



Human rights and human development

The basic idea of human development—that enriching the lives and freedoms of ordinary people is fundamental—has much in common with the concerns expressed by declarations of human rights. The promotion of human development and the fulfilment of human rights share, in many ways, a common motivation, and reflect a fundamental commitment to promoting the freedom, well-being and dignity of individuals in all societies. These underlying concerns have been championed in different ways for a long time (the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen came in 1789), but the recent literatures on Human Development and on Human Rights have given new shape to old aspirations and objectives.

Extensive use of these two distinct modes of normative thinking, respectively invoking human development and human rights, encourages the question of whether the two concepts can be viewed together in a more integrated way, gaining something through being combined in a more comprehensive vision. To answer this question, it is important not only to have a clear understanding of what the two concepts—human development and human rights—mean, but also to examine their commonalities and their differences. Indeed, it is necessary to undertake two basic diagnostic inquiries:

- How compatible are the normative concerns in the analyses of human development and human rights? Are they *harmonious enough*—to be able to complement rather than undermine each other?
- Are the two approaches sufficiently distinct so that each can add something substantial to the other? Are they *diverse enough*—to enrich each other?

The answers to both of these foundational questions are definitely in the affirmative.

Human development and human rights are close enough in motivation and concern to be compatible and congruous, and they are different enough in strategy and design to supplement each other fruitfully. A more integrated approach can thus bring significant rewards, and facilitate in practical ways the shared attempts to advance the dignity, well-being and freedom of individuals in general.

COMMON MOTIVATION AND BASIC COMPATIBILITY

The idea of human development focuses directly on the progress of human lives and well-being. Since well-being includes living with substantial freedoms, human development is also integrally connected with enhancing certain capabilities—the range of things a person can do and be in leading a life. We value the freedom of being able to live as we would like and even the opportunity to choose our own fate.

CAPABILITIES AND FREEDOMS

Capabilities can vary in form and content, though they are also often closely interrelated. They include, of course, the basic freedoms of being able to meet bodily requirements, such as the ability to avoid starvation and undernourishment, or to escape preventable morbidity or premature mortality. They also include the enabling opportunities given by schooling, for example, or by the liberty and the economic means to move freely and to choose one's abode. There are also important "social" freedoms, such as the capability to participate in the life of the community, to join in public discussion, to participate in political decision-making and even the elementary ability "to

The promotion of human development and the fulfilment of human rights share a common motivation

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appear in public without shame” (a freedom whose importance was well discussed by Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations*).

The human development approach is concerned, ultimately, with all the capabilities that people have reason to value. The human development index (HDI) incorporates the most elementary capabilities, such as living a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and enjoying a decent standard of living, and the various indices, tables and more elaborate discussions in the body of the *Human Development Reports* provide information on many other valuable capabilities. Indeed, longevity is itself an important means to other capabilities, since one does not have the freedom to do much unless one is alive.

What about human rights? The idea of an individual right must involve, directly or indirectly, a claim that one person has over others—individuals, groups, societies or states. The claims can take different forms, as has been analysed by legal theorists, from John Austin and Jeremy Bentham to H. L. A. Hart and Stig Kanger. Some rights take the form of immunity from interference by others; libertarians have tended to take a particular interest in such rights. Others take the form of a claim on the attention and assistance of others to be able to do certain things; champions of social security have tended to emphasize such rights.

But diverse as these rights are, they share the characteristic of entailing some entitlements to help from others in defence of one’s substantive freedoms. The claim to help may involve a demand for positive support and facilitation, or take only the negative form of assurance that there will be no hindrance from others. But all of these claims are aimed at securing the freedoms of the persons involved—to do this or be that—in one way or another. In this way, human rights are also ultimately grounded in the importance of freedoms for human lives.

SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONCERNS

Given this founding connection between human development and human rights—

particularly the involvement of each in guaranteeing the basic freedoms that people have reason to value—the ideas of human development and those of human rights are linked in a compatible and complementary way. If human development focuses on the enhancement of the capabilities and freedoms that the members of a community enjoy, human rights represent the claims that individuals have on the conduct of individual and collective agents and on the design of social arrangements to facilitate or secure these capabilities and freedoms.

