



SHARE YOUR PEACE

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP IN THE FIELD OF YOUTH

MODULE 4

HUMAN RIGHTS AND CONFLICT
RESOLUTION.
IS THERE A CONNECTION?



Erasmus+

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Content

I. Introduction	2
II. Universal declaration of Human Rights: when, how, why.....	2
III. Human Rights dogmas	4
IV. Hate speech: phenomena, roots of the conflict, armed conflicts.....	12
V. Freedom of speech vs. hate speech	14
VI. Human rights and armed conflicts	16
VII. Youth Workers and Human Rights	17
VIII. Conclusion.....	19



I. Introduction

We are 7.8 billion humans on Planet Earth.

The 2020 Data Sheet identifies key demographic findings around the world of 7.8 billion people.

All of us are in this number. And we all need to coexist.

It is utopic, someone may say, however, we need to learn how to coexist in comfort, respect to each other, and love.

Going back to the Stone Age, humans were born with the same opportunities and in the same world. From now on, we breathe the same air and drink the same water. However, because of some psychological patterns and behaviours, humans make a hierarchy, which had negative consequence for all of us.

This is how conflicts appear. Everything starts from a small issue, which may raise until enormous sizes. These, in turn, can develop into big problems, crises, conflicts, wars, genocide.

This is where and why Human Rights take place.

II. Universal declaration of Human Rights: when, how, why?



The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

After many conflicts and wars, member states of the United Nations pledged to promote respect for the human rights of all. To advance this goal, the UN established a Commission on Human Rights and charged it with the task of drafting a document spelling out the meaning of the fundamental rights and freedoms proclaimed in the Charter.



Thus, on December 10, 1948, **the 56 members of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.**

➡ **Recognition of the inherent dignity, equality, and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world.**

The influence of Human Rights has been crucial and fundamental. Now, its principles are incorporated into the constitutions of more than 185 nations, which are members of the United Nations.

Did you know? Although a declaration is not a legally binding document, the Universal Declaration has achieved the status of international law and principle because people regard it 'as a common standard for happy living'.

➡ **What rights do all of us have?**

To start with, all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person.

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude.

No one shall be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law. Moreover, all are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law.

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

Besides, all of us have the following obvious rights, as:

- Marriage and Family
- To Own Things
- Freedom of Thought
- Freedom of Expression
- The Right to Public Assembly
- The Right to Democracy
- Social Security
- Workers' Rights
- The Right to Play
- Food and Shelter
- Education
- Copyright
- A Fair and Free World



- Responsibility

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and any criminal charge against him.

The last but not least, no one can take away Human Rights from us! As well as we cannot take away Human Rights from another person no matter which nationality, gender, or belief this person is.

III. Human Rights dogmas

What is the importance of Human Rights? How is it linked to conflict resolution?
Which way is it influencing my life?

Imagine your regular day. You wake up at your house or apartment, having your breakfast, going to the office, buying coffee or tea on your way. You log in to your email or Facebook; write a comment under some important news, because you have just a different opinion from one that is taking place. In the evening, you call your mother or father; meet your boyfriend or girlfriend. At night, you meet your friends for a movie or a drink. You all choose what you would like to watch tonight.

These all mentioned above regular things are our human rights. Do you agree?

Okay, imagine the same day of your life with no Human Rights. You wake up in a strange place, where you had the opportunity to rest for a while, no breakfast, straight to unpaid work, begging the owner of the office for a cup of tea. You do not have access to email or Facebook, because there is censorship, and the last time your comment was not agreed with the government so now you are blocked. The scenario may be adapted according to ones' imagination.

