

OHCHR's approach to field work

Background

OHCHR's Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division (FOTCD) is responsible for overseeing and supporting work of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) at the country and regional levels, including through advisory services and technical cooperation.

At the country level, OHCHR works with national counterparts to strengthen national protection systems and support the implementation of effective measures to overcome obstacles to the realization of human rights. This includes efforts to establish or reinforce justice and accountability mechanisms at the national level, including by undertaking effective monitoring and investigation, to help secure redress for victims of human rights violations. The ultimate aim of this work is to empower rights-holders to claim their rights and strengthen the capacity of duty-bearers to fulfil their obligations to deliver positive human rights outcomes. OHCHR also responds to deteriorating human rights situations and early signs of emerging crises through the rapid

deployment of monitoring missions or additional surge capacity for UN operations on the ground in the context of humanitarian emergencies.

As of the end of 2015, OHCHR was running 65 field presences and providing support to other members of the UN system through rapid deployments of human rights officers in response to emerging situations across regions.

Types of field presences

OHCHR operates through two main types of field presences: stand-alone offices and collaborative arrangements. The first category is comprised of country and regional offices which are under the direct supervision of OHCHR. The second category consists of field presences with double reporting 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 resident coordinators and the High Commissioner.



OHCHR staff member at an indigenous territory in Alto Parapeti, Bolivia, where a hydrocarbon exploration project has affected indigenous lands and graves.

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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 14 country or stand-alone offices which are comprised of 13 country offices in: Bolivia, Burundi, Cambodia, Colombia, Guatemala, Guinea, Honduras, Mauritania, Mexico, the State of Palestine¹, Tunisia, Uganda and Yemen, as well as one field-based structure in Seoul covering the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Regional Offices and Centres

Regional offices are established through an agreement with a host government and in consultation with other countries in the region. These offices have an important role in supporting governments in their engagement with the UN human rights mechanisms, specifically the human rights treaty bodies, the special procedures and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). They also focus on cross-cutting regional human rights issues, in close cooperation with regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations and civil society. Regional offices further support and cooperate with OHCHR country offices by providing assistance on institutional and thematic issues. In addition to the regional offices, OHCHR maintains regional centres with specific mandates established through General Assembly resolutions. Regional offices and centres are funded by the UN regular budget and voluntary contributions.

OHCHR maintains 12 regional presences which are comprised of 10 regional offices in: East Africa (Addis Ababa), Southern Africa (Pretoria), West Africa (Dakar), South-East Asia (Bangkok), the Pacific (Suva), the Middle East and North Africa (Beirut), Central Asia (Bishkek), Europe (Brussels), Central America (Panama City), 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).

¹ Reference to the State of Palestine should be understood in compliance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 67/19.

Human rights components of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Special Political Missions

In 2015, OHCHR's capacity to support peace missions was strengthened with the establishment of the Peace Missions Support Section (PMSS) in New York. The work of PMSS has been critical to securing the integration of human rights in UN peacekeeping operations as well as in special political missions, primarily in relation to mission mandates, structures and concepts of operations, policy development and implementation and strategic engagement with Member States and UN departments that are dealing with peace and security issues. The Section provides thematic technical support and advice to the human rights components, Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and other parts of peace operations. It also extends human rights technical expertise and quality control in support of the Department of Field Support for the clearance, identification, recruitment and deployment of human rights staff in UN peace operations, especially with regard to start-up teams. In order to ensure thematic quality and a coherent UN approach, OHCHR maintains close coordination and communication with various UN partners, particularly the human rights components and relevant Integrated Operational Teams, and the Inter-Agency Integrated Task Forces in New York. OHCHR's active engagement in interdepartmental fora facilitates the inclusion of human rights considerations in decision-making processes, in line with requirements of the Human Rights Up Front Action Plan.

In 2015, the Secretary-General appointed a High-level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations to shape a vision for the future of UN peace missions. Throughout the year, OHCHR actively engaged to ensure that the Panel's review reflected relevant human rights aspects and developments in its recommendations for the adoption of new approaches for future peace operations. As a result of this successful advocacy, the final report of the Panel situated human rights at the centre of United Nations efforts to address conflict.

