



# Human Rights Now

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Abe Kohki, Director

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## Human Rights Now

*~Towards a world where human rights are protected for all~*

### About Us

Human Rights Now (HRN) is an international human rights NGO based in Tokyo, Japan with UN special consultative status. HRN was established in 2006 by a group of human rights professionals, such as lawyers, scholars, and journalists, as the first international human rights NGO based in Japan. With over 700 members comprised of various human rights specialists, HRN works for the promotion and protection of human rights for people in the world, with a special focus on Asia.

In 2012, HRN obtained UN special consultative status, and we have actively engaged in the UN decision-making process to protect and promote human rights.

### Our Mission

1. Contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide, with a special focus on Asian countries;
2. Contribute to the development of international human rights standards and norms through the UN and other international institutions;
3. Promote the incorporation of international human rights standards within the domestic framework of Japan.

In particular, we seek to make a concerted effort to improve the human rights situation in the Asian region. We spare no effort in making a positive difference by highlighting the human

rights situation and enabling victims of rights violations to have their voices heard, and we welcome close cooperation with international and grassroots NGOs around the world to achieve these goals.

## **Where We Work**

Currently, HRN has a presence in Tokyo, Osaka, New York and Geneva, and our activities extend throughout Asia and to conflict areas of the Middle-East.

## **Our Approach**

As an Asian-based international human rights NGO, HRN is able to add unique and independent value to the decision making processes of UN human rights mechanisms, where human rights remain politicized and voices on the ground are not sufficiently heard. HRN tries to change the debate over human rights in the world, where double standards remain embedded, and the voices of the most vulnerable people are ignored, while strong states and actors enjoy immunity over serious human rights violations. HRN believes that it is important to address the root causes of current international disputes and grave human rights violations, such as structural injustices and discrimination within the current international order.

Human Rights Now cooperates with numerous actors from around the world, including the Global South, aiming to facilitate a fair decision-making process within the international community that reflects the opinions of all stakeholders, especially those who are most vulnerable and suffering.

## **Our Methodology**

Our approach to human rights work consists primarily of conducting 1) fact-finding investigations, 2) advocacy and campaigns, and 3) empowerment through education.

### **1. Fact-Finding**

HRN conducts fact-finding missions in places where people suffer from serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law. Such missions include conducting field investigations, publicizing reports and calling for international attention to an issue.

Past investigations includes extrajudicial killings in the Philippines (2007), human rights violations in the course of crackdowns against peaceful demonstrations in Myanmar (Burma, 2008), the human rights situation in occupied Palestine territory (2009), hazardous child labour in Northeast India (2010), the human rights situation of people affected by the Great Earthquake in Japan (2011, 2012), land grabbing and extrajudicial killing in Cambodia (2012), the right to health of children affected by the conflict in Iraq (2013), and business and human rights in Bangladesh and China.

## **2. Advocacy**

As an international human rights NGO with special consultative status at the UN, HRN has made various advocacy efforts toward the decision-making processes of UN human rights bodies and other international mechanisms to protect and promote human rights around the world.

HRN has urged UN bodies, such as the UN Human Rights Council and General Assembly, to take appropriate measures to stop ongoing serious human rights violations and to bring justice to those responsible for such serious violations.

HRN also conducts awareness-raising campaigns to mobilize public attention to address serious human rights situations around the world. HRN also advocates to relevant stakeholders of human rights situations, including state concerns as well as multinational corporations.

HRN's past campaign and advocacy areas include the situation in Myanmar (Burma), Philippines, Cambodia, occupied Palestine territory, human rights violations in relation to the Global War on Terror (USA) and corporate social responsibility issues related to global industry. HRN also advocates to the Japanese government, Japanese aid agency and Japanese industry to improve human rights policy and behaviour in accordance with international human rights standards.

## **3. Empowerment**

HRN gives full support to grassroots efforts of civil societies based on the firm belief that such activities can make a real difference for human rights situations on the ground.

## **Issues**

HRN focuses on the following issues: armed conflicts, accountability for gross human rights violations; business and human rights; human rights defenders; economic, social and cultural rights; and the rights of women, children, ethnic minority groups and other vulnerable peoples.

### **Accountability for Gross Human Rights Violations**

HRN seeks accountability for gross violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, such as war crimes and crimes against humanity. We work to end impunity for grave violations of human rights based on the firm belief that achieving justice and accountability could prevent a recurrence of such violations and lay a foundation for long-lasting peace.

In particular, understanding that the status quo often fails to seek accountability for violations by strong states, HRN demands justice and accountability for crimes perpetrated by the strongest states. In this respect, HRN focuses on human rights violations committed in the course of the Global War on Terror and violations committed in occupied Palestinian territories.

At the same time, HRN works to end impunity and support transitional justice processes in various Asian countries.

### **Armed Conflict**

In today's world, many innocent lives are lost every year as a result of armed conflict. In response, HRN investigates and reports on the violations of international human rights and humanitarian law committed on the ground during armed conflicts, and it urges the international community to prevent further human rights violations by raising alarms and condemning them, as well as by taking steps towards justice and accountability by creating independent commissions of inquiry and bringing cases before the ICC. Moreover, HRN condemns the use of inhumane weapons and calls for their abolishment.