Despite the compatibility of the two approaches, their strategic form and focus are rather different. It is sometimes presumed that these approaches differ because they are concerned with different kinds of freedoms. The human rights literature has often focused primarily or exclusively on political liberties, civil rights and democratic freedoms. But these rights have not figured in some of the aggregate human development indicators, such as the HDI, for example, which concentrates on longevity, literacy and other socio-economic concerns. The domain of interest of the human development approach goes much beyond what is measured by the HDI, however. Political and civil rights and democratic freedoms also have their place in the human development perspective, though they are much harder to quantify, having resisted attempts in earlier *Human Development Reports* to measure them with composite indicators.

An adequate conception of human development cannot ignore the importance of political liberties and democratic freedoms. Indeed, democratic freedom and civil rights can be extremely important for enhancing the capabilities of people who are poor. They can do this directly, since poor people have strong reason to resist being abused and exploited by their employers and politicians. And they can do this indirectly, since those who hold power have political incentives to respond to acute deprivations when the deprived can make use of their political freedom to protest, criticize and oppose. The fuller human development approach does not ignore these concerns that figure so prominently in the human rights literature.

Similarly, the human rights literature is concerned not only with political and civil liberties, but also with the rights to education, to adequate health care and to other freedoms that have received systematic investigation in *Human Development Reports*. Indeed, recent documents, such as the Declaration on the Right to Development and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, emphasize that economic, social and cultural rights are no less weighty than civil and political rights. The contrast between the two concepts of human rights and human development does not, therefore, lie in any basic difference in their subject matter.

WHAT HUMAN RIGHTS ADD TO HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Since there are substantive differences between these two approaches that share common motivations and aims, it is important to investigate whether they are sufficiently distinct to complement and enrich each other. Even more important, what do practitioners of each approach stand to gain from the analyses of the other? How can the aims of each be better promoted by an integration of these approaches?

To have a particular right is to have a claim on other people or institutions that they should help or collaborate in ensuring access to some freedom. This insistence on a claim on others takes us beyond the idea of human development. Of course, in the human development perspective, social progress of the valued kind is taken to be a very good thing, and this should encourage anyone who can help to do something to preserve and promote it. But the normative connection between laudable goals and reasons for action does not yield specific duties on the part of other individuals, collectivities or social institutions to bring about human development—or to guarantee the achievement of any specified level of human development, or of its components.

This is where the human rights approach may offer an additional and very useful perspective for the analysis of human development. It links the human development

approach to the idea that others have duties to facilitate and enhance human development. What precise form the link between rights and duties should take is, of course, a different—and, in some ways, later—question (to be addressed shortly).

The first step is to appreciate that assessments of human development, if combined with the human rights perspective, can indicate the duties of others in the society to enhance human development in one way or another. And with the invoking of duties comes a host of related concerns, such as accountability, culpability and responsibility. For example, to assert a human right to free elementary education is to claim much more than that it would be a good thing for everyone to have an elementary education—or even that everyone *should* have an education. In asserting this right we are claiming that all are *entitled* to a free elementary education, and that, if some persons avoidably lack access to it, there must be some culpability somewhere in the social system.

This focus on locating accountability for failures within a social system can be a powerful tool in seeking remedy. It certainly broadens the outlook beyond the minimal claims of human development, and the analysis of human development can profit from it. The effect of a broader outlook is to focus on the actions, strategies and efforts that different duty bearers undertake to contribute to the fulfilment of specified human rights and to the advancement of the corresponding human development. It also leads to an analysis of the responsibilities of different actors and institutions when rights go unfulfilled.

Consider further the example of the right to a free elementary education. If a girl is not schooled because her parents refuse to send her to school, then the responsibility for the failure—and the corresponding blame—can be placed on the parents. But if she cannot be sent to school because the government forbids her going there (as, regrettably, some governments have excluded girls), then the blame can come down not on the parents but on the government. The failure may be more complex when the girl cannot go to school for one, or some combination, of the following reasons:

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Human rights thinking offers tools that amplify the concern with the process of development

- The parents cannot afford the school fees and other expenses.
- The school facilities are inadequate. For example, the school may be unable to guarantee that teachers will be regularly present, so that the parents think that it would be unsafe for the young girl to go there.
- The parents can afford the school expenses but at the cost of sacrificing something else that is also important (such as continuing the medical treatment of one of their other children).

