

UN Human Rights Body functions as an Instrument of Political Intervention

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Louise Arbour, former prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, today United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, arrives in Colombo today.

Contrary to the prudence required by an official of a multilateral organisation like the United Nations, she has already proclaimed her intention to press the Government of Sri Lanka to open a field office under her authority to “protect” the citizens of Sri Lanka, implying that the Government of Sri Lanka is not capable of protecting its own citizens!

Does Louise Arbour consider Sri Lanka to be a “failed State”, a dangerous concept of the Bush Administration?

This postulate was relayed in an international campaign by representatives of the so-called civil society whose links and political objectives are those of their donors - Western Governments and NGOs, both international and Sri Lankan, who receive their funds primarily from these same Governments.

Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and other NGOs such as INFORM in Sri Lanka suggest that such an office “could act as a neutral body” to monitor human rights in the country. They say “national mechanisms don’t work”. It is not surprising that under these conditions, the LTTE itself has promoted and welcomed the visit of Louise Arbour.

It is important therefore to re-situate this diabolical project within the context of the profound changes taking place within the United Nations System at the behest of the United States and its partners. Restructuring of the UN Centre for Human Rights has transformed it from a secretariat of the multilateral body - the Human Rights Council - into a highly politicised Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which is increasingly substituting itself for the Human Rights Council and its organs.

None can deny that there is a need to transform the United Nations and the international architecture into a system that represents genuine and greater - not less - multilateralism. But that is not the case today. Why? In the eyes of the US Administration and its partners, the survival of the multilateral system has become an anachronism.

Its aim now is to transform the organisation into a tool that serves its vision of global supremacy, to gain legitimacy for its preventive wars and its so-called action against terrorism, as well as to promote the rules of the market and guarantee private property.

Under the guise of “freedom to live in dignity,” the former Secretary-General of the United

Nations insisted “We must move from an era of legislation to an era of implementation”.

Through his notion of “responsibility to protect potential or actual victims of massive atrocities,” he legitimised foreign intervention in the internal affairs of sovereign States: “if national authorities are unable or unwilling to protect their citizens, then the responsibility shifts to the international community to use diplomatic, humanitarian and other methods to help protect the human rights and well-being of civilian population.

When such methods appear insufficient, the Security Council may out of necessity decide to take action under the Charter of the United Nations, including enforcement action, if so required.”

Under the multilateral vision, the human rights special procedures mechanisms such as Special Rapporteurs were created to exercise a protection or monitoring function from outside the country with due respect for State sovereignty.

Today, Louise Arbour’s mission is to impose upon countries that seek to defend their sovereignty and territorial integrity, a human right field office that would de-legitimise national mechanisms, while at the same time de-legitimising the multilateral system!

Why does Arbour not advocate opening human rights field offices in the United States or in the European Union countries, where it is now an established fact that the CIA has opened secret prisons on the Guantanamo model?

Attempts by the United States and its allied to instrumentalise the United Nations in this field is not new. Within the United Nations, the process began with the creation of the highly politicised Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and re-structuring of the former Centre for Human Rights.

The Centre functioned as a secretariat to service the human rights multilateral organ – the Commission on Human Rights and to provide advisory services and technical assistance to Governments – at their request – to establish or strengthen national institutions to carry out protection functions.

An insidious transformation is taking place within that Office turning it into an instrument of direct intervention in the internal affairs of sovereign States through a rapidly growing implantation of field offices essentially staffed by individuals paid by rich donor countries or private institutions.

Arbour’s vision implies new organs, new procedures, new methods of work, and a new type of staff that has more in common with diplomatic mercenaries than with international civil servants!

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has effectively turned into an intelligence-gathering arm in the name of “humanitarian intervention;” A greater human rights field presence during times of crisis would provide timely information to United Nations bodies and, when necessary, draw urgent attention to situations requiring action.”

This logic contributes to legitimising and systematising foreign intervention in all domains, if necessary, by force, “preventively and with the full range of available instruments.”

Such a vision could definitely emasculate the General Assembly of its supreme authority.

An illustration is the obsessive reference to subcontracting of UN programmes and activities, including research, and to 'strategic partnerships' with non-State actors of the so-called civil society and the private sector (transnational corporations) as newfound sole authorities. This is also true for human resources within the UN System.

