

EDUCATING TO AND FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

di Carola Carazzone¹

I would like to find the best way to give a contribution, through several provocations, to our engaging and topical debate on education to and for human rights as one of the present tools of Youth Ministry (for sure not the only one but one of the most effective).

For 150 years the Salesian Family has been working in 130 nations for the promotion and protection of those rights which jurists today define as the rights of children and adolescents, especially on the basis of the Salesian preferential option for the poor and vulnerable.

So many Salesians are daily involved in the rights of children and adolescents, to give them dignity and voice, to break the vicious circle of poverty, violations of human rights, underdevelopment. Maybe without ever having studied the Conventions and Resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly or by other Regional Organizations, simply loving and educating in the manner of Don Bosco.

But the educational and social exiting challenge launched by the Rector Major with the Strenna 2008², challenge that we will try to tackle during the Congress and above all after the Congress, is wider still and regards all Salesian works: schools, oratories, parishes, not only the works dealing with the marginalised.

As Salesian Family, the challenge for us is especially focused on prevention, on breaking the vicious circle which perpetuates the constant violation of the human rights and dignity of people, on promoting a grass rooted and disseminated human rights culture, able to escape from the offices of the jurists and philosophers, and become instead the heritage of human beings.

The challenge for us is to educate young people to participation, justice and solidarity, to individual and social commitment to human development, to become active as responsible citizens of the world.

It is a challenge to the Salesian, educative, pedagogical charism itself.

What does it mean today for Salesians to form the honest citizen?

What does it mean today to educate to an active responsible citizenship of the world, which takes to heart the lot of humanity and society which is already globalised.

I consider my intervention on the theme of education to and for human rights as a privileged one by way of the preventive system and holistic formation of good Christians and honest citizens, drawing your attention to three preliminary questions:

¹ Carola Carazzone, Human Rights Office Coordinator.

²“Promoting human rights, in particular those of juveniles, as the Salesian way of promoting a culture of life and a change of structures. The Preventive System of Don Bosco has a great social outreach: it wants to collaborate with many other agencies in the transformation of society, working for a change in the criteria and views about life, in the promotion of the culture open to others, in a sober style of life, in a constant attitude of selfless sharing and of a commitment to justice and the dignity of every human being.

Education to human rights, in particular to the rights of juveniles, is the privileged way to implement in various contexts this commitment to prevention, to integrated human development, to the construction of a world that is more fair, more just, more healthy. The language of human rights also allows us to dialogue and to introduce our pedagogy into the different cultures in our world” (from the basic content of the Rector Major's Strenna for 2008)

- Which meaning for human rights?
- Why educate to and for human rights?
- How to educate to and for human rights?

1. Which meaning for human rights

In order to understand the long journey to international recognition of human rights, Prof. Papisca used a metaphor, a river where the water flowing under solid surfaces finds ways to emerge.

The adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations on the 10th of December 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – a starting point and not the finishing one – gives voice to the emergence, in an international contest, of what was already pondered and achieved, through reflection, discussion and witness through the centuries, in many different cultures and civilizations, regarding affirmation of the dignity of the human being.

It is the absolute, unconditional dignity of the human being which is the core, heart, and *raison d'être* of human rights, and the foundation of – as expressed in the preamble of the Universal Declaration – freedom, justice and peace.

Human rights are the universal, inviolable guarantees, only quite recently (considering human history) imposed on National sovereignty, for defence and protection of the dignity of each person “without distinction of any kind, of race, colour, gender, language, political opinion, national or social origin, wealth, or other condition”³.

What are these guarantees, what are human rights?

Unfortunately today we see an abuse of the term “human rights” emerging from the restricted debate between jurists and philosophers in order to excite interest in broad public opinion, but about which there is still quite huge confusion.

Unfortunately today many people have only read maybe once the Universal Declaration and without having explored the human rights theme, talk about “human rights” and get “human rights” mixed up with subjective rights⁴, or out of ignorance or malice, hide their arrogance, privilege, revenge, luxury, selfish-interests under the title of human rights.

