The International Human Rights Movement
A.K.A. (Proposed new title)
NGOs and the Human Rights Movement;
How NGOs try to make rights real (and sometimes succeed)

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I. Overview
The human rights movement is one of the most successful social justice movements of our time, establishing universal principles that govern how states should treat citizens and non-citizens, and helping to challenge dictators and authoritarian rulers in many regions, including Southern Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. Over the last three decades, national human rights organizations (NGOs) have proliferated; today, a human rights community of some sort exists in virtually every country of the world. On the global level, simultaneously, the International Human Rights Movement (IHRM) has become a powerful force. The movement strengthens—and is strengthened by—a complex web of institutions, laws, and norms that constitute a functioning global system that builds on itself progressively, animated by strong NGOs.

The focus of this class is the NGOs that drive the movement on the international level. Indeed, in many ways this is a class about these kinds of organizations, although we will use the human rights movement as our entry point. Students will leave with a deep appreciation of what it means to work in or with Human Rights NGOs—and NGOs in general (such as in the environmental or feminist movements): challenges, strategies, dilemmas, theories of change, etc. and be uniquely prepared to both analyze this sector and/or work in it as a staff person, consultant, or NGOs leader.

Drawing on two decades of working closely with human rights NGOs, the instructor will bring countless examples from the field into the classroom, including internal debates about strategy development, institutional representation, research methodologies, partnerships, networks, venues of engagement, campaigning, fundraising and, perhaps most importantly, the fraught and complex debates about adaptation to changing global circumstances, starting with the pre-Cold War period and including some of the most up-to-date issues and questions going on in this field today.
II. Schedule of classes

January 26th, 2016

Social Movements and NGOs
There are two goals for today’s class: First, we will lay the groundwork for understanding the international human rights movement by focusing on the idea of a “movement”. We will use the lens of civil society theory and social movement theory to think about the ways in which individuals, associations, and organizations, including NGOs, engage with each other in building a movement “ecosystem”. We will also introduce the ideas of political opportunity structure, resource mobilization, and framing, as well as take note of the other kinds of actors (funders, governments, businesses) that are part of the broader movement ecosystem as well. Secondly, we will review course essentials, including the structure of the class and requirements. We will assign NGO presentations for the term and discuss subfields of human rights.

READ:
- The globalization Reader (NYU Classes), chapters 41, 43, and 44
- Surreptitious Symbiosis- Engagement Between Activists and NGOs by Marlies Glasius and Armine Ishkanian (NYU Classes)

February 2nd, 2016

The Human Rights Ecosystem: Focus on the human rights system
Today is a crash course on the international human rights system. Since the international system represents a set of political opportunity structures for the movement—and actors engage with the system regularly—it is vital that we understand it.

- Skim through OHCHR, Human Rights Indicators, pp. 1-26 (http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/Human_rights_indicators_en.pdf and also on NYU Classes)

Questions to consider:
(1) What is the human rights movement?
(2) What is the international human rights system?
(3) What is the relationship between the two?
(4) What does it mean to “realize rights”?

NGO case-studies: Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch

February 9th
The international human rights movement is dominated and sometimes driven by human rights NGOs. In this class, we will define national and international HRNGOs and examine their theories of change, structures, constituencies, and whom they represent, as well as Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs). We will also focus on how they are funded and especially the role of
private philanthropy in the human rights ecosystem. Finally, we will discuss the “translator” or “vernacularizer” role that many professional NGOs play.

- Makau Mutua, Savages, Victims, and Saviors: The Metaphor of Human Rights (on NYU Classes)
- Sally Engel Merry, “Transnational Human Rights and Local Activism: Mapping the Middle” (on NYU Classes)
- Enrique Peruzzotti, ’Civil Society, Representation, and Accountability ...” in NGO Accountability

NGO case-study: Human Rights First and International Commission of Jurists

Questions to consider:
1. What is the role of human rights NGOs in the broader human rights movement?
2. Does it matter how human rights NGOs are funded?
3. Is it problematic that most funding comes from the Global North while most HRNGOs focus on human rights problems in the Global South?

