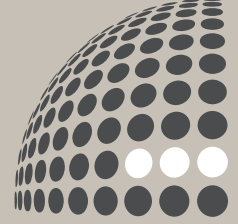


SETA Policy Debate



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Seeking Justice and Accountability: Rights Abuses and the Arab Uprisings



| joe stork | hatem ete | jan egeland |



ABSTRACT

The upheavals and transformations in the Middle East and North Africa today offer an unprecedented opportunity to press for human rights and democratization across a region of great diversity. From Tunisia to Bahrain, the popular impulse for greater freedom and democracy offers the chance to end many years of authoritarian rule and press regimes lacking legitimacy or support to reform or die. One important way to make respect for rights central to the process of political transformation is to demand that state officials are held accountable for violations such as torture, arbitrary arrest and killings against their own populations. In order to demonstrate that human rights will be central to the new political order, it will be equally important to hold new regimes across the region and opposition movements accountable for violations they may commit in the future or have already committed.

SETA's public seminar "Seeking Justice And Accountability: Rights Abuses And The Arab Uprisings" brought together Joe Stork and Jan Egeland of Human Rights Watch to discuss human rights in foreign policy making, and efforts to advocate for human rights and influence regimes like that in Syria which has turned a deaf ear to calls to end the brutal clampdown on demonstrators. In this context distinguished speakers addressed the following questions: What is the meaning of accountability for a country that violates human rights law or humanitarian law? How can we enable people to respect for human rights during the process of political transformation or in the new political order? How can Turkey play a role for the development of human rights in Middle East?



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SEEKING JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY: RIGHTS ABUSES AND THE ARAB UPRISINGS

| joe stork | hatem ete | jan egeland |

Edited by: Yavuz Güçtürk

Event Date: Tuesday, October 25, 2011

Policy Debate Series

The Policy Debate Series serves to provide a forum for fresh perspectives on controversial issues in world politics and Turkish foreign policy by bringing together experts representing diverse viewpoints and backgrounds. The series aims to bring these informed and innovative discussions to a broad audience. The presentations are transcribed from speakers' voice records and edited in a way that maintains the original content of their speech.

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SEEKING JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY: RIGHTS ABUSES AND THE ARAB UPRISINGS

Hatem Ete:

Distinguished guests,

Welcome to the public lecture of SETA. Today, we are hosting two reputable lecturers from Human Rights Watch. This month, we have organized two sessions on Arab Spring. In these sessions we dwelled on Arab Spring from political perspective. In this session, which is the third one on Arab spring, we would like to focus on the human rights aspect of the Arab spring. Human rights issue is at the center of Arab Spring. However, it is ignored in general. There is an irony here. Arab Spring emerged as a result human rights violations. On the other hand, we witnessed that people who struggled for a fairer order to question human rights violations also violated human rights both during their struggle and when they came to power. We witnessed it in the Arab Spring. The photo of Gaddafi's capture that we saw just a week ago says it all about human rights violations. Today, our reputable lecturers will talk about the ways of monitoring and reporting on human right violations as well as the responsibilities the new governments must undertake.

The program of our lecture is as follows: Our first lecturer is Joe Stork. He is the deputy director of Human Rights Watch's Middle East and North Africa division. He is an academician, journalist and activist and he has written many reports on the countries which we discussed under the framework of the Arab Spring. In general, SETA prefers short lectures which take approximately 20 minutes. But, Joe Stork's lecture will last 40 minutes. Joe Stark promised us to give an enjoyable lecture. I hope you will enjoy this 40 minute lecture. Before giving the floor to Mr. Stork let me introduce you our second lecturer from Human rights Watch, Jan England. He serves as Human Rights Watch's deputy executive director of Europe. He served for UN as well as the executive director of the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. Now I give the floor to Jan England. He will inform us about general missions of Human Rights Watch. Then, we will talk about Arab Spring from the perspective of human rights.

