

The Politics of Human Rights Non-Governmental Organizations in a Diverse and Changing World

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Abstract

When people hear the phrase “human rights”, they think of the highest moral precepts and political ideals. And they are right to do so. They have in mind a familiar set of indispensable liberal freedoms, and sometimes more expansive principles of social protection. But they also mean something more. The phrase implies an agenda for improving the world, and bringing about a new one in which the dignity of each individual will enjoy secured international protection. It is a recognizably utopian program: for the political standards it champions and the emotional passion it inspires, this program draws on the image of a place that has not yet been called into being. It promises to penetrate the impregnability of state borders, slowly replacing them with the authority of international law. It prides itself on offering victims the world over the possibility of a better life. It pledges to do so by working in alliance with states, when possible, but naming and shaming them when they violate the most basic norms. Human rights in this sense have come to define the most elevated aspirations of both social movements and political entities – state and interstate. They evoke hope and provoke action. This paper investigates human rights-focused non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Human rights NGOs have made a substantial global contribution to the promotion and defense of international human rights since the 1940s, when the modern age of human rights began. This paper defines the terms “NGO” and “human rights NGO,” categorizes human rights NGOs into different conceptual groups, and then lists and examines characteristics that successful, productive human rights NGOs typically have. It also lists a number of codes of ethics and behavior that were established to support the efficacy, accountability, openness, and legitimacy of human rights non-governmental organizations. Numerous NGOs have embraced these rules, which have been put into effect in a number of nations. This paper makes the case that human rights defenders might gain from taking on the qualities that have been identified as beneficial for human rights NGOs and that are usually included in the codes of ethics and conduct that they emphasize.

Keywords: Human Rights, Non-Governmental Organizations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Human Rights Defenders, Code of Conduct, Ethics

Introduction

Human rights are an inescapable fact in the world. They bring together the North and the South, the left and right, church and state. Street activists look to them while armed forces adopt codes of conduct ostensibly on their basis. They are the ideology after ‘the end of ideologies’, the only set of values left now that we have arrived at ‘the end of history’. Of course, such pervasiveness comes at a price of intellectual promiscuity. Human rights are used as a symbol or synonym for liberalism, capitalism or individualism by some and for development, social justice and/or peace by others. In the South, rights are seen as primarily collective rather than individual, social and economic rather than civil, associated with equality rather than with liberty. In the North, they can reflect commitments to solidarity and social justice as well as to political freedom – but they have also been used to underpin invasion and military brutality.

Who would not agree today with Hannah Arendt’s famous dictum that there is and always has been an inalienable “right to have rights” as part of the human condition? Human rights are the *doxa* of our time, belonging among those convictions of our society that are tacitly presumed to be self-evident truths and that define the space of the conceivable and utterable. Anyone who voices doubt about human rights apparently moves beyond the accepted bounds of universal morality in a time of humanitarian and military interventions. The only issue still contested today is how human rights might be implemented on a global scale and how to reconcile, for example, sovereignty and human rights. Whether human rights in themselves represent a meaningful legal or moral category for political action in the first place appears to be beyond question.

Human rights are those rights to which all human beings, *per se*, are entitled and can lay claims upon in society. The conceptualization of the content of human rights is a development of the 20th century, which continues into the new millennium. The central theme concentrates around the provision, protection and promotion of these rights. Major players in international politics have had an impact on the process of realization of these rights. Today, human rights have become a hugely contested domain. The politics of human rights intervention globally has also re-opened many debates on the legitimacy of the pursuit of collective ideals and the limits of sovereignty in our post-globalized world today.

In the study of human rights, one encounters relevant legal acts, constitutions, statutes and international instruments, various terms and notions other than human rights. These include fundamental human rights, fundamental freedoms, civil liberties and civil rights, individual and collective human rights as well as people’s rights. Amongst these various terms, human rights seem to be the most general notion encompassing rights attributable to individuals, groups of individuals, peoples and even mankind.

The term “human rights” has become so popular that there is hardly political, moral and legal discourse without the term being mentioned. It is used in political speeches, in law, in media, in workplaces and even in market places. Individuals, groups and nations claim a variety of rights ranging from right to life, right to work and strike, right to privacy, the rights of women and children, the right of the accused, etc. All these rights have at one time or the other been asserted and denied, exercised and waived, violated and respected and above all extensively discussed, interpreted and disputed in numerous contemporary societies and within international community. Human rights are often expressed and guaranteed by law, in the forms of treaties, customary international law, general principles and other sources of international law. International human

rights law lays down obligations of governments to act in certain ways or to refrain from certain acts, in order to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals or groups. As these human rights are being promoted and protected the world over, it is quintessential to stress that they are rights inherent to all human beings, whatever their nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. They are all equally entitled to human rights without discrimination.

While almost everyone has heard of human rights, few will have reflected in depth on what human rights are, where they originate from and what they mean. Today, the idea of human rights enjoys near-universal support; yet, there is profound disagreement about what human rights actually are – their true source of origin, how to study them, and how best to address their deficits. In spite of all these contemporary conflicts, human rights offer a vision of international justice that today's idealistic millions hold dear.

The issue of the dignity of the human person was first foregrounded by ancient Stoic philosophers who argued extensively that the human person has an ontological worth which is constituted by the power of reason. In promoting this ontological worth, various legal documents have been compiled. The most universally accepted among them is the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which articulates the dignity and rights of all members of the human family. Unquestionably, in the more than seventy-five years since the United Nations ("UN") published the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the number of human rights non-governmental organizations ("human rights NGOs") has increased significantly, and these organizations are vital to the advancement and defense of human rights around the world (Gaer 1995; UNESCO 2019; Nweke 2020; Dada 2022). Nonetheless, there is debate within the human rights community over what constitutes a "human rights NGO," how to categorize them appropriately, or even if it is appropriate to refer to them as "NGOs" in the first place (Nanda 1997; Samuel 2017; Spiro 2019). In addition, stakeholders in the human rights community are unable to come to a consensus on a system for screening NGOs in order to verify their legality, even if these organizations are widely present (Charles 2017; Bade 2020; Abiodun 2021; Adebambo 2022). It is difficult for stakeholders to discern between human rights groups that should be supported and those that should be disbanded due to definitional issues and other issues. The United Nations, other international organizations, and national governments must be aware of whether organizations are legal, genuine, and deserving of recognition, approval, tax breaks, or other forms of assistance. People who want to donate to NGOs or who are the beneficiaries of their generosity must know whether NGOs are reliable. Donors need to know which NGOs to fund, and NGOs need to know with which other NGOs they might collaborate to protect human rights.

Although the goal of this paper is not to provide the much-needed cohesive framework, it does contribute to its creation by evaluating and identifying characteristics that effective human rights NGOs have in common. This paper makes the argument that stakeholders in the human rights community may evaluate human rights NGOs by figuring out whether or not they have certain traits. It provides a brief overview of the development of modern human rights NGOs, starting with anti-slavery and other social movement organizations in the eighteenth century and continuing through their involvement in the UN's founding to its current proliferation. Ten characteristics/traits of effective human rights non-governmental organizations are listed and examined in this paper. These characteristics, which overlap and are not exhaustive, relate to the

human rights NGOs: (1) mission; (2) adherence to human rights principles; (3) legality; (4) independence; (5) funding; (6) non-profit status and commitment to service; (7) transparency and accountability; (8) adaptability and responsiveness; (9) cooperative and collaborative nature; and (10) competence and reliability. This paper builds upon the attributes identified previously, and explores a selection of NGO Codes of Conduct from around the globe designed to promote NGO accountability and transparency and to help bolster NGO credibility. Though efficacy of these Codes may vary, they all contain criteria useful in assessing NGOs. This paper concludes that while a lot has changed in more than seven and a half decades since the UN and contemporary human rights NGOs were founded, there is still debate about the definition of a human rights NGO and the best way to classify them. On the other hand, all parties involved in the field of international human rights legislation concur that the purpose of human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is to defend internationally acknowledged human rights on a local, national, sub-national, regional, and worldwide scale. To overcome obstacles both internal and external, successful and effective human rights NGOs should have the fundamental qualities listed below and practice self-regulation, maybe in part by abiding by NGO Codes of Conduct. Concerted efforts of all relevant stakeholders are needed to ensure that human rights NGOs are able to fulfill their mandate to protect human rights.