February 16th
Global dynamics of the international movement
The international human rights movement has gone through different stages in its evolution, with shifting dynamics. Building off the Makau Mutua article from last week, this class will examine the emerging 21st Century dynamics of the international human rights movement, with a special emphasis on the “spiral theory” of compliance.

We will also examine the question of funding the human rights movement, critically examining state and non-state donors and global philanthropy and its role.

- Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink, Introduction, Chapters 1-2 (p. 3-42)
- Bickford, SUR Journal Interview with Louis Bickford (On NYU Classes)
- Bickford, “Transnational Advocacy Networks” (On NYU Classes)
- Skim through “Funding for Global Human Rights” (IHRFG) (On NYU Classes)
- Also skim through AWID “Watering the Leaves, Starving the Roots”, esp. pp.1-25 (on NYU Classes and also downloadable here: http://www.awid.org/Library/WTL-Full-Report-Final)

NGO case-studies: FIDH and Conectas

Questions to consider:
1. How does the “spiral” theory help to understand the dynamics of the international human rights movement, especially the role of pressure exerted by international actors (including some states) on (other) states?
2. What is—and what should be—the role of philanthropy in supporting human rights? What will the human rights movement of the 21st Century look like?

February 23rd
The Compliance Gap
The International human rights movement has focused for many years on building the human rights system including through a focus on international law and norms (including through treaties and conventions). But has this focus yielded results in terms of improving the rights of actual human rights on the ground? This will be the core of today’s discussion.

- Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink, chapter 3 (Beth Simmons); and chapter 5 (Xinyuan Dai)

**NGO case-studies: Legal Resources Centre and Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC)**

**Questions to consider:**

1. How important are norms, standards, treaties, conventions? How would you compare the effectiveness of NGO strategies that focus on norm-development compared to other strategies?

2. What is required for “compliance”? Why is there a compliance gap? How can we learn from compliance gap research in the past as we approach the idea of new treaties in the future in areas, for example, such as business and human rights or LGBTI rights?

March 1st

**Non-state actors: business and human rights**

Building on the focus of the previous class on non-state actors, this class will focus on businesses, including multinational corporations. How has the human rights movement grappled with violations of rights committed by businesses, starting at least as far back as the Bhopal tragedy in 1984? Since that time, and especially in the last decade, there has been a significant expansion of norms and standards concerning the behavior of business in terms of human rights. We will begin with these normative developments and then focus on NGO strategies.

- Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink, chapters 11 and 12
- Read Chris Jochnick & Louis Bickford, "The Role of Civil Society in Business and Human Rights"

**NGO case-studies: Business and Human Rights Resource Center (BHRRC) and Global Witness**

**Questions to consider:**

1. Businesses can and do violate rights. But doesn’t the responsibility for rights violations lie with governments that do not regulate or control businesses? Shouldn’t activists and NGOs focus on governments?

2. How can NGOs measure impact in the business and human rights subfield?

3. How can NGOs confront the question of home country/host country dynamics? Does this require an approach that goes beyond national boundaries? What are the respective comparative advantages of national and international HRNGOs?
(4) Can businesses be “forces for good”? Should human rights activists ally themselves with (some) businesses in order to achieve their goals?

March 8th
**Emerging Powers, multi-polarity, and human rights advocacy in the 21st Century**
The international human rights movement has been connected in a variety of ways with American foreign policy—both because of US support for authoritarian regimes during the Cold War and, more recently, during the so-called War on Terror, but also because of genuine (if contradictory) US support for human rights globally as part of foreign policy since the 1970s. Many argue that shifts in the global order in the 21st Century will change the ways that human rights is articulated in foreign policy.

- Ted Piccone, “Global Swing States and the Human Rights and Democracy Order” (on NYU Classes)
- Noref, “Discursive Power of the concept of the rising power” (on NYU Classes)
- CONECTAS: Foreign Policy and Human Rights (on NYU Classes)

**NGO case-studies:** International Service for Human Rights (Geneva) and Forum-Asia Crisis Action

Questions to consider:
(1) Are we entering a new era of multipolarity in which emerging/rising powers like Brazil and South Africa are likely to play enhanced roles in global human rights?
(2) If so, what are the implications for human rights NGOs like Conectas?