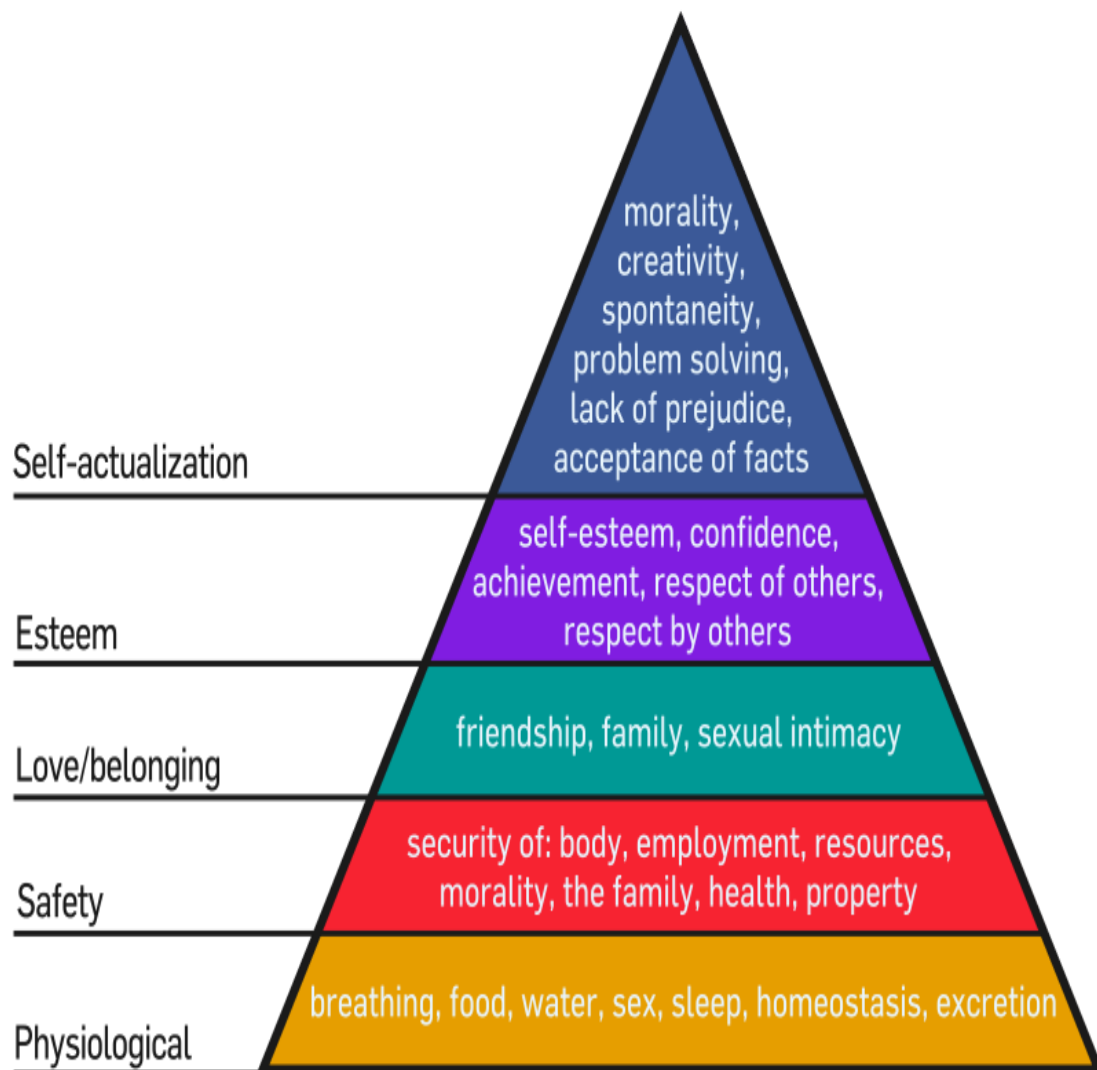
There is one small, almost invisible but important thing – Human Rights is something that explains to us: to be different is normality. Furthermore, we all are different; this was nature's concept. Human Rights teach us to accept the differences and respect it. Diversity is nature. Likewise, different biological species live in African jungles, American Amazonia, and Australia. All of them contribute to the biological circle. None is less or



more valuable. The same is about humans. We all are different and, therefore, we create the Planet Earth.