The expression is also useful to some countries for claiming the legitimacy of military intervention or an “ethical” war against terrorism; or it is useful for some people from rich nations to invoke the protection of their rights as consumers. European Union members have denied support for poorer nations who transgress these rights; autocratic political representatives have used them to sustain their new justification for colonialism by the West and to insist on unacceptable interference in internal affairs. The media have used them (or their brutal violation) to attract fleeting, flimsy public opinion.

The alarming risk is that, considering the complexity, the many ramifications of international human rights law (currently there are some 130 different primary source items on this), the full meaning and value of the parts and the whole could be lost.

In every continent the affirmation of international human rights law has been in conflict and is in conflict not only with the strong impulse of national sovereignty and

³ art.2 of the Universal Declaration.

⁴ As expressed in art.1 of the Universal Declaration, Human Rights are innate, considering the dignity of the human being as such. They pre-exist the written law and become *ius positum* in virtue of their recognition, not of their attribution as has been the case for subjective rights.

defending non-interference in its internal affairs, but also with conflicting political, geopolitical and especially economical interests.

Human rights eat away at *status quo*, power structures and dominant ways of living: they are the strongest way to foster and protect the most disadvantaged, the youngest, the poorest.

The history of human rights is a conflicting one: it is the story of the human struggle for dignity and freedom.

Not of course any freedom.

When we talk about human rights we refer only to the freedoms fundamental to human dignity - *inherent rights and fundamental freedoms* – ones we identify with one of the fathers of the Universal Declaration, Franklin D. Roosevelt: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear.

Each covenant, each international agreement, each body in charge of the promotion or protection of one or more human rights has been a victory, the result of debates, pressures, compromises, involving a large number of people.

If one looks, diachronically, at the history of human rights, one cannot help but note that progress beginning from 1990 was not even hopeful up to the fall of the Berlin wall: in 1990 only 10% of the world's nations had ratified the then six main International Conventions on human rights. In 2008 that number had grown spectacularly, reaching almost half of all nations, with five of the fundamental Conventions ratified by more than 160 countries.

Many Eastern countries, besides, following the fall of the Berlin wall, have put human rights in their national Constitutions, as happened previously in many Afro-Asian countries, once they achieved independence from colonial regimes.

Many countries, in more recent years, have introduced education to human rights in school programmes and created new institutions for promoting human rights and dealing with their violations: Guarantee Authorities, Independent national commissions, Ombudspersons, Civil defenders.

Again, the 90's saw the institution of International Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, while in 2000 there was the special court for Sierra Leone, in 2003 the Special Tribunal for Cambodia and, on 1 July 2002, after half a century of campaigning for its institution, the permanent International Criminal Court came into force.

If, we were saying, it is true that one cannot avoid noting of these results, it is the cry – where at least there is a cry and not deafening silence – of massive violations of dignity and the freedom of people that echoes daily from the four corners of the earth. The cry of the 1 billion 100 million people living on less than a dollar a day; of the 2.8 billion people living on less than 2 dollars a day; of the 1 billion 200 million who have no access to drinkable water and the 2 billion 600 million who have no access to any kind of medicine; the 854 million illiterate adults⁵; the 25 million *internally displaced* people (forced to flee within their own countries)⁶, the one in three women in the world who have suffered violence⁷.

⁵ UNDP, Report on Human Development, 2006.

⁶ UNHCR, 2007.

⁷ Amnesty International, 2007.

1.1. Two key issues for human rights

Far too often too many countries adopt selectivity and fictitious human rights policies that are dichotomous: some rights yes, others no; for certain vulnerable groups yes, for others no; theoretical recognition perhaps, effectively carried out – with consequent restrictions also in terms of national sovereignty – almost never.

No society or nation is immune.

Questions of human rights are not just questions for developing countries. Indeed it is the nations defining themselves as “advanced democracies” which are more often than not adopting a policy of human rights which we might say is ambivalent (double standards).

