

« From symbol to practice »

Some considerations on the impact of a human right to peace

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To apprehend and therefore to promote the recognition of the human right to peace, there is a need to understand and to foresee, what will a human right to peace be used for.

A legal text has more or less three dimensions or types of possible applications:

- a. A symbolic or educative value.
- b. A normative or programmatic output.
- c. And a control or coercive mechanism.

The symbolic value of the human right to peace will be immense.

For every inhabitant of the Earth to know that he has a right to peace, to live in peace, fully, would mean that he is effectively entitled to life, to a full life.

The full right to life and to a complete and peaceful life span is totally impossible without the right to peace. And it is only with a declared right to peace that one can assume his life in a fully constructive manner, without ever being – ideally at least – under the threat of war or violence!

The right to peace and to a peaceful life would also mean that we are all entitled to a life with sufficient dignity to enable us, all of us humans, to achieve – peacefully! I insist – the fulfillment of all our essential and basic needs. Without the fulfillment of these needs, if there is strife amongst humans for any aspect of life, there is no peace. And no competition or liberal entrepreneurship can legitimate such strife for a decent living.

The symbolic value of the right to peace becomes here more evident: if peace is granted to all, humanity reaches a stage where caring for each other, for every individual becomes normal and possible and reciprocally, where every individual can care for the good of all by assuming and claiming, for himself as for all, his own right to peace.

This is a far reaching assumption; somehow nowadays, still symbolic, indeed. But without seeing the goal, at least as a symbol, the goal is hard to reach. While having the symbol, peace unto all, as an indication for the path, does guide us towards this betterment.

The normative and programmatic value of the human right to peace needs to be a bit more concrete and precise.

First, why not start working, individuals and nations, at how we can progress towards peace. New tools and practices in peace building, better respect for all of us, if we make peace a human right we can ask to countries to report on how the human right to peace and how peace therefore progress, in detail and for the long term.

I do think that countries and the international community need a little bit of help for that. Except under the scrutiny of the Security Council and in case of self-defense only is the use of force permissible, if even needed. 60 odd years of this regime have proven insufficient not only to end the “plague of war” but to stop diverting tremendous resources for military purposes. Maybe humanity is not quite ready for peace, maybe there is too many weapons around, maybe we need more peace tools, peace symbols, peaceful intents and some peace education. So let us all give a little bit of help to the process. If countries truly intend peace, then they have nothing to fear from their own populations to help them reach that peace. There is no great need to change the regime. There is no intent (that I know of) to totally rule out the use of force, if needed, especially to protect peace itself. But this must be avoided by all possible and preventive means and measures. With the human right to peace, we have one more new tool to guarantee and may be to achieve peace. It has not yet been tried, but because peace is needed for each and every human being, peace is a human right and we intend to see it recognized, promoted and used to help this world get beyond the plague of war.

Shall we be coercive for that? Shall we give up our right to peace, to promote and enforce peace? There is a matter of accountability here that does not lie in the bearer of the right to peace, but in the violator of the right. Peace is self standing, I (we) do not need conflict, war or violence to define peace. Harmony, but also the common construction of a lasting humane civilization on Earth is a sufficient goal to define peace and to walk towards peace in peace, or at the least in non-violence.

Nevertheless, we can measure the progresses of peace and we do want this to be done and to be done at the highest level of human affairs, where peace lies for us all, collectively and individually, as nations, peoples and individuals, as a human community, where peace lies as a goal, a symbol and a culture, but also as a state of mind and a purpose of the heart, for each and all.

It might be that if we fail to construct peace together, we will all fall together. So though this will be possible, instead of looking for scapegoats, countries to blame or to condemn, in court or council, instead of being coercive why not build peace together?

I know I have been very idealistic, and optimistic in this presentation. But I know that the tools of peace are real and needed. And I do know that practical applications for the human right to peace are already numerous. We need recognition, indeed, but we also need to promote peace in our own constituencies and countries. By adopting the human right to peace locally, but also as an example, by working on new applications for the well recognized right to safety and security, we can see the right to peace progress. There are also other possibilities.

We need to show that peace is possible, individually and collectively, and in due time, hopefully, it will all fall in place.

Thank you for your attention and for your work, most of all whenever it goes beyond the recklessness of violence.

May peace bless you all!

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