As soon as we accept the idea that everyone is equal and has a right to think differently, many conflicts will disappear in the bud.

In 1943, Abraham Maslow published a paper 'A Theory of Human Motivation'. The ideas (and diagram) from that paper have been widely used in business schools and management training programs.



These same ideas can be applied to human rights.

Why? Because the rights, basically, were defined according to the people's needs.



The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a milestone document in the history of human rights.

Drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world, the Declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly as a common standard of achievements for everyone. It sets out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected and it has been translated into over 500 languages.



It is often being said that many of us take our Rights and freedoms for granted. The term 'human rights' has become a bit of a 'buzz word' among people who love to add their comments to Daily Mail articles or on Facebook articles: 'They forgot about human rights' or 'We're bending over backward for minorities'.

However, this is not what Human Rights are supposed to mean. First, Human Rights offer us **safety, freedom, and protection.**



Here are the reasons why do we need Human Rights
legislation, courts, lawyers, and campaigners.

To avoid **Slavery, human trafficking, and sexual exploitation**

To get rid of violations against freedom of speech, expression, assembly, and association.

To give a miss to tortures, arbitrary arrests, detentions, or exiles and restrictions against freedom of movement.

To support asylum seekers.

To avoid discrimination and unequal protection before the law.

To confront divided families.

To obtain privacy.

Long story short, we need human rights to feel safe free and – avoid conflicts.

Human Rights allow people to love who they choose and to be who they are. In
other words, to be happy.

As long as we are human beings, in principle, we always have fundamental human rights. This is true whether we are free or in prison, or whatever our circumstances. However, human rights cannot just be based on the rights-holders' personal needs and interests. Rights are normally considered to be above practical considerations of that sort: instead, they exist at the level of the moral duties we owe each other as reasoning beings.

The concept of human rights is deeply rooted in the idea of 'natural law', which comes from the moral principles common to all people by under their spiritual or rational nature as human beings. Natural law assumes that there are underlying rational principles of justice and morality that are universal in their nature and apply in all societies and at any time in history.



What is the relationship between human rights and conflicts?

There are three main schools of thought on the relationship between these statements: human rights, conflict resolution, and humanitarian law.

The human rights approach stresses the importance of exposing the truth about governmental abuses and ending injustices. The conflict resolution perspective focuses on resolving, managing, preventing, or transforming violent conflict through mediation, negotiation, or use of force. The humanitarian law approach is concerned with the conduct of war and the protection of civilians during armed conflict.

Human Rights, humanitarian law, and conflict resolution approaches prioritize individual human dignity, humane conduct in war and the promotion of peace respectively. Violent conflicts grow out of the quest for self-determination, demands for fair access to resources and resistance to discrimination. Human Rights abuses create cycles of dehumanization based on fear. The denial of Human Rights can engender and intensify conflict and so can the demand for those same rights. The state's inability to protect basic human rights and provide mechanisms for the civil resolution of conflict may prompt groups to use force in pressing their demands.

Viewed from these different angles, several important connections emerge in the relationship between human rights and conflict.

If human rights abuse and injustice are buried, conflict resolution and reconciliation will be undermined. Truth and reconciliation commissions enable divided societies to reunite more easily than courts.

For instance, refugees can destabilize a region by upsetting social balances and changing economic and demographic distributions and thereby precipitating new human rights abuses.

Efforts to ensure effective human rights protections during the peace process may run counter to the conflict resolution strategy.

➡ However, human rights can become a tool between groups competing for political power.



➡ As well as neutrality may not always be possible in delivering humanitarian relief and protecting human rights.

The different approaches share a commitment to maximizing human dignity and minimizing civilian harm. The challenge is to integrate their perspectives in a way that best responds to the nature of the conflict.

For human rights and conflict resolution to complement each other, it is important not to focus solely on respect for human rights while ignoring the need to end violent conflict.

Human rights must be combined with efforts to produce a more productive economy and a more legitimate and effective government.

➡ Donors need to help develop the capacity of local institutions and NGOs to provide and deliver humanitarian relief and protect human rights.

