



**Economic and Social  
Council**

Distr.  
GENERAL

E/CN.4/1990/SR.36  
3 May 1990

ENGLISH  
Original: FRENCH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Forty-sixth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIRST PART (PUBLIC)\* OF THE 36th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Thursday, 22 February 1990, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mrs. QUISUMBING (Philippines)

CONTENTS

Statement by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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, including:

(a) Question of human rights in Cyprus (continued)

---

\* The summary record of the second part (closed) of the meeting appears as document E/CN.4/1990/SR.36/Add.1.

---

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Official Records Editing Section, room E.4108, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Any corrections to the records of the public meetings of the Commission at this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

STATEMENT BY THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

1. The CHAIRMAN, introducing Mr. Stoltenberg, said that the latter had occupied the post of Minister of Defence of Norway in 1979 and of Minister for Foreign Affairs in 1987. He had also chaired the United Nations North-South Committee and had been appointed High Commissioner for Refugees in January 1990.
2. Mr. STOLTENBERG (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that the dramatic changes that had taken place in Europe and the steady progress elsewhere now made it possible to approach humanitarian problems, and particularly the refugee problem, with renewed energy. There were currently 14 million refugees in the world. In order to solve that complex problem, account had to be taken of all the factors which, singly or in combination, impelled people to leave their countries: persecution was certainly one of them, but there were also wars, man-made disasters, poverty and environmental destruction.
3. The organizations dealing with the problem, beginning with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, could intervene only within the limits of their mandate, resources and experience. It was therefore desirable that the response capabilities of the multilateral system as a whole be mobilized in a comprehensive approach. That was why he had wished to address the Commission at the outset of his tenure of office.
4. The Commission for Human Rights had an important role to play in such a comprehensive approach. Violations of human rights were a major cause of the refugee exodus and, through the efforts which it made to curb such violations, the Commission contributed to the prevention of refugee flows; violations of human rights also created complex problems of protection in countries of asylum; and the return to an acceptable human rights situation in countries of origin could be the key to the resolution of long-standing refugee problems. In all those cases, the refugee issue must be placed in a humanitarian and human rights context. Such a proposition might appear self-evident, particularly to the Commission, but it was by no means always accepted.
5. There was currently a tendency to assimilate the problem of refugees seeking asylum to that of all kinds of illegal migrants, including undesirable ones. But refugees were not migrants in any sense: they left not because they wished to leave but because the conditions in their country of origin impelled them to do so. The international community must therefore concern itself with that situation with greater urgency.
6. Strengthened observance of civil and political rights, but also of economic, social and cultural rights, was fundamental. In that connection it was clear that development occupied a central place in the solution of the refugee problem. Development aid had a considerable potential for promoting human rights and could, in particular, play an important role in voluntary repatriation.
7. The link between human rights violations and massive outflows of refugees would be examined by the Working Group on Solutions and Protection, which was soon to meet at the request of the Executive Committee of UNHCR. Asylum, in

particular, posed a number of serious problems which deserved to be considered by the Commission, such as the refoulement of refugees by certain States, their unwarranted detention, sometimes in unacceptable conditions, threats to their security and their forcible recruitment into armed forces or armed attacks against camps. The right to seek and enjoy asylum remained a fundamental right, and its denial had very serious consequences.

8. Attention should also be drawn to the case of women and children, who were particularly vulnerable and for whom UNHCR had developed special policies and programmes. The Commission had shown that it, too, had been aware of their needs, particularly during the negotiations which had produced the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

9. Those problems had already been raised at previous sessions of the Commission by the Director of UNHCR's Division of Refugee Law and Doctrine and were still of serious concern. It would be beneficial were the Commission to give them greater attention, not only in its resolutions, but also under the special procedures and reporting mechanisms which it had established.

10. According to the most broadly accepted legal definition, refugee status was granted to persons outside their own country who, due to a well-founded fear of persecution, were unable or unwilling to be protected by that country. However, some people who fled their own country were not fleeing from persecution but from ethnic or social unrest. They were not entitled to refugee status, and their situation was therefore even more precarious. UNHCR had therefore deemed it necessary to protect them. In his opinion, that problem provided real scope for multilateral humanitarian action.