Further, HRN investigates and advocates against human rights violations committed by states' armies under military dictatorships and in the course of militarization.

## **Business and Human Rights**

Today, global business enterprises are causing serious human rights violations in the course of their business in developing countries, such as labour rights violations and exploitation, deprivation of land rights and indigenous people's rights, environmental contamination causing devastating impacts for people's rights to health and livelihood, and so on.

HRN calls on multinational corporations to respect human rights in the course of their business in accordance with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

In cooperation with local NGOs, HRN carries out investigations on human rights violations related to corporate activities in Asia, including Japan, China, Cambodia, and Bangladesh. We also have dialogues and consultations with the relevant business sectors in order for them to maximize their influence to respect and ensure fundamental human rights for people related to their businesses.

## **Children's Rights and Girl's Rights**

HRN conducts fact-finding investigations on human rights violations against children and girls, and it makes policy recommendations to protect their rights. The area includes the issues of trafficking, child labour, armed conflict, and violations of the right to health.

## **Human Rights Defenders and Democratic Space**

In many countries around the world, human rights defenders are subjected to threats, judicial harassment, surveillance, arbitrary detention and even attacks and killings, and those who call for democratization are oppressed. At the same time, demonstrations are severely restricted and even brutally cracked down.

HRN works on the protection of human rights defenders by awarding and highlighting their work, by documenting and investigating attacks against human rights defenders, and by raising alarms when their situations are at risk. In particular, HRN supports women human rights defenders in Asia by awarding a significant woman human rights defender every year.

HRN also calls on state actors to ensure rights to freedom of assembly and association, oppose excessive restrictions and use of force, and work to protect a democratic space for people around the world.

## **Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

HRN believes that deprivation of ESC rights is grave violation of the most fundamental human rights, and thus gives special focus to these rights.

We work on the violations of ESC rights in the name of “development” such a land grabbing and violations of indigenous rights. We also work on labour rights violations and exploitation in the course of global business.

HRN has also worked on ESR rights following the 3.11 triple disaster in Japan, with special focus on the right to health of people affected by the nuclear disaster in Fukushima.

## **Women’s Rights**

Even today, women around the world continue to be subjected to discrimination, violence and deprivations of freedoms. Simply because of their gender, women can be deprived of their security, independence and even subjected to unjust imprisonment, torture, and execution.

HRN, working together with NGOs from around the world and especially in Asia, takes actions to end domestic violence, human trafficking, honor killing of women, military rape, and any other violence against women. HRN also works on the elimination of discriminatory and unjust punishment as well as the execution of women.

## **Our Achievements**

For over nine years, we have made a difference through our tireless work in collaboration with local people. Nevertheless, our challenge to help establish a more just and fair world has yet to be accomplished. We endeavor to strengthen our capacity and influence in order to protect even more people at risk and to make concrete progress towards a better world.

## **1. Fact-Finding**

### **China ~ Business and Human Rights**

In 2014, HRN conducted an undercover investigation into the supplier factories of Fast Retailing (FR), a Japanese major apparel company renowned globally for its brand name UNIQLO. The investigation was part of a joint project with a Hong-Kong based labour NGO to examine whether the human rights of the factory workers were being protected. Together with partner NGOs, HRN published an investigative report describing the details of exploitative labour conditions in two supplier factories, as well as carried out campaigns for the protection of human rights in global supply chains and the improvement of working conditions in Asian garment factories, all of which attracted much attention. FR acknowledged several facts pointed out in our report and published an action plan to improve the situation. HRN is currently engaged in a process of dialogue with FR to help bring forth positive changes on the matter.

### **India ~ Child Labor**

In Meghalaya State, located in the northeastern part of India, it was estimated that in recent years more than 70,000 children have worked in hazardous mines annually and lost their lives after being exploited in slave-like conditions. Many of the child labourers were brought from Bangladesh and Nepal by human trafficking. In 2009, HRN and local partners from the Impulse NGO Network investigated the extremely hazardous situation of child labor in Jaintia Hills, Meghalaya, and published a report on it. We held a press conference in Delhi which attracted considerable attention from both India and the UN, and it brought positive attention to the matter. In 2014, hazardous mines in Meghalaya State were shut down and the use of child labour in mines was prohibited based on the decision of the 'Green Court' in India, a special court established in 2010 to deal with environmental cases.

### **The Philippines ~ Extrajudicial Killings**

In the 2000s, it was estimated that nearly 800 human rights activists were attacked and killed in the Philippines. At the request of a local NGO in 2007, HRN conducted a field investigation in the Philippines and concluded that the military and the police were strongly suspected of involvement in the murders through extra-judicial killings of human rights activists. Based on

the findings, HRN called on the Philippine government to take immediate measures to prevent further killings, and it called on the Japanese government, the Philippines' largest donor country, to suspend its assistance to the Philippines until the killings stop. HRN held a press conference to address the issue, which received a great response from both domestic and international communities. In cooperation with UN experts and other NGOs, HRN conducted an extensive advocacy campaign. As a result of increased international pressure, the number of murders in the country has been dramatically reduced.