While force can be an effective means of preventing genocide, restraint should be exercised in using armed force to respond to humanitarian crises. It is dangerous for powerful states to act unilaterally. The international community can help build civil society institutions, develop justice mechanisms and fund human rights education. It must understand the unique circumstances of each conflict.

Therefore, we should consider Human Rights as a good way of resolving conflict according to the following facts:

- Because Human Rights are associated with justice, they can be good for resolving conflicts and contribute to the long-term stability of a conflict settlement.
- The Human Rights approach can also contribute to identifying the 'root causes' of a conflict and potentially means – to address them.
- Human Rights standards can help provide indicators for when a state has failed and to identify a moment of start to address the reasonable concerns of a group of its citizens.
- Human Rights can help identify potential mechanisms to resolve any kind of conflict.
- Human Rights can contribute to resolving conflict in both – short and long terms.
- Human Rights can also contribute to international support and mediators help for a peace process and political settlement.
- Human Rights can provide a neutral standpoint that can help resolve disputes between parties in conflict.

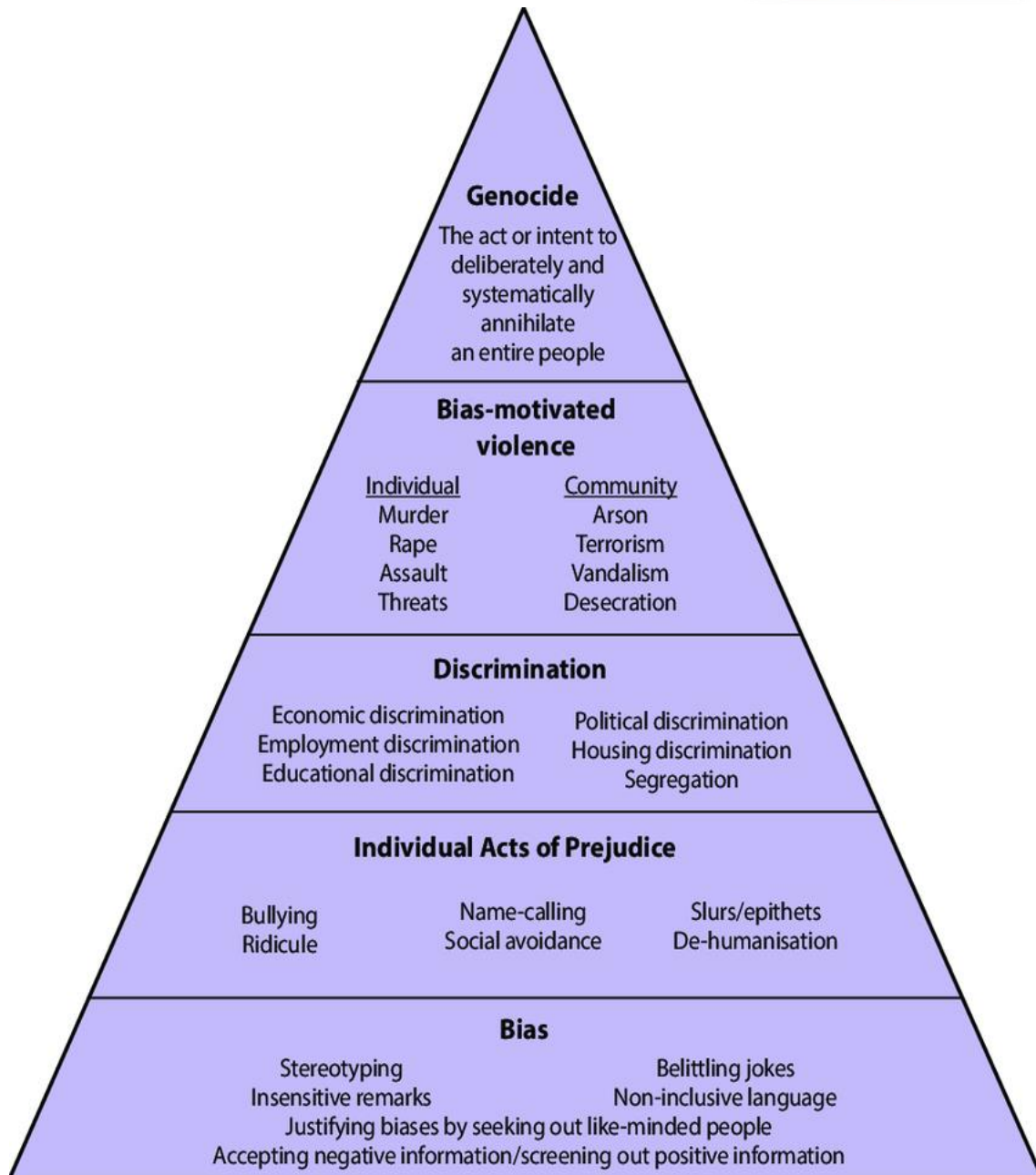


Human rights and conflict resolution complement each other mostly. Where there are some tensions, these can generally be addressed with political skill and deft institutional design. Moreover, political compromises to avoid war and delay its possibility contribute to protecting human rights, because war leads to some of the worst violations of human rights.

The one area where there is a clear tension between human rights and conflict resolution is in the case of amnesties for past violations. This raises an inevitable political compromise that domestic political actors will have to make in coming to a political agreement. However, such amnesties need not be recognized internationally and thus need not lead to individual impunity. This matter aside, the protection and promotion of human rights – and specifically the human rights – informed approach to conflict prevention and resolution – is instrumental to achieving peace and stability.

You will be surprised but due to the physiological differences human cannot live in a permanent state of equality, dignity, and absolute respect. Because stereotypes are born. In social psychology, a stereotype is a fixed, over-generalized belief about a particular group or class of people. By stereotyping, we infer that a person has a whole range of characteristics and abilities that we assume all members of that group have.

