

THE ARTICLES

The first article, by **Kiser Barnes**, was presented at the “First International Conference On Human Rights” in Brazil. Exploring the applicability of the International Bill of Rights in light of universality and multiculturalism, he presents a framework for human rights that is based on the all-encompassing principle of the essential oneness of humankind as expressed in the Bahá’í Writings. He also addresses the role of all principles in defining the laws that govern the field of human rights, including those derived from the core of religious teachings and the unification of humankind as the matrix for the universal enjoyment of human rights in a multicultural world.

Greg Duly looks at the rights and responsibilities of children within the Bahá’í community in light of the Bahá’í teachings, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Children. Viewing rights as spiritual in nature, he examines a variety of sources that support the approach of developing the latent capacities in children through participatory approaches, highlighting their role as unifiers and supporters of peace and security in the global society. He presents a number of recommendations as to how better relate to children and further facilitate their development as “a new race of men.”

Cheshmak Farhoumand-Sims discusses the dynamics of persecution for a religious minority in its land of origin. She points out the historical and ideological elements of this case and the need for the Iranian government to uphold the standards set in the Articles of the Universal Declaration, which it is a party to. She also explores some Christian and Islamic notions of human rights and their relationship to the current human rights regime. Finally, she stresses the need for the UN to increase its efforts in the area of human rights education aimed at all strata of human society, as a primary means of enforcing human rights standards.

Nazila Ghanea-Hercock focuses on the protection of human rights in the light of infringements within the domestic sphere of sovereign states. She outlines three types of challenge resulting from the interactions between the international and the national levels. Whilst the sovereign state system is regarded as being indispensable to the present operation of human rights, it becomes clear that it is also the prime barrier to the wider success of the human rights project. Expanding on a Bahá’í understanding of the relationship between rights and both internal and external sovereignty, she points out the need to explore the intricacies of a mechanism that

will help increase state accountability and responsibility to make rights an essential aspect of life for all people.

Next, **Graham Hassall** examines the short and fruitful history of the Bahá'í International Community and its contributions to the emergence of rights to human and social development. He characterizes these contributions since 1948 as principled, systematic and sustained. Expanding on the above, he investigates the conceptions in various statements by the Bahá'í International Community, in particular "The Prosperity of Humankind", which point to the specific observations, recommendations and contributions of this body to the United Nations and the international community for the advancement of human rights.

Drawing upon practical experience gained through involvement in a poverty reduction program in Africa, **Darren Hedley** illustrates some of the relationships between rights and responsibilities of participants in development work in peri-urban Zambia. He endorses capacity building as the essence of policies and programs aimed at true development and observes some of the challenges and benefits of such approach through overcoming cultural divides in engaging local residents as active participants of the project. By sharing his experiences, he guides the reader to understanding the importance of eradicating the extremes of wealth and poverty as an integral part of ending human rights violations.

Chichi Layor looks at the vital need to strengthen the relationship between promotion and protection of human rights and the institution of family, as "the natural and fundamental group unit of society." She illustrates the function of those rights pertaining to this institution within the current framework of human rights. Exploring the reasons for her chosen topic, she presents specific Bahá'í principles that support the need for family rights, primarily those of unity and equality and their implications in relation to familial roles. Furthermore, the author analyzes the contributions of family rights to the enhancement of a culture of rights within the society at large.

Michael L. Penn examines the international effort to eradicate violence against women and girls from a historical perspective and suggests that while significant advancements have been made in articulating laws that are essential to the protection of women and girls against human rights abuses, far too little attention has thus far been given to the inner psychological and spiritual dimensions of the problem. This paper thus reviews some of the most important legal and human rights developments that have taken place over the course of the last century, while at the same time examines the need for educational processes that address the inner domain of human moral, psychological and spiritual development if the campaign to eradicate gender-based violence is to be met with success.

Martha L. Schweitz draws on her observations of the cultural differences between Japan and the United States to reflect on the relationship between rights and responsibilities in light of societal norms. Furthermore, she juxtaposes the liberal philosophy of rights with principles in the Bahá'í Writings and enriches the debate on promoting the good of both the individual and society, by suggesting the need to examine entrenched assumptions and to transcend contemporary understandings of self. She affirms the Bahá'í commitment to human rights as spiritual in nature and as essential for the advancement of civilization, through a blending of Eastern and Western ideals that are often viewed as incompatible.

The right to education is an essential element of universal human rights. Over the past century and half a main feature of the persecution of the Bahá'í community in Iran has involved the removal of their right to education. The shut down of various Bahá'í schools throughout the country, or the expulsion and exclusion of Bahá'í students from public schools, colleges and universities in Iran, most recently since the 1979 revolution, has presented grave difficulties for the Baha'is in Iran. In a brief article, **Tahirih Tahriha-Danesh** presents a few observations about the importance of education in both Islamic and Bahá'í Sacred scriptures and the need for the international community to put an end to the Islamic Republic's goal to block the progress of the Baha'is in Iran by any means, including the basic right to education.