

# POLICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN AFRICA

## INTRODUCTION

This Newsletter is published as part of the Commission's mobilisation efforts towards inculcating a culture of respect for human rights in policing. In implementing its mandate to promote and protect human rights pursuant to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Commission also plays a key role by laying emphasis on respect for human rights by all State institutions, in particular the police. This mandate includes considering State reports, undertaking promotion missions and other advocacy activities.

The current security situation on the continent, in particular in the Sahel region where many governments are committed to stemming the tide of terrorism, highlights the relationship between the police and the affected population. In order to win the support and trust of the population, it is crucial for respect for human rights to be at the centre of policing.

Whereas one of the main duties of the police is to protect human rights, it is important to underscore that it is also the responsibility of the police to exercise respect for human rights in law enforcement. In this regard, it is fundamental to conduct human rights training for police officers.

This Newsletter shares experiences in human rights training for the police from three countries: Niger, Tunisia and Nigeria. These experiences are meant to serve as a source of inspiration to other countries where human rights training is yet to be made a core element in police training programmes.

**Commissioner Maya SahlilF adel**  
*ACHPR Special Rapporteur on Refugees, Asylum Seekers,  
Migrants and IDPs in Africa*

## POLICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING IN NIGER

Niger has been involved in human rights training for its National Police and National Guard since 2002 in cooperation with the Danish Institute for Human Rights. Manuals have been elaborated and written by the police itself in collaboration with representatives from civil society and the State School for Administration and Magistrates (ENAM). Pocket guides have also been developed. Human rights modules have been integrated in initial and in-service training. The training is carried out by the National Police themselves.

The training material is adapted to the local context in Niger. A preliminary diagnostic of policing and human rights in the country, the perception among the police and the population of the subject was undertaken by a team of objective experts. The subsequent training material therefore speaks directly to the human rights challenges in Niger both in relation to the population and the police itself. In terms of key lessons learnt

- The training material must recognise the specific context: *one size does not fit all*. It is therefore crucial that a proper planning phase is carried out before initiating a project.
- The training material needs to be developed by the national police themselves. However, civil society and human rights experts add important value and their participation is indispensable in the development of the material.
- The training needs to be anchored in the national training systems and be carried out by the National Police themselves.

The police in Niger see the focal point in the African Commission as a unique possibility to pool the experiences in the area of policing and human rights training on the African Continent.

**Issoufou Yacouba**  
*General Director of the National Police in Niger*

## POLICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING IN TUNISIA

Effective Human Rights training for police requires a convergence of political will, practical on-going training and holding officers to account for transgressions.

This is a challenging and complex environment. Often police abuse of human rights takes place in a context of societal and political tolerance of such actions. Tunisia is no different. A recent report by the Tunisian organization "Reform" revealed that 60% of Tunisians justify police violence as a just retribution for certain crimes. Police need to rise above this as a key actor in protecting the rights of citizens but are often ill equipped for the task.

During the era of ousted Tunisian dictator, Ben Ali, every Tunisian police officer received Human Rights training and committed themselves to the "Law enforcement officials' behaviour guide in the field of Human Rights". This 194-page guide includes extracts of the Tunisian constitution, the universal declaration of Human Rights and the international treaties ratified by the Tunisian government. The guide concludes with copies of letters from the Interior Minister to police stations reminding law enforcement officers of their obligation to respect Human Rights.

This seeming commitment to human rights was undermined by the fact that only one lecture on human rights was provided during the initial basic training and its presentation was legalistic and without practical application. Once officers left the college, accountability to human rights standards was non-existent and systematic police torture was encouraged and normalized as a way of exerting regime control. The inherent weaknesses in the police human rights environment was exacerbated by developments post the uprising against the Ben Ali dictatorship.

Following the revolution, social instability marked by violent protests led the new Tunisian government to increase the size of its police forces by over 10 thousand new officers. The training program was reduced from 10 months to 3 months, and in some cases 15 days. As a result many police officers are hardly trained on the basics of policing work let alone Human Rights. The unfortunate result is most evident in the recurring police violence during protest action. This is acknowledged by the government who recognize, the police's failure to act properly and the poor training law enforcement officers received is a significant contributor to police abuse.

In response international organizations such as the International Red Cross and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights have been invited in to support a series of human rights training workshops for the police. These workshops however while well received still lack follow up and often don't involve the lower ranks.

