

FOOD IS A HUMAN RIGHT

George Kent

Department of Political Science
University of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822
U.S.A.

kent@hawaii.edu

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ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Since the adoption of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, human rights advocates have focused most of their energy on civil and political rights. Now, in the second half-century of post-World War II human rights advocacy, economic, social and cultural rights are gaining increasing attention.

Economic, social and cultural rights include the right to an adequate standard of living. Article 25, paragraph 1 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* says:

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

This was elaborated in article 11 of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. Paragraph 1 says:

The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.

The human right to adequate food is explicitly recognized as part of the broader human right to an adequate standard of living. While the focus here is on food, we have much to learn from the work that has emerged on health, education, housing, and other issues relating to an adequate standard of living (see, for example, Hunt 1998; Kothari 1997; Leary 1994; Leckie 1989; Toebes 1998).

Individuals and organizations working to end hunger and malnutrition sometimes use the slogan "food first". The concept expresses their feelings that the food issue should be given high priority. However, it should be recognized that food and nutrition constitute just one of the dimensions of adequate livelihood, and it would be inappropriate to argue that nutrition is more important than, say, housing or education. All aspects of livelihood are interrelated, and should be kept in balance (Eide 1995, p. 91).

The point may be clarified by asking: can the human right to adequate food be fulfilled by an authoritarian regime?

It is certainly possible to assure that individuals' biological nutritional needs are fulfilled through authoritarian measures. Even chained prisoners can have their minimum required daily allowances of nutrients delivered to them. But fulfilling one's *need* for food in the biological sense is different from fulfilling one's *right* to food. It is true that many human needs can be met

by authoritarian powers without consulting with the people. Certainly one can provide food for individuals that will meet their basic nutrient requirements, as in a prison or an army. However, if people have no chance to influence what and how they were being fed, if they are fed prepackaged rations or capsules or are fed from a trough, their right to adequate food is not being met, even if they get all the nutrients their bodies need. Serving pork to a Muslim prisoner would violate his human rights, even if it contained the nutrients he needed.

Human rights are mainly about upholding human dignity, not about meeting physiological needs. Dignity does not come from being fed. It comes from providing for oneself. In any well-structured society, the objective is to move toward conditions under which all people can provide for themselves.

One of the major critiques of humanitarian assistance programs has been that "Aid processes treat lives to be saved as bare life, not as lives with a political voice (Edkins 2000, p. xvi)." The human rights approach responds directly to this concern. One can assure that people are treated like dignified human beings, rather than like animals on a feedlot, by making sure that they have some say in how they are being treated. This is why, in a human rights system, the people *must* have some institutionalized remedies available to them that they can call upon if they feel they are not being treated properly. There must be some meaningful action they can take if they feel their rights are not being acknowledged.

Saying that people must have actions they can take if they feel their rights are not being acknowledged is another way of saying that they must be free to participate in shaping the conditions in which they live. This refers not only to the quality of relationships between individuals and their governments, but also to the quality of their relationships with one another. Human rights are not only about the potentialities of isolated individuals. People must be recognized as social beings with a need and a right to share in shaping not only their individual futures but also the futures of their communities. At one level human rights may appear to be individualistic, but it should be recognized that the basis of the realization of individual human rights is the quality of our social relationships (Fields 2003). This is the essence of democracy.

On the basis of this formulation, democracy is required for the full realization of the human right to adequate food and all other human rights. The fulfillment of human rights requires a democratic social order, one in which individuals can play an active role in shaping the conditions under which they live. Democracy is about participation.

Just as the human right to adequate food must be seen in the context of the right to adequate livelihood, that cluster of rights, in turn, must be viewed in the broader context of all human rights. Livelihoods may be adequate in terms of specific measures of income, health care, housing, etc., but this must not be achieved through means that violate other human rights. Human rights are indivisible.

FOOD IN INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

Historically, national and international responses to problems of malnutrition have been based on compassion and the recognition that reducing malnutrition can be of considerable benefit to the society as a whole. These responses have ranged from small local feeding programs to large-

scale international actions involving the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Bank, the World Food Program, and many nongovernmental organizations. Now, however, there is increasing recognition that adequate food is a human right, and thus there is a legal *obligation* to assure that all people get adequate food.

As indicated in the preceding section, the articulation of the human right to adequate food in modern international human rights law arises in the context of the broader human right to an adequate standard of living. The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* of 1948 asserts in article 25(1) that "everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food"

In the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, which came into force in 1976, article 1, paragraph 2 says, "In no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence." In addition, article 6 says, "Every human being has the inherent right to life". This clearly implies the right to adequate food and other necessities for sustaining life.

