

Understanding human rights

[Sociology](#), [Human Rights](#)



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Introduction

Human rights are defined as those inalienable and universal rights and freedoms which all individuals enjoy simply because they are human, they are entitlements which we all share regardless of age, gender, race, sexuality, class or culture (Henry 2009: 1). Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, irrespective of the nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status.

Human rights are entitlements gotten without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible in the sense that most states have the same human rights laws that govern the security of individual and group with brings about equality before the law and freedom of expression; economic, social and cultural rights, such as the rights to development and self-determination.

Most human rights are expressed and supported by law, in terms of treaties, customary international law, general principles and other sources of international law. In fact, these human rights laws lay down obligations of

Governments to act in certain way in order to promote and protect human rights.

Human rights entail both rights and obligations. States assume obligations and duties under international law to respect, to protect and to fulfil human rights. The obligation to respect means that States must refrain from interfering with or curtailing the enjoyment of human rights. The obligation to protect requires States to protect individuals and groups against human rights abuses. The obligation to fulfil means that States must take positive action to facilitate the enjoyment of basic human rights. At the individual level, while we are entitled to our human rights, we should also respect the human rights of others.

Universal Declaration on human rights in 1948 contains 30 articles. but the most important of these are considered as follows:

the right to life, liberty, property and security of person,

the right to an education,

the right to employment, paid holidays, protection against unemployment and social security,

the right to participate fully in cultural life

freedom from torture or cruel, inhumane treatment or punishment,

freedom of expression and opinion

freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

Vienna World conference on human rights 1993 noted that ‘ it is the duty of states to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems.

Human Rights Act in the UK

“ The Human Rights Act was brought about as a result of the European Convention on Human Rights, which was set up by the Council of Europe. This was to ensure that the violations of human rights under the reign of Hitler during the Second World War, would not be able to happen again. The act however, was only passed into UK law in October 2000. Individuals now have the right to seek redress in a UK court instead of having to visit the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, which covered the act of: the right to life, prohibition of torture, inhuman and degrading treatment, Freedom from forced labour, Right to liberty, Right to a fair trial, Retrospective penalties, Right to respect for private and family life, Freedom of thought, conscience and religion, Freedom of expression, Freedom of assembly and association, Right to marry, Prohibition of discrimination”.

The Human Rights Act 1998, has affected the lives of British Citizens, for example recently a law allowing terror suspects to be detained for up to 90 days without charge, but this was dropped as it was deemed to breach the rights of those being detained for such a long period of time.

Importance of human rights

Human rights help everyone to have a secured and safe life. It educates people to be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall

promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

Criticisms against human rights

Human rights as a principle is always positive. They should be the basis for evaluating any regime, aid program, etc. The criticism can arise when human rights are written down as laws, as they are almost impossible to police and there can be very blurry edges when defining everyday practicalities, such as a bill of rights.

Some sociologists also see a problem with western countries defining human rights in a way that makes sense to westerners, yet is at odds with another culture. An example is child education. we see it as a human right and wish to enforce it globally. Many poor countries depend on working children in order for the family to eat and survive. When the child is forced to go to school, they lose a breadwinner, and a parent can also be forced to cease work in order to now attend to a child who is not working at home like they used to. Costs are also astronomical in developing countries to school a single child, and many families are large. end result is deepening of impoverishment before the fruits of the child's education kick in decades later. So is this still an easily recognisable human right?

“ Human Rights” is a much used and abused term today, and is used extensively for political gain. The term is used to defend Human freedom as well as destroy it. People tend to attach importance to particular human rights issue according to ideology and political convenience. if a man is not

to have recourse or rebellion against tyranny and oppression, taking law into their own hands," Human Rights" should be built into the society as a natural rule. As a last resort only, law should be applied as a protection.

Despite the fact human right laws are in existence, there is still racism and discrimination which has criticised human right in a way that it can no longer make any impact to individual in some societies.

Conclusion

Human rights are the rights of individual men and women to basic freedoms such as freedom of association, freedom speech, etc.

one should note that ' the improvement of one right facilitates advancement for the others, likewise, the deprivation of one right adversely affects the others.