The attribution or sharing of blame can be quite important here, and it is important to recognize how the effects of different inadequacies in a social system tend to aggravate one another. The willingness of parents to make sacrifices for their children's schooling will often be diminished when they have reason to doubt that this schooling will significantly benefit their children. The sacrifice of human development is much the same in all these cases, but the analysis of rights, duties and responsibilities must be quite different. In this respect, concern with duties enhances the ways of judging the nature and demands of progress. Since the process of human development often involves great struggle, the empowerment involved in the language of claims can be of great practical importance.

There are other substantial ways in which ideas of human rights contribute tools to the analysis of social progress offered by the human development approach. Development thinking has traditionally focused on the outcomes of various kinds of social arrangements. And although human development thinking has always insisted on the importance of the process of development, many of the tools developed by the human development approach measure the outcomes of social arrangements in a way that is not sensitive to *how* these outcomes were brought about. Human rights thinking offers tools that amplify the concern with the process of development in two ways:

- Individual rights express the limits on the losses that individuals can permissibly be allowed to bear, even in the promotion of noble social goals. Rights protect individuals and minorities from policies that benefit the com-

munity as a whole but place huge burdens on them.

- Rights thinking incorporates a distinction between how institutions and officials treat citizens and how they affect them. Human rights monitoring has traditionally focused on the conduct of public officials and the institutional structure within a society. This focus may be unduly narrow, but it reflects something important. Even if arbitrarily harsh police procedures such as torture and execution without trial minimize the number of violent deaths within a society overall by creating fear and disincentives to crime, they are not celebrated as promoting the human rights to life, liberty and security of the person. Human rights thinking gives special weight to threats from certain official sources, capturing the idea that there is something particularly wrong about harm to people carried out by those responsible for ensuring justice.

Finally, human rights analysis can enrich our assessments of social progress by helping us to become more attuned to features of a society that might not be adequately emphasized in pure human development accounting. Human rights are fulfilled when individuals enjoy certain goods and freedoms and when there are measures in place to secure these goods and freedoms. Human rights analysis thus involves assessments of the extent to which institutions and social norms are in place that provide security to the human development achievements within a society.

Gains in human development are not always attended by gains in human rights fulfilment, and subsequently a pure human development accounting may fail to pick up on the vulnerability of individuals and groups within a society. The East Asian financial crisis vividly illustrates how societies that have fared extremely well in terms of composite human development indicators were overly dependent on a buoyant market. The instability of the market combined with inadequate social security provisions exposed the insecurity of East Asia's human development gains.

Human rights assessment involves a reorientation of factual concentration which can

broaden and enrich human development accounting. Assessments of human rights fulfilment would, for example, focus not only on what progress has been made so far, but also on the extent to which the gains are socially protected against potential threats. The profound concern of the human rights literature with the duties of others in helping each human being live a better and less unfree life is thus quite relevant in considering both the ways and the means of promoting human development.

WHAT HUMAN DEVELOPMENT ADDS TO HUMAN RIGHTS

Just as human rights contribute something important to human development, so human development helps to augment the reach of the human rights approach. First, there is a tradition of articulation and definiteness in the analysis of human development which can add something to the literature of human rights. Human development analysis has been undertaken at various levels, qualitative and quantitative, and has made use of both inclusive tables and exclusive composite indicators. These different types of investigation, used discriminatingly, can help to give concreteness to human rights analysis. This can be significant, but there are also other advantages—more than clarificatory and presentational—that human development can bring to human rights.

Second, promoting the fulfilment of a right often requires an assessment of how different policy choices will affect the prospects for fulfilling the right. Assessing the human rights impact of various policies will involve both an analysis of the probable human achievement outcomes of the policy and a balancing of claims to different types of achievements—not all of which may be at once attainable. Such an exercise in the evaluation of achievement can sensibly be characterized as an exercise much like human development analysis. For example, the government of a non-affluent country may find it impossible to guarantee the fulfilment of all the identified human rights—including social and economic rights. The alternative scenarios of accomplishment and

failure to safeguard the different human rights can be seen as alternative human development achievements, related particularly to each set of policy decisions and the related patterns of rights fulfilment and non-fulfilment.

Human rights advocates have often asserted the indivisibility and importance of all human rights. This claim makes sense if it is understood as denying that there is a hierarchy of different kinds of rights (economic, civil, cultural, political and social). But it cannot be denied that scarcity of resources and institutional constraints often require us to prioritize concern for securing different rights for the purposes of policy choice. Human development analysis helps us to see these choices in explicit and direct terms.