Jan Egeland:
With growing
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Turkey ought
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Jan Egeland:

Thank you very much indeed Mr. Hatem Ete. We are very happy to be here, at SETA. Thanks everybody for coming today. These are difficult times for Turkey. The earthquake is devastating. Our heart goes out to those directly affected to all the people of Turkey. Thank you for receiving us in these difficult times.

I just started in Human Rights Watch in August as director for Europe and Deputy Executive Director for the whole organization. Why go to Human Rights Watch? My background was as president of the Norwegian Institute for International Affairs, Norwegian SETA if you like. I had good days there. Before that I was at the United Nations and I was also deputy in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Oslo for many years. I came to Human Rights Watch because it is an effective global force for human rights. It is an organization which has grown now globally with some 300 professionals of whom most are researchers of the highest quality.

Human Rights Watch, I think, is an example of how the world is changing. There are more and more organizations involved in providing high quality research and documentation on what are the facts on the ground in countries. We will need international action to protect and promote global human rights. Turkey and my country Norway or the United States or China will all be bound by the same international human rights standards. And the Arab Spring is the latest of many springs that brought democracy to Eastern Europe, to Latin America, and increasingly now we hope to the Middle East, to Africa and to Asia. These are exciting times and we see that more and more people fight for human rights and democracy. But the people fighting from within need international support. They need international attention. And the reason we are coming here as this, with me from Norway, and our Middle East and North African Division deputy director Joe Stork from Washington, is for the purpose of discussing with the Turkish Government how we can enter into a dialogue towards jointly promoting human rights. It is not by chance that we coming to Turkey. Turkey is at the crossroads between north and south, and east and west. And Turkey is becoming increasingly important in the world. And with increasing importance comes increasing responsibility. So Turkey has a responsibility given its economic strength, its trade, and its investments around the globe. With growing responsibility Turkey ought also to put more emphasis on human rights, which the country is now trying to do in Syria and many other countries. We believe that Turkey needs the research documenting the facts about human rights abuses around the world. Every single day Human Rights Watch issues a number of press releases on what is happening in forgotten emergencies and in very well-known places where human rights are at stake. I just checked a web page, and please go to our web page which is updated every day with new material. Most recently we documented the terrible executions that happened in Sirte, Libya, where militias killed fifty-three Qaddafi supporters in a hotel. Human Rights Watch researchers discovered the bodies and uncovered the truth, and within 24 hours this was world news and governments had to respond to it. And of course the new transitional government now feels watched. And that is important because that will lead to more respect for human rights in the future in Libya. And we hope in Libya to see a movement away from tyranny to

greater protection of human rights, and avoid moving from one stage of repression to another one. We will help, like Turkey will, Libya to become a better place than it was. That is the whole point of an organization like Human Rights Watch. In the past two or three days we have issued reports and made statements on Bahrain, on Moldova, on Japan's foreign policy in Burma, on American foreign policy in central Asia, on Tunisia's new constitution and on Venezuela's harassment of the free media. So you see the scope of our work.

Human Right Watch started in New York in 1978 as Helsinki Watch. It was an organization overseeing the human rights implementation of the Helsinki Accords between east and west which was basically the beginning of the end of the Cold War. Little by little there emerged different Watch organizations: Americas Watch looking at human rights in North and South America; Africa Watch; Middle East Watch, and all came together as Human Rights Watch in 1988. Since that time the organization has opened 28 offices all over the world, and we have researchers based in America, in Europe, in Africa, in Asia, in the Middle East and on all continents. Our hope is to expand further with partners in all corners of the world. Our mission is that we need to build a world coalition to defend the defenseless and to fight for basic human rights so that all can enjoy the freedom of expression and freedom of assembly we feel we have in this room.

Joe Stork:

Thank you very much Hatem Ete and my condolences to Yılmaz Bey, who I had the pleasure of meeting a few years ago, and to all of you who've suffered this week in the East. I know it is a tough moment for the country. All I can say is we stand with you today, these days, in this time of difficulty

I want to talk a little bit today about sort of how we do our work and what we have done in terms of the Arab uprisings. I hesitate to use the term 'Arab Spring' simply because I see lots of signs of Arab winter as well as Arab summer around. So I am not quite sure where we moving in terms of the calendar of the seasons.