“The international community must identify new ways and means for removing current obstacles and face the challenges to full realisation of all human rights, and eliminate the continuing violation of human rights which still goes on in the world”.⁸ This is the human rights challenge: how to guarantee the effective practice of rights abstractly proclaimed? What to do to eliminate the constant violation of human rights which still exists in the world? What to do to prevent this violation? What changes in thinking and action to propose to put an end to today's failures?

1.2. Indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights: civil, cultural, economic, political and social

Rights are inherent to the human being, as if they were written into one's DNA: the State does not grant them, does not enlarge on them, but limits itself to recognising them.

Civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights are all equally essential for the dignity and freedom of each human being. The human person is ontologically one: soul and body, spirit and organic matter, in its indissoluble integrity.

For fifty years Socialist countries maintained that it was necessary to ignore civil and political rights in order to foster economic and social rights, while other nations of the Western Bloc said the opposite, that it was necessary to suppress economic and social rights in order to guarantee civil and political rights.

Today it is no longer possible to justify the old dichotomy of the cold war and, as still happen in too many countries, to justify the violation of civil and political rights in order to promote social and economic rights or vice versa, inasmuch as one can only be effectively enjoyed if the other is at the same time.

Human rights in fact are indivisible because at their core is the human being, with his inviolable right to live a life of dignity in every dimension: civil, cultural, economic, political and social.

Besides, human rights are interdependent, in the sense that civil and political rights without economic and social rights are empty, and vice versa.

Between the realisation of civil and political rights and the realisation of economic and social rights there is not a relationship of subordination, but one of vital reciprocity. They nurture each other triggering a virtuous circle and they cancel one another out if they are put into a vicious circle.

Indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights are still just words, way off from real facts, abstract concepts with respect to the today reality. Too often human rights for the *ius positum* in practice mean only civil and political rights.

⁸ Preamble to the Declaration of the World Conference on human rights, Vienna 1993

At worldwide level, even in the United Nations, we see even more, from both sides, a mutilated view of human rights, the indivisibility and wholeness of the person. We see the divide between nations with a high level of economic development who want to keep the *status quo* and poor nations who forcefully claim their right to development and certain economic social and cultural rights.

One set of public opinion (or, seen from another perspective, an electorate) which in Europe and North America claims to be very sensitive to human rights, is in reality only so for certain civil and political rights.

It is easy to point to nations where women cannot report sexual violence, and then pretend that environmental degradation doesn't concern us or that the dramatic poverty of most people in the world doesn't exist or doesn't depend on the way we go about production and consumption or on our lifestyle. And it is also easy to proclaim people as champions of human rights who do not recognise immigrants or asylum seekers, or those who seek development cooperation.

1.3. A common responsibility to share

Use of the language of human rights presents notable benefits, but it can also accompany easy exploitation.

There are many benefits accruing from the use of the language of human rights as an instrument of social change so that every person in the world can enjoy a life of freedom and dignity. In our new globalised context human rights become a tool which can go beyond narrow national confines to pose limits and common objectives, create alliances and strategies and mobilise resources, both human and economic.

But, as we were saying, the language of human rights becomes risky or even false and misleading if not seen as part of rights and responsibilities. In juridical terms rights cannot exist without duties, otherwise they are not rights but expectations, interests, feelings.

If, regarding our own rights, we are ready to draft a long list and call them rights, or worse still human rights, mere interests, while, with regard to others' rights, we are not even ready to recognise the responsibilities and duties which correspond to the most basic and vital needs, well then, probably, it would be better to avoid speaking about human rights.

The perspective of human rights is in fact by its very nature inclusive: all human rights for all human beings. Responsibility of all and each one: communitarian personalism and holistic humanism.

Children's rights, women's rights, minority groups' rights, rights of persons with disability are not 'special' rights.

Every human being has a right to enjoy all human rights and the State, the community, other individuals have the duty to act to guarantee the individual, taking account of his or her special circumstances and differences, the best possible enjoyment of those rights.

