



The Human Rights Work of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

Objectives and Focuses of the FES's Human Rights Work

BACKGROUND

»Human rights« are the innate, inviolable and inalienable basic rights and freedoms to which every person is entitled by virtue of their humanity. In contrast to citizens' rights, they are independent of nationality. The foundation for human rights work today is a comprehensive international system of human rights protection which emerged after the Second World War on the basis of the traumatic experiences with the Nazis.

»All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.«

Article 1, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

A broad definition of international human rights was effected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted and proclaimed on 10 December 1948. Since then, in elaborating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations has elaborated nine treaties, including the two Covenants which were adopted in 1966 and came into force in 1976, on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

PRINCIPLES

Democracy, social justice and solidarity are key to the socio-political work of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), which as a basic principle is understood as human rights work. The FES's human rights-related work is topic-oriented and involves seminars and workshops, dialogue platforms, expert meetings and publications. The FES attaches particular importance to the equal status of economic, social and cultural human rights and civil and political human rights: they are both interdependent and interrelated.

Human Rights in the International Work of the FES

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung fosters the political conditions required if human rights and basic freedoms are to be respected by means of projects in more than 100 countries. Its socio-political programmes support, among other things, democratic reforms, participation, the rule of law and freedom of the press through consultation on the establishment of constitutional and legal systems and cooperation with civil society organisations. The FES's economic and social policy advice is directed primarily towards the implementation of economic and social rights. The promotion of political dialogue ultimately means supporting efforts towards reaching agreement and the reconciliation of political conflicts. The FES's human rights-related work in other countries takes many forms: from the fostering of trade union rights, through legal advice for marginalised groups, promoting a free media and advising governments and international organisations, to addressing such topics as climate change and human rights, or coming to terms with human rights violations after the demise of dictatorships.



SELECTED PROJECTS: HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUE BETWEEN CHINA AND GERMANY

The Dialogue on Human Rights between China and Germany commenced in 1999. The German side is represented by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the Chinese side by the China Foundation for Human Rights Development (CFDHR) and the Chinese Association for International Understanding (CAFIU). The participants in this Dialogue are high-ranking representatives of politics and society. The aim is, by means of open discussion and on the basis of mutual respect for the other's culture, history and social system to establish a foundation for an understanding on human rights.

www.fes.de/international/asien/inhalt_en/china_en.htm



SELECTED PROJECTS: SUPPORT FOR PARALEGAL UNITS IN RURAL TANZANIA

The implementation of women's rights in Tanzania has been undermined to date by the widespread dominance of unwritten and religious »traditions«. Together with the Women's Legal Aid Centre (WLAC) the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung has been supporting the training of »barefoot lawyers« in Tanzania for over 10 years and also supports mobile Paralegal Units in 15 regions of the country. The legal advisers, who work for free, are trained in family law and land rights, as well as political participation rights in order to raise awareness in villages and communities and to provide support for individuals.

www.fes-tanzania.org

SELECTED PROJECTS: CAMPAIGN AGAINST »PROTECTION CONTRACTS« IN MEXICO

So-called »Protection Contracts« are labour contracts concluded between – usually not democratically legitimised – trade unions and employers above the heads of the workers concerned, for the purpose of precluding proper interest representation of the workforce. Protection Contracts in this way violate international labour and human rights norms. In Mexico, an estimated eight out of ten contracts have been concluded under these conditions. The FES in Mexico has been addressing this issue by means of events and publications since 2004. For example, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung supports the publication of a digital newsletter which provides information on the relevant legal issues. The aim of these activities is to inform workers of their rights and to push for the abolition of Protection Contracts.

www.fesmex.org

Human Rights Work of the FES in Geneva

The FES's Geneva Office engages in constant cooperation with various UN treaty organisations in the area of human rights. For example, it cooperates with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), with various special procedure mandate holders and with the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR). The monitoring of political processes in the UN Human Rights Council is also a key element of FES work.

Expert seminars are held to develop human rights standards, and every effort is made to involve civil society representatives from the global South. This working line examines global topics such as climate change, the food crisis and corporate responsibility for human rights issues.



With regard to the implementation of labour rights, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung cooperates with the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and Global Union Federations. A matter of particular concern to it is the linking of the human rights system with international social policy and the apparatus for monitoring labour and social rights. In this connection, the FES has for many years promoted the exchange between the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) and the ILO Committee of Experts related to the implementation of conventions and recommendations (CEACR).

www.fes-globalization.org/geneva/

Human Rights Work in Germany

In Germany, the FES holds conferences and seminars on human rights topics in cooperation with other civil society or political actors.

The focal points are as follows:

- **International human rights policy and legal frameworks**
UN Human Rights Council and its special procedures; International Criminal Court
- **Development and human rights**
Economic, social and cultural rights; right to development; development cooperation and human rights
- **Business and human rights**
International directives and standards; corporate social responsibility



www.fes.de/gpol/en/human_rights.htm



HUMAN RIGHTS FORUM

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung cooperates closely with the Human Rights Forum, a network of 51 German NGOs established in 1994. The aim of the Forum is to improve coordination and cooperation with regard to civil society organisations active in human rights, both nationally and internationally.

As a member organisation with a representative office in Geneva the FES frequently serves as the »base« for the activities of the network with regard to the UN Human Rights Council and plays a substantial role in supplying the German political sphere with feedback from discussions in Geneva.

HUMAN RIGHTS HANDBOOK

In cooperation with the Human Rights Forum the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung publishes the Human Rights Handbook. This introduces the human rights work of NGOs, state institutions and international organisations and is intended to provide all those active in this area, either full-time or on a voluntary basis, with the know-how they need for political lobbying.

www.fes.de/handbuchmenschenrechte | www.forum-menschenrechte.de



THE HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD OF THE FRIEDRICH-EBERT-STIFTUNG

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung presented its Human Rights Award for the first time in 1994. The Award is given, in accordance with the wishes of donors Karl and Ida Feist, to individuals or organisations all over the world who have done outstanding service in the cause of human rights. Previous awardees include the Truth Commissions of Chile and Peru, the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers in Russia and a South African lobbying organisation which fights for the right to treatment of persons infected with HIV/AIDS.

For further information on the Human Rights Award and on previous awardees see:

www.fes.de/themen/menschenrechtspreis/en/

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www.fes.de/GPol/en

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) was founded in 1925 and is the oldest political foundation in Germany. It is a private cultural non-profit institution and committed to the ideas and basic values of social democracy. The FES carries the name of Germany's first democratically elected president, Friedrich Ebert, and continues to promote his legacy of promoting freedom, solidarity and social justice.

In accordance with this mission, both at home and abroad, it runs programmes of political education and international cooperation, provides scholarships and conducts research.