The human right to adequate food was affirmed explicitly in two major binding international agreements. In the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (which came into force in 1976), article 11 says that "The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing, and housing . . ." and also recognizes "the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger"

In the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (which came into force in 1990), two articles address the issue of nutrition. Article 24 says that "States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health . . . (paragraph 1)" and shall take appropriate measures "to combat disease and malnutrition through the provision of adequate nutritious foods, clean drinking water, and health care (paragraph 2c)." Article 24 also says that States Parties shall take appropriate measures . . . "To ensure that all segments of society, in particular parents and children, are informed, have access to education and are supported in the use of basic knowledge of child health and nutrition [and] the advantages of breastfeeding" Article 27 says in paragraph 3 that States Parties "shall in case of need provide material assistance and support programmes, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing, and housing."

Even if the human right to adequate food had not been stated directly, it would be strongly implied in other provisions such as those asserting the right to life and health, or the *Convention on the Rights of the Child's* requirement (in article 24, paragraph 2a) that States Parties shall "take appropriate measures to diminish infant and child mortality". The human right to adequate food has been reaffirmed at the international level in many different settings.

Henry Shue defines basic rights as those necessary for the enjoyment of all other rights (Shue 1996). In these terms, there can be no question that the human right to adequate food is a basic right.

The foundations for the human right to adequate food lie in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the binding international human rights instruments in which it is explicitly mentioned, primarily the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* and the

Convention on the Rights of the Child. Other binding international human rights agreements such as the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* contribute to the articulation of relevant rights. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has identified a large number of authoritative international instruments that address the human right to adequate food (FAO 1999).

On reviewing the hunger data, Philip Alston and Katarina Tomaševski observed that "these statistics make hunger by far the most flagrant and widespread of all serious human rights abuses." Alston added that "the right to food has been endorsed more often and with greater unanimity and urgency than most other human rights, while at the same time being violated more comprehensively and systematically than probably any other right (Alston 1984, pp. 7, 9)." There is no need to propose the human right to adequate food; it is already well established in international law. The task now is to assure the universal recognition and realization of that right.

FOOD IN INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

Food plays a special role in international humanitarian law, that part of international law that is particularly concerned with conflict situations. In a statement on *The Right to Food* made to the UN's Commission on Human Rights in April 2001, the International Committee for the Red Cross described the major relevant rules:

- ? International humanitarian law expressly prohibits starvation of civilians as a method of combat in both international and non-international armed conflict. This prohibition is violated not only when lack of food or denial of access to it causes death, but also when the population suffers hunger because of deprivation of food sources or supplies.
- ? It should be noted that intentional starvation of civilians as a method of warfare is a war crime when committed in international armed conflict under the 1998 Rome Statute establishing a permanent International Criminal Court. Intentional starvation of civilians is a serious violation of international humanitarian law when committed in internal armed conflict as well.
- ? In elaboration of the prohibition of starvation, international humanitarian law specifically prohibits attacking, destroying, removing or rendering useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population. Such objects include foodstuffs, agricultural areas for the production of foodstuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installations, drinking water supplies and irrigation works.
- ? It is fairly obvious that population displacement is a major cause of hunger and starvation in war. International humanitarian law prohibits the forced displacement of civilians unless their security or imperative military reasons so demand in both international and non-international armed conflict. Forced movement of civilians is a war crime in both types of conflict under the Rome Statute.
- ? Last, but by no means least, international humanitarian law contains specific rules on assistance to civilian populations in armed conflict situations. Parties to an armed conflict must allow humanitarian and impartial relief operations - including those

aimed at providing food - when supplies essential for the civilian population are lacking. (ICRC 2001).

The ICRC representative pointed out, “the strength of humanitarian law lies also in the fact that its prescriptions must be applied immediately, rather than progressively, that it unequivocally binds both state and non-state actors and that it permits no derogations whatsoever”.

The Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food highlighted the role of food in international humanitarian law:

75. The starvation of civilians as a method of warfare is prohibited in both international and non-international armed conflict. That prohibition is violated not only when denial of access to food causes death, but also when the population suffers hunger because of deprivation of food sources or supplies. The prohibition of starvation is elaborated upon in provisions prohibiting attacks against or destruction of items necessary for the survival of the civilian population, including foodstuffs and drinking water:

“Starvation of civilians as a method of combat is prohibited. It is therefore prohibited to attack, destroy, remove or render useless, for that purpose, objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as foodstuffs, agricultural areas for the production of foodstuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation works.”

