

Reflections on Human Rights

I was born and raised in Finland, a country where human rights enjoy a reasonable level of respect. Not only has my life been in this sense secure, but also other aspects making a high quality and even socially equal life have always been there, such as free medical care and affordable, actually for all practical purposes free, education.

For those used to them, human rights are like the air we breathe and the water we drink: noticeable only when somehow lacking. Intellectually we know that they cannot always and everywhere be taken for granted: my wife is Russian and she had a schoolmate who got into trouble for listening Beatles; this happened during the Soviet times. Being free to listen to Beatles is certainly an aspect of human rights.

Every human being is a value in his/her own right. In order for all our lives to be dignified, this is a value that has to be respected. Thus the human rights of every single individual are very important for us all, regardless of the status we otherwise enjoy in our various societies.