Non-Governmental Organizations and Human Rights Non-Governmental Organizations

Numerous academics and professionals concur that the definition of an NGO varies depending on the situation and that it may be easier to identify what it is not than what it is (Baehr 1996; Olz 1997; Alston 2015). Moreover, there is no denying that a consensus definition of non-governmental organizations has been difficult to come by (Rudasil 2014; Charles 2017; Bade 2020; Adebambo 2022). This paper will offer the working definition of NGO for purposes of this study, rather than attempting to establish a universal definition: An NGO is an autonomous, non-governmental, goal-oriented organization that is private, independent, and not under government control.

A wide range of organizations can be included under the general term "NGO," including research centers, cooperatives, sporting groups, literary or scientific associations, credit unions, foundations, political parties or other groups, educational and training institutions, girl and boy scouts, sporting groups, service organizations, neighborhood associations, consulting firms, and trade unions and other professional associations (Mutua 1996; Bunn 2014; Nweke 2020). These organizations may have equally wide-ranging objectives, such as defending the commercial interests of their corporate members, opposing corporate conduct, supporting political candidates or policies, encouraging sports, advancing the interests of a particular industry, providing education and training, spreading news, or generally defending international human rights (Bunn 2014; Abiodun 2021).

Though scholars tend to trace the origins of modern NGOs to the late Renaissance era, pointing to private individuals who formed to oppose government policy on slavery and other social issues in the 1700s, private organizations such as religious orders, charities, foundations, and educational groups have existed for centuries (Keeney 2012; Dada 2022). NGOs began to influence public opinion, lobby governments, and bring about change during the 1800s (Lieber 1859; Tocqueville 1966; Skocpo 1996; Charnovitz 2016; Yaziji and Doh 2019). These "early" non-governmental organizations included the International Worker's Association (1864), the British and Foreign

Anti-Slavery Society (1839), the International Committee of the Red Cross (1863), the International Peace Bureau (1892), the Federal Council of Churches (1908), the Union of International Associations (1907), the American Jewish Committee (1906), and the French-based League for Human Rights (1898) (Iriye 2012; Hinks, et al. 2016).

NGOs survived both World Wars and are still very much in use today, seventy-five years later. It has proven to be just as difficult, if not more so, to define, classify, or label "human rights NGOs" than it was to define "NGO." An NGO dedicated to human rights must, at the very least, meet the basic criteria of being an organization that is goal-oriented, non-profit, private, autonomous, and neither created or governed by a government. However, a human rights NGO goes one step further and stipulates that the organization's main goal must be to advance and defend universally acknowledged human rights. Human rights NGOs must be guided by international human rights law norms as incorporated into the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, other international human rights law instruments, and the customary international law of human rights (Council of Europe 1986; Bernhardt 1986; Spiro 2019). The United Nations and other bodies have promulgated international instruments to protect the integrity of NGOs, including human rights NGOs (Spiro 2019; Abiodun 2021).

The term "international human rights norm" refers to a broad range of rights that are covered by other areas of both domestic and international law, such as the law of the sea, international criminal law, international humanitarian law, international environmental law, labor law, law pertaining to refugees and asylum seekers, and constitutional law. In one way or another, all these legal fields aim to uphold international human rights (such as the rights of accused criminals and their families, the rights to due process, the rights of indigenous peoples to their natural resources, the rights of individuals to food obtained through ocean fishing, and the labor rights of refugees or asylees). The definition of "human rights NGO" is broad and includes NGOs that seek to protect human dignity rights in all these boundless substantive areas of law.

There is no consensus on a coherent typology despite several attempts to classify human rights NGOs in a systematic manner (Spiro 2019; Nweke 2020). According to McDougall (2012) and (2014), human rights are and ought to be "on the frontline of the human rights struggle, fighting to promote human rights" in every situation. The United Nations Office of the President of the Millennium Assembly (2011), Welch, Jr. (2010), Korey (2011), and other human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) made a substantial contribution to the negotiation of the UN Charter and to almost all, if not all, of the major international human rights law instruments from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to date. The legal foundations for the connection between the UN and NGOs, the relationship's historical background, the obligations of intergovernmental organizations to consult with NGOs, and the peculiarities of an umbrella organization collaborating with UN-affiliated NGOs are all covered in this portion of the article. The "indispensable" contributions that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have made to the preservation of human rights inside the UN system have been praised by recent Secretaries General of the UN, such as Ban Ki-Moon, Kofi Annan, and Boutros Boutros-Ghali (U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan 2005; Bade 2020; Abiodun 2021).

The legal foundations for the connection via which NGOs are granted UN "consultative status" and legally offer technical analysis and knowledge to various UN entities are provided by Article

71 of the UN Charter and a number of Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) decisions (Bloem, et al. 2019). Article 71 allows for consultation arrangements between national and international organizations, with a focus on multinational groupings (U.N. Economic and Social Council Resolution 1996). This was the first time the word "non-governmental organization" was included in a UN text. When it comes to subjects under its purview, the Economic and Social Council may set up appropriate mechanisms for consultation with non-governmental groups. Such arrangements may be made with international organizations and, where appropriate, with national organizations after consultation with the Member of the United Nations concerned.

ECOSOC granted NGOs consultative status as early as 1948, and it spelled out the first set of rules governing this relationship in resolution 288 B(X) of 1950 (U.N. Economic and Social Council Resolution 1996; Dada 2022). The General Assembly (GA) reviewed these rules, and through GA resolution 1296 of 1968, the GA established criteria for NGO participation and provided for the UN to appoint NGO liaison officers (Dada 2022).

In the 1950s to 1990s, national, sub-regional, regional, and international human rights NGOs multiplied and made important contributions to UN activity; as a result, the UN explicitly asked these organizations to join. After reviewing the relationship between NGOs for several years, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) adopted resolution 1996/31 in 1996 to update the relationship. This resolution allowed national and regional NGOs to be accredited provided that "their aims and purposes are in conformity with the spirit, purposes and principles of the UN Charter" (U.N. Economic and Social Council Resolution 1996). The Human Rights Council, which only started operations in 2006, is one of the organizations with which NGOs are now affiliated. This resolution, which defines NGO as "any international organization which is not established by a governmental entity or intergovernmental agreement," oversees these relationships (Nweke 2020). NGOs advise the UN informally, at public sessions, during international conferences and their preparatory meetings, and through their applications for NGO accreditation, which are examined by the ECOSOC Committee on NGOs (Adebambo 2022). NGOs can provide perspectives on any important issue pertaining to UN activities, even those that directly jeopardize peace and security. Even if an NGO does not have ECOSOC consultative status, the NGO may still consult with the UN on an ad hoc basis or through procedures established by various UN affiliated bodies (Charles 2017; Abiodun 2021).

NGOs are granted additional authority to engage in UN affairs by the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Program of Action, which states that NGOs "should be free to carry out their human rights activities, without interference, within the framework of national law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights." "States and international organizations, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations, to create favorable conditions at the national, regional, and international levels to ensure the full and effective enjoyment of human rights" was one of the calls made in the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, which confirmed that "the promotion and protection of human rights" is "a matter of priority for the international community." The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action of 1993 acknowledged non-governmental organizations' "important role in the promotion of all human rights... at national, regional and international levels... and to the... protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms."

The Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO), a leading NGO membership organization connected to the UN since the 1940s, has acknowledged that there have been three distinct "generations" in the history of the UN-NGOs relationship (Bloem et al. 2019; Hill 2019). In the first generation, which spanned 1945 to the end of the Cold War, official ties were primarily allowed by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) with a small number of international NGOs (Hill 2019). A wave of national NGOs arose in the second generation, and the UN changed its consultation procedure to allow them to obtain accreditation (Hill 2019; Dada 2022). In the third generation, accredited international and national NGOs, both individually and in concert with each other, were able to contribute even more to the work of the UN (Hill 2019).

Collaboration between the UN and NGOs is coordinated by the NGO Branch of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) through a network known as the "United Nations NGO Informal Regional Network" (UN-NGO-IRENE) (Adebambo 2022). The UN-NGO-IRENE network serves as a conduit between the UN headquarters in New York, national UN organizations, and non-UN entities such as educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, commercial groups, and charitable foundations (Adebambo 2022). The UN-NGO-IRENE Best Practices Network, an interactive online platform that allows NGOs to exchange and discuss best practices, is just one of the numerous ways that the UN has made itself more accessible to NGOs today (U.N. Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2019; Adebambo 2022). The United Nations, other inter-governmental bodies, and national governments facilitate NGO participation in those bodies' deliberations, negotiations, and decision-making. An emerging body of literature debates whether governments, inter-governmental organizations, and national governments have a duty to consult with NGOs, or whether these consultations are only permissive (Charnovitz 2016: 344; Dada 2022; Adebambo 2022).

The two principal traditional sources of international law – treaties and customary international law – assist in the resolution of this question. No treaty specifically addresses the issue of whether the duty to consult is a rule of international law (Charnovitz 2016: 368; Adebambo 2022). Thus, we turn to the next source, customary international law, for which proof would need to be adduced in the form of state practice and *opinio juris*. These two elements exist, proving that the duty to consult is a binding norm of customary international law.

The state practice prong can be readily met. Even in organizations that previously "seemed to be off-limits for NGOs," like the UN Security Council, Charnovitz observes that "consulting with NGOs is widespread and continues to expand" (Charnovitz 2016). Many UN entities, such as the UN treaty bodies, the UN Forum on Forests, the Food and Agricultural Organization, the World Health Organization, the International Labor Organization, ECOSOC, and the Human Rights Council, often meet with non-governmental organizations (Dada 2022).

Treaty language that mandates NGO consultation, such as clauses stating that NGOs "shall be admitted," which is mandatory language and not permissive, supports the state practice prong of the duty to consult (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) 1973; Abiodun 2021). In addition, the UN General Assembly issued a Declaration in 1999 stating that "everyone has the right to communicate with non-governmental or intergovernmental organizations at the national and international levels, both individually and in association with others" (Adebambo 2022). According to Adebambo (2022), the *opinio juris* prong

has also been met. A right to consult has been endorsed by a large number of legal experts and practitioners (de Chazournes and Sands 1999; Willetts 2010: 191-212; Charnovitz 2016; Abiodun 2021; Dada 2022).

A thorough illustration of the vast array of human rights NGO types and the diverse range of activities they do would take up far more space than this article allows. As a result, this portion of the study will only identify and analyze a very random cross-section or sampling of the activities carried out by a number of local and international human rights NGOs. Human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in the UN system are highlighted. These include NGOs attending UN conferences, NGOs filing "shadow reports" and giving oral presentations to UN treaty bodies concerning human rights violations in various nations, NGOs functioning as human rights "major groups" in the UN Forum on Forests, and NGOs taking part in global complaint mechanisms (Adebambo 2022). Also discussed are academic institutions engaging in human rights promotion and protection, and human rights NGOs operating outside the UN and intergovernmental human rights systems.

Since the 1945 San Francisco conference in which NGOs played a major role in influencing world powers in shaping the United Nations, NGOs have continued to play a major role in UN conferences, and have made substantial contributions to the work of the UN in many areas, including development, peace, nutrition, health, rights of women and children, international crimes, racism and race discrimination, global finance, and human settlements – all of which directly or indirectly concern international human rights issues (Dada 2022).

States parties to international human rights law treaties are obligated by law to report regularly on their compliance—or lack thereof—with the human rights obligations enshrined in the treaties (Dada 2022). States report to UN "treaty bodies," which are teams of impartial UN experts that examine the reports and offer "concluding observations" about the states' compliance or noncompliance (Adebambo 2022). Human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been granted permission to engage in this process through express treaty language or customs of treaty bodies. Some of these procedures include submitting "shadow reports" that serve as a counter to and "alternative to" the reports of states, and subsequently visiting the United Nations in Geneva or New York and orally presenting the reports to the UN treaty bodies (Adebambo 2022). Human rights NGO shadow reports have positively impacted the work of the treaty bodies, whose members have, for example, referred to shadow reports when posing questions to or raising issues with government representatives who appear for treaty body hearings. Sometimes treaty body members raise these issues during the formal, on-the-record hearings, and other times they may raise the issues informally with government representatives outside of meetings. At times, the treaty bodies incorporate into their concluding observations recommendations raised by NGOs in the NGO shadow reports. NGOs are a valuable resource for information for UN treaty bodies (Moralez 2010: 175, 180-181; Dada 2022: 148-151).

Human rights non-governmental organizations can help nations comply with treaties by pushing them to involve their citizens in the process. Human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have the ability to push states to disseminate copies of pertinent human rights treaties, draft government periodic reports, hold public consultative sessions, allow feedback from NGOs and other sources, finance NGO attendance at treaty body hearings in Geneva or New York, and widely disseminate any treaty body's concluding observations. NGOs can also push for nations to

turn in past-due periodic reports and to remove any objections they may have about treaties. NGOs can also implore nations to persuade other states to follow treaty provisions and other regulations in a similar manner.

One of the several UN organizations contacting NGOs and other non-state actors for participatory advice and engagement is the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) (Nweke 2020). The UNFF is tasked with preserving the world's finite forests from both an ecological and human rights standpoint. One important aspect of the UNFF's activity is the participation of a variety of forest-related stakeholders, known as "major groups," in its procedures (Charles 2017). NGOs are among the nine main organizations that are urged to actively engage in almost every facet of UNFF operations (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019; United Nations Forum on Forests, 2019). The major groups are invited to full-day multi-stakeholder dialogues as part of UNFF regular sessions, are entitled to submit statements for the record, and can intervene orally at UNFF meetings.

Human rights fall within the competency of the UNFF as governmental and non-state actor policies and practices regarding forests may threaten economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights of poor and marginalized indigenous forest-dependent peoples (Forest Peoples Programme 2017; Then 2019). The UNFF is charged with ascertaining how climate change and other forces deprive peoples of their human rights. Just like NGO stakeholders in cases involving human rights violations related to natural resources (such as conflict diamonds or conflict timber), NGO stakeholders working on forest issues play a vital role in identifying those human rights violations, violators, and remedies (Wallis 2015; Blundell 2015; Seymour 2018).

International human rights law treaties that permit individuals or states to file complaints include: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the Convention Against Torture; the Women's Convention, the Race Convention; the European Convention on Human Rights; the American Convention on Human Rights (Pact of San Jose); and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Dada 2022). Essentially three types of complaints have been used in the context of human rights treaties: (1) inter-state complaints, (2) individual complaints against a state, and (3) inquiries (Dada 2022). Generally, NGOs may file on behalf of themselves as aggrieved parties, or on behalf of individual or group victims. Furthermore, human rights NGOs may serve as legal advisors, experts, or *amicus curiae* in these cases.

