
UN Finds Out that Human Right Activism in Brazil Is Hazardous Activity

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Hina Jilani, the Special Representative of the U.N. Secretary General on the situation of human rights defenders, submitted on March 14 the preliminary report of her visit to Brazil which took place in December, 2005.

Jilani emphasized that, "despite government initiatives and the efforts of an experienced and active civil society, serious concerns regarding the situation of human rights defenders persist because of a wide gap between the declaration of policy and its implementation on the one hand, and the creation of mechanisms and their effectiveness, on the other." She also cited the lack of investigation of violations against human rights defenders.

The report stresses the concern of the Representative with the criminalization of social action by human rights defenders. She notes that human rights defenders have been subject to unfair, malicious, and systematic prosecution, repeated arrests and vilification, unjust and retaliatory actions by the State as well as by powerful and influential non-State entities representing economic interests.

Jilani recommends that the Special Secretariat for Human Rights and the Federal Public Ministry make joint efforts to collect and analyze the cases brought against human rights defenders in order to propose legislation or policy guidelines to prevent criminal prosecution of defenders for carrying out activities in defense of human rights.

Another section in the report deals with police violence. Jilani recommends a review of existing mechanisms for the monitoring and accountability of the State security apparatus, particularly the State military police. There is a general lack of confidence in the competence, vigilance and independence of the existing mechanisms.

The Special Representative was greatly disturbed by reports indicating that, when human rights activists organize, they are accused of forming criminal gangs and when they mobilize for collective action to protest violations of rights they are accused of creating public disorders.

She notes, with grave concern, that peaceful public action for defense of human rights has frequently been met with disproportionate use of force by the police.

The Preliminary Report is available in English on the following web-site:
<http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/chr/docs/62chr/ecn4-2006-95-Add4>