11. In such an international climate, the promotion of refugee protection principles and global accession to refugee law instruments took on a heightened significance for UNHCR. In addition, the already close co-operation between UNHCR and human rights bodies, especially the Centre for Human Rights, could be considerably strengthened. Emphasis should also be placed on the vital role played by non-governmental organizations in the protection of refugees: they co-operated with UNHCR in project implementation, helped to finance its activities and mobilized the support and assistance of the international community. UNHCR would continue to explore with them new modes of co-operation adapted to each situation.

12. UNHCR would continue to do everything within its capacities and resources to protect refugees and to find lasting solutions to their problems, but it could not carry out that complex task alone. In an increasingly interdependent world an innovative approach which drew on the capabilities of the United Nations system as a whole was therefore necessary. The Commission had an important role to play in helping to promote a more humane world for all people. The way in which States treated refugees was a touchstone of their human rights policy.

13. The CHAIRMAN assured the High Commissioner for Refugees that the Commission had heeded his appeal for closer co-operation and had appreciated the link which he had highlighted between its own activities and those of UNHCR. The Commission would reflect on the matter and respond to the appeal during the present session.

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, INCLUDING:

(a) QUESTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN CYPRUS (agenda item 12) (continued)

(E/CN.4/1990/5, 21, 22 and Corr.1 and Add.1, 25-28, 51, 52, 55, 57, 69, 70 and 74; E/CN.4/1990/NGO/1, 3, 9, 10, 15, 19, 23-27, 31, 32, 34, 35, 40, 47, 53-55 and 58; A/44/526, 573, 620, 622, 635, 669 and 671)

14. Mrs. OLSEN (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom) devoted most of her statement to violations of human rights in El Salvador, particularly violations involving women and children. Such violations must be considered in the light of the serious crisis which the country was experiencing, characterized by the persistence of an armed conflict, a dramatic reduction in purchasing power, increased unemployment, under-employment and infant mortality, malnutrition of the overwhelming majority of children, the proliferation of shanty towns, a very high rate of illiteracy and a low health budget that was three times less than the defence and public security budgets.

15. According to the Human Rights Commission of El Salvador, in 1989 a total of 6,233 persons, including Mrs. Cecilia del Carmen Segura, who had been abducted and brutally tortured, had been subjected to various violations of their rights, including abductions, disappearances, murders, psychological and/or physical torture, arbitrary arrests and detentions, house searches without a warrant and looting.

16. Under the state of siege in force since 12 November 1989, the military, the security forces and paramilitary groups were able to intimidate the civilian population with complete impunity. For example, Mrs. Herrera, President of the Women's Legal Assistance Centre, had been abducted by military personnel, interrogated and then killed by a bullet in the head. On 1 December 1989 military personnel, after failing to find the trade union activist Jorge Alberto Amaya at his home, had abducted nine members of his family, including five children aged between 2 and 12 years old. Some were at present still in prison. Manuel Antonio Colindres Panameño, who had given evidence before the United Nations Special Representative to El Salvador concerning the murder of his parents and brother by soldiers, had been abducted by military personnel on 8 January 1990. His whereabouts was still unknown.

17. In November and December 1989, at the height of the armed clashes, the Government of El Salvador, far from protecting the civilian population, had ordered the army to bomb the poorest and most densely populated districts. It had not been possible to identify or count the many civilian victims, who had been hastily buried in common graves.

18. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom therefore requested the Commission to urge the Special Representative to visit El Salvador in order to investigate the bombings and the damage which they had caused to the civilian population and to extend his mandate to enable him to collect further information on human rights violations in El Salvador.

19. Turning to Nicaragua, she requested the Commission to do its utmost to verify reports that women had been abducted by the Contras in 1984 and taken to camps in Honduras, where they had been raped, and to ensure that the 9,000 persons still in those camps could, if they wished, return freely to Nicaragua under the peace accords signed by the Central American States.

20. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom wished to sound a cry of alarm concerning the massive violations of the rights of the Kurdish people by Iraq and by Turkey.

21. Mr. SELEPENG (Botswana) recalled that the Commission on Human Rights, aware of the urgent need to restore the human rights of the Cypriot population, had adopted various resolutions on the subject since 1976. His delegation considered that the international community in general, and the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Commission on Human Rights in particular, must take advantage of the current climate of détente and redouble their efforts to find a just and lasting solution to the Cyprus problem. Such a solution could be found only if the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus and its status as a non-aligned country were respected. Also, foreign troops must be withdrawn so as to create a favourable climate for reconciliation and reconstruction, and the fundamental rights and freedoms of the people of Cyprus, including freedom of movement, freedom of settlement and the right to property of which it had been dispossessed following the events of 1974, must be restored.