Human rights research, teaching, and service are being more and more integrated into the mission statements of academic institutions, and centers and programs dedicated to these objectives are being established (Hoffman 1984; Steiner 2012; Hurwitz 2014; Carrillo 2014). Indiana University School of Law – Indianapolis, Harvard Law School, Columbia Law School, DePaul College of Law, University of Buffalo School of Law, University of New South Wales, the University of Hong Kong (HKU) Faculty of Law, and other law schools in the United States and other nations are among those that have established human rights programs or clinics with these goals (Ezer and Ross 2016; Nweke 2020).

Countless local human rights non-governmental organizations throughout several nations do not have any affiliation or intention to work with the United Nations or any other intergovernmental organization. The local concerns clearly come under the conventional and customary international human rights law, although those NGOs may or may not refer to them using terms like "rights," "human rights," or "international human rights law." These organizations operate domestically

while participating in worldwide human rights initiatives. The Indianapolis, Indiana, U.S.A. - based Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV) is an example of a human rights NGO that concentrates on domestic issues. The ICADV has the following mission statement: ICADV is dedicated to ending domestic violence by raising public awareness and educating the public, fighting for systemic and societal change, influencing public policy and resource allocation, educating and empowering coalition members, and promoting the availability of high-quality, all-encompassing services (Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence 2019). The ICADV works to protect domestic violence victims' internationally recognized human rights, such as the right to bodily and mental integrity, the right to health and the right to security. However, it tends to work on these issues through a domestic U.S. and Indiana lens, by referring to local criminal law or local social services, rather than by referring to international human rights law even though the United States is bound to comply with the ICCPR and other international human rights law instruments and norms.

Domestic violence implicates not only domestic law, but also it implicates the internationally recognized rights to life, liberty, security, integrity, health, and a wide range of other international law protections. The nature of a group as a human rights NGO is not negated simply because that group may not adopt the moniker "human rights NGO" or may not use "international human rights law language". Local private social service agencies and other similar groups are "human rights NGOs" whether or not they identify themselves as such (Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence 2019).

Ten Fundamental Characteristics of Successful Human Rights NGOs

There are many more fundamental characteristics that successful human rights NGOs possess than just the ten (10) that are enumerated and examined here. Nonetheless, the characteristics mentioned and looked at here are particularly important for human rights NGOs that aim to defend human rights in the field(s) that they have chosen to operate in. This is not to suggest that all groups with these characteristics will succeed, nor that all successful groups will fully integrate all of these fundamental characteristics. This paper claims that an NGO's chances of success are increased if it integrates these fundamental characteristics into its structure and operations. These characteristics, which overlap and are not exhaustive, relate to the human rights NGO's: (1) mission; (2) adherence to human rights principles; (3) legality; (4) independence; (5) funding; (6) nonprofit status and commitment to service; (7) transparency and accountability; (8) adaptability and responsiveness; (9) cooperative and collaborative nature; and (10) competence, reliability and credibility.

Human Rights NGOs Must Have a Clear Mission to Promote and Protect Human Rights, and Be Result-Oriented

The goal of effective human rights NGOs is to advance and defend a broad spectrum of rights across several important domains. In its broadest sense, the term "human rights" refers to the freedoms and rights that are necessary for people to live fully. These rights include those listed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, other international human rights law documents, and customary international human rights law. They also encompass economic, social, cultural, civil, political, and third generational rights.

As an "obligation of result," an NGO's duty to uphold human rights must be fulfilled for it to achieve its objectives. Unlike an "obligation of conduct," which imposes a responsibility "to take steps" or "to attempt" or "to try" to preserve human rights, this obligation is different in that compliance is achieved only when the conduct is conducted. Merely taking action or attempting will not satisfy a result-related responsibility.

All human rights NGOs advocate on behalf of human rights. They all endeavor to convince some actor – a local or national government, an intergovernmental organization like the UN or another non-state actor – to take some action or refrain from some action to protect the human rights of the NGO's constituency, those whose human rights the NGO seeks to protect. The NGO could be committed to advocating on behalf of prisoners of war, submitting reports to UN human rights treaty bodies, proposing plans to promote development in countries lacking food or health care, raising money for humanitarian aid, combating torture, providing adequate housing, or pursuing many other activities that would further human rights protection internationally or domestically.

The goals of a human rights NGO need to be made very clear. They have to provide advice to the staff of the NGO, to victims who are looking for help, to donors who want to know how much they are giving, to other NGOs looking to collaborate, and to governments that oversee or license NGOs. The goals shouldn't be too vague to be unachievable, like trying to end all human rights abuses in a certain nation—that might not be a really realistic aim. Furthermore, as human rights overlap, are tied to one another, and do not exist in a vacuum, the objectives cannot be unduly limited (Adebambo 2022). Human rights NGOs that skip from project type to project type may be unfocused, and may fail to acquire needed expertise in a particular substantive area.

NGOs promoting human rights must be "clean hands." They ought to be law-abiding, dedicated to upholding international human rights standards in both their internal and exterior operations, as well as to guarding against transgressions of such legislation. That is, human rights NGOs have a duty to uphold human rights values, as stated in further detail in the paragraph that follows.

Human Rights NGOs Must Adhere to Human Rights Principles

Human rights concepts included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, other human rights documents, and customary international human rights legislation must serve as the foundation for and guide human rights non-governmental organizations. An NGO might lose credibility, become ineffectual, and appear hypocritical if it violates human rights standards. Its actions run the danger of damaging its own and human rights NGOs' reputations, and they make it less likely that they will receive funding and be able to fulfill their purpose of defending human rights.

To become affiliated with NGO networks, umbrella groups, and caucuses, NGOs must not only state that they abide by human rights norms in their structure and internal operations as well as externally in their human rights programs and projects, but also they must actually abide by human rights norms. To become accredited by inter-governmental organizations, NGOs must pledge to comply with UDHR rights (Dada 2022). Non-compliant NGOs can have their accreditation terminated.

NGOs promise to uphold democracy and the right to representation for all people. NGOs must abide by the UDHR's prohibition on discrimination while recruiting, discharging, and providing assistance to victims. When social, cultural, or religious barriers—or divisions along gender or class lines—would typically prevent people from various groups from interacting, this can be difficult. For instance, mixed-membership NGOs may be challenging to establish and run in

communities where conflict stems from tribal or ethnic divides due to lingering concerns about bias, mistrust, and suspicion.

Human Rights NGOs Must Be Legally Organized & Must Comply With Law

Human rights non-governmental organizations are required to abide by the laws of the countries in which they operate, the norms of their place of incorporation, and international law, which includes international human rights law. Terrorist organizations such as al Qaeda may not be eligible to be classified as NGOs because of their unlawful status or actions that violate national and international laws. Gangs, triads, and the mafia could also be excluded. Anarchists may be disqualified for their actions, such as using violence to protest World Trade Organization meetings or the yearly World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Guerrilla or rebel groups might not be accepted since they might not have been incorporated lawfully or might participate in illegal activity.

NGOs must register as non-profit organizations in several countries. NGOs find it easy to register in some nations when the process is rather straightforward. Significant obstacles are often placed in the way of NGO registration by the governments of other nations (Goitom 2019; Nweke 2020). NGOs may operate covertly and without registration in nations where they encounter security issues and other challenges. This may make those organizations unlawful under their country's laws, which would make it extremely difficult for them to accomplish their goals since, for instance, they couldn't openly solicit donations or find new members. Their ability may be significantly reduced, which raises the question of whether having a human rights organization that is badly handicapped is preferable to having none at all. NGOs should not accept contributions illegally or accept contributions from donors who acquired the funds illegally.

