



Role of United Nations for Fulfillment of Economic, Social and Cultural rights

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Abstract

Are economic, social, and cultural rights fundamentally different from civil and political rights, can each of us claim economic, social, and cultural rights, what are the obligations of states on economic, social, and cultural rights, are such rights justiciable, etc.? in this research paper have these question's valid answer. UN plays a very crucial role even its body system also gets funding for these rights. These rights are absolute people can't enjoy their life without them. Calls may special and regular sessions to codify and enhance these rights.

Keywords: United Nations, Economic, Social, and Culture Rights, Human Rights Council, OHCHR,

Introduction

Economic, Social, and Culture Rights (ESCR) like other human rights, contain dual freedoms: freedom from the State and freedom through the State. As we have taken the example of the right to adequate housing free from evictions carried by state agents (freedom from the state) other side got assistance to for adequation housing in critical situations (freedom through the state). They have become increasingly well-defined in national, regional, and global legal systems, in laws and regulations, in national constitutions, and in international treaties. Accepting them as human rights creates legal obligations on States to ensure everyone in the country can enjoy these rights and to provide remedies if they are violated.

Economic Social Cultural Rights

The Vienna Declaration 1993 affirms that –all human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and, interrelated‖ and that –the international community treat all human rights in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis (Vienna Declaration 1993).

The Kantian understanding of human beings being treated as an ends in themselves, not as a means to any

other ends as they are embodiment of reason and rationality, forms the basis for the exposition of such claims. The language of rights permeates and dominates our contemporary political, social and economic life. We have the right to life, the right to freedom of expression, right to equality etc. The concept of rights according to scholars is based on the –acceptance of ideas of personal autonomy, individuality, liberty, and human equality (Ramaswamy 2015:236). As claims, rights represent a particular sort of –justification for a demand namely a fundamental moral principle that accords importance to certain basic individual values such as equality, autonomy or moral agency (Waldron 1987:443). Legal rights are those that are accorded recognition by law and enforced by courts. The others that do not come within the purview of existing laws are moral and natural rights (Cranston 1973: 9-17). Moral rights although not enforceable legally depend on their validity of them being morally justifiable.

The concern for economic, social and cultural rights emerged in Europe primarily in the context of industrialization in Britain. The demand for improvement in working conditions at the national level gave rise to the need to cooperate at the international level. As a result, following certain initial conferences the –International Association for Labour Legislation (IALL) was established in 1901 in Basel (Eide 1997: 27). Later in 1919 the International Labor Organization (ILO) was also established to look after the issues related to workers' rights. The debate on economic, social and cultural rights became important once again in the 1930s under welfare capitalism, wherein the state undertook the responsibility to fund public programmes and policies in relation to these rights. In this endeavor the Nordic countries took the lead in institutionalizing practices that guaranteed the enjoyment of such rights.

The domain of economic, social and cultural rights extends across a vast area of rights such as the right to food, right to adequate housing, water, sanitation, right to education etc. They are particularly perceived as being conducive to development rather than as being central to establishing political stability. Economic, social and cultural rights are therefore better described as entitlements or necessary human goods that individuals must have and enjoy in order to live wholesome lives (Beitz 1984:172, McCloskey 1982:143). They may be defined as being basic to the project of human development.

UN and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Reference to economic, social and cultural rights may be found in treaties such as the UN Charter, article 1 (3), 55 and 56, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) 1966, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) 1965 article 5 (e), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) 1979 articles 10, 11, 12, 14, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989 especially articles 22-30, the Convention on the Human Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families (ICRMW) 1990, the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (RC) 1951, the Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in 1949. Other Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts 1977, Rome Statute of an International Criminal Court (ICC), 1998, articles 43 (6),.

Treatment (Social Security) Convention, 1962; Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 1989, and the

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ICRPD), 2006. Member states have a legal obligation to respect, protect, and fulfill economic, social and cultural rights and are expected to take progressive action to fulfill these rights.

The Limburg Principles on the Implementation of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Maastricht Guidelines on Violations of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, are some of the yardsticks that have been developed at the international level for assessing the progress of the implementation of these rights (Krennerich 2010:11). There have four ways through which economic, social and culture rights may be measured – these include by substantiating claims relating to ESCR violations, by identifying and drawing attention to access of such rights to marginalized and vulnerable groups, by making transparent the process of policy making and by promoting public participation in monitoring. Besides this, case law related to civil and political rights have been made use of to counter violations of economic, social and cultural rights. For example, the principle of non-discrimination (Article 26 of ICCPR) is often cited to ensure that the State does not differentiate between persons belonging to different groups on issues involving fulfillment of rights of economic, social and **cultural nature**.