Third, while human rights are ultimately matters of individual entitlement, their fulfilment depends on appropriate social conditions. The goal of human development is to create an enabling environment in which people's capabilities can be enhanced and their range of choices expanded. By attending to this process of human development, human rights analysis can get a fuller assessment of what is feasible given the resource and institutional constraints that prevail within a society, and a clearer understanding of the ways and means of making a more attractive set of policy choices feasible. While the human rights literature has been concerned with the analysis of duties, the human development literature has constantly emphasized the importance of institutional complementarity and resource constraints and the need for public action to address them. Focusing on causally important institutional and operational variables, the human development literature brings to discussion and analysis of human rights some additional understanding of policies that will best promote human rights in a world that is inescapably pluralist in terms of causal influences and interactive impacts.

Fourth, the idea of human development involves change, and in this sense it has an inescapable dynamism that the specification of a given set of human rights may lack. Human development includes an abiding concern with progress, with things moving on

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from where they were earlier. The insistence on a dynamic view can be particularly useful in considering human rights over time. When a country is very poor, it may not be capable of achieving the fulfilment of every right that is judged important. But this is not an argument for giving priority to economic rights over civil and political rights. Economic entitlements complement rather than outweigh the importance of civil and political rights. But regardless of which kind of right is at issue, varying extents of crucial freedoms may be incorporated in different formulations of each right. Within the right to health, for example, the freedom to receive standard or primary medical care must be taken to be more basic than the freedom to receive costly surgical procedures. A poor country must insist on providing the former, but may have to wait until it is much richer to guarantee the second.

In this way, there may be a progression (indeed, “development”) in the human rights that receive priority, even though all such rights ultimately have value and importance. By adding the perspective of change and progress in conceptual and practical reasoning about human rights, human development can help to deepen the understanding and broaden the usefulness of the human rights approach. Indeed, the dynamic view inherent in human development analysis has already been partially integrated into human rights thinking, most obviously in the appreciation that some rights must be progressively realized. Human development analysis can give more structure and concreteness to this idea.

THE NATURE OF DUTIES ASSOCIATED WITH HUMAN RIGHTS

What form should the nature of duties associated with human rights take? To whom do they apply? With what degree of compulsion? In many writings on rights—geared rather rigidly to legal rights—it is assumed that rights make no sense unless they are combined with exact duties imposed—without fail—on specified persons or agents who would make sure that these rights are fulfilled. A person’s right

to something must, then, be inflexibly coupled with another person’s (or another agent’s) duty to provide the first person with that something. This corresponds to what the great 18th-century philosopher Immanuel Kant called “perfect duty,” strictly linking rights perfectly to prespecified exact duties of particular agents (in form, perfect duties in an ethical system are rather close to legal duties). In contrast, imperfect duties—also a concept explored by Kant—are general and non-compulsive duties of those who can help. This is a far less rigid system (as Amartya Sen explained in 1999 in “Consequential Evaluation and Practical Reason”), since imperfect duties leave open both *how* the duty can be discharged, and how forceful the duty is. Nevertheless, the neglect of the demands of an imperfect duty also involves a serious moral—or political—failure.

Those who insist on the rigid linkage of rights and duties, in the form of perfect duties, tend typically to be rather impatient with invoking the rhetoric of “rights” without exactly specifying particular agents whose precisely defined (and inescapable) duty it is to ensure the fulfilment of those rights. Not surprisingly, they are often very critical of the use of the concept of “human rights” without exact specification of responsible agents and their precise duties to bring about the fulfilment of these rights. Demands for human rights may then appear, in this line of reasoning, as largely “loose talk”.

They are not loose talk. Indeed, if this view were to be fully accepted, the human development literature would need to be kept analytically delinked from the approach of human rights—even if the rhetorical and agitprop merits of the language of human rights may be readily conceded when it comes to exposition or to “consciousness raising”. But to divorce the rhetoric from the substance of an approach goes entirely against the tradition of the human development literature, which has been committed, right from the beginning, to standing on articulated concepts and exacting argumentation, rather than concentrating on moving language and stirring phrases not matched by explicit defence.

The issue of the relationship between rights and duties must be seized at a critical level. It has already been argued that rights and duties must be linked in some form, but why the insistence on exactly matching rights with prespecified duties that apply rigidly to particular agents? It can be argued that the insistence on a rights-duties tie-up in this rigid form is simply a hangover from the empire of law, making all invoking of rights—even in ethics and politics—ultimately parasitic on the concepts and ideas that apply specifically to legal rights.