March 15th—NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK

March 22nd
**Incorporating a gender perspective: private wrongs and non-state actors**
The field of human rights is often defined as involving abuse (of commission or omission) by the state against individuals in the public sphere. But a gender analysis has, over past decades, taught us that human rights can come under threat by non-state actors such as religious institutions, purveyors of “tradition” and “family values”, and can be committed in the private sphere as well as the public sphere. In this class we will disentangle some of these questions by looking at how NGOs have developed strategies and programs that bring in a gender perspective.

- Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink, chapter 14, “Changing Hearts and Minds”, by Alison Brisk

**NGO case-studies:** AWID and IGLHRC

Questions to consider
(1) What does it mean to have a gender analysis in human rights?
(2) Do human rights NGOs have a gender analysis? What would this mean? How would we know?

(3) How might we explain the profound success of LGBTI rights campaigns in recent years, at least in North America? Are there lessons to be learned from this subfield that other subfields of human rights could benefit from?

(4) Anticipating DIFRET: can “tradition” violate human rights? How do NGOs deal with this challenge?

March 29th
Incorporating a gender perspective: private wrongs and non-state actors (PART II): the NGO response

Film: DIFRET
Plus discussion

Readings: TBA

April 5th
Economic and Social Rights
Since the origins of human rights and even more since the end of the Cold War (and the Vienna Conference of 1993), activists have argued that all rights are interdependent and indivisible. In the last few decades, NGOs have started to reflect this. In today’s class, we will discuss how securing economic and social rights have become key strategic goals of a number of human rights NGOs.

- Watch Chile-MOOC-Philip Alston: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EUtPKF-J28
- Who will be Accountable: CESR (on NYU Classes)

NGO case-studies: Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR)

Questions to consider:
(1) Does a focus on ESCR rights tend to encourage a different set of NGO strategies from a focus on political and civil rights? For example, does “naming and shaming” work equally well for all rights?

(2) What does it mean to say all rights are indivisible in terms of NGO mission and focus?

April 12th
NGOs and conflict

Film: E-TEAM
Plus discussion


April 19th
The digital revolution and what it means for the human rights movement
There are at least two broad ways that the digital revolution has had an impact on human rights advocacy: first, as a substantive theme (and subfield), digital rights (or internet rights) is emerging as an area of concern that is linked to other rights areas such as right to privacy; freedom of expression; and freedom of assembly. Secondly, the digital era has also given NGOs a new set of communications and media tools. We will look at both of these areas during this class.

- Frank LaRue – Freedom of Expression on the Internet (on NYU Classes)
- Peruse this website: https://www.tacticaltech.org/
- And this one (including video clips): http://personaldemocracy.com/
- Glance at this website: https://www.rightscon.org/
- Optional: Watch CitizenFour (https://citizenfourfilm.com/)

**NGO case-studies: Benetec’s Human Rights Program and Tactical Tech**

**Questions to consider:**

1. A certain set of human rights claims involve “public space”, such as freedom of assembly and freedom of expression. Is the internet “public space” and what does it mean to articulate rights claims in the digital realm?

2. How are digital rights as a subfield interconnected with business and human rights?

3. From your reading of NGO websites, are the NGOs that we are examining adequately incorporating new digital strategies?

**April 26th**

**LAST CLASS**

*Measuring Impact of Human Rights NGOs and the future of the international human rights movement*

In this class, we will examine what is involved in running a human rights organization, from strategic planning of program, to measurement of impact, to fundraising and communications. Then we will zero in on the question of impact.