Human Rights NGOs Must Be Independent and Non-Partisan

Human rights NGOs must be accountable to their people, the victims whom they are tasked with protecting; they cannot afford to serve more than one master. Similar to administrators of for-profit companies, non-profit administrators handle a wide range of tasks, and in order to fulfill their mandates, they need to be strong and autonomous. NGO administrators create the organization's policies and plans, manage its finances, people, and working conditions, carry out the organization's objective of defending human rights, and implement programs. Successful NGOs resist undue political or other external pressures from any quarter, including other human rights NGOs, political parties, companies, and governments. A group that compromises its independence risks becoming a "fake NGO" or a "rogue NGO" (Fowler 2016).

Being independent and non-partisan does not mean that an NGO cannot collaborate with or support a political group or governmental agency, or cannot accept funds from such groups. Many NGOs assist governments (e.g., by providing humanitarian, consulting and other services to governmental agencies), and many NGOs collaborate with and brief governmental and political groups on a wide range of human rights issues (e.g., the Obama Presidential campaign pre-election received feedback from NGO members, some of whom were part of Obama Steering Committee and Policy Groups) (Massing 2018).

Governments may, however, place restrictions on NGOs that would jeopardize their independence. An NGO's independence would be jeopardized, for instance, if it took funding from the US government on the condition that it would further the US government's political agenda. Since such an NGO would be representing US foreign policy, it may be challenging for it to disagree

with or oppose expressed or implied US government viewpoints. NGOs have a duty to uphold their principles and constituents above their funders and self (McLeary 2017; Massing 2018). Human rights NGOs need to be autonomous, as previously stated. Non-governmental organizations ought to decline financial support from entities that impose restrictions on their ability to operate internally, make decisions, or carry out programs or initiatives (Forsythe 1989; Tolley 1994; Ovsiovitch 1998; Dada 2022). For instance, up until January 2019, the US government withheld funding from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating abroad that offered health-related human rights services if those organizations supported or offered abortion-related services, even if the services were rendered using the non-US organizations' own resources (Center for Reproductive Rights 2019; Adebambo 2022). If the US is the sole donor for a particular NGO or is one of only a few donors, and if the NGO heavily relies on the US for sustenance, that NGO would be wedded to the US and its policies (Skuster 2014; Seevers 2016; Stein and Shear 2019; Adebambo 2022).

Many, if not most NGOs depend to some degree on their governments for direct or indirect assistance. Some NGOs are exempt from paying taxes to their governments, which translates into a subsidy of the NGOs. NGOs in many jurisdictions must be registered with the government, and they may feel pressure to comply with government demands for fear their licenses will be revoked. NGOs that promote human rights shouldn't depend on individual donations. Human rights NGOs may attempt to exert influence over private contributors. When considering suggested donations, NGOs should find out whether there are any "strings attached" and should only accept the contributions if there aren't. An NGO working on the right to health in underdeveloped nations, for instance, could carefully consider whether a pharmaceutical firm that gives to the organization might condition such donations—either explicitly or implicitly—on the organization's advocacy stances or practices. Both actual and perceived impropriety should be avoided by the NGO.

Human Rights NGO Funding Must Be Adequate & Appropriate

An NGO cannot fulfill its mandate of protecting human rights if its funding is insufficient. The amount of funding that is adequate varies based on the NGO, its mission, and its operations. For example, a small local NGO may only need a few hundred dollars to carry out its mission each year, while a large multi-national NGO may need millions of dollars. Funding for an NGO must be both adequate and appropriate in order for the NGO to carry out its projects and programs. Determining what constitutes "adequate" or "appropriate" depends on many variables, making the topic of much debate.

Several human rights NGOs lost sizeable amounts of money in the Bernie Madoff investment fraud scandal (Tse 2019). This has begged the question of what duty an NGO has not to risk NGO assets in investments, and whether NGO fiduciary duties equal those in the for-profit world.

Human Rights NGOs Must Be Committed to Service to Others & Be Non-Profit

Human Rights NGOs goals should focus on service to others, emphasizing altruism, selflessness, and volunteerism. Those goals should not be on profit for the NGO, staff, or other stakeholders. However, that does not preclude NGOs from employing tools and mechanisms common in the profit-making business world, such as for administrative and fund-raising purposes.

Human Rights NGOs Must Be Transparent & Accountable

Human rights NGOs need to be open and responsible in order to be successful (Adebambo 2022). Since NGOs need to look honest and reliable in addition to being such, transparency would help prevent an impression of impropriety and discourage real misconduct. An NGO must disclose information about itself to all relevant parties, such as governments, the victims it is helping, donors, employees, consultants, advisors, pertinent intergovernmental organizations, other pertinent NGOs, umbrella organizations or other comparable structures in which the NGO participates, and the general public, in order to be considered credible.

Transparency and accountability do not necessarily require a human rights NGO to open all its financial, operational and other internal documents all the time. It does require an NGO to be cognizant of the sources of its funding and to inform interested stakeholders about internal decisions and records that would offer insight into agendas that an NGO might have that could conflict with the needs of the beneficiaries of the NGO's protection or conflict with donor or governmental requirements (Baker and Cooper 2018; Baker and Savage 2018).

Human Rights NGOs Must Be Adaptable and Responsive to Change

A successful NGO must be imaginative, open-minded, and incredibly adaptable. It must also be ready to change course when necessary to meet the evolving requirements and goals of governments, assistance recipients, and funders. An effective NGO must, in particular, be flexible and sensitive to shifts in the field of human rights, educational opportunities, and substantive areas of concentration. Many NGOs today rely on the internet to help them carry out their tasks. NGOs utilize the internet, even in less developed nations, to explore better ways to promote human rights, collect money, work together within NGO networks, exchange information, and send advocacy materials to the UN and other organizations. Successful NGOs gain advantage through adapting to innovation, such as the internet, e-mail, mobile or cellular telephones, mail or post, fax, easier international travel, and tele-conferencing or video-conferencing.

Social networking is a relatively recent technology breakthrough that NGOs are depending more and more on. Social networking is the process by which people and organizations join online networks to exchange ideas and discuss subjects of mutual interest. Human rights organizations naturally have an interest in upholding human rights. Among the various social networking sites are Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, and many more. By using these websites, a person may build a "user profile" that they can use to connect with other people who share their interest in human rights, and so on. Communities of linked people and organizations with common concerns for human rights are the outcome. These networks are utilized for information sharing, program promotion, funding and aid requests, and human rights cause advocacy. NGOs have found social networking sites useful, as evidenced by their recruiting staff to create and operate their networks (Derechos: Human Rights Listings 2018). Also, NGOs, human rights advocates, and victims have found such networks invaluable in instantly sharing with the world evidence of violations as they occur (Cohen 2019; Quigley 2019).

Another relatively new phenomenon is "blogging". Human rights NGO blogs are websites on which human rights NGOs or their staff regularly post news and other items related to human rights and post comments about those items. Members of the general public can access NGO blogs of interest to them and may even be able to comment on them. These blogs serve many purposes, including to share information, to stimulate discussion and to prompt action.

In order to advance human rights, several other NGOs are embracing new technologically inventive approaches and adjusting to the 21st century (NetSquared 2019; The Hub 2019; WITNESS 2019; Dada 2022). Assessing the responsiveness of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to evolving rights interpretations or definitions, opposing advocacy strategies among NGOs operating in the same field, and continuously shifting values and mores is crucial. An NGO, for instance, would generally give little to no consideration to economic rights like the right to food, health care, and housing, while supporting civil and political rights like the right to vote, free speech, and bodily integrity. That NGO may modify its strategy and incorporate economic rights, recognizing that civil, political and economic rights are inextricably intertwined, interrelated, and indivisible.