It is inescapable and urgent to overcome the exclusivity of the responsibility of States and identify the responsibilities of every agent: institutional, economic and social which is able to influence the effective realisation of human rights. In our new globalised context the responsibility of the State today is necessary but no longer sufficient.

The exclusivity of the Individual-State perspective, which we have inherited from the European and North American Enlightenment of the 18th and 19th centuries, and which still marks today's mechanisms for promoting and protecting human rights, is insufficient.

Today we need a system of responsibility for the promotion and protection of human rights which is much more differentiated and which involves, as well as States, global organisations and international financial institutions (World Commerce Organisation, World Bank, International Monetary Fund), businesses, NGO's, media, schools, communities, families, individuals: everyone able to have a huge impact on the effective enjoyment of human rights.

2. Why to educate to and for human rights

As the Rector Major urges us, we want to educate young people to and for human rights with the aim of building a new world, more fair, more just, more healthy first of all because too often education today is a market education, at the service of maintaining the *status quo* which continues, in the era of globalisation, to privatise riches ever more in a few hands, a few people, a few groups, a few countries and, at the same time, socialise poverty.

“The drama of modern day humanity” – the Rector Major teaches us⁹ - “is the rupture between education and society, the divide between school and citizenship”.

Salesian education instead must be “an education to values, a promoter and creator of responsible citizenship”.

The Rector Major speaks to us of *humanising education* and the of the *youth ministry of involvement*, claiming that the Salesian educational proposal for a culture of justice, solidarity, change of structures, while arising from the preferential option to stay amongst the poorest, concerns all Salesian works and not those just dealing with marginalisation.

Secondly, we want to educate young people to and for human rights because the Salesian Family educates each year millions of youngsters and has a unique representation worldwide – not comparable to any other educational agency - for playing a key role at world level in promoting human rights.

Working together with other agencies the Salesian Family will be able to have a determinant impact and to give a most meaningful contribution in light with the salesian charism itself.

We do know that the issue of education to human rights is a more or less recent one. The international law of human rights has been slow to recognise education to human rights as the aim end and mean of human development and the prime and undeniable tool of prevention¹⁰.

For a long time education has been considered only a question of access, a question of quantity and not quality, not a question in itself of human rights.

On the other side, for a long time the perspective of the movement for human rights was too often exclusively one of a “punitive” nature: denouncing violations once they have been committed.

Now, denouncing violations of human rights is certainly a major item available to NGOs, associations, individuals, even more so now with the information era upon us, new technologies like blog, chat, forum on line, but also with a computer and internet access, as part of international campaigns, movements, appeals on behalf of human rights.

⁹ Cf Fr. Pascual Chàvez Villanueva, *Education and citizenship. Lectio Magistralis* for the Degree Honoris Causa, Genoa, 23 April 2007.

¹⁰ Bases of the right-duty of education to human rights are considered the following international norms: art. 26, paragraph 2, of the Universal Declaration; art.13 of the International Covenant on economic, social and cultural rights; art. 7 of the International Convention on the elimination of any form of racial discrimination; art. 10 of the International Convention on the elimination of all form of discrimination against women; art. 29 of the International Convention on children's rights.

These denunciations, sometimes, can save the life of a victim.

Denunciation can also be useful in sensitising new people, common people who normally are not interested in ideas about human rights – I am thinking of the great campaigns against the use of child soldiers, or the death penalty, where the role of public opinion has been fundamental.

Denunciation is a vital tool not only *ex post* for protecting human rights already violated, but also *ex ante* for promoting human rights, sensitising to prevention of violations.

The problem however is that the exclusivity of the perspective of denouncing, which has characterised much of the activity up till now with regard to human rights, can end up being reductive.

In fact it is necessary to spread a culture of human rights, to educate to human rights, persuade, beyond simply prohibiting; prevent rather than simply cure.

Up till now ridiculously few resources have been invested in prevention, education to human rights, both in school and out of school.

Non-government organisations, too, have only recently begun to invest in resources for education to human rights.

To the cause of preventive education to and for human rights the Salesian Family can bring a unique, outstanding and irreplaceable contribution.

