

Human Rights: The Foundation of Global Justice and Human Dignity

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Essay

"The true measure of a civilization is how it treats its most vulnerable." This timeline idea captures the essence of human rights, which stand as the moral compass guiding nations

towards justice, equality and peace. From the ruins of world War II to the aspirations of the universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the global community has repeatedly affirmed that every individual possesses inherent dignity and inalienable rights. These rights are not privileges granted by states but fundamental guarantees essential for protecting life, liberty, autonomy, and equality. In an age marked by rising authoritarianism, deepening inequalities and expanding digital surveillance, human rights remain the only universal framework capable of ensuring fairness within societies and justice among nations. They safeguard the weak, restrain the powerful, and create the ethical foundation upon which humane governance is built. Thus, human rights form the very cornerstone of global justice and the enduring guardian of human dignity.

Conceptualizing human rights begins with their philosophical roots in natural law, which holds that certain rights are inherent to all human by virtue of being human. Social contract theorists like Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau further advanced the idea that individu-

uals surrender some freedoms to the state in exchange for protection of these natural rights, forming the intellectual foundation of modern human rights.

Contemporary understanding of dignity-based rights emphasizes that every individual possesses intrinsic worth that must be respected and protected. Modern frameworks view rights as universal, indivisible and interdependent, ensuring not only freedom from oppression but also access to education, health and equality. This dignity-centered approach guides global human rights law, placing human well-being and respectful treatment at the core of justice and governance.

The historical evolution of human rights gained momentum during the enlightenment, when thinkers like John Locke argued for natural rights to life, liberty and property, while Rousseau emphasized popular sovereignty and collective freedom. These ideas shaped modern rights framework and later evolved into three generations of human rights: first-generation civil and political rights, second-generation

economic, social and cultural rights, and third generation collective rights such as development, peace and environmental protection - together forming a comprehensive global rights tradition.

After conceptualizing and analysing of human rights as a foundation of global justice and dignity, with the philosophical and historically, there are some detailed arguments that show the human rights as a foundation of global justice are as follows:

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." (Martin Luther King J.R). Human rights serve as the foundation of global justice by ensuring equality, dignity and non-discrimination for all individuals, regardless of identity or status. They promote fair treatment, social inclusion, and equal access to opportunities across societies. UDHR Article 1, which declares that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights," reinforcing this universal commitment, guiding states to uphold justice and protect marginalized groups.

Secondly, human rights as a foundation of global

justice. Strengthen rule of law and fair legal system when rights are protected. Individuals can seek remedies without fear of bias or corruption. The World Justice Project (WJP) 2023 Rule of Law Index revealed declining justice systems in over 60% of countries, highlighting the urgent need for stronger institutions to safeguard rights, prevent abuse, and promote equal access to justice for all. So, no doubt, human rights as a foundation of global justice ensure the rule of law and fair legal system.

Thirdly, human rights form the basis of global justice by vulnerable and marginalized, ensuring their safety, dignity, and access to essential services. Right based frameworks compel states and institutions to address inequality and safeguard those at risk of abuse and exclusion. According to the UNHCR 2024 report, more than 114 million people are forcibly displaced, underscoring how human rights protections are crucial for refugees, asylum seekers, and other vulnerable population worldwide.

Fourthly, human rights underpin global justice by promoting peace and preventing conflict through

norms that restrain state violence and protect civilian life. When fundamental rights are upheld, grievances that fuel extremism, oppression, and instability are reduced. The 1948 convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of Genocide obligates states to prevent and punish mass atrocities, demonstrating how international human rights law serves as a vital safeguard against large-scale violence and conflict.

Lastly, human strengthen global justice by ensuring accountability through international institutions that deter abuses and enforce legal responsibility. Bodies such as the international criminal court (ICC) prosecute individuals for genocide, war crimes against humanity, preventing impunity for grave violations. As of now, the ICC has handled 31 cases involving senior military and political leaders, illustrating how global mechanisms uphold justice and reinforce a rules-based international order.

There are some arguments that define human rights as the guardian of human dignity are describe below;

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." (Eleanor Roosevelt) Human rights safeguard human dignity by affirming the equal worth of every individual regardless of race, gender, class, or belief. This principle rejects all forms of hierarchy that devalue human life and ensures that each person enjoys the same moral and legal status. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reinforces this ideal by declaring all human "free and equal in dignity and rights", establishing equality as the core of human dignity.