I have been working with Human Right Watch since 1996. Most of my work has been involved in documenting abuses in Bahrain and in Egypt as well as in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. I have done work not only regarding abuses by governments, the governments just mentioned in particular, but also by armed groups such as the Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Palestine. We also hold those groups accountable for violations of human rights, in particular violations of international humanitarian law in the armed conflict situation that prevails in that region. I also want to just call attention briefly to some of the many other issues we deal with. We have spent a good deal of time over the last several years looking at the problems of migrant workers in the region, and particularly migrant domestic workers who are mainly women, mainly coming from South Asia or East Asia, mainly working in the Persian Gulf countries but elsewhere in the region as well. The women who come as domestics are basically confined to the homes they work in. They are the most isolated and vulnerable of migrant workers.

Jan Egeland:
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Joe Stork:
Our human rights reference points are the international covenants and conventions that most governments around the world have signed on to, have treaty obligations to respect.

We do work, as Jan mentioned, in about 90 different countries, and the United States of America is one of those countries. In fact we have here, on the table, a few copies of the report we recently put out stressing the need for accountability for those US leaders who authorized torture, such as George Bush, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and their entourage.

This question of accountability goes to the heart of our work. I can say the work we do consist of essentially three phases. First of all, we investigate human rights violations. Secondly, we expose the violators. Thirdly, we press for remedy. That's where the question accountability comes in.

Now, obviously we can't cover abuses in every country, and in the countries that we do work in we can't investigate every abuse that we might conceivably look at.

So how do we prioritize what we do? One thing we look at is the seriousness of abuse. Obviously an abuse like torture is something that is extremely serious. Violations of the right to life, especially extra-judicial executions, are extremely serious. Secondly we look at the numbers of people affected. Is this particular violation affect in particular large number of people? Thirdly we ask the question: can Human Rights Watch have an impact, can we make a difference? If we speak now on this question, can we change the situation? So we sometimes take on issues that may not be the most serious in the country or may not affect in the greatest number of people but it is an area where our intervention actually can result either legislative changes or policy changes that actually ameliorate the situation for the victims.

People sometimes ask quite reasonably what do we mean by human rights. Our human rights reference points are the international covenants and conventions that most governments around the world have signed on to, have treaty obligations to respect. For instance, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention Against Torture and so forth. In Human Rights Watch we also address the questions of international humanitarian law, violations during times of armed conflict -- basically the Geneva Conventions.

Our biggest asset is our credibility. We are challenged all time --of course by the governments we are criticizing as being unfair, as being biased, as not understanding the security problems they face, and so forth. We are particularly under scrutiny in this high-profile part of the world, in the Middle East, and especially regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict holds pride of place here. . We make sure that we are able to answer all criticisms, to answer the all questions, to support the allegations that we document.

How do we do this? We do this primarily by giving voice to the victims. We interview victims, we interview witnesses to incidents, to clashes. We look for first-hand testimonies. We don't accept what we may call hear-say. Probably the most frequently asked question to Human Rights Watch researcher is, "How do you know this? How do you know what you just wrote in this report? We have to be able to say this information is from someone told us this was something he or she saw themselves. If they say they heard it from someone, we ask to get in touch with that person, can we get their phone

number, can we talk with them, tracking down to the source. We show a healthy scepticism, in other words.

For instance, back in 2002, I am taking an example now from our work on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. When Israeli forces attacked the refugee camp of Jenin, in the West Bank, we were in there within days. We interviewed over a hundred victims and witnesses. We crosschecked. We got the names of the people who have been killed. And we looked into the circumstances of each and every one of those deaths. That was the basis for the report we published. We came under very harsh criticism, accusing us of supporting terrorism for example. But in this report, just like the other reports we have done, no-one could say that our facts were wrong. I am not aware any of reports I have been involved in over these 15-16 years with Human Rights Watch, of any successful challenge, any case that we had to issue a correction. We do get it right, even if our findings are not immediately accepted by the parties involved.