3. How to educate to and for human rights

An education that did not go beyond describing injustice in the world and violation of human rights, would inevitably be ally in this injustice.

Education in human rights cannot limit itself to making human rights known, but should be an education not only TO but also FOR human rights, and should lead to commitment, solidarity, action.

The aim is of course not merely contemplation of abstract values but incarnation: action-oriented education, education to action, gesture, taking a position, critical analysis, thinking, being informed, considering critically information received from the media. It is an education that should be ongoing and daily.

Education to human rights, in a non-static and evolving vision, in fact, is not and cannot be, about revealing an immutable and static truth, but is a dialogue that taking into account international situations and concerns¹¹ is contextualized at local level (*glocalization*).

Seen this way, education to and for human rights must of necessity be multidimensional and seen as an holistic and ongoing education to active and responsible citizenship, one capable of joining the descriptive to the prescriptive, the knowing to the being, and integrating the passing on of knowledge with the formation of personality.

On these basics, education to and for human rights should comprise, as taught us Rector Major in the Commentary to Strenna 2008, at least three dimensions:

- ❖ cognitive dimension (knowing, thinking critically, conceptualising, judging: Don Bosco would say “reason”),
- ❖ affective dimension (trying out, having experience, empathy: Don Bosco would say “loving kindness”;
- ❖ volitional, active behaviour (choices and actions, putting certain behaviours into action: Don Bosco would say “religion”).

¹¹ In the perspective indicated in paragraph 2 of art. 26 of the Universal Declaration, in art 13 of the Covenant on economic, social and cultural rights and in art.29 of the Convention on the rights of the child.

3.1. Education to and for human rights and not 'teaching'

If by teaching we mean a traditional kind of didactic activity where one person only, the teacher, has something to teach, while the rest (students) just have to listen and learn, then human rights cannot be taught: one educates to human rights.

Human rights are not taught 'from above' top down or imposed.

One educates to human rights (from the Latin *e-ducere*), human rights are transmitted and grasped, if by these words we consider that there is space for mutual comparisons, dialogue and personal rethinking.

Human rights still seem to be a matter for people who sporadically shine (or dishonourably so) in the media, to then disappear, locked up in the offices and studies of philosophers and jurists.

Education to and for human rights has to get out of the restricted environment which is the competence of jurists and lawyers without any interdisciplinary aspirations of it becoming the heritage of all, the heritage of anyone who feels ready to open and maintain an intercultural dialogue which draws its basis from human rights.

Education to and for human rights is an education to all levels in every social context. Everyone, children, older youth, adults, can be educated to the ethical value of human rights and their practical effects on social existence.

Everyone, even a child (think for example of so-called *peer to peer education*) can become, in turn, an educator and promoter of human rights.

Education to human rights in the past (and sometimes today) was understood as an education in civics which takes place in school.

This is an extremely limited and limiting perspective for at least four reasons:

- a) too inwardly referring in terms of one's own context,
- b) often reduced to a merely cognitive, theoretical, normative teaching of material considered as the domain of juridical studies, where human rights teaching is still anchored to norms and their content,
- c) restricted to adults as the only ones able to reach children, adolescents,
- d) limited to schooling.

Today much research has confirmed the limits of this traditional approach (*civic learning*) based exclusively on knowing about political institutions and their history, and proposes a much broader approach, *socio-civic learning* which is a stimulus to practical experience, acceptance of responsibility and participation, an approach that has so many elements in common with the Salesian style of education.

3.2. Interdisciplinary and holistic nature of education to and for human rights

Human rights, in fact, are not only matter for juridical and philosophical consideration, but are interdisciplinary material. They can be taught and discussed in school in the context of many subjects: history, geography, foreign languages, literature, biology, music, economics.

Human rights should be an integral part of training and updating of teachers, so the teachers themselves can be able to redevelop and mainstreaming human rights in a multidisciplinary approach as a cross-curriculum *leit motive* in different subjects. But that is still in the future somewhat and human rights continue, even at university level, to be a specialized matter, rather than something cross-curriculum.

