



Human Rights - A Necessity for Sustainable Peace

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Are Human Rights a necessity for a sustainable peace? Do implemented Human Rights standards guarantee peace? A highly qualified panel considered this question appropriately on the UN International Day of Peace. Ms Sylvia Escobar is a former Human Rights Ambassador for Spain, Eyal Bloch has 20 years experience teaching education programmes in Israel and the West Bank to promote human rights awareness and a culture of peace and Ed Brown, the Moderator, has specialised in the human rights of Christians behind the Iron Curtain and now in nations where Christians are minorities.

Mr. Jan Egeland, the European Director for Human Rights Watch, began with the question, 'Are we making progress towards peace and Human Rights?' There are less armed conflicts in world today than ever before and a smaller risk of facing violent death today. If we look for progress in human rights we can identify that the number of democracies have more than doubled and the number of dictatorships is more than halved since the end of World War II.



Armed conflict and human rights issues are inter-related. There is a new challenge as the UN is ineffective in solving armed conflicts, e.g. Syria. The UN Security Council members take different sides in the Syrian conflict. Human Rights and peace are interrelated. The individual should be protected against government and armed actors.

The International Criminal Court is popular among leaders because of putting African war lords on trial. It has not however put any Middle East war lords on trial. There is no common standard on Human Rights. Some nations are reluctant to implement human rights because they're afraid of being punished for past mistakes. Human Rights, though, are for everybody without discrimination.

Mr. Jan Egeland, is the European Director for Human Rights Watch, Human Rights Watch International, Deputy Director as well as the former director of the Norwegian Institute of Foreign Affairs. He was the UN Undersecretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, and Emergency Relief Coordinator from June 2003 to December 2006. He was Secretary General of the Norwegian Red Cross and the Chair of Amnesty International, Norway.

Ms. Silvia Escobar, the former Human Rights Ambassador of Spain, posed the question, 'If Human Rights are respected universally, would that be an ideal world?'. She answered saying, 'We don't know.'

Ms. Escobar quoted Kofi Annan's millennium speech: "No development without peace; no peace without human rights." Therefore States must implement policies on human rights protection. There much remains to be done.



There is another step beyond the duty of nations to guarantee rights and responsibilities. The concept of human security takes people as point of reference, not states and territory. The human security agenda must go beyond humanitarian action. We should see human rights from a human security perspective. States have the responsibility to implement treaties to which they are signatories.

How should civil society promote human rights? It must promote respect for human rights. It must provide human rights education. It must teach peaceful co-existence. That is essential for governance building. There is no genuine democracy unless based on human rights. There must be accountability. Civil society must enable the individual to become agent of change.



***Ms. Silvia Escobar**, is the former Human Rights Ambassador of Spain. She is co-founder and 1st president of the Spanish Section of International Amnesty (1976-1982). She was the Red Cross Director of Social Services and member advisor for the Sub-Secretary of Foreign Affairs where she was Deputy General Director of the Human Rights Office which was created with her appointment in 1983. From May of 2005 till 2011 she was Ambassador in Special Mission for issues related to Human Rights under the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation. She is a member of the Paris International Academy of Human Rights and of the Press International Institute in Vienna.*

Eyal Bloch said he comes from Jerusalem, the place of endless conflicts! However, where there is conflict, there are also opportunities. How to make news out of good deeds? Conflicts are news, but if we build something together, that is not a news item. There are numerous instances of media creating conflicts between Israelis and Arabs.

It is important to have realistic expectations as to what is achievable. Creating new alternative forms of interaction is a long process. Conflicts are short; the peace building process is very long.

In Israel peace activists follow the army. They teach soldiers to love peace. We have to enter the formal system in order to have impact and make it sustainable. The biggest distance on earth is the 30 cm between the head and the heart.

*For the past 20 years **Eyal Bloch** has been involved in peace education mainly in primary education. He is the Co-Founder of the Institute of Education for Sustainable Development. In 2004 'All In Peace', a Olympic peace festival for 5th grade students from conflict areas, which he founded, was chosen on September 21st to be one of the best peace education programmes in sport.*

In the past three years Eyal has been working in Kenya to introduce Education for Sustainable Development to primary schools on national scale. He and his team have done intensive training in Israel from the Deputy Minister of Education, CEO, to the Headmaster. This has brought great success in several schools where they were able to transform the school: academically, socially and environmentally. These are following principals of education for sustainability that were developed in their institute. Two years ago on International Peace day they presented a peace proposal developed by youth from Israel and Palestine based on children rights.