Beside witnesses we also look for documents, court documents for instance, trial records, medical records from hospitals, official statements. We go to the governments, to authorities involved in a particular situation. We ask for their point of view. They don't always agree to meet with us. They don't always respond to our very detailed letters asking them about a particular situation. But we do try to get their views on what we are reporting. We think it is very important that their perspective be included.

The last point I will make here is that we go for consistency. We make sure of the same level of scrutiny goes in each and every research report that we do. We make sure that the kinds of things we advocate are consistent. A recommendation – say, to cut off arms sales – is not just consistent for Middle East governments, but is the same thing we would push for in a similar situation in Latin America, in Africa, in Asia, across the board.

Let me share with you a couple of thoughts I have about human rights, the paradoxical relationship of human rights plays in politics. On one hand human rights is non-political in the sense of being non-partisan, in the sense of being non-ideological. At another level, though, human rights is intensely political. Because, after all, human rights are essentially claims the people make on those in power and coercive institutions generally. And the articulation and the formulation of rights in the international treaties that I just mentioned is a political process. And the implementation of these treaties in terms of domestic legislation is a further product of political struggle in any country. The promotion of rights and international standards is itself a part of a process of political socialization, we can say. My view is the human rights is, at one level at least, about the possibility of practicing politics non-violently. Of conducting struggles for power and for influence non-violently. And as options for practicing oppositional politics in much of the Middle East have been closed down over the decades. We have seen so many people who had been politically active move into human rights work. At the same time, over the last year we have seen political openings with the uprisings in country after country. We have seen in some places like Tunisia, for instance, if you look at several people who were running in this Sunday's election, those people were a couple of years ago very active as human rights practitioners and human rights defenders.

Joe Stork:
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Joe Stork:
The expanding international consensus recognizing human rights standards has become a major component of the dialectics that have shaped global politics since the middle of the twentieth century.

The expanding international consensus recognizing human rights standards has become a major component of the dialectics that have shaped global politics since the middle of the twentieth century. The problem of course now at this stage, at this point in time, is that the standards have been articulated, they are reasonably well known, certainly among governments, but the question is, how to enforce them. A country by signing on to the international covenants, the Convention against Torture for instance, takes on obligations to respect those conventions. But what happens when they don't respect them? What happens when they routinely violate those conventions and standards?

It is important to recognize that these conventions, these treaties, were not created by Human Rights Watch or Amnesty International. They were created by governments. They were all created by statesmen, and by military leaders in the case of humanitarian law, the Geneva Conventions. They came together in international fora and produced these treaties. Groups like Human Rights Watch over the past decade played a role in pushing governments to implement and respect these standards. We played a big role for instance in the establishment of the convention to ban anti-personnel landmines. That was an effort that we were very much part of it. I mentioned the work we do around the issue of migrant domestic workers. Recently there was a convention created in Geneva, under the auspices of the International Labour Organization for protection of migrant domestic workers. Again, we played a big role in making that happen.

The remedy for the absence of enforcement, it seems to us, is precisely in this area of accountability. By accountability I mean the obligation of a government, of a political authority, when there is prima facie evidence of serious violations of human rights law, or humanitarian law to undertake investigations, where warranted to carry out prosecutions, and to impose disciplinary measures or punishments of those involved, often involving prison sentences that are commensurate with the seriousness of offence.

Now we now that in many countries including the United States, there is a lapse between what is required and what is done. What we have seen I think in the last decades are some important developments in terms of increasing the likelihood of some measure of international accountability -- I can mention the creation of the International Criminal Court, for instance.

Now Turkey I understand has signed Rome Treaty creating the ICC, but actually has not invested efforts in creating the domestic legislation that would put the treaty into effect. These are the kinds of steps that we encourage Turkey to do, as well as other governments around the world that have not yet done so. We have seen recently the useful role that the ICC can play in terms of referral of leaders of former Libyan government to ICC jurisdiction. There is also the phenomenon of universal jurisdiction, so that for very serious offenses like torture, like war crimes, any state that is party to the Convention against Torture, or the Geneva Conventions, can act. This was the basis for instance when Augusto Pinochet, the former dictator of Chile, was arrested in London back in 1998 and eventually returned to Chile for trial.

