



Global Challenges on Human Rights

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ABSTRACT: Human rights are the fundamental and inherent rights of all human beings without regard to race, gender, nationality, religion and social status. They are inalienable and inseparable rights which includes the right to life, the right to freedom, the right to equality and the right to religion. With the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 by the UN General Assembly, the need for Promotion and protection of human rights gathered momentum and as a result many international covenants and laws on human rights came into being. But in spite of bringing these laws, violation of human rights continue all over the world. The challenges on human rights have varying dimensions- racial, ethnic, religious and political. This article highlights some of the global challenges on human rights with particular reference to racial discrimination in the United States of America, the ethnic cleansing and religious persecutions of Sri Lanka and Myanmar, mass killings of innocent civilians by the authoritarian political regimes of Syria and the Philippines.

KEYWORDS: ethnic cleansing, genocide, human rights, racism, savage killings, torture.

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I. INTRODUCTION

All human beings are born equal and they are inherently entitled to live with dignity and honour irrespective of their place of birth, race or religion, gender or social status. For the realisation and fulfilment of an orderly and peaceful human life, certain basic rights are necessary which may be termed as 'Human Rights'. The concept of human rights in its modern form gathered momentum with the end of World War II. The horrors of The World War II experienced by mankind and the inability of the League of Nations to prevent the war and loss of innocent lives gave birth to the establishment of the United Nations Organisation on 24th October 1945. Consequent to the formation of UNO, the urge for the protection and promotion of human rights among the member nations became so high that the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in December 1948 which became the corner stone of Universal Human Rights laws. The nuclear holocaust impacted the very existence of mankind and the need for preventing another war to save humanity and to protect the human rights by rule of law, the civilised nations agreed to formulate certain common standards on human rights and as a result there evolved many international covenants and treaties some of which are mentioned below.

1. International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the crime of Genocide (1948)
2. Convention on Political Rights of Women(1953).
3. International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (1965).
4. International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (1966).
5. International Convention on the Economic Social and Cultural Rights (1966).
6. International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women (1979).
7. International Convention against Torture and other Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984).
8. Convention on the Rights of Child (1989).
9. International Convention on the Protection of rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Family (1990).
10. International Convention on the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearances (2006).

The United Nations has thus expanded the horizon of human rights laws to include specific standards for women, children, minority ethnics, refugees and migrants with a view to protect them from discriminations. But in spite of these International Treaties and laws, violation of human rights such as systematic

annihilation of minority communities, genocide, ethnic cleansing, killing of political opponents, racial discrimination, torturing and gang rape of women and children continue to be unabated across the world. This article attempts to give an insight in to the global challenges on human rights and its impact on humanity.

With the emergence of modern Nation- State System, it has become the sacred duty of every sovereign state to protect the life and liberties of its people within its territorial jurisdiction in accordance with the provisions of their respective constitutions and also in conformity with the international treaties and universal human rights laws. But in reality the human rights of the citizens are often denied or violated by the state itself.

The challenges on human rights have varying dimensions. Even after the Universal Declaration of Human rights, discrimination based on colour of the skin continued in many parts of the world. Racial discrimination or 'Apartheid' was an official state policy of South Africa till the end of white rule in 1994. It is after a long and historic struggle that Apartheid came to an end and the first non-white government under the leadership of African National Congress came to power in South Africa in 1994. Human rights are inalienable rights having universal standards and recognition. This article focuses the challenges on human rights in its racial, ethnic, religious and political dimensions in the present scenario.

II. RACIAL, ETHNIC, RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL DIMENSIONS

2.1 Racial Dimension

From the racial point of view, the human rights laws in the United States are prejudiced and the discrimination against the Black People are very rampant in many states of America. America is the leading champion of individual liberties and global exponent of human rights but they have no respect for the rights of the Black people in their own country. They are being subjected to abuse, torture and illegal detention of police custody and killings and denial of their basic rights. The cold blooded murder of unarmed black youths such as Eric Garner in New York City, Michael Brown in Ferguson in Missouri, Tamir Rice in Cleveland, Freddie Gray in Baltimore, Philando Castle in Minnesota by the white police between 2010 and 2015 invited world wide protest against the US Government and its Human Rights Policies which culminated in the formation a movement called 'Black Lives Matter' led by the African- American community for the protection of human rights of the Black people. Most of the Blacks believe that the criminal and judicial system in the US favours the Whites. Racial divide between the Blacks and Whites is deep rooted in the American Society and the Black people have a strong feeling that they are put in an inferior position in all realms of life in the United States. The racial discrimination of the USA is also evident in the case of refugees and migrants from Asia and Africa. The human rights of the refugees are constantly negated by the United States of America and their migration policies are more or less conditioned by racial priorities. A notable feature at this point is that the United States has not ratified many International Conventions on Human Rights in the name of national security including the Optional Protocol of the Convention against Torture. In spite of having a strong constitution and innumerable provisions for the protection and promotion of all basic rights, the US approach and practice is contrary to the internationally recognised standards of human rights.

2.2 Ethnic and Religious Dimensions

The challenges on human rights on the ethnical dimension could be related to what is called 'ethnic cleansing' which refers to the systematic mass killings and expulsion of an ethnic minority community or a religious group in a country. The Sri Lankan and Myanmar experiences throw much light on Ethnic Cleansing carried out by their military personnel at the behest of the state. In Sri Lanka the internal war between the Tamil rebels and government forces came to an end by 2009. But the Human Right activists accused the government of ethnic cleansing of Tamil Speaking Minority in the Eastern and Northern provinces of Sri Lanka and thereby committed crimes against humanity. In the last phase of the war, tens of thousands of Tamil rebels and youth were captured, shot and killed by the regime forces and their bodies are believed to have been either thrown into the sea or cremated en mass in the remote jungles leaving no evidence of tracing out them.