Stereotypes – very strong and small things at the same time. This is the beginning of conflicts. Why? Let us look at the Pyramid of Hate. The first level of this pyramid has a strong, crucial, and direct link to the human rights and conflict regulations.





IV. Hate speech: phenomena, roots of the conflict, armed conflicts

Let us start from the beginning.

➡ Stereotypes are generalized beliefs about a person or a group of people. Usually, these beliefs do not have anything in common with reality. Some examples, taken from Human Rights case law, are the notions that 'Roma people are thieves' or 'Women are weak'.

Human Rights bodies thus appear to be starting to realize what social psychologists discovered a long time ago: that stereotypes underlie inequality and discrimination. Despite their relevance and their legal momentum, however, stereotypes have so far received little attention from human rights law scholars.

Because of ignoring small and invisible stereotypes, discrimination and hate speech occur in a society. The reason is – stereotypes are building a huge wall around our vision and perception of the world. Guiding by the stereotyping mind, humans decline diversity. Emotions and way of thinking 'I am right, they are wrong' are dominating, which leads to discrimination and language of hate. These two lead towards the top of mentioned above pyramid – hate crime.

➡ Discrimination is the unfair or prejudicial treatment of people and groups based on characteristics such as race, gender, age or sexual orientation.

➡ Hate speech is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary as 'public speech that expresses hate or encourages violence towards a person or group based on something such as race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation'.

To identify hate speech, it is essential that we first understand the importance of the mutually reinforcing human rights to freedom of expression and equality.

Hate speech targets people as individuals or groups because of who they are.

➡ A hate crime is a prejudice-motivated crime which occurs when a perpetrator targets a victim because of their membership (or perceived membership) of a certain social group or race. It generally refers to criminal acts, which are seen to have been motivated by bias against one or more of the social groups listed above, or by bias against their derivatives. Incidents may involve physical assault, damage to property, bullying, harassment, verbal abuse or insults, hate crime, or offensive graffiti or letters (hate mailing).