22. His delegation therefore urged the Commission to use its good offices to enable the refugees to return to their homes and to recover their property. All foreign settlers must be encouraged to leave the island and Cypriots must be permitted to rebuild the homes which they had had to leave 16 years previously. He believed that the Commission would be able to find a way of alleviating the sufferings of the Cypriot people.

23. Mr. OLIVEIRA SANTOS DA COSTA (Observer for Angola) said that, although 30 years had gone by since the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 1514 (XV) and although substantial progress had been made in the field of human rights, there were still countries and territories subjected to foreign domination and occupation despite the efforts made by the international community.

24. In the Middle East, for example, Israel was pursuing an expansionist policy by occupying Palestine and other Arab territories. The repressive practices to which the populations of those territories were being subjected were contrary to the International Covenants on Human Rights and must be condemned by the whole international community. A solution to the problem must be found with the utmost urgency, in order to ensure that the rights of the peoples of the region, including the Palestinian people, were respected.

25. East Timor had been subjected to a bloody invasion and to an unjustifiable occupation by a foreign country. The people of East Timor must be able to exercise its right to self-determination, and he appealed to all parties concerned to co-operate with the Secretary-General of the United Nations with a view to finding a comprehensive and lasting solution to the problem.

26. Another cause for concern was the persistent occupation of part of the Republic of Cyprus in defiance of the resolutions adopted by the Commission on Human Rights and the Security Council. Only respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Cyprus would enable the Cypriot population to exercise its rights in full and the refugees who wished to do so to return to their homes.

27. Namibia's forthcoming accession to independence and the recent release of Nelson Mandela were encouraging developments, but the international community must continue to play an active role in the total dismantling of apartheid.

28. Mr. WAGNER (International Human Rights Law Group) said that the welcome events in the field of human rights that had recently taken place in the world had, unfortunately, had no impact in three countries - China, Guatemala and Sri Lanka - where the right of everyone to life, liberty and security of person set forth in article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was being routinely violated.

29. In China, following the suppression of the peaceful pro-democracy movement in June 1989, several thousand persons had been arrested for having sought to express their political opinions and, according to reliable information received by the International Human Rights Law Group, some 40 of them at least had been executed, in some cases secretly, without having been charged or tried. In addition, participants in the demonstrations had been executed for minor offences which had not merited the death penalty, since, according to article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the death penalty could be pronounced only for "the most serious crimes". Furthermore, the policy under which, according to the President of the Supreme Court of the People's Republic of China, Chinese courts must deal leniently with those who confessed their crimes and inflict severe punishment on those who refused to do so was not consistent with the principle of the presumption of innocence set forth in article 10 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and showed that the Chinese courts were neither independent nor impartial in cases involving participants in the democracy movement.

30. The treatment meted out to the pro-democracy demonstrators was in no way an internal affair of concern only to China, since China had ratified treaties that recognized the international community's right to concern itself with the way in which a State treated its own citizens. It had also voted in favour of resolutions of the Commission concerning the dispatch of United Nations missions to examine the human rights situation in other countries, as well as in favour of resolution 1989/5 in which the Commission had strongly condemned South Africa, even though the Government of South Africa itself affirmed that apartheid was an internal affair. Apartheid and the suppression of the pro-democracy movement in China were certainly not comparable situations, but the fact that China had voted in favour of that resolution was irrefutable proof that it recognized the legitimacy of the concern expressed by the international community regarding the violations of human rights committed in the territory of a sovereign State. Consequently, the Commission must appeal to the Government of the People's Republic of China to stop arresting and punishing persons who had peacefully expressed their opinions and to ensure that all persons currently detained were promptly and unconditionally released or charged and tried in accordance with international recognized standards.

31. The International Human Rights Law Group was also extremely concerned about the deterioration in the human rights situation in Guatemala, despite the few brief improvements that had occurred after the change-over from a military to a civilian Government in 1985. Several hundred cases of extrajudicial killings and forced or involuntary disappearances had been reported in 1989, and several students had been the victims of such practices since August 1989. Yet the judiciary were still powerless to cope with the situation; although remedies such as habeas corpus were available in cases of human rights violations, judges were afraid to give effect to them. Since 1985 only one habeas corpus case had gone beyond the initial procedural stage, and all action had been blocked when the Supreme Court had decided that only a military court was competent to examine it.