We saw another example recently in the aftermath of the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza in December 2008 – January 2009, with the appointment of the UN investigation head-

ed by Richard Goldstone, which itself became a kind of markers for international justice efforts. For political reasons that I don't have time to go into here, the findings of the Goldstone report, the recommendations of that report, certainly not been accepted by the main parties to the conflict -- the Israeli government on one hand and Hamas authorities on the other hand. For political reasons also various big powers in the United Nations Security Council have chosen to basically to block the steps recommended in the report rather than pursue them to their conclusion. But nevertheless I think it's fair to say the very exercise that produced the Goldstone report and the publicity around its findings and recommendations will have a positive impact on the behaviour of the parties to the conflict moving ahead.

Let me turn to Egypt. Quite fortuitously I flew into Cairo on January 25th -- the first day of large demonstrations. I went there because we had just finished a report, an investigation precisely on the question of the failure of Egyptian authorities to investigate serious allegations of torture.

In Egypt, as in many other countries, the responsibility to investigate these allegations when they occur rests with the public prosecutor, and our investigation showed the extent to which in Egypt the public prosecutor had systematically failed to do so. To make a generalization, as I think Hatem Bey mentioned in his introductory remarks, in the Arab uprisings we have just seen it is hard to think of a single one that did not have at its root human rights violations. Perhaps this is nowhere so clear as in Egypt.

The Facebook site that brought thousands of Egyptians out on January 25th and then on January 28th hundreds and thousands more all around the country -- it was a page called "We are all Khalid Said." Khalid Said was a young Egyptian man, in his late twenties, in Alexandria, who was beaten to death in public in June of 2010. In broad daylight, by undercover police. Many people witnessed the brutal assault that killed Khalid Said. That public murder, coupled with the attempts of Egyptian authorities to cover up the role of the police -- they said, "No, he wasn't killed because they smashed his face into stone steps. He died because he trying to swallow drugs and choked to death." What? This was so transparently preposterous that people across the country were furious, and that fury built up over the following six months to the point where this January 25th demonstration -- ironically enough January 25th was National Police Day in Egypt. So on that Tuesday Egyptians did not have to go to work, offices were closed, schools were closed, people were available to demonstrate and the numbers who turned out far exceeded the expectations of anyone. I asked one of the organizers of that first demonstration if they expected this, if they were hoping for this. They said no, we were hoping that maybe around the country we would get a thousand people. Well they got tens of thousands of people -- not just in Cairo, but also in Alexandria, in Sohag, in Mahalla -- It was an urban phenomenon basically but it was all over the country. I think those days and nights in Tahrir Square, what impressed me the most and I was there; I actually stayed for the eighteen days of the uprising and I happen to leave, again coincidentally, on the day Hosni Mubarak left Cairo. I think what impressed me the most were two things. One is the resolute peacefulness, non-violent character of those demonstrations. As you know the demonstrators, the protestors, came under assault

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in the very beginning from the security forces and then after security forces withdrew from plain clothes, gangs of people who were sent out into the streets by the ruling party with sticks, with Molotovs, with in some cases with firearms to attack the demonstrators. And I was full of great apprehension that as a result of those attacks that the demonstrators themselves would respond with violent measures. And there were certainly some fighting back. There was stone for stone. There was Molotov for Molotov. There were not firearms though and on the whole things remained quite peaceful. The destruction that took place was targeted at police stations and at the headquarters of the ruling National Democratic Party in cities around the country.

The other thing that impressed me was the sense that people were finally able to express themselves. People were carrying homemade signs out in Tahrir Square. Now many of the slogans were the same, okay, but they were not mass produced in some political office and certainly not in some factory,. They were written out on some kitchen table. Perhaps my favourite slogan of all was, you may recall during those days there were lots of talk, particularly in Washington, and in other western capitals about the fear of a political vacuum. My favourite slogan was one that says "Hosni, , the only vacuum we fear is the one between your ears."

