in humanitarian efforts; Mauritania in support of OHCHR's lead role of the protection sector; and Lebanon in support of OHCHR's protection engagement relevant to the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic. In addition to maintaining its Protection Cluster lead role in Haiti, Palestine, and the Pacific (as co-lead with UNHCR), OHCHR maintained leadership of two regional Protection Clusters in the Philippines in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan and in Liberia in the context of the Ebola crisis. In 2014, OHCHR accessed humanitarian pooled funds (i.e., the Central Emergency Response Fund and the Emergency Response Fund) for engagement in Mauritania, Myanmar, Ukraine and Yemen; and obtained funding from bilateral sources for its engagement in humanitarian action in Palestine and Syria.