

Project Title: The United Nations and Human Rights in Post Conflict Situations
Dates: June 2001- May 2003
Location: Nottingham
Unit: Post Conflict and Capacity-Building
Core Staff: Nigel White, Dirk Klassen
Funders: UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and HRLC

Project Summary

This two-year research project studied the role of the UN in protecting and entrenching human rights in post conflict situations such as in Afghanistan and East Timor, with the aim of producing constructive criticism of UN practice and developing clear and practical guidance for future activities. As part of the project the HRLC convened a 2-day conference in September 2002 to consider the project research and analysis. The conference papers were published in an edited collection in a book edited by Nigel White and Dirk Klaasen, *The UN, Human Rights and Post-Conflict Situations*. Jointly funded by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and HRLC.

Objectives

The focus of the project was to consider the UN and human rights protection in post-conflict situations, with the major aim being to assist in the establishment of standards and mechanisms for human rights protection following the cessation of hostilities and to encourage best practice. The overall approach was one of constructive criticism of UN practice to date, and the development of clear and practical guidance for future UN activities.

Participants

90 participants attended the project conference in September 2002, including academic commentators, as well as UN representatives and experts from other organisations and agencies working in the area.

Activities

Research

The first two main topics for research were:

- A consideration of the different types and levels of human rights assistance provided by the UN in the post-conflict phase of state-building.
- Identification of the legal principles and norms that govern operations, the norms that should govern such activities, as well as revealing weaknesses in UN activities to date.

After establishing these foundations, research was subsequently conducted into:

- The future protection of human rights provided by the UN as part of its peaceful state building efforts. Practical aspects were considered including the UN's

assistance with the constitutional make-up of the state, the embedding of human rights provisions and protection within a state, and the development of the rule of law and civil society as components of an integrated human rights protection strategy.

- The UN's promotion of mechanisms for past accountability for human rights atrocities (as far as these processes impact upon future human rights protection attempts).

Although the project looked at UN practice in the area as a whole in order to glean principles of best practice, the project was given particular focus by a detailed assessment of the problems facing the UN in Kosovo.

Conference

As part of the project research and analysis, the HRLC hosted the conference, *The United Nations And Human Rights Protection In Post Conflict Situations* (Nottingham, 12 And 13 September 2002). The conference considered the initial analysis and provided academic as well as practical criticism of it, in addition to developing its ideas. 90 participants attended, and invited contributors included academic commentators, as well as UN representatives and experts from other organisations and agencies working in the area. Papers were presented on general themes and case studies of particular post-conflict situations.

Outputs

- The production of an initial analysis of UN practice and law in the area of human rights protection and promotion in post-conflict situations. As the largest provider as well as the organisation which has a large degree of responsibility for setting the standards in this area, a critical evaluation of the UN's involvement in human rights protection in post conflict situations made a significant contribution to the development of best practice in this area.
- An edited collection of papers based on the conference, which recommend improvements and identify good practice in the UN's human rights protection and assistance in post-conflict situations. *The UN, Human Rights and Post-Conflict Situations*, edited by Nigel White and Dirk Klaasen, was published in February 2005.