In Bahrain my colleagues were there right after the first large demonstration took place on February 14th, and the number of people who came out, the peaceful militance of the demonstrators -- certainly they had the wind of Egypt and Tunisia at their backs. But February 14th was not an accidental day. It was the 10th anniversary of when King Hamad announced the National Action Charter, which won a resounding 95 or 96 per cent of the vote in a referendum in 2001. And Bahraines thought that it meant an elected legislature, one with some authority, that finally there was going to be some measure of democracy in the country. And it was indeed the sense of people ten years later that these promises had been betrayed by the ruling family that brought people out into the streets in Bahrain.

Syria, I don't think I have to say anything about that particular situation in the sense that you are close to it geographically, you are close it, I am sure, emotionally. And in many ways again, you know what triggered things and when people finally moved into the streets in Syria in mid-March it was a result of atrocities carried out by Syrian security forces in the town of Deraa. One of the reports that we have available here today for some of you to take is an investigation precisely into the massacres and atrocities in Deraa.

I think one of the things that enabled us to be on the ground so quickly in Egypt, in Bahrain, in Tunisia and in Libya was our investment over the previous couple of years in making sure our staff is based there. We have offices in Bahrain, in Cairo, in Jerusalem and soon will be opening a small office in Tunisia. It was those years of that work in producing the in depth reports, like the investigation into torture in Egypt that I mentioned, that enabled us when we were on the ground in Egypt, in Bahrain, in Libya and so forth in doing our quick reactions to the fast moving events very much operating as news sources. And with the cutback of international media, at least western based international news networks and so forth, over the last few years. I think we've come

to play a much more important role in terms of being a kind of first source of impartial information on events like we saw in those countries.

And I think it was those years of investment in deep research efforts,- when things were not so much in the headlines- when it was not very popular to be exposing torture or the failure to investigate torture. That enabled us to speak with some authority and credibility to CNN, to Al-Jazeera, to the various other news networks that came to us for information. We found ourselves having to feed this 24/7 media beast, having to constantly balance the demand for short term responses to what happened yesterday, to what happened this afternoon, as well as devoting time to probing into the bigger issues, the underlying issues. That's the challenge we face today. Still, if we were to talk about the priorities we have going forward. I think my main point here would be that it was this careful attention to detail and constantly asking the question, "How do you know?" over the years in these countries and looking at issues like torture in Bahrain, in Egypt and elsewhere that enabled us to respond in the way that we did and to have the kind of impact that we did.

Now, going ahead, we find ourselves facing a number of challenges and this is where I get to the advocacy part of my remarks.

We are talking about situations in all of these countries, certainly in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya now, what we may characterize as transitional situations. So on the one hand you have transitional authorities, a transitional government. How do we respond to that? This government, this transitional government, has limited authority and probably should have limited authority in term of making far-reaching changes. But we do insist that even if, for instance, in Egypt a constitution is suspended as it has been by the military authorities that we insist that the human rights elements, the rights and protections that were built in the Egyptian constitution, no matter how flawed the policies were that brought us to this point, these elements should not be suspended.

These are things that governments, even transitional governments, need to insist on and enforce as well, in this case Egypt, but it could go for any country, its international treaty obligations. And here not just the international covenant for civil and political rights or the convention against torture but also, for instance, the African human rights treaty that Egypt is party to as well as Libya and Tunisia. Perhaps relevant to Turkey but also beyond Turkey elsewhere in the region is the jurisprudence that has come out over the years from the European Court for Human Rights.

There is a need also to bring existing laws into compliance with international standards and to stop enforcing bad laws, to stop enforcing laws that basically criminalize free speech, that criminalize the right to freedom of association. And probably the most important thing going ahead, both for the transitional phase and looking ahead over the longer term is the independence of the judiciary. The need for transitional authorities and judicial officers and judges et cetera who have the authority to strike down bad laws, to refuse to convict on the bases of bad laws and to interpret laws going ahead in line with international standards.

As Jan mentioned, we have also broadened our advocacy targets historically as Human Rights Watch, an organization that first came together in New York, in the United

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We are talking about situations in all of these countries, certainly in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya now, what we may characterize as transitional situations.