Violence is only one of the possible results of hate speech, which could aim at diminishing the rights of the targeted group by making it an object of discrimination. Hate speech may also be used to stereotype a group by identifying and highlighting one



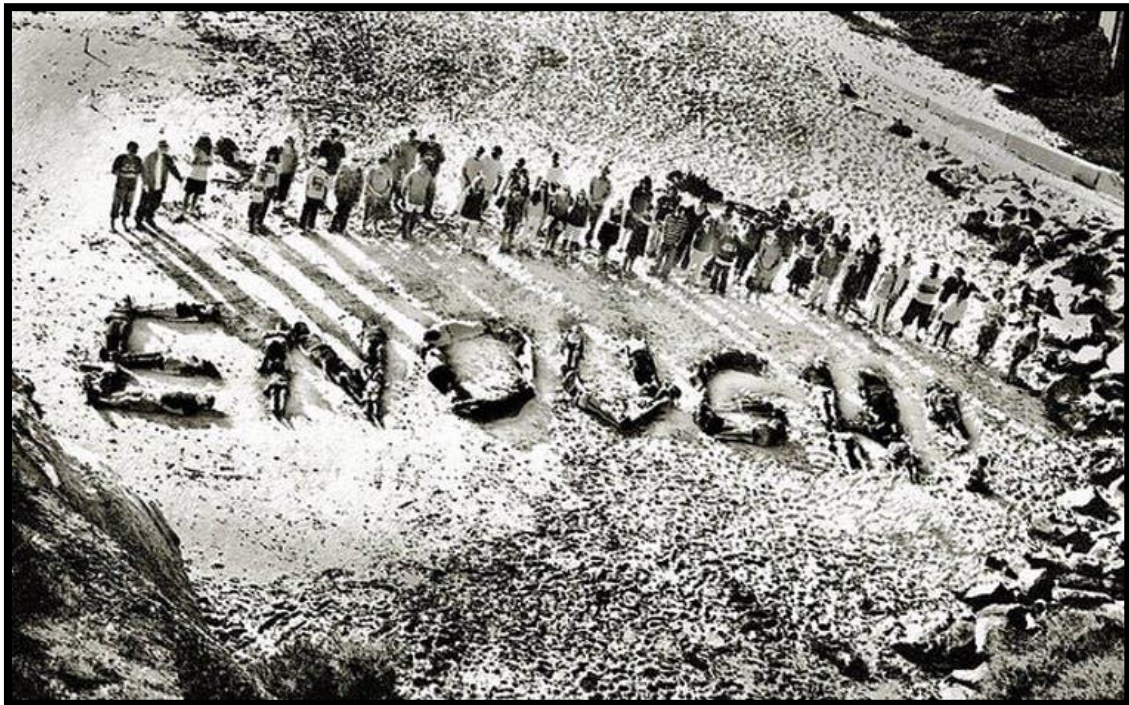
or more of its asserted negative characteristics. By such denigration, a climate of hostility against group members is eventually created.

Alike the rolling from a hill snowball increases, the same way of development has every stereotype or a word (at first glance quite innocent word).

On the top of the pyramid is a word, which usually makes us ask the following questions: Why did it happen? How could it happen? What is wrong with this society? How could they do this towards the same human beings? What was the reason?

This is genocide.

➡ The United Nations Genocide Convention defines genocide as 'acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such'. It includes the killing of its members, causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, deliberately imposing living conditions that seek to 'bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part', preventing births, or forcibly transferring children out of the group to another group.





V. Freedom of speech vs. hate speech

Freedom of speech vs. Hate speech

Following the topic of human rights and freedom of speech, in particular, there is a new conflict of 21 centuries: conflict of freedom of speech and hate speech.

Freedom of opinion and expression is a fundamental human right, protected in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and given legal force through all major international and regional human rights treaties.

International human rights law requires States to guarantee to all people the freedom to seek, receive, or impart information or ideas of any kind, regardless of frontiers, through any media of a person's choice.