The claim of universalism that pervades the language of rights has however not gone unchallenged. Cultural relativists argue that no human rights are absolute, that there is infinite cultural invariability, and that all cultural practices are morally equal and valid (Shestack 2003: 30). Cultural relativists advocate for an indigenous notion of human rights. K Pannikar argues that human rights are merely one window through which one particular cultural envisages a just human order for its individuals (Howard 1997-98: 98). This assumes special importance in the context of economic, social and cultural rights. According to one scholar, a cultural challenge to human rights arises at present from three distinct sources - from resurgent Islam from within the West itself and from East- Asia (Ignatieff 2003: 407).

Article 55 of UN Charter mention high standards of living, full employment, full employment, and conditions of economic, and social progress and development. Towards this, the UN through deliberations in various organs such as the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, particularly the Commission of HumanRights, the International Court of Justice, and of late the Security Council, have been responsiblefor drawing up codes related to the field of economic, social and cultural rights.

For example, apart from important Conventions, a range of secondary legal sources on economic, social and cultural rights have been provided by the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights located within the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) at Geneva. The Committee has been central in developing the normative definition of key economic, social and cultural rights, interpreting the role of state parties to the ICESCR and monitoring protection and violence of such rights. The Committee issues periodic guidelines in the form of General Comments explaining the potential of the rightsfalling within the ambit of economic, social and cultural rights (Kaufman 2008:409).

The UN's role in promotion of such rights has been documented by many scholars. Some scholars such as Forsythe have focused on the political debate surrounding the interface between civil and political rights and

economic social and cultural rights. There are others scholars who have focused on specific themes such as right to food, right to education etc. The reports brought out by the Human Rights Council especially by the Special Rapporteurs appointed by them for investigating violations of such rights also form an important source of literature. In —Themes emerging from the United Nations Human Rights Council, Smith (2011), has defined the mechanism of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) as representing a unique opportunity for every UN member state to be scrutinized in turn on a regular basis, as many states have not yet ratified all the core international human rights treaties.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is an innovative mechanism by which the Human Rights Council reviews the human rights records of all U.N. member states every four years. By this mechanism countries got an opportunity discuss actions taken with regard to fulfillment of important human rights. Special Procedures another U.N. Charter based mechanism, serves as the UN's —eye and ears for addressing human rights issues in specific countries or aiding discussion on thematic issues, usually called by a Special Rapporteur, Special Representative, or Independent Expert, or a working group on the subject. Currently mandates exist for 33 thematic and 8 country-specific special procedures. Thematic mandates cover a broad range of issues including adequate housing, education, extreme poverty, and health. In recent years, U.N. experts, including the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, the Independent Expert on the question of Human Rights and Extreme Poverty, the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, the Independent Expert on the Human Right to Water and Sanitation, and the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing have all made official visits for gathering information on the implementation of the above rights to various countries (Kaufman 2004: 420).

UN Mechanisms and Procedures

The Charter of the United Nations defines the promotion of universal respect for, and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms as one of the basic objectives of the organization. It is important to note that at the time of the drafting of the Charter, the Latin American countries pushed that idea inclusion in an International Bill of human rights. —Some of the consultants from the forty-two NGOs invited by the U.S state department to advise the American delegation met with U.S Secretary for case of human rights provision (Roosevelt 1947:4). The Charter of UN describes in Article 13(1) calls upon the General Assembly to —initiate studies and make recommendations for the purpose of promoting international cooperation in the economic, social, cultural, educational and health field and assisting in the realization freedom to all without any distinction as to race, sex, language or religion and educational cooperation. Article 62 of the Charter calls upon the Economic, Social and Council to initiate studies and reports and make recommendations for the purpose of promoting respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. It also gave the ECOSOC the responsibility of forming —commissions in economic and social fields and for the promotion of human rights (Article 68).

