

UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL



Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/Sub.2/NGO/101
1 September 1981

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Sub-Commission on Prevention of
Discrimination and Protection
of Minorities

Thirty-fourth session
Agenda item 8

QUESTION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF PERSONS SUBJECTED
TO ANY FORM OF DETENTION OR IMPRISONMENT

Written statement submitted by the World Peace Council,
a non-governmental organization in consultative status,
roster

In January 1980 and also this year in memoranda sent to the United Nations Human Rights Commission, the World Peace Council denounced the "institutionalized character" of the practice of disappearance of persons for political reasons, in several countries in Latin America.

The WPC has received constant denunciations by organizations, relatives and friends of persons missing for political reasons. We wish to call attention to the fact that this practice has continued in a number of countries.

This method of political repression varies from one country to another, but - irrespective of the numbers involved, which also vary - in all these countries it represents a violation of most elementary human rights:

Arrest or kidnapping of persons by State bodies or others, which carry out their actions with complete impunity, subsequently, the authorities refuse to acknowledge that the persons affected have been detained. In some countries the corpses of missing persons are found abandoned, generally with signs of torture, in others the fate of these prisoners remains unknown, unless a secret cemetery is accidentally discovered.

It is suspected that missing persons are kept in prisons, concentration camps, police stations, their whereabouts however is always concealed. The relatives live under the terrible uncertainty of knowing nothing about them. Theirs is a permanent pilgrimage, always unsuccessful, from police stations to military garrisons and authorities, presenting habeas corpus writs before the courts and leading always to frustration due to a justice which provides no hope.

This problem has reached the stage where conflicts have arisen and difficulties have been encountered in the interpretation of civil laws covering issues of presumed death or abandonment due to fortuitous circumstances, catastrophes or accidents, the prescribed laws which do not cover the cases of disappearances discussed here.

It has been proved that the "disappearance" of persons has become an international practice of political suppression. We pointed out in our memoranda mentioned above, that many citizens from one country have "disappeared" in another country and evidence has been established on the collaboration of the security services of various countries.

"No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrests, detention or exile", state article 9 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and other articles of the penal code. Persons who disappear for political reasons however are denied even those rights which are generally granted to the most dangerous criminals in the above-mentioned countries.

The World Peace Council would like to draw the attention of the Sub-Commission to this hideous and inhuman practice affecting thousands of persons. World public opinion considers that no statute of limitation should apply to such crimes and that the investigations both into previous as well as into current cases should continue unremittently. There are thousands of missing persons unaccounted for by the Governments concerned.

To support our statement and supply further evidence we are prepared to present to you a number of documents.

The WPC stresses the necessity of having these grave violations of human rights discussed by the United Nations organs concerned. It also urges that a Special Inquiry Commission be set up to investigate the cases on the spot and inform the world community of its findings.