Human rights NGOs may adopt a comprehensive strategy, fighting for immediate full implementation of rights, or may adopt an incremental approach, fighting for rights in stages. For example, some groups combating sexual orientation discrimination may insist on full and immediate equality for persons of all orientations, whereas other similar groups may defer some claims such as equality of transgendered persons, until, for example, society is perceived to be more receptive (Schindler 2017; Dada 2022).

Some human rights NGO employees or potential employees might profit from NGO education options in official NGO degree programs or unofficial NGO management training courses covering subjects including starting and maintaining successful NGOs (IndiaEdu Organization 2019; Dada 2022).

Human Rights NGOs Must Be Cooperative & Collaborative

If human rights NGOs are disengaged from their constituency or operate only inside their own community, they may not be able to achieve their goals. Human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are required to engage in cooperative efforts with external parties such as governments, intergovernmental organizations, other NGOs, the media, individuals whose rights the NGOs are attempting to defend, and others.

NGOs must cooperate with governments that are charged with registering, monitoring, and granting tax and other benefits to them. Furthermore, NGOs collaborate with governments on projects and programs, and they may rely on governments for aid to help the NGOs carry out their missions. Similarly, NGOs cooperate and collaborate with inter-governmental organizations, such as the United Nations, that in essence vet the NGOs to help ensure their credibility and viability, and then may fund them on projects, many of which involve doing collaborative work with UN agencies (United Nations Development Programme 2019; Abiodun 2021; Adebambo 2022).

NGOs charged with advocating for human rights must cooperate with governments and inter-governmental institutions to gain accreditation or a similar status to be able to present advocacy papers and participate in deliberations of those organizations. For example, the United Nations Economic and Social Council accredits NGOs who can assist ECOSOC on human rights and other issues. NGOs can also gain accreditation to national and regional human rights institutions.

Through cooperation with the United Nations, NGOs have been an instrumental part of treaty negotiations, such as for the Rome Conference on the ICC (Pace 2019). NGOs play a major role in the treaty monitoring process of United Nations treaty bodies, and indeed NGOs play an official role for some of the committees (Bustelo 2010). NGOs work very closely with academic

institutions, whose professors and students lend expertise and person-power to NGO efforts, and who may hold key positions in the NGOs (Pace 2019).

Cooperation between local and foreign non-governmental organizations operating in similar geographic and substantive areas is crucial. Victims, as well as other stakeholders and communities who stand to gain from human rights responses, can profit from the synergies. Local NGOs operating on the ground could have a better understanding of the level of deprivations experienced by victims, as well as the political and legal figures and institutions that support violations. They might also have a deeper understanding of the cultural, social, and other needs of the local community. International NGOs, many of whom may not be permanently located in the local regions to be served, must work with local NGOs, adapt to the community, recognize that the needs of the local community are paramount above the needs of the international NGOs, and refrain from actions that undermine successful local efforts. International NGOs have to account to their sponsors, some of which are external parties who might not agree with local NGOs about which policies should be adopted locally or how much money should be spent locally. International NGOs should exercise caution when trying to impose their own will locally, since this might erode community spirit, alienate the victims being protected, and even erode local human rights safeguards. International NGOs should be aware that local NGOs may be in competition with them for the same donations, which might reduce the effectiveness of the local NGOs.

NGOs must cooperate with media that can help disseminate information about human rights abuses and remedies and with human rights victims whose interests, needs and sensitivities must be taken into account before NGOs seek to act on victims' behalf. NGOs will not always agree among themselves on policy, logistics, or other critical components of their work, and they may not all speak with one voice. But the more they collaborate, the better, as they work to promote and protect human rights with the best interests of the victims paramount.

Human Rights NGOs Must Be Competent, Reliable & Credible

NGOs need to be competent in order to be effective (Webster 2019). Numerous NGOs exhibit high degrees of proficiency and achievement (Pace 2019). NGOs' efforts to the advancement and defense of human rights have been praised by world leaders and a wide range of other individuals (Pace 2019).

If a human rights NGO is not competent, it does not mean that it is no longer an NGO. It simply failed in its mission to protect human rights. Some human rights NGOs may fail because they are mismanaged, suffer from bad decisions made by the board or employees, or underestimate the effort or resources needed for particular projects or programs. Some may fail because of corruption, embezzlement, or other illegal activity by employees¹⁰⁸ or outsiders (Holguin 2012). According to the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (2016), not all capable NGOs are successful. Some capable NGOs fail because governments erect impassable barriers in their way, which prevents the organizations from succeeding, especially if the organizations lack political or other clout. For instance, NGOs operating in repressive nations may face unachievably strict registration requirements, harassment from the government, retaliation, discrimination, threats, or intimidation. Some governments have the authority to impose restrictions on NGOs' access to outside funds, staff, and other forms of outside support, as well as on their freedom of association, expression, and peaceful assembly (International Center for Not-for-Profit Law 2016). International human rights law permits governments to regulate NGOs, but some governments

violate international human rights law by expressly banning NGOs or imposing regulations that de facto eliminate NGOs' ability to exist and function.

Over the years, several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and groupings of NGOs have effectively executed their tasks to safeguard human rights in various domains. NGOs skillfully advocated for the inclusion of human rights safeguards in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Charter. NGOs successfully pushed for the creation of a new UN post for a High Commissioner for Human Rights, despite opposition from several states and UN officials. NGOs played a key role in the enactment of the Landmine Treaty, the Rome Treaty, which established the International Criminal Court, the Disabilities Convention, and many other international law instruments that codify international human rights law (Lord 2014; Karzon 2016). They also successfully fought for the international instrument establishing greenhouse gas control measures at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

NGOs appeared to have been successful in their campaigns against private companies that were accused of violating human rights. Examples of these companies include Nestle, which was criticized for marketing artificial infant feeding (as opposed to breast milk) worldwide, Monsanto, which was accused of distributing genetically modified food, and Starbucks, which was forced to adopt a code of conduct for workers at its Guatemalan plantations as a result of pressure from a "campaign for justice for coffee workers" (Compa and Hinchliffe-Darricarrère 2015).

NGO Self-Regulation via Codes of Conduct and Ethics

Certain non-governmental organizations exercise self-regulation by adhering to Codes of Ethics, Codes of Conduct, or NGO Certification Schemes that have been put out by pundits, governments, intergovernmental organizations, or other NGOs (McChesny 1995; Crook 1996, Mullerat 2015). These Codes were created for a number of purposes, such as: increasing public confidence in NGOs; assisting them in becoming more effective; countering accusations that they are corrupt, self-serving, and therefore ineffective; impeding government attempts to regulate NGOs; codifying standards of behavior among NGOs; and enhancing the legitimacy of NGOs that could display the "seals of approval" that were granted in accordance with the Codes (Kooijmans 1990; Olz 1997; Adair 1999; Heap 2011; Blitt 2014; Shea and Sitar 2019).

These Codes, some of which are still in the works, mandate that NGOs strive for and follow standards that are on par with or compatible with the qualities that the authors of this paper's earlier analysis of the list of qualities for effective human rights NGOs discovered and examined (Shea and Sitar 2019). The effectiveness of these Codes is still up for debate, but a thorough investigation into that topic is outside the purview of this work. They seem to be effective overall, as shown by the following: the growth of these codes; the fact that reputable, long-standing human rights NGOs adhere to them; and the fact that governments use Code participation as a consideration when deciding which NGOs to collaborate with. Though the Codes discussed herein may not necessarily be the best-crafted, best-implemented, or most highly effective of the many Codes that exist, examining them is illustrative as all the Codes contain at least some attributes that any successful human rights NGO must possess.