Education to human rights at the school level, then, though fundamental, does not cover, nor can it ever cover, the multiplicity of possible ways for spreading a human rights culture. NGOs, associations, oratories, social centres, youth centres can play a key role in education to and for human rights.

The best solution would be a truly holistic education to human rights: an education that goes alongside formal elements, as well as non-formal and informal elements, an holistic education involving both in-school and outside of school settings.

Holistic education for human rights overcomes the merely juridical and cognitive aspect, and favours passing from understanding, to interiorising, to commitment and taking on responsibility.

One could say in fact that education to citizenship, democracy, peace, through human rights involves every educational setting and would be articulated in three successive phases:

- the first is an understanding of one's own rights, duties and underpinned values;
- the second is personal reflection, interiorising those values and rights;
- the third is learning to put them into practice and learning to defend one's rights and those of others.

3.3. Ongoing education for a grass-rooted culture of human rights

To speak then of ongoing education for a culture of human rights means to educate to commitment to causes and to the issues that arise day after day in our lives at local or international levels.

It is important in fact to stress the systematic element tied in with the concept of culture. We are not dealing with sporadic interventions, but coherent ethical interdependent principles, which have to bring about appropriate understandings, abilities, attitudes, not sterile claims but actions.

Besides, today educating means teaching a person to educate him or herself constantly, in a fluid and continually evolving society. This is why we find the need for ongoing education.

The Salesian family has, as perhaps any other education agencies have, the practical pedagogical means of reaching the minds and hearts of the young, the ability to alternate theoretical understanding with practical experience, through multidimensional techniques: theatre, music, sport, role play, artistic competitions, film discussions, participation, volunteer work.

Today the Salesian family also has at its disposal the new technologies, which involve the young so much with possibilities of offering online forums, blogs, chat on human rights themes.

The General Assembly of the United Nations has declared 2009 "International year of human rights learning". This is a cause the Salesian Family must give its enormously significant contribution to.

THE ONGOING GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS MARCH: A KEY DATES CHRONOLOGY

- 1945** Founding of the United Nations (UN)
Birth of the Arab League
- 1946** Founding of the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (now the World Bank)
Inauguration of the United Nations Commission for Human Rights
- 1948** The United Nations General Assembly approves the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
The Organization of American States (OAS) is born
American Declaration of Rights and Duties of Man
- 1949** European Council is born
Wars of national liberation and insurrections arise in Asia and Africa.
- 1950** Some countries obtain their independence
-... United States: movements for civil rights and politics against racial segregation
- 1950** European Convention on Human Rights
- 1954** European Commission of Human Rights
- 1955** Bandung Conference, at which 29 African and Asian states condemn imperialism, racial discrimination, nuclear armament and put forth the demand for a peaceful cooperation for development
- 1957** European Economic Community (EEC) and EURATOM
- 1959** The birth of the European Court for Human Rights
Creation of the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights
Wars for national liberation in countries still under imperial rule continue. The fight gradually leads to independence and self-determination in many countries
Feminist movements demand equality of rights and opportunities
- 1960** First session of the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights
- 1963** The foundation of the Organization for United Africa
- 1965** UN Convention for the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination
- 1966** International Pact on Civil and Political Rights approved by the UN General Assembly
International Pact on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights approved by the UN General Assembly
- 1968** Teheran, first world conference on Human Rights
- 1969** American Convention on Human Rights approved
- 1973** International Convention for the Elimination and Punishment for the Criminals of *Apartheid* approved by the UN General Assembly