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You know, when people say why this is important for a country's foreign policy to cooperate these human rights elements? So my favorite example is Iraq.

States, and has historically had an advocacy focus mainly, in addition to the violating government, wherever it would be, focused on those Western capitals like Washington, like London, Paris, Brussels, who because of the North-South dynamics, because of the aid relationships, because of the military supply relationships were able to have some influence on the behavior of the governments whose violations we were criticizing. We don't think this is sufficient anymore, for a number of reasons. One of them I have already mentioned, in the case of the United States. The United States has lost a lot of its credibility in talking about accountability for torture because of its failure to pursue accountability as it applies to its former high level government officials.

But for other reasons as well, we think there is a need to recognize that in many parts of the South, human rights is regarded - not correctly in our view - but nevertheless the reality is that it is regarded as a Western phenomenon. It is not: it is a universal phenomenon. These treaties, as I've mentioned, were not formulated by Human Rights Watch in New York. These treaties were formulated by governments that included representative of countries of the South as well as of the North. But we think it is important for government, particularly for governments for instance that are making calls for inclusion as permanent members of the Security Council, for instance I'm thinking of countries like South Africa, like Brazil, that are demanding this kind of international political recognition. Good, but part of deserving that recognition has to involve also taking on board not only in your own domestic policies but also as a foreign policy matter human rights issues and holding other governments to account for human rights violations. So, for instance, we considered it an important achievement that the UN Security Council as well as other UN bodies like the Human Rights Council moved very decisively in taking up the question of Libya, when Qaddafi's forces started a killing spree against demonstrators. We've been extremely disappointed at the failure of the Security Council to take up the issue of Syria with the same kind of diligence. The numbers of people killed by the authorities in Syria now exceed those killed in Libya. We recognize that the whole question of military intervention is a very fraught one. And the question of Syria at the UN after Libya brings with it a sort of baggage as a result of the NATO intervention. But we nonetheless think that it is important that we continue to spend a lot of our advocacy efforts in Johannesburg, in Sao Paulo, in other places, in terms of talking with the government officials but also with the think-tanks, with the editors, with the columnists, with the people who together help to formulate a country's foreign policies. And this is the kind of relationship we also hope to develop in the case of Turkey as Jan mentioned.

Why this is important? You know, when people say why this is important for a country's foreign policy to cooperate these human rights elements? So my favorite example is Iraq. Human Rights Watch in the 1990s after the operation of Iraq's Saddam Hussein's armed security forces, basically the genocide campaign against Iraq's Kurdish population. We spent the next five or six years through the mid-1990s making a very big effort, this is before the international criminal court, to get states to take up the question of Iraq's genocide in the international Court of justice. The International Criminal Court deals with individuals who are accused of serious crimes. The International Court of justice deals with complaints of states against states.

We had no success, needless to say. In terms of getting the kind of Security Council referral that would have allowed this to happen or getting capitals, whether that be Washington which of course had now developed a very adversarial relationships with Saddam Hussein's government but also governments like the Netherlands, which is seen by many of us as a safe bet, a country you go to to take up human rights issues. You go to a country like the Netherlands, a small country that doesn't have the kind of political, strategic, economic stakes in the region. But even there, we simply were not able to get traction on this.

Now, I don't want to claim too much for this, but I imagine that if we had been successful, that if the international community had moved on the basis of Saddam Hussain's apparent and egregious human rights crimes in the 1990s that we might have been spared what's happened in the aftermath as result. You know, of course, not around human rights issues, but around issues of nuclear weapons issues, chemical weapons. Whether true or false is not the issue for me today, the fact is those were the stakes that lead up to the decision to go to war. But If human rights issues and humanitarian law issues had been taken seriously at the time, in the aftermath of the genocide campaign, I think Iraq certainly would have been better off and the rest of us as well.

Let me just make one other concluding remarks -- I always tend to speed up when my time is running out, causing the translators great problems, my apologies.

What I would suggest things that Turkey might consider, for instance, when dealing with let's take for example the country whose internal situation is the most explosive today and also the one because of its geographical proximity is of most concern to Turkey, namely Syria.