Afghan NGO Code of Conduct

Aid organizations in Afghanistan created the Afghan Code of Conduct in 2010 to govern NGOs' in-country operations in response to claims that they had been misusing funding meant for post-war reconstruction (Shea and Sitar 2019). The Afghan Code of Conduct comprises 21 Articles aimed at raising NGO standards of conduct and improving the quality of NGO services, as well as promoting transparency, accountability, and good management among NGOs through "voluntary self-regulation" and assisting the public, governments, donors, and media in understanding NGOs (Shea and Sitar 2019).

The Afghan Code of Conduct has been signed by hundreds of the 2,400 national and international NGOs registered to operate in Afghanistan (Integrated Regional Information Networks 2015). These groups are meant to be people-centered, to be transparent and accountable, and to be committed to sustainable positive impact, to good internal governance, to honesty, integrity and cost effectiveness, to diversity, fairness and non-discrimination, to building Afghan capacity, and to independence.

Ghanaian NGO Standards of Excellence

Local Ghanaian NGOs, foreign NGOs operating in Ghana, and donors started formally addressing issues identified in their interactions in 2014. These issues included a lack of equity in their partnerships, worries about accountability and the credibility of NGOs as a result of reports of their "misdeeds," and a lack of stakeholder commitment to enhancing local capacity (Ghana NGO/CSO Standards Project 2017; Shea and Sitar 2019). NGOs could proudly display a "seal" or "certificate" to demonstrate their adherence to the Ghana NGO Standards of Excellence if they fulfilled a particular standard.

The Ghana NGO Standards sought to establish minimum standards, determined by the community, that enshrined "principles of good and ethical practice" (Shea and Sitar 2019). The regulatory framework for NGOs in Ghana was meant to help ensure that Ghana NGOs were accountable and transparent and were seen by the public and others to be accountable and transparent, and to enhance mutual trust and confidence among local NGOs, international NGOs, and donors.

The goal of the Standards was to show that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) could self-regulate and that they could: foster institutional and organizational learning within the organization; maintain transparency, accountability, and good governance; stay relevant and responsive to the needs of the Ghanaian people; adhere to internal policies; raise the caliber of services provided; strengthen ties and relationships between NGOs and other stakeholders, such as the government and the private sector; and promote the formation of mutually beneficial strategic partnerships (Shea and Sitar 2019).

In order to avoid government-imposed restrictions, the Standards were designed to represent common norms and guidelines for standardized conduct. These guidelines were all subject to NGO self-verification and quality control. All non-governmental organizations operating in Ghana, regardless of size or particular mandates, would be subject to the Standards.

Australian NGO Code of Conduct

For domestic and foreign human rights and development NGOs operating in Australia, the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) is responsible for enforcing a Code of Conduct (Australian Council for International Development, 2014). About eighty non-governmental organizations (NGOs) sign up for this voluntary program and commit to operating with honesty and responsibility. The Australian Code aims to raise the bar and guarantee public

trust in the organizations and their efforts to defend human rights by leveraging foreign funding to combat poverty via efficient and sustainable development. While not required to be ACFID members, NGOs are required to sign and abide by the Australian Code.

All NGOs certified by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) must abide by the Australian Code in order to submit an application for financing from the Australian government (Australian Council for International Development 2018). In areas like organizational integrity, governance, public communication, finances, personnel, and management practices, among others, the Australian Code lays out standards and requirements to which signatories are bound and against which complaints and compliance are assessed (Australian Council for International Development 2018).

Iraqi NGO Code of Conduct

NGOs based in Baghdad started the independent NGO Coordination Committee in Iraq (NCCI) in April 2003 (NGO Coordination Committee in Iraq 2019). The main goals of NCCI, which as of 2018 had grown to include a network of 200 Iraqi NGOs and 80 international NGOs, are as follows: (a) to serve as an impartial, independent, and neutral NGO forum for information sharing and coordination among NGO communities on matters pertaining to Iraq and its people, regardless of gender, politics, ethnicity, or religion; (b) to promote the respect of international humanitarian law and human rights while making sure that humanitarian needs are recognized, effectively advocated for, and met; and (c) to collaborate to enhance NGO capacity to deliver humanitarian and development assistance in Iraq. All NCCI members are bound by its Code of Conduct incorporated into the NCCI Charter (NGO Coordination Committee in Iraq 2019).

Ethiopian NGO Code of Conduct

The Ad Hoc NGO Consultation Working Group was established in 1997 by NGO umbrella groups in Ethiopia. This group drafted a Code of Conduct for NGOs in Ethiopia, which was refined during 2018 consultative meetings and approved in September 2018 at a meeting that was attended by over 200 NGO representatives (NGO Code of Conduct for NGOs in Ethiopia 2019).

The Ethiopian NGO Code of Conduct was designed to promote NGOs' voluntary self-regulation to ensure transparency and accountability, to improve the quality of NGO services "by helping NGOs to adopt higher standards of conduct and to devise efficient decision-making processes," to "improve communication between the NGO community and the various stake holders," and to improve NGO performance "by encouraging the exchange of experiences among its members and learning from proven best practices" (NGO Code of Conduct for NGOs in Ethiopia 2019).

Philippine NGO Codes of Conduct and Ethics

Established in 1998, the Philippine government assigned the Philippine Council for NGO Certification (PCNC) the following responsibilities: (a) certifying NGOs for tax benefits and other purposes; (b) overseeing NGOs using a Code of Conduct; and (c) recommending the removal of registration and tax privileges from noncompliant NGOs (Hartnell 2013; Philippine Council for NGO Certification 2019). The PCNC evaluates NGOs according to the following standards, which are also included in the PCNC Guidebook on the Fundamentals of NGO Governance: vision, mission, and goals; governance; administration; program operations (including monitoring and evaluation systems); financial management; and partnering and networking, in an effort to make sure that NGOs fulfill the minimal requirements for increased transparency and accountability (Philippine Council for NGO Certification 2019).

The PCNC writes about the significant role played by NGOs in Philippine society (Philippine Council for NGO Certification 2019): The Philippine NGO sector has developed a strong reputation for the delivery of basic services to the urban and rural poor. This has been recognized by national and local government, by other NGOs in the region, and by the donor community. In fact, NGO participation in all aspects of governance is enshrined in the Philippine Constitution. The past administrations of President Aquino and President Ramos have included NGOs in local and national consultations on important issues and have encouraged them to participate in the governance processes of the country. The newfound recognition of the role and contributions of the NGO sector in Philippine development has led to the spectacular rise in the number of NGOs in the country. Some reports state that there are as many as 60,000 non-profit, non-governmental organizations registered in the Philippines today.

The Philippine Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODENGO) is a coalition that was formed in 2009 by the ten biggest NGO networks in the Philippines (Philippine Council for NGO Certification 2019). The CODE-NGO's Covenant on Philippine Development and the Code of Conduct for Development NGOs were passed during the organization's inaugural National Congress in December 2012, which was attended by 1000 NGOs (Caucus of Development NGO Networks 2019). The Commission on Internal Reform Initiatives (CIRI) was established in 2015 by the CODE-NGO National Board to supervise the establishment of a system to ensure member accountability and transparency. CODENGO developed the implementing guidelines for its Code of Conduct for Development NGOs. Enforcement is carried out by the CIRI, the National Board, and the members themselves. It is intended to be strict and provide specific procedures for guaranteeing adherence. According to The CODE-NGO Covenant on Philippine Development 2019, members may face the following penalties if they fail to submit specific reports or show up for meetings: First Offense: Notice; Second Offense: Warning; Third Offense: Suspension of Benefits; and Fourth Offense: Ground for Termination.

South African National NGO Coalition (SANGOCO) NGO Code of Conduct

In order to organize NGO input on South African government policy and guarantee that NGOs continued to serve the people of South Africa, the South African National NGO Coalition (SANGOCO) was established in 1995 as an umbrella organization for NGOs from all across the nation (Dada 2022). According to SANGOCO, in order for NGOs to be strong, knowledgeable, and productive and to influence government policy on any matter pertaining to the advancement of human rights in South Africa, they must adhere to a set of ethical standards that SANGOCO has established (Dada 2022). The Code of Ethics focuses on six core elements: values; governance; accountability; management and human resources; finance; and resources (Dada 2022).