This rather severe view tallies with Jeremy Bentham's argument that a "declaration of rights would be but a lop-sided job without a declaration of duties". It tallies also with Bentham's rejection of the ethical claims of "natural rights" as "nonsense" and the concept of "natural and imprescriptible rights" as "nonsense on stilts" (presumably, artificially elevated nonsense). It refers to this sense of illegitimacy in taking the idea of rights beyond what Bentham, along with many others, thought to be the proper use of an essentially legal concept.

This way of seeing rights—essentially in legal or quasi-legal terms—does, however, militate against the basic idea that people have some claims on others and on the design of social arrangements regardless of what laws happen to be enforced. Indeed, it is a commitment to common fellowship and solidarity, quite well expressed in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration, that inspires the idea that all persons have duties both to refrain from harming others and to help them. The Universal Declaration demands protection from unjust laws and practices on the ground that no matter what the laws may be, individuals have certain rights by virtue of their humanity, not on the basis of their citizenship or contingent facts about the legal reality of the country of which they are citizens. Human rights are moral claims on the behaviour of individual and collective agents, and on the design of social arrangements. Human rights are fulfilled when the persons involved enjoy secure access to the freedom or resource (adequate health protec-

tion, freedom of speech) covered by the right. In many contexts, establishing legal rights may be the best means of furthering the fulfilment of human rights. Nevertheless, legal rights should not be confused with human rights—nor should it be supposed that legal rights are sufficient for the fulfilment of human rights.

This is indeed the approach to rights invoked by such general political theorists as Tom Paine, in his *Rights of Man*, Mary Wollstonecraft, in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (both published in 1792), and also by earlier writers in the social contract tradition such as John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. All of them asserted that all human beings are endowed with rights prior to the formation of social institutions that constrain both the design of institutions and the conduct of other individuals. The insistence that the discourse of rights cannot go beyond the limits of legal demands does less than justice to the sense of solidarity and fairness in social living, commitments that are not parasitic on the exact laws that may have been enacted in a society.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND IMPERFECT DUTIES

There is, however, a different kind of rationale for insisting on the rigid rights-duties linkage in the form of perfect duties. It can be asked how we can be sure that rights are, in fact, realizable unless they are matched by corresponding duties that ensure their fulfilment. This argument is invoked to suggest that to be effective, any real right must be matched by a specific duty of a particular agent, who will see to the actual fulfilment of that right.

It is certainly plausible to presume that the performance of perfect duties would help a great deal towards the fulfilment of rights. But why cannot there be *unfulfilled* rights? There is no contradiction involved in saying (indeed lamenting): "These individuals have these rights, but alas the rights were not fulfilled". The question of the fulfilment of rights must be distinguished (as Amartya Sen has argued) from the issue of their existence. We need not jump from regretting the *non-fulfilment* of rights all the way to the denial of the existence—or the cogency—of the rights

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themselves. Often, rights are unfulfilled precisely because of the failure of duty bearers to perform their duties.

In normative discussions human rights are often championed as entitlements, powers or immunities that benefit all who have them. But even when universal and unblemished fulfilment of human rights for all may be very hard to achieve, the articulation of these rights can help to mobilize support from a great many people in their defence. Even though no particular person or agency may be charged with bringing about the fulfilment of the rights involved, the articulation of imperfect duties may be both an assertion of normative importance and a call for responsible action to be undertaken by others. For example, we can argue that women had a human right to be free from discrimination on the basis of gender independent of whether this right was protected by laws and social arrangements. Gender discrimination is not merely a crime practised by individuals who are violating their perfect duties to particular women. Gender discrimination is an injustice entrenched in the social norms and institutions of all societies. This injustice is expressed both in laws and in other social

norms and informal practices of discrimination against women.

Women's human rights give them a claim that male-only suffrage and many other practices be ended through social, legal and institutional reforms. The duties correlated with this right cannot easily be allocated to particular duty bearers because the task of reforming these unjust practices falls on the group as a whole. Yet individuals surely have imperfect duties correlative to this right, and speaking of this right clearly expresses something of great normative importance.

