

RIGHTS WATCH (UK):

UNCHR Report:

Promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms through a better understanding of traditional values of humankind: best practices”

Deadline: 15 March 2013

Submission

Human rights instruments are too often drafted in terms of universality. Universal declarations of human rights are an ideological precept reflecting the values and ideologies of particular states or coalitions of nations with vested interests or a collectivity of guilt which they consider should be shared or imposed upon the rest of world. The critique of the universalism of human rights is not new. However, the universalism of human rights critique has become more complicated in the new millennium through globalisation which reduces spatial boundaries between states and the hardening of faith as ideology. The alleged global war on terror waged against the west (and we see the ‘allied’ invasion of Iraq and the process of regime change as an adjunct to this ‘global war’) is found in western consciousness in rogue states which have no ‘respect’ for human rights and are enclaves of terror. Alternatively, the war on terror is fostered and nurtured on ‘home soil’ in suspect communities which do not respect the values of those they share space within ‘the homeland’.

This a good time, therefore, on the 10th anniversary of the ‘allied’ invasion of Iraq and when human rights amongst the ‘allied’ states of the west are threatened because they interfere with domestic and international security arrangements or do not figure with those other states (the third countries) who are chosen to do business with as flags of convenience (who often do the dirty work of torture for ‘us’), to support the motion promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms through a better understanding of traditional values of humankind.

The traditional values of humankind is a good phrase as it elides human rights with the broader context of humanitarianism and the values of humanitarianism as a social bond between individuals in communities with or without states. Humankind can reflect the values of the goodness, empathy, respect, care, mutual support and trust which characterised societies defined by tolerance between selves and others: being-with. It is also entry point of for social justice These are the base entry point for a human rights discourse to evolve but without the immediate reliance upon a concept of rights (and with rights responsibilities). And this entry point does not require the protection of rights by a force such a state with the reliance upon economic indicators or real coercion.

As an NGO with human rights as it operative guiding principle, we add this short commentary or reflection to the OHCHR Report. We add a coda the role of civil society in all communities or states which seek to endorse and live by the fundamental values of humankind.

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