United States of America – InterAction Private Voluntary Organization (PVO) Standards

Enhancing the efficacy and professional capacities of its members involved in international humanitarian activities is the goal of InterAction, a membership association of U.S. NGOs (InterAction Organization 2017). As the biggest alliance of international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) with a U.S. basis that work with the world's impoverished and most vulnerable people, InterAction makes this claim. Together, the 175 members of InterAction aim to "expand opportunities and support gender equality in education, health care, agriculture, small business, and other areas" in every developing nation (InterAction Organization 2017).

All InterAction member organizations have been required to attest to their adherence to the Private Voluntary Organization (PVO) Standards since 2014 (Dada 2022). Each member additionally self-certifies every other year, recertifying their conformity with the Standards through recorded "evidence of compliance" (InterAction Organization 2017). The purpose of InterAction's PVO Standards was to uphold and enhance public confidence in the honesty, caliber, and efficacy of member organizations' initiatives. The Standards define the financial, operational, programmatic, and ethical code of conduct for InterAction and its member agencies, and encourages organizational learning, best practices, and InterAction members meeting the highest international non-profit standards (InterAction Organization 2017).

The Sphere Project – Another Collaborative Effort for a Code of Ethics

Humanitarian NGOs, such as the Red Cross and Red Crescent, initiated the Sphere Project in 1997. Its foundations are twofold: first, that every effort should be made to lessen human suffering resulting from disasters and conflicts; and second, that individuals impacted by disasters have a right to a dignified life and, consequently, a right to aid (Dada 2022). Sphere is comprised of three components: (a) a manual titled "Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response"; (b) an extensive collaborative process; and (c) a declaration of dedication to excellence and responsibility. International non-governmental organizations are united by their adoption of the Sphere and its application in national legal systems to safeguard human rights. The goals of Sphere are "to improve the quality of assistance to people affected by disaster and improve the accountability of states and humanitarian agencies to their constituents, donors and the affected populations" (The Sphere Project 2019).

World Alliance for Citizen Participation (CIVICUS) International Non-Governmental Organizations Accountability Charter

The voluntary International Non-Governmental Organizations Accountability Charter was introduced in June 2006 by the World Alliance for Citizen Participation (CIVICUS) and ten other international NGOs. According to CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation (2017), the charter "publicly outlining their collective commitments to uphold the highest standards of professional and moral conduct." CIVICUS aimed to provide a positive example for NGOs and improve their legitimacy, accountability, and openness. In addition to publishing a report detailing their degree of compliance and anticipated efforts to comply, signatories to the Charter committed to applying its requirements to all of their policies, operations, and initiatives (CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation 2017).

In order to provide a knowledge foundation and momentum for activities aimed at building civil society at the country level, the CIVICUS Civil Society Index (CSI) is a participatory needs assessment and action planning tool for global civil society (CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation 2017). The CSI looks for data regarding the condition of civil society in a nation, shares that data widely with interested parties (such as the government, donors, academics, and general public), and works to improve NGO sustainability and capacity as well as bolster the role that NGOs play in bringing about positive social change. The International Advocacy Non-Governmental Organizations (IANGO) Workshop was also introduced by CIVICUS. Through this workshop, leaders of IANGOs reflect, learn, and think strategically about topics such as accountability and transparency (CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation 2017). Other

regulatory mechanisms include the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), the NGO Sector Supplement, and the GRI Sustainability Reporting Guidelines (Dada 2022).

World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (WANGO) Code of Ethics and Conduct for NGOs

Established in 2000 by international NGOs and other stakeholders, the World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (WANGO) aims to bring together NGOs around the globe to promote peace, human rights, and global well-being. According to the World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (2019), it "helps to provide the mechanism and support needed for NGOs to connect, partner, share, inspire, and multiply their contributions to solve humanity's basic problems."

WANGO launched its Code of Ethics Project and formed a committee to create an NGO Draft Code of Conduct during its 2010 Annual Meeting in Washington, DC (World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations, 2019). The current WANGO Code of Ethics and Conduct for NGOs was finished in March 2015 after a preliminary draft was distributed in March 2014 (Dada 2022). According to the World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (2019), the WANGO Code's guiding principles are: accountability and openness; human rights and dignity; religious freedom; responsibility, service, and public-mindedness; collaboration across national boundaries; truthfulness and legality.

European Commission NGO Code of Conduct

A Draft Code of Conduct was released by the European Commission on July 22, 2005, with the intention of preventing NGOs from being used as a front for terrorism and other misbehavior. According to the Commission, the optional Code will support high standards of accountability and openness, bolster donor integrity and confidence, and aid in protecting non-governmental organizations (Adebambo 2022). Organizations that "engage in the raising and/or disbursing funds for charitable, religious, cultural, educational, social, or fraternal purposes, or for the carrying out of other types of good works" and that operate within the European Union are covered by the Code (Adebambo 2022). The Code mandated that NGOs follow the "Know your beneficiaries, donors, and associate" NGO rule, which states that NGOs "should make best endeavours to verify the identity, credentials, and good faith of their beneficiaries, donors, and associate" NGOs, among other requirements. These records included annual financial statements and annual reports. The Code also required NGOs to maintain audit trails of funds. By adhering to these guidelines, "NGOs will be able to maintain public trust, enhance the credibility of their essential work, and at the same time establish a framework for public authorities to identify and trace misuse of [NGOs] for terrorist financing and other criminal abuse," according to the European Commission (Adebambo 2022).

Conclusion

Human rights are an inescapable fact in the world. They bring together the North and the South, the left and right, church and state. Street activists look to them while armed forces adopt codes of conduct ostensibly on their basis. They are the ideology after "the end of ideologies", the only set of values left now that we have arrived at "the end of history". Of course, such pervasiveness comes at a price of intellectual promiscuity. Human rights are used as a symbol or synonym for liberalism, capitalism or individualism by some and for development, social justice and/or peace by others. In the South, rights are seen as primarily collective rather than individual, social and

economic rather than civil, associated with equality rather than with liberty. In the North, they can reflect commitments to solidarity and social justice as well as to political freedom – but they have also been used to underpin invasion and military brutality. Hannah Arendt's well-known statement that there is and has always been an unalienable "right to have rights" as a component of the human condition is widely accepted today. Human rights are the *doxa* of our time, one of those social beliefs that set the boundaries of what is imaginable and utterable and are implicitly accepted as self-evident facts.

This paper has demonstrated how human rights NGOs, which are defined as private, independent, non-profit organizations that were not established by or under the authority of a government and whose mission is to promote and protect internationally recognized human rights, have certain fundamental characteristics in common that make them more effective in achieving their goals. It is indisputable that successful, effective human rights NGOs play a crucial role in aiding in the eradication of human rights abuses throughout the world, even though seventy-five years have passed since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was proclaimed and scholars and practitioners are still at odds over how to define or classify human rights NGOs. Stakeholders at all levels depend on human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs), regardless of whether such NGOs have the essential characteristics covered in this article or follow particular NGO Codes of Conduct that themselves always include the characteristics.

Even if it is regrettable that some human rights organizations fail, the fact that a large number of them do is promising, at least in part due to these qualities. Successful human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) possess the ten qualities listed and examined below, regardless of their size: they can be small, locally focused organizations run on a shoestring, with just one volunteer, or they can be large, international organizations with multi-million dollar operating budgets and staff dispersed across the globe. For all those who support and protect human rights, these prosperous, efficient NGOs may serve as role models.

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