Even if it were to be the case that a particular government does not, right now, have the resources (or the possibility of raising the resources) needed to bring about the fulfilment of specified rights for all, it is essential to encourage the government to work towards making their fulfilment feasible. Credit can still be given for the extent to which these alleged rights are fulfilled. This can help to focus attention on these human rights—and to promote their fulfilment. It can also enrich the understanding of processes that lead to successes and failures in human development. The combination of the two perspectives gives us something that neither can provide alone.

THE ONGOING GLOBAL STRUGGLE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Struggles and historical events

THROUGH THE 17TH CENTURY

Many religious texts emphasize the importance of equality, dignity and responsibility to help others
Over 3,000 years ago Hindu Vedas, Agamas and Upanishads; Judaic text the Torah
2,500 years ago Buddhist Tripitaka and Anguttara-Nikaya and Confucianist Analects, Doctrine of the Mean and Great Learning
2,000 years ago Christian New Testament, and 600 years later, Islamic Qur'an

18TH–19TH CENTURIES

1789 The French Revolution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen
1815 Slave revolts in Latin America and in France
1830s Movements for social and economic rights—Ramakrishna in India, religious movements in the West
1840 In Ireland the Chartist Movement demands universal suffrage and rights for workers and poor people
1847 Liberian Revolution
1861 Liberation from serfdom in Russia

THE 20TH CENTURY

1990–29

1900–15 Colonized peoples rise up against imperialism in Asia and Africa
1905 Workers movements in Europe, India and the US; in Moscow 300,000 workers demonstrate
1910 Peasants mobilize for land rights in Mexico
1914–18 First World War
1914 onward Independence movements and riots in Europe, Africa and Asia
1915 Massacres of Armenians by the Turks
1917 Russian Revolution
1919 Widespread protests against the exclusion of racial equality from the Covenant of the League of Nations
1920s Campaigns for women's rights to contraceptive information by Ellen Key, Margaret Sanger, Shizue Ishimoto
1920s General strikes and armed conflict between workers and owners in industrialized world

1930–49

1930 In India Gandhi leads hundreds on long march to Dandi to protest salt tax
1939–45 Hitler's Nazi regime kills 6 million Jews and forces into concentration camps and murders Gypsies, Communists, labour unionists, Poles, Ukrainians, Kurds, Armenians, disabled people, Jehovah's Witnesses and homosexuals

Conferences, documents and declarations

Codes of conduct—Menes, Asoka, Hammurabi, Draco, Cyrus, Moses, Solon and Manu
1215 Magna Carta signed, acknowledging that even a sovereign is not above the law
1625 Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius credited with birth of international law
1690 John Locke develops idea of natural rights in *Second Treatise of Government*

1792 Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*
1860s In Iran Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzade and in China Tan Sitong argue for gender equality
1860s Rosa Guerra's periodical *La Camelia* champions equality for women throughout Latin America
1860s In Japan Toshiko Kishida publishes an essay, *I Tell You, My Fellow Sisters*
1860–80 More than 50 bilateral treaties on abolition of the slave trade, in all regions

1900 First Pan-African Congress in London
1906 International convention prohibiting night work for women in industrial employment
1907 Central American Peace Conference provides for aliens' right to appeal to courts where they reside
1916 Self-determination addressed in Lenin's *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*
1918 Self-determination addressed in Wilson's "Fourteen Points"
1919 Versailles Treaty stresses right to self-determination and minority rights
1919 Pan-African Congress demands right to self-determination in colonial possessions
1923 Fifth Conference of the American Republics, in Santiago, Chile, addresses women's rights
1924 Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child
1924 US Congress approves Snyder Act, granting all Native Americans full citizenship
1926 Geneva Conference adopts Slavery Convention

1930 ILO Convention Concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour
1933 International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women of Full Age
1941 US President Roosevelt identifies four essential freedoms—of speech and religion, from want and fear

Institutions

1809 Ombudsman institution established in Sweden
1815 Committee on the International Slave Trade Issue, at the Congress of Vienna
1839 Antislavery Society in Britain, followed in 1860s by Confederação Abolicionista in Brazil
1863 International Committee of the Red Cross
1864 International Working Men's Association
1898 League of Human Rights, an NGO, in response to the Dreyfus Affair