76. Physical destruction includes the destruction of crops by chemical defoliants or the pollution of water reservoirs. Violations would also occur if landmines were to render agricultural areas useless. Under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, intentionally using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare by depriving them of objects indispensable to their survival is considered a war crime in international armed conflict (Ziegler 2002).

Strictly speaking, the rules relating to food in international humanitarian law are not cast as human rights, but rather they complement the human right to adequate food in international human rights law. As summarized in a study of “The Right to Food in Situations of Armed Conflict: The Legal Framework”:

While the rules are primarily formulated as obligations of parties to an armed conflict, rather than as rights, the results desired by both humanitarian and human rights law are the same—the ability of individuals to obtain or receive adequate food (Pejic 2001, p. 1109).

GLOBAL DECLARATIONS AND COMMITMENTS

Alongside the developments in international law described in the preceding sections, numerous conferences and non-binding international declarations and resolutions have helped to shape the emerging international consensus on norms regarding the human right to adequate food.

In 1974 the World Food Conference issued a *Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition*. It asserted that "Every man, woman and child has the inalienable right to be free from hunger and malnutrition in order to develop fully and maintain their physical and mental faculties." That declaration was endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in Resolution 3348 (XXIX) of December 17, 1974 (Declaration 1974).

In response to concerns about inappropriate marketing and promotion, the *International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes* was adopted by the World Health Assembly (WHA) in 1981 (International Code 1981). The WHA has approved a series of resolutions in subsequent years to further clarify and strengthen the code.

The constitution of the World Health Organization says that "the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being . . .", clearly implying the human right to adequate food (Brundtland 2000).

An International Conference on Nutrition, organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Health Organization, was held in Rome in December 1992. The idea of the human right to adequate food was frequently endorsed. In his address opening the conference His Holiness Pope John Paul II said:

It is up to you to reaffirm in a new way each individual's fundamental and inalienable right to nutrition. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights had already asserted the right to sufficient food. What we must now do is ensure that this right is applied and that everyone has access to food, food security, a healthy diet and nutrition education.

In the conference's concluding *World Declaration on Nutrition*, the nations of the world agreed that "access to nutritionally adequate and safe food is a right of each individual."

In July 1996, as part of the preparatory work for the World Food Summit, a meeting on "The Fundamental Human Right to Food" was called by the president of Venezuela and held in Caracas. The Caracas statement called for the development of a Code of Conduct that would clarify the content of the right to food and provide guidance regarding its realization. This statement helped to highlight the importance of the right to food at the World Food Summit.

In November 1996 the World Food Summit concluded with agreement on the *Rome Declaration on World Food Security and World Food Summit Plan of Action*. The first paragraph declared: "We, the Heads of State and Government, or our representatives, gathered at the World Food Summit at the invitation of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, reaffirm the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger." The summit called for further specification of the meaning of the right to food, through a process described in the following section.

The second paragraph of the 1996 Rome Declaration said: "We pledge our political will and our common and national commitment to achieving food security for all and to an ongoing effort to eradicate hunger in all countries, with an immediate view to reducing the number of undernourished people to half their present level no later than 2015." This was repeated in paragraph 7 of the *Plan of Action*. However, apart from a minor mention in paragraph 60, the thirty pages of commitments, objectives, and actions that followed made no further reference to this specific time frame.

In the late 1990s work on the human right to adequate food centered on a mandate from the World Food Summit held in Rome in 1996. In the Summit's concluding *Plan of Action*, Objective 7.4 called upon . . .

. . . the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, in consultation with relevant treaty bodies, and in collaboration with relevant specialized agencies and programmes of the UN system and appropriate inter- governmental mechanisms, to better define the rights related to food in Article 11 of the Covenant and to propose ways to implement and realize these rights . . . (FAO 1996).

Several different initiatives were taken to respond to this call, including supportive resolutions from the Commission on Human Rights; a Day of Discussion on Right to Food held by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and Expert Consultations on the human right to adequate food held in Geneva, Rome, and Bonn. In April 1999 the United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition (then known as the United Nations Administrative Committee on Coordination/Sub-Committee on Nutrition) focused its annual meeting on the human right to adequate food. In May 1999 the United Nations' Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights released its landmark *General Comment 12 on The Right to Adequate Food (Art. 11)*, described in the following section.

All these efforts were given further impetus at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000. The eight Millennium Development Goals, supported by all 189 nations at the summit, were led off by goal 1: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.