Moreover, human rights protect the most basic elements of human dignity - life, security and freedom from violence - by holding states accountable for preventing abuse and ensuring safety, when these rights are upheld, individuals can live without fear and with respect for their inherent worth. According to the UNODC 2023 report, persistent global homicide rates highlight the urgent need for rights-based protections to secure safety and dignity for all people. Thus, the human rights protect the human dignity after properly ensure.

Last but not the least, human rights safeguard human dignity by empowering personal autonomy and nurturing self respect, allowing individuals to make free choices about their beliefs, identity and expression. When people exercise these freedoms without coercion, they develop confidence, agency, and a sense of ~~worth~~ worth. The ICCPR protects this autonomy - Article 18 guarantees freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, while Article 19 ensures freedom of opinion and expression - affirming that dignity flourishes where individuals choice is respected.

Additionally, human rights guard human dignity by preventing assaults on both physical and moral integrity, ensuring individuals are protected from torture, inhuman treatment, and degrading punishment. When states uphold these protections, they preserve each person's essential worth and humanity. The UN Convention Against Torture reinforces this principle by obligating states to prohibit, investigate, and punish all acts of torture, affirming that dignity cannot exist where cruelty or coercion is allowed to persist.

Lastly, human rights acts as a guardian of human dignity by enabling a dignified and decent standard of living, ensuring access to essentials and such as education, health care, housing and work. When these socio-economic rights are upheld, individuals can lead fulfilling lives with self-respect and opportunity.

According to the UNDP Human development report 2023, 1 in 5 people globally still lack basic socio-economic rights, underscoring the urgency of rights-based policies.

Despite their universal importance, the realization of human rights faces numerous contemporary challenges that threaten justice and human dignity worldwide. These challenges are as follows:

Rising authoritarianism and shrinking civic space pose serious threats to human rights and global justice. Governments increasingly restrict freedom of expression, assembly, and association, suppress dissent, and manipulate legal systems to consolidate power. Such measures marginalize civil society, weaken accountability and undermine democratic norms, limiting citizens

ability to claim their rights and participate meaningfully in governance.

The misuse of counter terrorism laws undermines human rights by allowing states to detain individuals arbitrarily, curb freedom of expression, and target political opponents under the guise of Security. For example, in several countries, activists and journalists have faced prolonged detention and harassment under broad, anti terrorism statutes, highlighting how such laws when abused erode justice and violate fundamental freedoms.

Same as climate change and environmental injustice threaten human dignity by disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations, limiting access to clean air, water and safe habitats. Simultaneously, rapid digital surveillance and unregulated artificial intelligence pose serious privacy risks, enabling mass data collection and potential misuse. Together, these global developments highlight the urgent need for right-based policies that protect both environmental and digital spaces to safeguard justice and human dignity.

After conceptualising all the over view of human rights as an global justice and dignity and their challenges that are undermining globally, there are some arguments that define how can human right strengthened more, as follows;

Strengthening human rights for global justice and dignity requires robust enforcement internally and the integration of rights-based approaches into development and governance.

Effective legal systems, independent institutions, and accountability mechanisms ensure protection of freedoms while embedding human rights in policies promotes equitable access to education, health and economic opportunities. Together, these measures empower citizens reduce inequalities and create societies where justice and human dignity are respected and upheld.

Lastly, protecting digital rights and regulating artificial intelligence are essential to safeguard privacy, prevent misuse of data, and ensure ethical technological use. Simultaneously, human rights education and civic awareness empower citizens to understand, claim and defend

their rights. Together, these measures strengthen democratic participation, accountability, and respect for human dignity in both digital and real world spaces.

In conclusion, human rights are the cornerstone of global justice and the guardian of human dignity, protecting equality, freedom, and the most vulnerable. Despite challenges like rising authoritarianism, misuse of laws, climate crises, and digital surveillance, their universal principles guide societies toward fairness, peace, and inclusion. Strengthening enforcement, rights-based governance, and civic education ensures these ideals become realities. By embedding human rights in every facet of life, we can build a world where justice is not optional and dignity is inviolable - a world where every individual can truly live free, equal, and respected.