1902 International Alliance for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship
1905 Trade unions form international federations
1910 International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union
1919 League of Nations and Court of International Justice
1919 International Labour Organization (ILO), to advocate human rights embodied in labour law
1919 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
1919 NGOs devoted to women's rights start addressing children's rights; Save the Children (UK)
1922 Fourteen national human rights leagues establish International Federation of Human Rights Leagues
1920s National Congress of British West Africa in Accra, to promote self-determination
1925 Representatives of eight developing countries found Coloured International to end racial discrimination
1928 Inter-American Commission on Women, to ensure recognition of women's civil and political rights

1933 Refugee Organization
1935–36 International Penal and Penitentiary Commission, to promote basic rights of prisoners
1945 Nuremberg and Tokyo trials
1945 United Nations
1946 UN Commission on Human Rights

Struggles and historical events

1942 René Cassin of France urges creation of an international court to punish war crimes

1942 US government interns some 120,000

Japanese-Americans during Second World War

1942–45 Antifascist struggles in many European countries

1949 Chinese Revolution

1950–59

1950s National liberation wars and revolts in Asia; some African countries gain independence

1955 Political and civil rights movement in US; Martin Luther King Jr. leads the Montgomery bus boycott (381 days)

1960–69

1960s In Africa 17 countries secure right to self-determination, as do countries elsewhere

1962 National Farm Workers (United Farm Workers of America) organizes to protect migrant workers in US

1960s–70s Feminist movements demand equality

1970–79

1970s Human rights issues attract broad attention—apartheid in South Africa, treatment of Palestinians in occupied territories, torture of political opponents in Chile, “dirty war” in Argentina, genocide in Cambodia

1970s People protest against Arab-Israeli conflict, Viet Nam war and Nigeria-Biafra civil war

1976 Amnesty International wins Nobel Peace prize

1980–89

1980s Latin American dictatorships end—in Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay

1988 In the Philippines peaceful People’s Power Movement overthrows Marcos dictatorship

1989 Tiananmen Square

1989 Fall of the Berlin Wall

1990–2000

1990s Democracy spreads across Africa; Nelson Mandela released from prison and elected president of South Africa

1990s Ethnic cleansing in former Yugoslavia, and genocide and massive human rights violations in Rwanda

1998 Spain initiates extradition proceedings against General Pinochet of Chile

1999 Doctors without Borders wins Nobel Peace prize

2000 Court in Senegal charges former Chadian dictator Hissene Habre with “torture and barbarity”

Conferences, documents and declarations

1945 UN Charter, emphasizing human rights

1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights

1948 ILO Convention on the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize

1949 ILO Convention on the Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining

1950 European Convention on Human Rights

1951 ILO Equal Retribution Convention

1957 ILO Convention Concerning Abolition of Forced Labour

1958 ILO Convention Concerning Discrimination in Employment and Occupation

1965 UN International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

1966 UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

1966 UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

1968 First World Conference on Human Rights, in Tehran

1973 UN International Convention on Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid

1973 ILO Minimum Age Convention

1974 World Food Conference in Rome

1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

1981 African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights

1984 UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

1986 UN Declaration on the Right to Development

1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

1990–96 Global UN conferences and summits on the issues of children, education, environment and development, human rights, population, women, social development and human settlements

1998 Rome statute for establishing International Criminal Court

1999 CEDAW Optional Protocol for Individual Complaints

1999 ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention

Institutions

1948 Organization of American States

1949 Council of Europe

1950 ILO fact-finding commission deals with violations of trade union rights

1951 ILO Committee on Freedom of Association

1954 European Commission of Human Rights

1959 European Court of Human Rights

1960 Inter-American Commission on Human Rights holds its first session

1961 Amnesty International

1963 Organization of African Unity

1967 Pontifical Commission for International Justice and Peace

1970 First commissions on peace and justice in Paraguay and Brazil

1978 Helsinki Watch (Human Rights Watch)

1979 Inter-American Court of Human Rights

1983 Arab Organization for Human Rights

1985 UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

1988 African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights

1992 First Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) High Commissioner for National Minorities

1993 First UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, appointed at the Vienna Conference

1993–94 International criminal tribunals for former Yugoslavia and Rwanda

1995 South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission

1995–99 Ten countries launch national plans of action for the protection and promotion of human rights

Source: Lauren 1998; Ishay 1997; UN 1997a, 1997b; An-Na’im 2000; Olcott 2000; Mendez 2000; Šilovic 2000; Pinheiro and Baluarte 2000; Vizard 2000; Akash 2000.