32. Although Guatemala was a party to the American Convention on Human Rights, article 4 of which guaranteed the right to life, liberty and security of person, the Government of Guatemala had taken no action to put an end to the systematic violations of human rights or to improve the human rights situation in the country, despite the special advisory services furnished to it for that purpose in accordance with the recommendations of the Commission.

33. In Sri Lanka, too, violations of the right to life were becoming more and more frequent and systematic. The Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances had listed 33 new cases of disappearance in 1989 and had reported that 901 cases remained unresolved. Many lawyers and journalists who had reported human rights violations had been threatened with death or killed.

34. Nevertheless, the Government of Sri Lanka had done nothing to bring those responsible for the violations to justice. In fact, any investigation on the subject was almost impossible because of the powers conferred upon the Government by the state of emergency reimposed in June 1989. Regulation 55 FF. had been repealed, but none of the acts committed by the Government's security forces under it could give rise to an inquiry or prosecution. Finally, the Indemnity Act of December 1988 provided that no criminal proceedings could be brought against members of the security forces, who could thus act with complete impunity.

35. The seriousness of the human rights situation in China, Guatemala and Sri Lanka called for special action by the United Nations. Consequently, the International Human Rights Law Group suggested that the Commission should appoint special rapporteurs to investigate human rights violations in those three countries and ways of preventing them.

36. Mr. HUSSEINI (International Organization of Journalists) said that his organization grouped together over 260,000 journalists from 124 countries and that its main objectives were to protect the right to freedom of expression and information in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to promote professional standards in journalism and enhance the social responsibility of journalists in accordance with the international principles of professional ethics, to promote the democratization and autonomy of the media, to protect and strengthen the moral and material rights of journalists through their professional associations and trade unions, and to promote the protection and safety of journalists, as well as world-wide solidarity among them. In its efforts to achieve those objectives, IOJ attached great importance to co-operation with the United Nations system, and in particular with the

Centre for Human Rights and the Commission on Human Rights. On many occasions it had requested the Commission to intervene in order to put an end to human rights violations in various parts of the world and had submitted a document on the safety and protection of journalists to it at its present session.

37. In recent years journalism had become one of the most dangerous professions in the world. The right to inform and to be informed, which was one of the most basic human rights, was being increasingly violated throughout the world, particularly in countries subjected to dictatorial and oppressive régimes. Many journalists had been arrested, tortured, imprisoned and even murdered while performing their duty to inform. In 1989 alone, 60 of them had been killed in the performance of their duties. The highest number of murders of journalists had been recorded in Latin America, particularly in Colombia, as a result of political terrorism and the increase in drug trafficking.

38. According to other statistics, 269 journalists had been unjustly arrested and imprisoned in 1989, approximately 100 per cent more than in 1988, mostly in developing countries where basic human rights were systematically violated. Moreover, many journalists were being kidnapped. Three more had been kidnapped in 1989, and it was still not known what had become of the British journalist, John McCaffrey, who had been kidnapped in Lebanon in 1985.

39. It was becoming increasingly difficult for journalists to do their work in several parts of the world, and the international and regional organizations of journalists grouped in the Consultative Club that operated under the auspices of UNESCO had given the matter serious consideration at their latest meeting in Mexico City in July 1989. They had decided to request all intergovernmental bodies, including the Commission on Human Rights, to take steps to guarantee the safety of journalists in the performance of their duties.

40. To reduce journalists to silence and to prevent them from informing their readers constituted a flagrant violation of human rights and of all the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Commission should therefore act without delay and appoint a rapporteur to study the matter and to report back to it at its forty-seventh session. IOJ, for its part, was ready to assist the rapporteur and to help the Commission in its efforts to protect human rights.

41. Mr. CAICEDO FERNANDEZ (Latin American Federation of Associations for Relatives of Disappeared Detainees) said that the statements made by his Federation (FEDEFAM) were based on the testimony of families of disappeared detainees and on reliable evidence and that FEDEFAM's only objective was to seek out the truth.