There was a follow-up to the World Food Summit of 1996, called World Food Summit: five years later. It was actually held in 2002, because of the events of September 11, 2001. WFS:5yl produced a final declaration that called for the creation of an International Alliance Against Hunger. Paragraph 10 called upon the FAO Council to establish

. . . an Intergovernmental Working Group, with the participation of stakeholders, in the context of the WFS follow-up, to elaborate, in a period of two years, a set of voluntary guidelines to support Member States' efforts to achieve the progressive realisation of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security; we ask the FAO, in close collaboration with relevant treaty bodies, agencies and programmes of the UN System, to assist the Intergovernmental Working Group, which shall report on its work to the Committee on World Food Security (FAO 2002a).

This was a disappointment to many because the idea of voluntary guidelines replaced the idea of creating a code of conduct on the right to adequate food. This was a decisive move away from acknowledging any sort of firm obligation on the part of the international community with regard to the human right to adequate food. Norway explained its concern in this way:

Norway would have preferred the expression code of conduct instead of voluntary guidelines because it is clearer and more definite. However, we hope that this will set in motion a process that will lead to a useful instrument that would have the same function as a code of conduct on the right to adequate food, and in fact lead to such a code in the future (FAO 2002b).

The United States had a sharply different view:

The United States wishes to attach the following reservation to the Declaration of the World Food Summit: *five years later* "International Alliance Against Hunger." The United States believes that the issue of adequate food can only be viewed in the context of the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being, as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which includes the opportunity to secure food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services. Further, the United States believes that the attainment of the right to an adequate standard of living is a goal or aspiration to be realized progressively that does not give rise to any international obligation or any domestic legal entitlement, and does not diminish the responsibilities of national governments towards their citizens. Additionally, the United States understands the right of access to food to mean the opportunity to secure food, and not guaranteed entitlement. Concerning Operative Paragraph 10, we are committed to concrete action to meet the objectives of the World Food Summit, and are concerned that sterile debate over "Voluntary Guidelines" would distract attention from the real work of reducing poverty and hunger (FAO 2002b).

The United States has consistently resisted not only the human right to food but also the more comprehensive human right to an adequate livelihood. Even before the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* was adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 1948, Eleanor Roosevelt told that body that the United States government did not consider economic, social and cultural rights to "imply an obligation on governments to assure the enjoyment of these rights by direct government action (Glendon 2001, p. 186)". The United States failure to ratify either the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* or the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* reflects its long-standing resistance to the idea of economic and social rights.

GENERAL COMMENT 12

On May 12, 1999 the UN's Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights released *General Comment 12 (Twentieth session, 1999): The Right to Adequate Food (Art. 11)* (General Comment 12 1999). This statement, prepared by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, constitutes a definitive contribution to international jurisprudence.

GC12's paragraph 1 begins by citing the foundation of the legally binding right to food in article 11 of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. It draws a distinction between the reference in the first paragraph of that article to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food, and the second paragraph of that article, which calls for ensuring "the fundamental right to freedom from hunger and malnutrition". GC12 indicates that "more immediate and urgent steps may be needed to ensure" the fundamental right to freedom from hunger and malnutrition. Thus, hunger and malnutrition signify more acute, more urgent problems than are indicated by inadequate food in itself. The distinction is addressed again in GC12's paragraph 6:

The *right to adequate food* will have to be realized progressively. However, States have a core obligation to take the necessary action to mitigate and alleviate hunger as provided for in paragraph 2 of article 11, even in times of natural or other disasters.

It is important to distinguish the broad concern with food supplies from the immediate need to deal with hunger and malnutrition. The food supplies approach focuses attention on what is in the family's or the nation's cupboard, while the focus on hunger and malnutrition focuses attention on the conditions of people's bodies.

GC12's paragraph 4 highlights the linkage of the right to adequate food to "the inherent dignity of the human person" and points out that it is indispensable for the realization of other human rights. It is also inseparable from social justice.

Paragraph 5 observes that "Fundamentally, the roots of the problem of hunger and malnutrition are not lack of food but lack of *access to* available food, inter alia because of poverty, by large segments of the world's population." This sentence might have been clearer if the phrase "lack of food" was followed with something like "in the community". The reference here is to the fundamental distinction between *availability* (is there food around?) and *access* (can you make a claim on that food?).

GC12's paragraph 6 presents the core definition:

The right to adequate food is realized when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement.

The paragraph goes on to emphasize that the right to adequate food "must not be interpreted in a narrow or restrictive sense which equates it with a minimum package of calories, proteins and other specific nutrients". In other words, simply delivering prepackaged meals in the way one might deliver feed pellets to livestock cannot fulfill the right. That sort of approach would be incompatible with human dignity. Delivering such meals might be sensible in a short-term emergency, but it cannot be the means for realizing the human right to adequate food over the long run.

