

Do we Defend Human Rights or Do We Defend Ourselves from Them?

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Theme: [History](#)

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Translated and edited by Dr. Claudio Schuftan The original is in Spanish. I have to confess though that, although in a small part fallacious, it raises some uncomfortable and disturbing questions for which I only may have some answers. At the risk of being accused of courting controversy I share this with you. (Claudio Schuftan)

1. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 assumes humankind agrees with the institutions of a bourgeois society. According to the Declaration we are entitled to protection under the law (Art.7). Of what law? Laws made by whom? Aren't the owners of power and of money the ones who make the laws according to what is convenient for them? So, do those who question the law attempt against human rights (HR)?

2. The Declaration also says that every person has the right to property (Art.17). How necessary was it to insert that Article to protect the patrimony of those who already had amassed a fortune? So, do those who attempt to take something away from the latter attempt against HR?

3. People are needed to work for the benefit of the owners of capital. Then, we have to remember that every person has the right to work and to a salary (Art 23). So, does anyone who tries to set up an alternative and different system to neoliberalism attempt against HR?

4. What are we supposed to do so that everybody supports the ideology of those who organized our world in their own favor? Easy! Every person has the right to education....To that education that reproduces the system? Does s/he who does not accept this attempt against HR?

5. Can this all mean that oppression is actually used in the name of HR? Are we supposed to defend all the rights that justify and consolidate the neoliberal system? Are we going to defend these rights knowing that, in their name, the owners of power and of the money have invaded all spaces and have defended their own interests?

6. Where is the right to rebel and to resist to be found? Where is the right to live an alternative life without interference left?

7. These reflections and questions take us to think about drafting a proposal for a Declaration of HR from another angle, from the perspective of poor people, of the invisible, of the excluded. Actually, new rights are being proclaimed coming from different corners of

the world: poor people's rights, poor women's rights, indigenous people's rights, poor black people's rights, people with special abilities rights, poor young people's rights, poor children's rights, the rights of nature and of the environment... What counts is to continue opening spaces in which all voices merge, and from which a new declaration can be proclaimed, one that brings together the common aspirations of the have nots.

8. We cannot turn away from the term Human Rights; what we have to do is to give it a new content, one that acts as a liberating force.

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