The UN has adopted a resolution to launch an enquiry in to the war crimes committed by the Sri Lankan Forces and Tamil Rebels during the centuries old civil war. But it was instantly rejected by Sri Lanka saying that they have started their own reconciliation process for which a commission of enquiry was appointed what is known as "Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission". The limited mandate and bias of the commission brought no justice to the Tamil people. Recent reports from Sri Lanka show that Muslim minorities are being targeted by the radical Sinhala Buddhists causing damage to life, liberty and property. Sri Lanka has failed to act in accordance with the UN resolutions on human rights violations and crimes against humanity. It is high time that Sri Lanka should move forward to demolish the repressive structures and institutional cultures that remain deeply entrenched after decades of erosion of human rights.

Grave human rights violations are being reported from Myanmar against the ethnic minorities. The Rohingya muslim community were forcefully fled to the neighbouring state of Bangladesh by the Myanmar

military. Their houses were torched and properties looted. Extrajudicial killings, rape and extermination of children were accused on the military. Some 6 lakh Rohingyas are reported to have fled the country. The UN calls for enquiry were turned down by the Buddhist Majority Government. It is ironical to note that such grave human rights violations happened in the home land of Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate whose struggles brought 'democracy' to Myanmar. Though she is the de facto authority of Myanmar Government, she has not extended her support to the UN rapporteurs who reached Myanmar to take stock of the human rights violations and the atrocities committed by the military.

2.3 Political Dimension

When we analyse the political dimensions on human rights challenges it could be seen that the Authoritarian political leaderships in many parts of the world flagrantly violates human rights laws and ruthlessly killing its own people and the international community tend to become mere spectators. The worst human disaster of this century could be traced in the war ravaged Syrian state led by an authoritarian regime having no regard for human lives. In Syria the regime forces on the one side and the dissidents on the other are desperately killing the innocent civilians most of them are women and children by flouting all international norms and standards of human rights. An estimated 35000 lives are reported to have been lost since the start of war and lakhs of people took refuge in the neighbouring countries. More than 5 lakh Syrians have been internally displaced and living in inhuman conditions without any food, water or shelter. The political leadership under its president Bashar al Azad is playing a tool at the hands of the Big Powers and peace has become a remote possibility. Major Powers involved in the war are Russia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the United State of America and all of them have vested interests. The big powers have already inflicted heavy damage to the life and property of the innocent civilians and still competing one another to show their military might over the war devastated nation and the ordinary people bear the brunt of the war. The indiscriminate gunfire and continuous bombardment have reduced most of the inhabited areas to ashes. The political leadership and the United Nations proved to be a failure to bring peace in Syria.

In the Philippines, the war on drugs started by its president Rodrigo Duterte had already left 12000 people dead raising serious human rights concerns. Human rights Activists allege that the president himself endorses extrajudicial killings of the Drug Dealers and Drug addicts. The International Court of Justice (ICC) has started an enquiry into the charges filed by Philippines Lawyer Jude Sabio against Duterte in connection with the administration campaign against illegal drugs which provoked Duterte to withdraw the membership of Philippines from the ICC.

Apart from these, human rights violations are being reported from China, Pakistan, Turkey, Iraq, Central African Republic, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Afghanistan and India.

Various forms of Human Rights violations are being committed by the People's Republic of China. Lack of religious freedom, restriction of freedom of speech, repression of ethnic minorities, detention of political dissidents and critics of Government, death penalty even for the commission of minor crimes, crackdown of Buddhist monks in Tibet and suppression of democracy movement in Hong Kong are the challenges to human rights experienced from china.

In Pakistan human rights of the minority communities are continuously violated. The desperate killings of minorities including the Hindus, Christians, Ahmadians, Baluchs and Sindhis are alarmingly increasing in the recent years. Violations of human rights of political prisoners, illegal detention of critics of government restrictions on the freedom of press, cold blooded murder of journalists, writers and human rights activists, abduction and rape of minor girls are reported on daily basis. The military in Pakistan is the de facto authority wielding immense powers and the actions of them are held unaccountable. Turkey's human rights violations are very alarming. The killings of Kurdish freedom fighters and the crackdown of the supporters of the US based opposition leader Fethullah Gulan are still continuing. The Kurdish minority community is mercilessly persecuted and forcefully fled to the neighbouring countries. Their freedom movement is ruthlessly crushed by the Turkish military.

The savage killings of the political and the religious opponents by the Islamic state of Iraq in Syria are totally against all established norms and International Standards of Human Rights. Of late 39 Indian nationals whom were held hostage have been reportedly killed by the ISIS for none of their faults.

III. CONCLUSION

Human rights are increasingly under threat nowadays and the United Nations Human Rights Council has every responsibility to see that all its members are upholding the highest standards of human rights and fully cooperate with the mechanisms of the council as envisaged by the UNGA Resolution No-60/251 so that Universal human rights could be protected and promoted everywhere. The member states also have great responsibility to see that their obligations are fulfilled in accordance with the international human rights laws and

the UN Charter. The security council of the United Nations requires urgent democratic reforms so that all the member nations shall accomplish their human rights obligations fully and effectively and in conformity with the international human rights laws. Political bias of the United Nations and the Veto power enjoyed by the big powers are the major obstacles to tackle the growing challenges on human rights across the world.

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