## **2. Advocacy**

### **Myanmar (Burma) ~ Towards Freedom and Democratization**

Since 2007, HRN has been working in cooperation with local people to improve the human rights situation in Myanmar. We contributed to the current democratization process in Myanmar through a series of advocacy campaigns, including an international awareness raising campaign and UN-level advocacy for adopting resolutions on Myanmar, with a special focus on the UN Human Rights Council.

HRN also co-organized the International Tribunal on Crimes against Women in Burma, an event held in Tokyo in 2010 after the New York Tribunal shed light on grave human rights violations against women conducted by Myanmar's military government. Through the project, HRN made a strong appeal to the international community regarding the severity of violence against women perpetrated by the military regime.

### **Cambodia ~ Introducing Victims' Perspectives in the Special Tribunal for Cambodia**

The Khmer Rouge, a political party under Pol Pot which seized power in Cambodia in the late 1970s, committed countless grave human rights violations, including the torture and massacres of many civilians and intellectuals. When the Special Tribunal for Cambodia was established in 2006 to deal with these human right violations, HRN offered support to ensure that the tribunal would lead to a successful peace-building process within Cambodian society.

In particular, HRN contributed to the introduction of a system for victims' participation within the tribunal process. HRN published an opinion paper, "Justice for Victims", and visited Cambodia to have a dialogue with relevant actors and stakeholders. As a result, a tribunal rule



clearly established a process to allow victim participation in the proceedings. Today, many victims participate in the tribunal as a party, and they have started to break their silence by discussing their experiences openly within their communities.

### **3. Empowerment**

#### **Myanmar (Burma)**

Since 2007, HRN has supported a law school called Peace Law Academy (PLA) in Mae Sot, Thailand, near the border of Myanmar, with the aim of providing grassroots support for Myanmar youth who are striving to change their society under the legacy of the military dictatorship.

We have been empowering these youth, who are bearers of the country's future, by providing them a series of lectures and courses to teach on a wide range of topics, including international human rights standards, the international human rights framework for protecting rights on the ground, and comparative studies of various legal systems.

The school has produced three generations of graduates since 2007, with over 75 students, including ethnic minorities and women. Today, many of the graduates have returned to Myanmar and are actively working to promote human rights and democracy in the country.

Since 2014, HRN has operated a human rights education program inside Myanmar in collaboration with the Yangon Bar Association to provide human rights education to local lawyers and citizens.

#### **Northeast Asia**

HRN has provided a number of capacity-building programs to human rights defenders in Northeast Asia. HRN actively participates in a series of trainings for human rights NGOs in the region, and works to strengthen networking among human rights defenders there.

## How can you support Human Rights Now?

### Donate Now!!

Human Rights Now is a non-profit and non-governmental human rights organization trying to make a difference and create positive change in the world, working towards a more prosperous and peaceful future by promoting and protecting human rights.

HRN does not receive any government funding, so it relies on generous donations by people like you from all over the world to defend human rights and to stop human rights abuses. We would greatly appreciate it if you can make a contribution and support our work.

Please donate and make a difference. Thank you very much.

Please find details at: <http://hrn.or.jp/eng/join/>

### Bank Details

**Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ, Account No. 337-5466424, Swift code: botkjpjt,**

**Account Name, Tokutei Hieiri Katsudou Houjin, Human Rights Now**

Before your donation, please contact us; **Email [info@hrn.or.jp](mailto:info@hrn.or.jp)**

### Membership

For those particularly passionate about human rights issues, there is an opportunity to become a member of HRN. Membership allows individuals to support HRN in its mission to improve human rights around the world in a more active way, while also providing members with a number of entitlements and perks. All members will receive our newsletter (for residents in Japan), entitlement to a tax deduction in Japan, and the chance to help and participate in HRN events, while Full Time Members also receive voting rights at our general meetings to decide what human rights issues to undertake and invitations to our exclusive seminars (for residents in Japan).

Please find details at: <http://hrn.or.jp/eng/join/be-a-member/>

#### Membership Fee

Member Type	Annual Membership Fee	
Full Member	Individual Membership	\$100 or ¥10,000
	Student Membership*	\$30 or ¥3,000
	Corporate Membership	\$1,000 or ¥100,000
Supporting Member	Individual	\$50 or ¥5,000

## **Internships**

**Internship positions** at Human Rights Now (HRN) are unpaid but will provide you extensive practical experience in global human rights issues.

Internship positions are available in our Tokyo, New York, Geneva, and Yangon offices.

Research interns conduct legal research, draft statements and reports, network, and particularly in NY and Geneva have the opportunity to observe various UN conferences.

<http://hrn.or.jp/eng/join/volunteer/>

We would be happy for interested residents of any of these cities to become **volunteers at any Human Rights Now office**, helping administrative and PR work!

If you are interested in volunteering at HRN, please read the site linked below and contact us:

**Email:** [info@hrn.or.jp](mailto:info@hrn.or.jp)

**Learn more about Human Rights Now!**

**Who we are and how we are making a  
difference around the world!**

<http://hrn.or.jp/eng/>