As a result, right from the start expectations prevailed that the UN would be able to undertake the task of preparing a document that would provide a universal framework for the promotion and protection of human rights for all. Through carefully conducted deliberations at the level of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, particularly the Commission of Human Rights established in 1946, the UN was able to draw up a universal code called the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948.

The UDHR was a major policy document that sought to lay down the essential framework of a universally applicable human rights regime. Henry Steiner and Philip Alston, two intellectual leaders of the human rights movement, call UDHR as a –the parent document– (Mutua 2007:554). Hans Kelsen, Karl Vasak noted that the UDHR served as a source of inspiration for other binding instruments for the protection of human rights (Vyver: 144). However, other scholars such as Rajai-Khorasani, have argued that the UDHR is largely a Western construct, that fails to recognize the cultural requirements of the Muslim community (Mayer 2007: 9). Similar opinion is voiced by another scholar who argues that the language of the Universal Declaration derived from western religious and political philosophical traditions, notably Christianity and the Enlightenment, does lend credibility to the claim made by cultural relativists (Tuijl 2000: 619).

In 1946, at the time when the UDHR precepts were being founded, more attention was paid to the mechanisms by which the rights would be instituted within the UN System than the meaning and concept of the rights themselves. According to Evans, ‘endless debate about the moral and philosophical foundations of human rights w[ere] seen as a threat to achieving this task (Evans 2011, 10). As an idea while the UDHR precepts were welcome to states, Cold War politics of the day swayed the debate in another direction. –The call for including economic and social rights in any international law on human rights was seen as ‘socialism by treaty, ‘un-American‘ and unacceptable by many influential groups within the United States (Evans 2011,9). The West led by the United States of America demanded that the rights contained in the UDHR be dealt with in two separate conventions, one dealing with civil and political rights (ICCPR).

that it championed and the other backed by the Soviet Union on economic, social and cultural rights (ICESCR). In recent decades, human rights treaties such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child represent a holistic approach to rights promotion and protection.

In 1968 the United Nations convened the international conference on human rights in Tehran Iran review of the Universal Declarations of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948 and then twenty-five years later in 1993 the world conference was held on human rights in Vienna conference, Austria. –The objectives of the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights as specified by the United Nations General Assembly was to review and assess the progress that had been in field of human rights which they could be overcome (Vyver:126). The implementation of economic, social and cultural rights received a boost in 1985 with the establishment of a new UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Committee is a body of 18 independent

experts established through ECOSOC Resolution 1985/17 of 28 May 1985, to monitor the implementation of the ICESCR.

In June 1986 a conference was held in Maastricht at which a group of experts in international law and representatives of the UN and its specialized agencies discussed the nature of state under in ICESCR. The result of this conference was that unanimous adoption of the Limburg Principles on the Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In 1993 eight years after the creation a Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural rights (CESCR) the Special Rapporteur on the Realization of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Danilo Turk, recommended a seminar for indicators progressive realization of economic, social, and cultural rights (ESCR).



Table 1: UN Conventions Related to Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

<i>S. no</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Year of Adoption</i>	<i>Ratification (by countries)</i>
1.	<i>International Convention on the Elimination of All Form of Racial Discrimination</i>	<i>21 Dec 1969</i>	<i>87</i>
2.	<i>International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights</i>	<i>16 Dec 1976</i>	<i>70</i>
3.	<i>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</i>	<i>18 Dec 1981</i>	<i>80</i>
4.	<i>Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment</i>	<i>10 Dec 1987</i>	<i>81</i>
5.	<i>Convention on Rights of the Child</i>	<i>20 Nov 1990</i>	<i>140</i>
6.	<i>Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women</i>	<i>10 Dec 2000</i>	<i>80</i>
7.	<i>Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of child sale, prostitution and pornography.</i>	<i>25 May 2002</i>	<i>121</i>
8.	<i>Convention on rights of Migrant Workers Member of their families</i>	<i>18 Dec 2003</i>	<i>38</i>
9.	<i>Optional Protocol to the Convention against torture, punishment, other violated treatment .</i>	<i>18 Dec 2006</i>	<i>75</i>
10.	<i>Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Right of Person with Disabilities</i>	<i>12 Dec 2008</i>	<i>92</i>
11.	<i>Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</i>	<i>13 Dec 2008</i>	<i>159</i>
12.	<i>International Convention for the protection of all Persons from enforced Disappearance</i>	<i>20 Dec 2010</i>	<i>94</i>
13.	<i>Optional Protocol to the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights</i>	<i>10 Dec 2013</i>	<i>45</i>