I think Turkey would do well to consider ways that it might address the requests made by the national transition council the collective Syrian opposition body that actually, I believe, was formally set up in Turkey, in Istanbul.

And they have a four-point agenda. It is not addressed to Turkey but to the international community generally. One is that they are pressing for and asking for international and regional monitors- civilian monitors, people who would be able to come into the country, of course they would require the acquiescence, if not the formal invitation of the Syrian parties to do this. So we realize it might be a step too far, but we nevertheless think that there is a role for such civilian observers, human rights monitors, if you will, in a situation like in Syria -- and also in Yemen I might add, today. How can Turkey play a role in responding to this request? Well, for instance, in the Geneva UN Human Rights Council, in the debates going on as we speak in the UN General Assembly to support- and not just say okay we will go along with you- but actually consider taking a leadership role in mandating UN human rights monitoring mission for Syria.

Now, again, at the end of the day, Syrian authorities would have to accept this, but this is an important call to put forward. I think that the fact that the Syrians themselves or Syrian opposition is asking for this is important. They are also asking that international media pay greater attention to what is happening there. And I think there is room for Turkish media as well as media from other countries. Thirdly, they are asking

Joe Stork:
If human rights issues and humanitarian law issues had been taken seriously at the time, in the aftermath of the genocide campaign, I think Iraq certainly would have been better off and the rest of us as well.

for humanitarian assistance. Obviously, particularly in cities and towns that are under siege by the military authorities, security forces -- medical supplies, medical assistance, as well as other supplies are badly needed.

And then lastly, they are asking for sanctions to be put onto the symbols of the regime. I believe symbols of the regime in their discourse is referring to, you know, the top leadership personalities in Syria. Now, we know that Turkey has said publically that they are considering, or perhaps they are even undertaking some sanctions. We believe that there should be sanctions that are not broad based, but targeted to people who are responsible for carrying out the crimes in Syria rather than sanctions, you know, that would harm or cause greater distress to the civilian population. I hope that we have all learned our lesson from the saga of the Iraq sanctions in the 1990s or Israel's closure of the Gaza Strip that's still going on today. Those kinds of sanctions themselves violate human rights in a very significant way.

I think, you know, Turkey is a country- and I will conclude here - Turkey is obviously a country that has great geo- strategic as well as commercial interests in the Middle East region and it is our view that over the long term, over the medium term, and perhaps even in the short term that integrating human rights elements in a more open, public, and transparent way into Turkish foreign policy could be good for business, could be good for Turkey's geo-strategic aspirations.

I hope this is an issue that we can discuss in the time remaining this morning as well as going ahead. We realize this is sort of a long term investment that we are interested in making in terms of our relationship with civil society in Turkey as well as with governing authorities.

So thank you for coming today. Thank you for your attention.

Joe Stork, deputy director of Human Rights Watch's Middle East and North Africa division, is a general expert on human rights issues in the region. Before joining Human Rights Watch in 1996, Stork co-founded the Middle East Research & Information Project (MERIP) and served as chief editor of Middle East Report, its bimonthly magazine. Author of numerous books and widely published articles on the Middle East, he has lectured widely at universities and public forums around the world. Stork served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Turkey and holds an M.A. in International Affairs/Middle East Studies from Columbia University.

Jan Egeland serves as Human Rights Watch's deputy executive director of Europe. Prior to joining Human Rights Watch, he was the executive director of the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. As UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and as UN Emergency Relief Coordinator from 2003 to 2006, Egeland helped reform the global humanitarian response system and organized the international response to the Asian Tsunami, and for crises from Darfur to the Democratic Republic of Congo to Lebanon. In 2006, Time magazine named him one of the 100 "people who shape our world." From 1999 to 2002, he was the UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Colombia, and from 1990 to 1997 he served as state secretary in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He has substantial experience in the field of humanitarian relief and conflict resolution through his work at the United Nations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent, the Norwegian Government, and other nongovernmental organizations. Egeland also currently holds a position as an associate professor at the University of Stavanger.

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