42. The report prepared by Mr. Wako, Special Rapporteur on Summary or Arbitrary Executions, on his visit to Colombia in October 1989 (E/CN.4/1990/22/Add.1) gave a comprehensive picture of the current situation in that country, where human rights, including the right to life, were being grossly and systematically violated. The Colombian people was the real victim of the acts of violence committed by the military, the State security agencies and paramilitary groups that acted with complete impunity, applying criminal methods of repression developed for the Latin American continent by the United States under a system of government which gave precedence to force over law. Mr. Wako's report clearly showed that army and police personnel had



been involved in individual and collective murders committed with the aid of paramilitary groups established under the organic decree on national defence promulgated under the state of siege which had been in force in the country for 40 years. The Government had provisionally suspended only one of the articles of that decree and had amended another, but it had taken no effective measure to dismantle the paramilitary groups, to purge the army or to change its repressive methods. It took shelter behind the campaign against drug traffickers in order to conceal its direct or indirect responsibilities in what had been called "the dirty war", in which many army and police officers were involved who were still serving or had even been promoted.

43. The figures given by Mr. Wako in his report gave some idea of the extent of the violence in Colombia. However, the disappearance, following their arrest by a paramilitary group, of 42 farmers on 14 January 1990 in the Uraba area marked a new stage in the escalating terror, as it constituted a collective disappearance. It was therefore essential for the Commission to appoint, with the utmost urgency, a special rapporteur to monitor the human rights situation in Colombia.

44. With regard to Chile, which was the subject of the report prepared by Mr. Fernando Volio Jiménez (E/CN.4/1990/5), FEDEFAM considered that the election of a new Government in December 1989 did not justify the removal of the question of human rights in Chile from the Commission's agenda. General Pinochet had succeeded in remaining at the head of the Chilean army, which was primarily responsible for the human rights violations committed during the 16 years of military dictatorship; all the crimes committed by agents of the dictatorship had remained unpunished and further murders had taken place in late 1989; the 774 cases of disappearance reported since 1973 had still not been elucidated and the military courts were still applying methods that were contrary to the principles of international law. The Special Rapporteur on Chile himself recommended that the Chilean Government should not carry out the death penalty imposed on 17 political prisoners, that it should continue to investigate the disappearances and that it should forbid torture.

45. The Commission on Human Rights therefore had a duty to continue to monitor the situation in Chile and to make sure that the new Chilean Government was willing to investigate the violations committed and to punish their perpetrators, notwithstanding any attempts which the military might make to sabotage the rule of law.

46. In El Salvador the human rights situation had worsened with the assumption of power by the Arena party and following the FMLN's military offensive, which had served as a pretext for the Government and the army to intensify their repression of the people of El Salvador by sheltering behind the powers conferred by the state of siege decreed on 12 November 1989 and extended on 8 February 1990. Since then the number of killings and disappearances had further increased, and the freedoms of expression, association and movement had been restricted. The offices of humanitarian and trade union organizations were attacked and sacked, and persons who denounced human rights violations ran the risk of being abducted or murdered. That was what had happened to the young Manuel Colindres Panameño, who had been abducted by soldiers on 8 January 1990 and was still missing.

47. Moreover, like various institutions in Guatemala, including the Congress of Guatemala, FEDEFAM requested the Commission to appoint a special rapporteur to monitor the human rights situation in that country, which was currently experiencing serious difficulties, as was shown by Mr. Gros Espiell's report (E/CN.4/1990/45/Add.1).

48. Finally, FEDEFAM requested the Commission to invite the Peruvian authorities to do their utmost to try to recover alive Professor Javier Antonio Alarcón who had been missing since mid-December 1989.

49. Mr. IBARRA (Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches), speaking on behalf of the 300 member churches of the World Council of Churches, drew attention to certain situations involving human rights violations which called for immediate action by the Commission. First of all, in the Philippines, although certain abuses had lessened in 1989, human rights lawyers and members of the left-wing opposition continued to be subjected to repression. Counter-insurgency strategies were aimed at destroying the opposition. In 1989 they had resulted in a strengthening of the paramilitary forces (CAFJU) and in massive enforced displacements of populations which, over the past two years, had caused more than 400,000 persons to seek refuge elsewhere in their own country. In order to put an end to such violations, the Philippine Government should try to solve the problems of agrarian reform and employment and respond to the demands of indigenous peoples for regional autonomy.