Source: UN

To ensure monitoring of implementation of these rights the Commission followed a system of appointment of experts called Special Rapporteurs to look into various aspects of implementation of rights such as the right to housing, right to education, and right to food, and realization of economic, social and cultural Rights. Table 2 provides a glimpse of the various areas where Special Rapporteurs and Independent Experts have been appointed by the Commission on Human Rights. The Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) works as the nodal agency coordinating the work of different experts. Following Secretary-General Kofi Annan's call for human rights to be mainstreamed throughout the UN system emphasized the human rights framework in implementing their mandates¹ (Robinson 2004:867).



Table2: Special Rapporteurs on Different Areas of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

S.No.	Title	Mandate established in/ by	Mandate extended in/ by
1.	Special Rapporteur on adequate housing	2000 Commission on Human Rights	2007 Human Rights Council 2010 Human Rights Council 2013 Human Rights Council
2.	Special Rapporteur on Child Rights	1990 Commission on Human Rights	2008 Human Rights Council 2011 Human Rights Council Human Rights Council
3.	Special Rapporteur on field of cultural rights	2009 Human Rights Council	2012 Human Rights Council
4.	Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education	1998 Human Rights Commission	2008 Human Rights Council 2011 Human Rights Council
5.	Special Rapporteur on issue of enjoyments safe, clean, healthy and <u>Sustainable Environment</u>	2012 Human Rights Council	2015 Human Rights Council
6.	Special Rapporteur on <u>Extreme Poverty and Human Rights</u>	1998 Human Rights Commission resolution	2011 Human Rights Council 2014 Human Rights Council
7.	Special Rapporteur on the right to Food	2000 Commission on Human Rights	2010 Human Rights Council 2013 Human Rights Council
8.	Expert related on Foreign Debt, and other financial obligations and Cultural rights.	2000 Commission on Human Rights	2008 Human Rights Council 2011 Human Rights Council

			2014 Human Rights Council
9.	Rapporteur related right to religion	1986 Commission on Human Rights	2007 Human Rights Council 2010 Human Rights Council 2013 Human Rights Council
10.	Special Rapporteur on mental health	2002 Commission on Human Rights	2010 Human Rights Council 2013 Human Rights Council

11.	Special Rapporteur on Rights on Migrant	1999 Commission on Human Rights	2008 Human Rights Council 2011 Human Rights Council 2014 Human Rights Council
12.	Special Rapporteur on drinking water	2008 Human Rights Council	2011 Human Rights Council 2012 Human Rights Council
13.	Special Rapporteur on the	1995 Commission on Human Rights	2011 Human Rights Council
	implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous <u>substances and wastes</u>		Council 2012 Human Rights Council
14.	Special Rapporteur on torture, cruel conditions	1995 Commission on Human Rights	2008 Human Rights Council 2011 Human Rights Council

Source: UN

Concluding Remarks

Economic, Social and Cultural rights are essentially rights relating to different aspects of development, and although there are countries that have questioned the very basis of their recognition as rights; the UN system it must be admitted has institutionalized various norms and standards for the codification of economic, social and cultural rights. The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in this context has played a crucial role in aiding this process of progressive recognition that has been accorded these rights in international community.

Particular expertise in the field has been provided by experts working on different dimensions of rights protection and realization. These include extensive commentaries in the form of General Comments on various aspects of the rights enlisted in the related UN Conventions. For example, in the debates on the General Comment on cultural rights in 2005, discussions were focused on different aspects such as the right of protection in relation to scientific, literary or artistic production, elimination of discrimination to ensure equal access to effective protection of moral and material interests, along with deliberations on the core obligations and responsibilities of states. Similar debates exist for General Comments on the right to work, employment condition, social security, children rights, protection of family, nutrition, shelter, education etc.

In addition to the CESCR, the UN also has treaties bodies like CEDAW, CRC, and the Committee on the rights of person with disabilities, looking after the protection of social and economic rights of particular sections. These treaties bodies create norms and mechanisms by which states that have ratified the agreements have to submit periodic reports related to the progress made in the realization of such rights. This procedure is similar to that followed under the Universal Periodic Review and the Special Procedures of the HRC.

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