

Internationally Accepted Principles Of Policing In A Democratic State

We the undersigned agree that the following points are essential principles of policing in a democratic state. These principles will guide the Commission in its recommendations concerning the reorganisation of the police in the Federation. These principles will also serve as the guidelines for police operations and for the training which will help reorient the police to serve and protect the citizens of the Federation consistent with the requirements of a democratic state.

1. Police must be oriented and operate in accord with the principles of democracy. By this statement we mean that police must orient themselves and always operate in a manner which is consistent with the Constitution and laws of the Federation. It is the law, created by the democratically elected representatives of the people, which must guide police action. Arbitrary enforcement of the law is inconsistent with this principle.
2. Police, as recipients of high public trust, are professionals whose conduct must be governed by a professional code of conduct. By this statement we acknowledge that policing is more than just an occupation. The special trust reposed by the public in their police requires that police exercise the highest standards of ethical conduct in the discharge of their duties. A professional code of ethics for Federation police must be developed to guide Federation police officers.
3. Police must have as their highest priority the protection of life. By this statement we acknowledge that the human life is precious and the right to life is an accepted fundamental human right. While police officers are afforded special privileges and increased responsibilities with regard to force, the application of force should be minimal in all circumstances and deadly force should only be used to protect the life of the police or the lives of other people.
4. Police must serve the public and are accountable to the public they serve. By this statement we acknowledge that the essence of policing is public service. In a democratic society the police are guardians of the public safety. They are accountable to the public in the execution of that task. This means the police must act in such a way so that the public knows, understands and accepts the police measures which are being undertaken to provide for public safety.
5. Protection of life and property is the primary function of police operations. By this statement we mean the primary concern of police operations must be directed to the prevention of crime which threatens the life and property. While crime detection is unquestionably an important function of police and has great deterrent value, the central focus of police activity must be on measures to prevent crime.
6. Police must conduct their activities with respect for human dignity and basic human rights of all persons. By this statement we mean that in the performance of their duties police must show adherence to those internationally recognised human rights standards. Torture or other cruel inhuman or degrading treatment of either citizens or detainees, is inconsistent with this principle and cannot be practised or countenanced by police officers.
7. Police must discharge their duties in a non-discriminatory manner. By this statement we mean that law enforcement, public safety and protection of human rights must be handled in a manner which is fair and equal for all persons. Discrimination on the basis of race, gender, religion, language, complexion, political opinion, national origin, birth, property, ethnicity or other status in the delivery of police services is incompatible with policing in a democratic state. This principle applies to the recruitment, promotion, and assignment of police officers, as well. The composition of the police should reflect the public they serve.

Office of the High Representative