

Poverty, Inequality and Violence: is there a human rights response?

An International Conference
organized by
The World Organisation Against Torture

Geneva, 4 to 6 October 2005

Conference Documents

The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) organized in Geneva from 4 to 6 October 2005 an international conference designed to answer the question “*How can we prevent or reduce violence, including torture, by acting on the root causes found in violations of economic, social and cultural rights?*”.

Human rights defenders from some 40 countries, United Nations human rights experts, representatives of international trade unions, academics, international officials and representatives of donors gathered for the three day conference to discuss the causal relationship between inequalities (poverty and violations of economic, social and cultural rights) and violence. Violence being understood in its broad sense, as state sponsored (torture, summary executions, disappearances, etc.), social and domestic violence.

While the impact of socio-economic factors on the emergence of violence has already been the subject of much research, the question has not been approached from a human rights perspective. In other words, the relationship between the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights and violations of civil and political rights – such as the right to life and the protection against torture – still needs to be examined.

The Conference is part of a project being carried out by the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT) with the support of the Geneva International Academic Network, the Dutch Foundation ICCO, the Paris based “Fondation des droits de l’homme au travail” and the Swiss Federal Government (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation). The project’s ultimate objective is to identify specific actions which the various actors can take to reduce violence by acting on its economic, social and cultural root causes.

The Conference based its work on a study entitled “*Poverty, inequality and violence: The Economic, social and cultural root causes of violence, including torture, a human rights perspective*” carried out by OMCT. That study includes an extensive (84 page) academic analysis investigating the correlations between violence and socio-economic inequalities as well as a chapter dealing with the relation of access to resources and domestic violence in South Africa. A further chapter examines the relationship between economic recession and violence in developed countries.

In addition, the study contains in-depth analyses of the situation in five countries (Argentina, Egypt, Nepal, South Africa and Uzbekistan) along with case studies examining specific instances in those countries prepared in collaboration with national human rights partners. An analysis of how selected international human rights mechanisms, including the United Nations Treaty Bodies and international development and financial institutions

approach the issue is also part of the study. Summaries of the principal points and conclusions of each chapter of the study are available (see below).

Conference participants made a wide range of recommendations to improve the respect for human rights and to deal with the root causes of violence which can be found in violations of economic, social and cultural rights. These will be included in the report on the Conference now being prepared.

Accessible through this web page are the following documents relating to the Conference.

I. Poverty, inequality and violence: The Economic, social and cultural root causes of violence, including torture, a human rights perspective. Study prepared by the World Organisation Against Torture

A. [Summaries of the principal points and conclusions of the study](#)

B. The study

Part I. Empirical studies of the correlation between social and economic inequalities and violence

A. The correlation of violence to socio-economic inequalities; an empirical analysis by Alan Wood

1. [Summary of the analysis](#)

2. [Full analysis](#)

B. [Establishing the correlation between women's home/property ownership and levels of domestic violence; a case study from South Africa by Cedric Loots of the Human Rights Institute of South Africa](#)

C. [Economic, social and cultural rights, inequality and victimisation: The challenge for developed countries; Summary of studies by Anders Nilsson and Felipe Estrada](#)

Part II. Impact of socio-economic factors on violence; the national level perspective: Human rights, the socio-economic situation and violence in five countries

A. [Argentina; Country Profile and Case Study](#)

B. [Egypt; Country Profile and Case Studies](#)

C. [Nepal; Country Profile and Case Studies](#)

D. [South Africa; Country Profile](#)

E. [Uzbekistan; Country Profile and Case Studies](#)

Part III. Impact of socio-economic factors on violence; the perspectives of human rights mechanisms and international organizations

A. International and regional human rights mechanisms and the structural causes of violence

1. United Nations human rights organs

- Introduction

- a. [United Nations Treaty bodies](#)

- i) HRC
 - ii) CESCR
 - iii) CEDAW
 - iv) CERD
 - v) CRC
 - vi) CAT

- Lessons learned/conclusions

- b. United Nations Special procedures mechanisms

- i) Violence against women
 - ii) Health
 - iii) Executions
 - iv) HR Defenders
 - v) Extreme poverty
 - vi) Indigenous peoples
 - vii) Housing
 - viii) Arbitrary Detention
 - ix) Food
 - x) Sale of Children
 - xi) Torture

- Lessons learned/conclusions

- B. International labour, development, financial and trade institutions and the structural causes of violence

1. [International Labour Organisation](#)
2. [World Bank](#)
3. International Monetary Fund
4. [World Trade Organization](#)

II. Background documents to the study

- A. Establishing the correlation between women's home/property ownership and levels of domestic violence; a case study from South Africa by Cedric Loots of the Human Rights Institute of South Africa.

- B. Background documents for the country profiles and case studies provided by National Partners

1. Argentina

- English – [Annex 1](#) – [Annex 2](#) – [Annex 3](#)- [Annex 4](#) – [Final Report](#)

- Spanish – [Parte I, II, III y IV](#)

2. Egypt

3. Nepal

4. South Africa

5. [Uzbekistan](#)

- C. Other background documents

1. -[Anders Nilsson & Felipe Estrada, Victimisation, Inequality and Welfare during an Economic Recession; A study of Self Reported Victimisation in Sweden 1988-1999.](#)
 -Felipe Estrada and Anders Nilsson: “Exposure to threatening and violent behaviour among single mothers – the significance of lifestyle, neighbourhood and welfare situation”, *British Journal of Criminology*, 44:2:168-187.
 -[A third study has also been prepared by Felipe Estrada and Anders Nilsson entitled “The inequality of victimisation. Exposure to crime among rich and poor 1984-2001”](#), Arbetsrapport/Institutet för Framtidsstudier; 2005:8 Institute for Futures Studies Box 591, SE-101 31 Stockholm, Sweden
2. United Nations Development Group, Common Country Assessment Uzbekistan 2003

D. Conference documents

1. Keynote speeches

- [Mrs. Louise Arbour](#), United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
- [Eric Sottas, Director](#), World Organisation Against Torture

2. Conference programme

3. Provisional list of participants