Human Rights compliant policing in Tunisia is recognized as a key to consolidating the new democracy. Serious efforts by the government, the police, civil society and the African and International Community are needed in order for the police to fulfil their dual mandate of making communities safer and protecting human rights and democracy.

*Bassem Bouguerra*  
*Reform Tunisia*

## **POLICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING IN NIGERIA**

Human Rights continue to be one of the most critical challenges facing the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). Allegations of human rights abuses by police officers dominate most discussions about police effectiveness in dealing with cases of crime and criminality in Nigeria. As an emerging democracy, it is imperative that the police promote human rights through the practice of human rights based policing and thus help to institutionalize and sustain democratic practice.

If understood in the proper context, the promotion and protection of human rights is at the very core of policing. The enforcement of laws and the maintenance of peace and order are, first and foremost, about protecting the rights of citizens. So the role of police personnel in protecting and respecting the rights of every individual is fundamental.

Human rights training is therefore an integral part of any training for the Nigeria Police personnel. The Nigeria Police is committed to ensuring that its staff respect and protect human dignity and maintain and uphold the human rights of all persons in the performance of their duty. This commitment is underscored by the development of Human rights desks and the current review of human rights training. Supported by the Swiss Government and several civil society organizations (CSO) particularly PRAWA and CLEEN Foundation, and university teachers, the Nigeria Police is working to strengthen and integrate human rights training into core police training. The aim is to strengthen police officers' understanding and capacity to respect and protect the rights of others, especially vulnerable persons such as women and children.

Nigeria's human rights training takes into consideration international best practices and the provisions of treaties, conventions and protocols that the country is a signatory to. The training curricular is being developed with the support of the Swiss Government in three phases.

The first phase, which has been completed, involves the assessment of and development of the current human rights training content and its integration into the Police training curricular.

The second phase, which is ongoing, is the development of training modules, documents and training tools. The curricular is being developed around key areas related to human rights based

policing, development of key skills and competences, and development of the right attitude and behavior change for police officers. Methodology for delivering the training will be student-centered geared toward achieving the key areas.

The final phase three is the implementation of training. This last phase includes conducting a train-the-trainer course and the piloting in selected police colleges.

In addition to all of these are the development of Human Rights Practice Manual (HRPM) and the strengthening of the work of the Human Rights Desk Officers (HRDOs).

The HRPM is a guidance document that will be available to every police officer. It is a standard operational procedure document for human rights practice by police officers and provides a clear understanding of the principles of human rights based policing methods, standard of conduct of police officers, and guidance on the appropriate intervention in human rights issues.

The HRDOs will be appointed at all police service delivery points e.g. police stations. The intention is to make human rights a reality and create a system for the monitoring of human rights issues by the police. The HRDOs will ensure that human rights observance is institutionalized in police service delivery. As focal officers in the implementation of the NPF Human Rights Based Policing, the HRDOs presents the best means of ensuring that police practices recognize the human rights and dignity of every person, whilst providing victims practical and effective venue to air alleged violations committed by police officers.

*DCP Austin I. IWAR,*  
*Deputy Commissioner, Federal Operations (FEDOPS)*  
*Nigeria Police Force*

## **NEWS FROM THE FOCAL POINT IN THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES RIGHTS**

The role of police in the protection of human rights is increasingly being integrated into the work of the African Commission, especially in its promotion missions. In this regard, the role of the Chadian police in the protection of human rights, police accountability and human rights training for the police, were some of the subjects of discussion between the Secretary General in the Chadian Ministry of Interior and Public Security and a delegation of the African Commission which undertook a promotion mission to that country from 11 to 20 March 2013.

The Commission's Secretariat is also in the process of collating resource materials on police and human rights with a particular focus on Africa, with a view to creating a one-stop database where information relating to security sector reforms in Africa; police accountability; training manuals; Codes of Conduct; conference/seminar reports; academic writings on the thematic; international and domestic legislation relating to police work, amongst others, could be found. A database of experts in the area is also being developed.

### **SIDE EVENT AT THE 53<sup>RD</sup> SESSION IN BANJUL**

During the 53rd Session, the Commission, the Danish Institute for Human Rights and APCOF, will jointly organize a side event at the session venue focusing on human rights training for the police. The side event will seek to share practical experiences on human rights training for the police, identify lacunas and challenges related to training and explore ways of filling these gaps and meeting the challenges.

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