
Preface

Human rights are for all

Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it.

Hannah Arendt

The origins of this book, and motivation for creating it, can be traced to the experience the editors have had over many years working with people whose human rights were at risk of violation or were already violated. There are many groups who are at particular risk of being exposed to human rights violations and therefore often described as vulnerable groups, such as refugees, LGBTIQ+, persons with disabilities, children and even also women. The world, that is politics, wars, abuse of power, colonialism, patriarchy, has placed or forced people into disadvantaged and vulnerable positions.

This was all summed up very well by Pastor Martin Niemöller (1892–1984):

First, they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

(<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/martin-niemoeller-first-they-came-for-the-socialists>)

When encountering refugees and other survivors of gross human rights violations, often victims of torture, it may strike us as difficult to work as psychologists without having an understanding of what severe human rights violations represent in terms of international treaties and state obligations. Such experiences thus highlight the need for knowledge of what such violations and lack of justice may mean in the lives of those who survive and need our support. It may also create in us a wish for further engagement and commitment to the defence of human rights.

Many human rights conventions have been developed specifically to address the ways people can be affected, and we are of the view that human rights cannot be left only to lawyers, philosophers and politicians. Human rights are about human behaviour and relationships. This is why we are inspired by Amartya Sen's ideas (2005): "Human rights are strong ethical pronouncements as to what should be done"; "they are recognised freedoms, seen as entitlements of a person to development and realisation of his or her capabilities" – all very psychological ideas.

When we think of promotion and protection of human rights, it is good to remind ourselves that being a psychologist is just one of our roles, one that we have very likely

chosen freely. Besides being psychologists, we have the privilege of being teachers. However, we also belong to various groups, some of them less and some of them more likely to be at risk of human rights violations. We all could be clients needing services that psychologists provide. So, this book is not about *us* – psychologists or teachers – and *them* – clients or students – it is about pursuing both processes, demanding as well as ensuring that human rights are protected and promoted. During our work with this book, human rights have been under increasing threat and this was one of our immediate motivations for putting this book together. If respect for human rights decreases, then psychological distress will be on the increase – and this book is an attempt to counteract such a development as well as strengthen awareness of the consequences of such processes.

We all consider it a duty as a psychologist, a scientist and a teacher to contribute to the improvement of the living conditions of people. However, the world is full of contradictory demands and access to safety, economic welfare, education and the fulfilment of other basic needs for some people sometimes comes into conflict with the interests of others. Because of this we argue that there is also a duty for psychologists and scientists to find a set of normative standards from which to take a stand. Human rights deliver an approximation to such a frame of reference. They may guide psychologists in their professional choices. Therefore, knowledge of human rights is essential for professional psychologists, and human rights education is one of the ways to achieve it.

In the book we aim to raise awareness of the close connection between the ideals and obligations laid down in international human rights, and the objectives of professional psychology: the well-being of people and peoples. By this we mean that central to what we as psychologists do on a daily basis – working to better lives and create conditions for development – we are in many ways fulfilling the objectives of human rights.

We hope through the different chapters in the book to cover the many challenges that face the profession of psychology in its engagement with the wide range of situations that human beings experience. We also cover the social contexts where the rights and dignity of individuals and peoples are not always respected or protected and where psychologists may be working. Human rights come into play in psychologists' daily practice, dealing with these challenges where, at times, human rights may be actively violated.

There are numerous ways in which psychologists have been engaged in work that, while not explicitly advocating for human rights in their day-to-day practice, nevertheless has contributed to human protection. Through this book we hope to support a more thorough involvement of psychologists in human rights protection and promotion than hitherto. In recent times the link between psychological practice and explicit human rights promotion and protection has become clearer, and psychologists and their associations are becoming more focused on their role in society. Unfortunately, human rights are still not a standard reference point within the profession of psychology. One of the challenges is to make human rights standards meaningful and relevant, and our view is that one of the best ways to achieve this is to include human rights in the education of all psychologists.

The incentive for this book to be written can be traced back to 2013 when Robert Roe, (at the time) President of the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations (EFPA), proposed that psychology should expand its focus to be more directed at the needs of society. In particular he advocated for a stronger engagement of psychologists in the promotion and protection of human rights, as human rights globally were coming under increasing pressure. Taking up this challenge, EFPA emphasised more strongly the responsibilities of the profession of psychology for promoting human rights and actively opposing human rights violations. Three priorities have been formulated: to raise awareness of human rights and risks of human rights violations; to act to prevent human rights violations; and to alleviate the effects of such violations. In order to achieve these objectives, the EFPA established the Board Human Rights and Psychology. The work of this

Board provided a platform for the articulation of the efforts and achievements of those psychologists who were already active in this field; and in addition it gave the important message to psychologists' associations and their members that *psychology matters in human rights and that human rights matter in psychology*.

Together with the European Inter-University Centre for Human Rights and Democratisation (EIUC, now the Global Campus of Human Rights) and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), the EFPA Board Human Rights and Psychology organised a meeting of experts in the field of human rights and psychology in Venice, Italy in 2016. One of the conclusions of this work referred to educational resources: "*university courses and literature were scarce for psychologists to enable them to become more aware and better equipped for their role as human rights promoters and protectors*." Our book has been the result of a number of conference symposia and many discussions, and it aims to contribute to meeting the need for course material and ideas for curriculum development.

This book is about learning *why* and *how* to be a more socially accountable psychologist:

- how to raise awareness among professional psychologists, university teachers and psychology students about their role as human rights promoters and protectors, within their discipline as well as in society at large;
- how to provide knowledge and tools enabling them to put a human rights perspective into practice; and
- how to provide texts and methods for teaching human rights.

The book comprises 19 chapters and is divided into four parts. The first introduces the main ideas in human rights law and practice and its relevance for psychology. The second deals with ethics and accountability, the third with how human rights and psychological practice can work together and the final section contains ideas for development of educational materials and approaches.

In all the chapters, authors provide theoretical background as well as practical implications and examples of connections between human rights and psychology. They also list some questions intended to encourage reflection about the topic.

In the appendices, we offer a list of learning and teaching resources, as well as an overview of bodies and organisations that are focused on human rights protection and promotion.

We are honoured and thankful to 32 authors from 18 countries and six continents for their contributions and, most importantly, for their dedication to human rights and psychology. We are also grateful that two esteemed colleagues agreed to write the preface and the postscript for this book.

Diversity in writing styles is reflected in each chapter, as the book never required uniformity. We as editors find it colourful and enriching. It was also inevitable to have some overlapping between chapters, as the general topic and the main goals are mutual.

Although many topics are covered in this book, some are missing. We are aware that the themes of interconnectedness of psychology and human rights are by no means exhausted. We encourage readers and colleagues to broaden the subject, expand the content and contribute to human rights and psychology.

The editors of this book want to acknowledge the authors' contribution, the participants of the expert meeting in October 2016 in Venice as well as the staff and teachers of the EIUC and the FRA who supported it, the colleagues of the EFPA Executive Council and Boards; the formal and informal reviewers of the concept of the book and of the various chapters; and Routledge.

Most importantly, we acknowledge all those who are struggling for human rights and the many who are victims of human rights violations. We are aware that on a global level many people and organisations are committed to the protection of human rights and support for

people whose rights are violated even in situations where they themselves may be at risk. We hope that this book will be a contribution to the struggle for human rights and the prevention of human rights violations in the future. In the book, you can also read about how people can be extraordinarily resilient even under terrible conditions.

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Reference

Sen, A. (2005). Human rights and capabilities. *Journal of Human Development*, 6(2), 151–166.