GC12 paragraph 7 explains that *adequacy* means that account must be taken of what is appropriate under given circumstances. Food *security* implies food being accessible for both

present and future generations. *Sustainability* relates to long-term availability and accessibility. Thus, as explained in paragraph 8, the core content of the right to adequate food implies:

The availability of food in a quantity and quality sufficient to satisfy the dietary needs of individuals, free from adverse substances, and acceptable within a given culture;

The accessibility of such food in ways that are sustainable and that do not interfere with the enjoyment of other human rights.

These terms are then explained further in paragraphs 9 through 13.

Paragraph 14 summarizes the obligations of States as follows:

Every State is obliged to ensure for everyone under its jurisdiction access to the minimum essential food which is sufficient, nutritionally adequate and safe, to ensure their freedom from hunger.

The obligation applies to everyone under the state's jurisdiction. Thus, it is not permissible to exclude immigrants or refugees, even if they are in the country illegally. The obligation cannot be limited only to citizens, or only to particular ethnic groups. If a group of people is under military occupation, the obligation extends to them as well.

Paragraph 15 draws out the different kinds or levels of obligations of the state. These obligations may be sorted into categories as follows:

- ? *respect* - "The obligation to *respect* existing access to adequate food requires States parties not to take any measures that result in preventing such access."
- ? *protect* - "The obligation to *protect* requires measures by the State to ensure that enterprises or individuals do not deprive individuals of their access to adequate food."
- ? *fulfil (facilitate)* - "The obligation to *fulfil (facilitate)* means the State must pro-actively engage in activities intended to strengthen people's access to and utilization of resources and means to ensure their livelihood, including food security."
- ? *fulfil (provide)* - "Finally, whenever an individual or group is unable, for reasons beyond their control, to enjoy the right to adequate food by the means at their disposal, States have the obligation to *fulfil (provide)* that right directly. This obligation also applies for persons who are victims of natural or other disasters."

General Comment 12 should be consulted for its analyses on these and other themes, including the issues of implementation at the national level, framework legislation, monitoring, remedies and accountability, international obligations, etc.

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Human rights are international in the sense that they apply to all persons. However, the obligations are primarily domestic, in the relationships between national governments and their own people. The major obligations of national governments are to people living under their jurisdictions. However, it should be recognized that the international community also has obligations with regard to food. People who do not have adequate food are people of particular nations, but they are also people of the world, and they have rights claims not only in relation to their own nations but also in relation to the world as a whole. The human right to adequate food would mean very little if obligations to honor that right were limited only to one's own government, one's own nation. Children born into poor countries are not born into a poor world.

Human rights would be really *inter-national*--in the sense of transcending national borders--only if, upon failure of a national government to do what needed to be done to assure realization of those rights, the international community was *obligated* to step in to do what was necessary. There is now no mechanism and no firm commitment to do that with regard to the human right to adequate food or many other kinds of rights. The obligations of the international community are not well articulated.

There is some recognition of obligations beyond national jurisdiction in human rights law. The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* says, in article 28, "Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized." Article 22 says economic, social and cultural rights should be achieved "through national effort and international cooperation." In the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, article 2, paragraph 1 calls on each State Party to take steps "individually and through international assistance and co-operation, especially economic and technical, to the maximum of its available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the rights recognized in the present Covenant . . ." Article 11 requires States Parties individually and through international cooperation to take the measures needed to implement "the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger." It says *everyone*, and not just the people of their own countries.

General Comment 12, on the human right to adequate food, explains the international obligations more fully in paragraphs 36 and 37 (General Comment 12 1999).

International human rights law can be understood as the project of articulating universally accepted standards of governance with regard to the protection and promotion of human dignity. Human rights implies some level of obligation to everyone everywhere, and not only to those individuals under the jurisdiction of one's own national government. The guiding principle should be that the international community is subject to human rights obligations similar to those of states. If a particular action by a national government would be viewed as a human rights violation, then a similar action by, say, the World Bank, probably should be viewed as a human rights violation as well. International governmental agencies are creations of nation states and act in their behalf. Thus they are subject to much the same obligations as those states.

With full recognition of the human right to adequate food in a world of democratic global governance, we would expect that more of the world community's attention and resources would

be devoted to addressing the concerns of weaker nations and weaker persons. The pursuit of global equality would mean that people at risk of malnutrition everywhere would be entitled to the same sort of assistance, at least with regard to that part of their assistance that comes through international governmental agencies. It may be difficult to imagine the achievement of this level of equality in the treatment of needy people, but the concept should be held in mind as the objective, the goal implied by the commitment to the human right to adequate food.

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