However, quite often, when we express our opinion towards other social groups it raises hate speech. How and why it works like this?

The scope of the right to freedom of expression is broad. It includes, for example, the expression of opinions and ideas that others may find deeply offensive, and this may encompass discriminatory expression. It is often said that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interrelated, interdependent and mutually reinforcing. There are, furthermore, two reasons why international law grants particular importance to the right to freedom of expression as a cornerstone right:

- At a personal level, freedom of expression is a key to the development, dignity and fulfilment of every person. People can gain an understanding of their surroundings and the wider world by exchanging ideas and information freely with others. People feel more secure and respected if they can speak their minds.
- At a state level, freedom of expression is necessary for good governance and, therefore, for economic and social progress. It ensures accountability by enabling people to freely debate and raise concerns with the government, including for the protection and promotion of other human rights.

Having said this, the right to freedom of expression is not absolute right, and the State may, under certain exceptional circumstances, restrict the right under international human rights law. Why? Because international Human Rights law guarantees equality and non-discrimination for all people. And quite often there is a conflict of interest between freedom of speech and hate speech.



The principle of non-discrimination has three conjoined elements. It is understood as:

1. any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference against a person;
2. based on a protected characteristic recognized under international human rights law;
3. which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.

Addressing hate speech does not mean limiting or prohibiting freedom of speech. It means keeping hate speech from escalating into something more dangerous, particularly incitement to discrimination, hostility, and violence, which is prohibited under international law.

To sum up said above, we need to remember one thing:

The borders of one-person finish at a point, where the borders of another person begin.



VI. Human rights and armed conflicts

Human Rights and armed conflicts

In recent decades, the armed conflict has blighted the lives of millions of civilians. Serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law are common in many armed conflicts. In certain circumstances, some of these violations may even constitute genocide, war crimes, or crimes against humanity.

Around the world, we are seeing a disturbing groundswell of xenophobia, racism, and intolerance – including rising anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim hatred and persecution of Christians.

Social media and other online platforms, which became an essential way of communication for humans now, are being exploited as platforms for neglect, disrespect and display of hate speech. Public discourse is being weaponized for political gain with incendiary rhetoric that stigmatizes and dehumanizes minorities, migrants, refugees, women, and any so-called 'other'.

Unfortunately, hate is moving into the mainstream and through every broken norm, the pillars of our common humanity are weakened.

Hate speech is a menace to democratic values, social stability and peace. As a matter of principle, the United Nations must confront hate speech at every turn. Silence can signal indifference to bigotry and intolerance, even as a situation escalates and the vulnerable become victims.

Tackling hate speech is also crucial to deepen progress across the United Nations agenda by helping to prevent armed conflict, atrocity crimes and terrorism, end violence against women and other serious violations of human rights, and promote peaceful, inclusive and just societies.

These are the most heard armed conflicts that all of us know about: Gaza: Health situation in the Gaza Strip; Health Care in Pakistan's Tribal Areas; the United Kingdom The Case of Serdar Mohammed (High Court Judgment); Malaysia/Philippines, Conflict over the Sultanate of Sulu; Women and Sexual violence; Code of Conduct of the Free Syrian Army; European Court of Human Rights Kononov v. Latvia; Yemen, Potential Existence and Effects of Naval Blockade; Israel/Palestine, Accountability for the Use of Lethal Force; Mexico, The 'War on Drugs'; South Sudan, Activities of Oil Companies. These and many more can be found on the official webpage of the UN.

All the conflicts begin with the humiliations of other peoples' points of view/rights/opinions etc. There is no doubt in it. It will not take much time to google any



of the mentioned above conflicts from the UN lists and see the history. Why did it happen? What was the first step before the escalation?

Certainly, there are always two or more sides; each of them thinks they are who is right.

This is when youth workers step on the stage. Yes! Youth and social workers matter a lot. NGO sector is one of the most effective representatives in the peace-building process. Otherwise, why any government would allocate funding for their activities.

VII. Youth Workers and Human Rights

Youth workers and human rights. Where is the common ground?