50. In Burma the proclamation of martial law in July 1989 had marked the beginning of a new wave of repression, which had led to massive and arbitrary arrests of political opponents and had forced thousands of students to seek refuge in the frontier zones. Elections were scheduled for May 1990, but there were some fears that there would be irregularities. The Commission should keep the situation under review and try to ensure that the elections to be held were free and fair.

51. In Sri Lanka the living conditions of the population and the human rights situation had worsened considerably in 1989. There had been a spectacular increase in acts of violence, particularly in the south, where extrajudicial killings had taken place daily. Abuses had been committed by various groups, including Tamil militants, death squads and special forces of the army. The underlying economic inequalities had not been diminished, and the democratic process had not yet made it possible to set up institutions capable of solving the country's problems. It was desirable that the Commission reaffirm the concern it had expressed in its resolution 43/61 and take initiatives to put an end to the political conflict and to the violations of human rights in Sri Lanka.

52. In Haiti the situation had worsened over the past month as a result of the acts of repression carried out by the military Government of President Prosper Avril against his political opponents in the Rassemblement national. Dozens of persons had been arrested, and the offices of various political parties had been sacked, as well as the premises of the Oecumenical Centre for Human Rights, an organization which worked in close co-operation with the World Council of Churches. The Council associated itself with the appeals made for the restoration of the Constitution of March 1987 and for the disarming of the paramilitary forces and the holding of the promised elections. It requested the Commission to appoint a special rapporteur to study the situation in Haiti.

53. On many occasions the World Council of Churches had addressed the Commission on the subject of violations of human rights committed by the military régime that had been in power in Chile since 1973, basing itself on the patient and meticulous work done by the Vicaría de la Solidaridad of the Archbishopric of Santiago. Despite the encouraging changes that had recently taken place, the Commission should continue to be vigilant. The work done by its Special Rapporteurs and by human rights organizations in Chile constituted an asset that must be used to solve the problems that still persisted, such as the releasing of all political prisoners, compensation of the victims of the 16 years of repression, and determination of the past responsibilities of the military Government. The civilian Government which was to take office in March 1990 would inherit a deeply divided country in which the military would continue to hold great power. In those circumstances the World Council of Churches recommended that the Special Rapporteur's mandate be renewed.

54. In Guatemala political violence had increased alarmingly, the most cruelly affected being the indigenous peoples who constituted the bulk of the population. There were countless bombings, murders and disappearances, and the army and the Government security forces were terrorizing human rights activists, peasants, trade unionists and students who were seeking a national dialogue conducive to peace. In September and October 1989 the number of extrajudicial killings and disappearances had been three times the figure recorded in the first half of the year, and at the year's end reliable sources had reported over 1,300 murders. In addition, the injustice of the system of land tenure and the imbalance in the distribution of resources, together with gross violations of human rights, were obstacles to the initiation of a dialogue conducive to peace with social justice. The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs requested the Commission on Human Rights to reconsider the situation in Guatemala under agenda item 12 and, if necessary, to appoint a special rapporteur for that purpose.

55. In El Salvador the churches and humanitarian institutions had been the major targets for persecution since their denunciation of the injustices that were taking place. The repression carried out by the armed forces was designed to nullify the social work done by the churches and had been further intensified after the big offensive launched on 11 November 1989 by the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front, for which the authorities accused the churches of acting as a screen. Since then church buildings and social premises had been looted and many religious and lay social workers had been threatened with death, arrested and, in some cases, tortured. Six Jesuits and two women working with them had been savagely murdered. Although the Roman Catholic Church had for a long time been the target of the most violent repression, the other churches - Lutheran, Episcopalian and Baptist - were not being spared by the paramilitary groups. Human rights groups, women's associations, trade unions, the intellectual community and grass-roots organizations were also victims of the repression, the recrudescence of which delegations from the World Council of Churches and various congregations had been able to ascertain on the spot. It seemed clear that the intimidation and terror was aimed in particular at grass-roots organizations and their members, especially in the countryside.

56. In view of the very sharp deterioration in the human rights situation in El Salvador, the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs requested

the Commission on Human Rights to denounce the abuses that were being committed by the armed forces and paramilitary groups in that country, particularly the indiscriminate attacks on the civilian population, and the persecution of the churches, humanitarian organizations and human rights groups. It also urged the Commission to renew the mandate of the Special Representative appointed to study the situation in El Salvador, which should be kept under review.

The public meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.