- 1976** Amnesty International wins the Nobel Peace Prize
- 1979** UN Convention for the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination against women (CEDAW)
- Inter American Court for Human Rights begins work
- 1981** The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights is approved
- 1983** Arab Organization for Human Rights is founded
- 1984** UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- 1985** UN Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights instituted
- 1986** UN Declaration of Development Rights is approved
- 1988** The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights is instituted
- Adoption of the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights (San Salvador Protocol)
- 1989** UN Convention on Infant Rights
- The Berlin Wall fell
- Tiananmen Square Massacre
- 1990** Ethnic cleansing and war in former Yugoslavia, genocide in - Rwanda, conflicts in other African countries (Congo, Angola, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea) and in some areas of the former USSR
- 1993** World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna
- UN High Commissioner for Human Rights installed
- 1993-** International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia and for
- 1994** Rwanda established
- 1994** World Conference on the Population and Development in Cairo
- The end of racial segregation in South Africa
- Inter American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women (Convention Belem do Pará)
- 1998** The Statutes of the Permanent International Criminal Court for war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity is approved
- 1999** NATO Conflict- Republic of Yugoslavia in Kosovo; war in Cecenia e in East Timor
- Optional Protocol to CEDAW that grants individual recourse is approved
- 2000** Two Optional Protocols against the use of child soldiers and the sexual exploitation and prostitution of minors are approved
- Special Criminal Court for Sierra Leone is instituted
- 2001** Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, Durban
- Terror attacks of September 11th in New York and Washington
- 2002** The Statutes of the Permanent International Criminal Court for war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity take effect
- 2003** February 15th: According to CNN 110 million in over 600

- cities worldwide participate in the World Peace March
- 2004** The Optional Protocols of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights for the Constitution of an African Court of Human Rights takes effect
The Arab League adopt the Arab Charter on human rights
- 2006** The new UN Human Rights Council substitutes the Commission on Human Rights
UN Convention on the Rights of People with disabilities is adopted
UN Convention on the protection of all persons from forced disappearance is adopted.
- 2008** The UN Convention on the Rights of People with disabilities entered into force
The Arab Charter on human rights entered into force
The Human Rights Council adopted the Optional Protocol to the Covenant on economic, social and cultural rights for individual complaints.

FUNDAMENTAL UN HUMAN RIGHTS CONVENTIONS

Conventions	adoption	entry into force	Member States
International Convention for the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination	1965	1969	173
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	1966	1976	161
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	1966	1976	157
International Convention for the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination against women	1979	1981	185
International Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	1984	1987	145
International Convention on the Rights of the Child	1989	1990	193
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	1990	2003	37
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	2006	2008	20
Convention on the protection of all persons from forced disappearance	2006	Not yet entered into force	4

EUROPEAN SYSTEM	
EUROPEAN UNION (EU)	
27 Member States -	www.europa.eu
- Commission	
- European Parliament	
- Council of the European Union	
- European Ombudsman	
- EU Fundamental Rights Agency	
- Court of justice of the European Communities	
COUNCIL OF EUROPE (COE)	
47 Member States -	www.coe.int
- European Court of human rights	
- Commissioner for human rights	
- Parliamentary Assembly	
- Committee of Ministers	
- Congress of local and regional authorities	
- Secretary General (Directorate for human rights)	
- European Committee of Social Rights	
ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE (OSCE)	
56 Member States -	www.osce.org
- Office for democracy and human rights (ODIHR)	
- High Commissioner for national minorities	
- Secretariat (specialized offices)	

AFRICAN UNION (AU)	
53 Member States	
	www.african-union.org
- Commissione dei diritti	African Court of human rights
- Parlamento panafricano	African Commission for human rights
- Consiglio pace e sicurezza	Pan African Parliament
	Peace and security council

ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OEA)	
34 Member States	
	www.oas.org
- Interamerican Court of human rights	
- Interamerican Commission of human rights	
- Interamerican Institute of human rights	

Newly established regional systems where mechanisms of human rights promotion and protection are not functioning	
LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES	
22 Member States	
	www.arableagueonline.org
- Arab Charter of human rights	
- Human rights Committee	
- Council of Arab League	
ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE	
57 Member States	
	www.oic-oci.org
- Cairo Declaration of human rights in islam	
ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH EASTERN ASIAN COUNTRIES (ASEAN)	
10 Member States -	www.aseansec.org
- ASEAN Charter (20 Nov. 2007) with reference to human rights and establishment of a human rights body	

United Nations Human Rights System