According to the European Council's report, international Human Rights norms and values implicitly and explicitly shape European Institutions and European youth policies. Thus, Human Rights offer a normative framework for the formulation of regional and national youth policies, as well as strengthen policies by legal obligations.

Let us ask ourselves a question on the specific potential of youth work for Human Rights education. Its' potential begins with the fact that, unlike school education, youth work is driven by the experiences of its addressees and organizes learning processes in which these experiences form the basis. The professional environment strongly supports the idea that youth work shall not simply be a transfer of knowledge about human rights, designed as an authoritative transfer of valid values and norms.

Effective youth policy cannot successfully live and develop without the empowerment of young people, to whom it is concerned. Policymakers acknowledge not only the needs and special situation of young people but prove their entitlements and rights as well.

The principles of equality and non-discrimination belong to the most fundamental elements of international human rights law. The same principles refer to the Council of Europe's and European Union's youth policies. Moreover, European youth policies have a particular focus on young people who are vulnerable, disadvantaged or socially excluded.

The international Human Rights framework requires active and informed participation of young people in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of policies that affect young people's life.



The local and regional sectoral policies should include a youth dimension and identify consultation and co-operation with young people as an essential principle in youth policy implementation.

Education and training play an important role in the promotion of international human rights values and principles.

➡ However, **simple knowledge of human rights standards is not always enough to enable youth workers to transfer these rules into their practice.**

‘One of the fundamental goals of all education for democratic citizenship and Human Rights education is not just equipping learners with knowledge, understanding, and skills. It is also empowering and encouragement of young people with the readiness to take action in society in the defence and promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law’ – claimed in the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education within the Council of Europe.

Human rights education shall not be restricted to transferring knowledge about values and laws or value education.

➡ We need to remember that Human Rights education is always also a political and social one.

In other words, an education that addresses controversies about the right design of a good society. This education raising up the question: what kind of society we want to live in?

Human Rights education must also point out that referring to Human Rights is an inescapable framework for political controversy, but that it is not capable of providing clear solutions for political decisions. It develops from an understanding of human rights as a political concept that states and state policy can be treated as guarantors of human rights.

Youth work is well recommended not to see itself as a supplement to and extension of the school education and knowledge transfer, but as an independent sector of education, which is fundamentally different from school; which provides other education and knowledge that we cannot find in the official institutions.

➡ Youth work is based on voluntary participation while the school system is based on forced one. Therefore, perception of youth worker’s actions is completely different among the learners.

For this reason, youth work is directed towards the needs and interests of young people, as an attractive and undeniable offer to young people.

The biggest challenge a youth work faces is finding out forms of raising awareness about human rights and other related topics.



VIII. Conclusion

A good youth worker always strives to find this magnetic approach that will make learners want to participate in education, make them think 'how cool is that!'

Therefore, youth work can and should try to address people, who have already developed and settled their interest in political and social issues and are involved in civil society's life.

So what a youth worker has to offer such beneficiaries? The distinction between the three dimensions of human rights education is significant:

human rights education – is education **about, through and for** human rights.

➡ As an example, let us look at the Youth for Human Rights International (YHRI). It is a non-profit organization founded in 2001 by Dr. Mary Shuttleworth, an educator born and raised in apartheid South Africa, where she witnessed first-hand the devastating effects of discrimination and the lack of basic human rights.

The purpose of this organization is to teach youth about human rights, specifically the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and inspire them to become advocates for tolerance and peace. Why are we looking at this organization as an example, you will ask? And this question is very good. Likewise, other big streams, YHRI has now grown from a local organization into a global movement, including hundreds of groups, clubs and chapters around the world.

Youth for Human Rights International teaches human rights education both in the classroom and in non-traditional educational settings (e.g. from conferences, workshops, and video making to hip-hop and dancing). They reach people from diverse backgrounds, with materials that often appeal across generations.

All of us as youth workers can evolve into this size of an organization. And this is what should encourage us to move and to focus on our goals, on bigger results.