New recruits will serve the political interests of the major financial and military contributors; flexibility and precariousness in staff contracts will facilitate rapid deployment in the service of the new interventionist vision.

Heads of field offices have "the discretion, the means, the authority and the expert assistance that they need to manage an organisation which is expected to meet fast-changing operational needs in many different parts of the world."

Managers may take unilateral decisions to establish, in a selective and arbitrary manner, "strategic partnerships" with non-State actors of the so-called civil society, NGOs, and the private sector. The political implications will be apparent in the sensitive field of 'intelligence gathering' under the guise of protecting the human rights of civilians!

The radical break that Louise Arbour is ardently advocating requires the elimination of the remaining values, principles, and ethics that are linked to the multilateral system and which constitute obstacles to the deployment of the new organisation, as envisioned by the US and its allies.

More than 60 years after the founding of the United Nations, the United States and its partners want to substitute for the common vision held by peoples and States emerging from the victory over fascism, a unilateral and grotesque interpretation of the threats and challenges faced by the world, and actions that must be taken.

Member States are being pressured to adopt "a new security consensus that whatever threatens one threatens all," and accept that "threats which each region of the world perceives as most urgent are in fact equally so for all."

According to the multilateral concept of the United Nations, threats to international peace and security are any forcible action by one State against another, against its national sovereignty, its territorial integrity or political independence, the right of people to self-determination and freedom.

It include wars of external aggression, the subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation, as well as armed intervention and all other forms of interference or attempted threats against the personality of the State or against its political, economic and cultural elements.

However, under the vision promoted by Louise Arbour, matters that fall essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of States will be considered threats to international peace and security. 'New threats' will include civil violence, organised crime, terrorism, proliferation, small arms and light weapons, weapons of mass destruction, poverty, deadly infectious disease, environmental degradation!

Under the guise of "freeing the world from want," the Western powers are seeking to

legitimise the imposition of conditionalities on poor and weaker developing countries so as to force upon them the single economic model thereby accelerating the process of capitalist globalisation with the accompanying devastation that we are witnessing.

Developing countries are pressured to strengthen so-called 'governance,' combat corruption, reduce the State role in the economy and society except those that stimulate private investment, increase the role of the private sector and civil society, provide legal and other guarantees for their activities, including property rights: conditions that already form part and parcel of the controversial structural adjustment programmes of the rich countries and their notorious international financial institutions.

In return, the rich countries will reward developing countries with "increased development assistance, a more development-oriented trade system and wider and deeper debt relief."

Yesterday, peoples, nations and States were united in the promotion of common values and principles. Today, Louise Arbour's vision is to unite member States around a manicheistic vision.

Thirty-seven years ago, the Declaration on principles of international law friendly relations and co-operation among States, which further defined the Charter of the United Nations, proclaimed that "States have the duty to co-operate with one another, irrespective of the differences in their political, economic and social systems, in the various spheres of international relations, in order to maintain international peace and security and to promote international economic stability and progress, the general welfare of nations and international co-operation free from discrimination based on such differences."

Today, instead of cooperation between sovereign States, unilateral humanitarian intervention often under cover of the United Nations - in the name of defence of human rights has become the rule.

From now on, regional arrangements will be replaced by the tenebrous "international community or relevant regional actors and organisations," with the right to intervene wherever and whenever in accordance with a political agenda.

From now on, local disputes will be replaced by "whatever threatens one threatens all". From now on, pacific settlement will be replaced by "other methods or the full range of available instruments." Member States and the United Nations will be reduced to less than nothing.

If we should allow victory of unilateralism over multilateralism, NATO intervention against former Yugoslavia, the armed US aggression against Afghanistan, its aggression and occupation of Iraq will retroactively gain legitimacy.

So will the establishment by the Security Council of ad hoc tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, of which Louise Arbour was the Prosecutor! All that is illegal will become legal; Lies will become truth.

Will Sri Lanka become another target?

Accepting the opening of a United Nations human rights field office in Sri Lanka will be accepting a project which is, in essence, a diabolical one.

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