- Sikkink ropp, ch 8, 9, and 15
- Amnesty International, Strategic Plan (on NYU Classes)
- Monitoring and Evaluation for Human Rights Organizations: Three Case Studies (on NYU Classes)

Optional:

- ICTJ, Strategic Plan (on NYU Classes)
- KHRC, Strategic Plan (on NYU Classes)

**NGO case-studies: Witness and ICTJ**
III. Required readings
A. Please purchase/obtain:

- Thomas Risse, Stephen C. Ropp, Kathryn Sikkink (eds) (2013), The Persistent Power of Human Rights; From Commitment to Compliance (Cambridge);

B. Open a Twitter account and follow OpenGlobalRights (at OpenDemocracy) and read existing debates. Check daily. Follow: Ken Roth, Chris Jochnick, Louis Bickford, Hossam Bahgat, FIDH, Iain Levine, BHRRC, etc. (to be discussed in class)

C. Please review websites of all NGOs listed on syllabus in preparation for each class, as well as twitter feeds.

IV. Written Assignments and Grading
Students will be graded on the following:

1. PROPOSAL: Paper proposal (10%): One page maximum (text) plus one-page maximum bibliography (i.e. 2-pages maximum), bring printed copy to class on March 10th and email copy to me (with revisions, if necessary, from workshop) by midnight on Friday, March 13th. Resources for paper topic:

   (1) DIRECTORY OF OHCHR SPECIAL PROCEDURES

   (2) See classifications of thematic areas here:
   http://humanrights.foundationcenter.org/key-findings/

2. NGO report (one each): 2-pages (single-spaced) (10%)
3. FINAL PAPER (50%)—subfield mapping: 10-page (maximum) single-spaced paper leading to recommendations.
4. PARTICIPATION/reading/website analyses (30%)

VI. Instructor
Louis Bickford runs the Global Human Rights program at the Ford Foundation. Prior to joining the Foundation in 2012, he served on the executive leadership team at the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights (2010-2012) and, before that, was a founding staff member and a director at the International Center for Transitional Justice (2001-2009), where he managed the Center's global network of NGOs and oversaw programs in South Africa, Chile, Morocco, Japan, and Spain. He also created the Memory, Museums, and Memorials program (later the Truth and Memory unit).

Bickford has also done independent consulting for numerous institutions and in various world regions, including in Afghanistan, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo, and for institutions
including the Center for Strategic and International Studies; the Expert Working Group on Transitional Justice (appointed by the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina); and the Oak Foundation, where he undertook a strategic review of human rights programs.

From 1999-2001, he was Associate Director of the Global Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, where he oversaw three global research projects, including the “Legacies of Authoritarianism” project, and managed the Macarthur Global Studies Fellowship program for PhD and MA students in the social sciences and humanities and ran a weekly Dissertators Workshop. He has given keynote addresses or lectures at Ateneo de Manila University (Philippines); University of Chile Law School; Duke University; Comissão de Anistia do Ministério da Justiça (Brazil); the Inter American Court for Human Rights (Washington, DC); Yale University Law School; the Universidad Liberoamericana (Mexico); University of Hiroshima (Japan); Kabul University (Afghanistan); University of Rosario (Colombia); Sabanci University (Turkey); University of Sarajevo (Bosnia); UNESCO (Paris); and University of Liberia; among others.

Bickford teaches regular graduate seminars on human rights and transitional justice at NYUxxx University (Institute for the Study of Human Rights), New York University (Wagner School) and the New School for Social Research (Graduate Program in International Affairs). He received a Ph.D. from McGill University (1999) and a MA degree from the New School (1991), both in political science.

**Statement on Academic Integrity**

The intellectual venture in which we are all engaged requires of faculty and students alike the highest level of personal and academic integrity. As members of an academic community, each one of us bears the responsibility to participate in scholarly discourse and research in a manner characterized by intellectual honesty and scholarly integrity.

Scholarship, by its very nature, is an iterative process, with ideas and insights building one upon the other. Collaborative scholarship requires the study of other scholars’ work, the free discussion of such work, and the explicit acknowledgement of those ideas in any work that inform our own. This exchange of ideas relies upon a mutual trust that sources, opinions, facts, and insights will be properly noted and carefully credited.

In practical terms, this means that, as students, you must be responsible for the full citations of others’ ideas in all of your research papers and projects; you must be scrupulously honest when taking your examinations; you must always submit your own work and not that of another student, scholar, or internet agent.

Any breach of this intellectual responsibility is a breach of faith with the rest of our academic community. It undermines our shared intellectual culture, and it cannot be tolerated. Students failing to meet these responsibilities should anticipate being asked to leave NYUxxx.