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Help

At the invitation of the Government concerned (an invitation generally requested by the Special Rapporteur), Special Rapporteurs can coconduct country missions, typically lasting for 10 to 15 days, to assess the situation on the ground. Such country visits include meetings with officials, often at the level of cabinet members, as well as with civil society and victims of human rights violations. They also include field visits outside the capital. Country visits are an important tool in the hands of the Special Rapporteurs, for a number of reasons:

1. They allow a direct exchange with human rights defenders or victims who are on the frontline, providing them with a much more concrete opportunity to interaction with the UN human rights machinery.
2. They improve the understanding of Special Rapporteurs of the challenges faced, better than desk research would ever allow.
3. They provide the Special Rapporteur with an opportunity to interact with high-level officials of the country concerned, who may have otherwise a weak understanding of the human rights duties of the State and of the expectations of the international community in this regard.
4. They allow the Special Rapporteur to strengthen the message sent by various UN agencies operating in the country, adding his or her voice to such concerns, but with an even greater independence.
5. They may allow the Special Rapporteur to bring together various constituencies -- foreign diplomats, UN agencies, local public officials, local NGOs, and national human rights institutions -- who may be encouraged to find ways to work more closely together, in particular to ensure appropriate follow up to the conclusions reached by the Special Rapporteur.

Such country missions end with a press conference where an end-of-mission statement is presented. A report on the mission is subsequently presented before the Human Rights Council. This report can trigger initiatives in the State concerned, whether by the Government, local civil society organisations, or UN agencies. It also is an important source of information in the context of the UPR (discussed earlier) and when States have an interactive dialogue with human rights treaty bodies, based on the reports that they submit periodically to these expert bodies on the implementation of the respective treaties.





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