Fourteen UN peace missions maintained a human rights component and incorporated human rights promotion and protection into their mandated work, namely in: Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Iraq, Kosovo², Liberia, Libya, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan (Darfur).

² Reference to Kosovo should be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

Human Rights Advisers in United Nations Country Teams

Human rights advisers (HRAs) are deployed at the request of resident coordinators on behalf of the United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs). They may also be posted at the request of Regional Teams of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG). Advisers support and 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 to build and strengthen national human rights capacities. Other functions include: advising and providing training to independent national human rights institutions (NHRIs) 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 when applicable, advising on integrating human rights in humanitarian response and post-crisis recovery processes.

Human rights advisers are funded through extrabudgetary contributions. In some instances, cost-sharing agreements are concluded with UNDP or relevant UNCTs and other UN entities at the country level. Since 2014, new deployments are funded through a Multi-Donor Trust Fund established under the UNDG Human Rights Working Group (UNDG-HRWG), chaired by OHCHR, to support the implementation of the 2012 UNDG strategy for the deployment of new HRAs. Almost all of the UNCTs that received a HRA under the strategy managed to fulfil their commitment to the cost-sharing arrangement for the second year of the deployment. Where challenges remain in meeting this cost-sharing requirement, OHCHR will continue to support local efforts to ensure the continuation of these important deployments.

OHCHR has deployed 25 human rights advisers or national human rights officers in: Bangladesh³, Chad, the Dominican Republic³, Jamaica³, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi³, Mozambique^{3,4}, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, the Philippines³, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, Rwanda, Serbia, Sierra Leone³, the Southern Caucasus (based in Tbilisi and covering Armenia,

Azerbaijan and Georgia), Sri Lanka, Tanzania³, Timor-Leste³, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Zambia³, as well as for UNDG regional teams in Bangkok³ and Panama³.

Engagement in Humanitarian Action

The Office sustained strong engagement in humanitarian action at the global and field levels, with a view to ensuring that the protection of human rights remains 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 Agenda.

At the global level, OHCHR engaged with relevant policy, strategy, decision-making and operational fora, including by maintaining consistent dialogue with and contribution to the IASC Principals, Working Group and the Emergency Directors Group. The Office continued to serve as co-chair, along with InterAction, of the Global Protection Cluster Task Team on the IASC Protection Priority. In 2015, the Task Team completed the *Independent Whole-of-System Review of Protection in Humanitarian Crises*, the findings and recommendations of which have triggered debates about strengthening protection in humanitarian action. The Task Team has also initiated the development of an IASC policy on protection.

At the field level, the Office continued working closely with Humanitarian Coordinators, Humanitarian Country Teams and Protection Clusters, ensuring that the protection of human rights was integrated in humanitarian preparedness and response. OHCHR leadership and deployments contributed to more comprehensive protection responses in various locations. An analysis of human rights monitoring experiences provided information, helped shape humanitarian decision-making and contributed to the development of more targeted responses to protection needs.

OHCHR deployments included missions to: Nepal, following the earthquake to provide support to the Protection Cluster and to the National Human Rights Commission as it assumed a co-leadership role in the Cluster; Ukraine, in support of OHCHR's role as co-lead of the Protection Cluster; Mauritania, to implement a project funded by the Central Emergency Response Fund on vulnerabilities and to provide technical advice on a human rights-based approach and the cluster system to the UNCT,

³ Deployed through the UNDG-Human Rights Working Group.

⁴ Deployment of the Human Rights Adviser is scheduled for 2016.

government and civil society organizations; and Yemen, in support of OHCHR's efforts to monitor and report on the ongoing conflict. In addition to maintaining its Protection Cluster lead in Palestine and Mauritania, OHCHR continued to co-lead Clusters in Liberia (the Protection Partners Forum co-

led with the Ministry of Justice); the Pacific (Fiji) and Ukraine, both in cooperation with UNHCR. Finally, three human rights officers were deployed to advise the humanitarian leadership working on the Syria crisis (from Lebanon), Jordan and Turkey on human rights issues.