



EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

Encouraging global recognition of human rights is one of the fundamental tasks of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. It is a matter of both ethical and political importance for our work in Germany and the world. Universal human rights are an indispensable requirement for achieving freedom, justice, and peace through development assistance.

Our ethical principles are derived from the Christian view of humanity, namely that each individual is a unique creation of God. The idea that the value of human life is sacred, something which underlies all human rights, unites us all under a central belief of the Christian church. The "Dignitatis humanae" declaration of the Second Vatican Council meant that the "value of human life" was brought to the collective conscious. After the experiences of the Second World War, the theology of human dignity enjoyed a renaissance in the Protestant Church as well. On the basis of the Protestant principle of justification, the idea that human beings are made in God's image served as the foundation of individual liberty, which has been given by God.

Across the world, Christians and members of different faiths have spoken out against infringements of human rights throughout the ages. In particular, the tangible experiences of injustice, genocide, torture, and totalitarian control during the first half of the twentieth century have increased people's awareness of the need to safeguard human dignity, especially through human rights.

As well as our ethical perspective, we are committed to the political and legal character of human rights. Human rights are not just enshrined in Article 1 of the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany as “inalienable,” but also as enforceable basic rights, by which “the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary” are bound. In addition, the numerous international conventions on human rights, which have occurred since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was published in 1948, have helped strengthen the political task of realizing human rights, and made these the ethical and political duty of countless men and woman, organizations, and nations around the world.

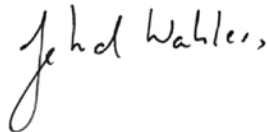
Therefore, human rights are of exceptional importance to the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, since it regards freedom as a fundamental principle. As the CDU’s program of principle puts it, “it is the duty of those who are free to stand up for the freedom of those who are deprived of it.” Consequently, our duties include promoting a social policy that is guided by the standard of human rights in the field of education and culture so as to enable young people to discover a path through life, on which they may find the ideal of freedom and social justice that they are seeking.

While forging a link between the awareness of freedom and the awareness of responsibility, we argue at the same time against any facile attitude of cultural pessimism as well as against any egotistical over-emphasis of an awareness of freedom, which ignores the responsibility towards one’s fellow man and one’s community that is conjoined to it. Intervening on behalf of the victims of persecution and discrimination all over the world constitutes an ethical and political purpose that guides a Christian democrat’s awareness of responsibility.

Human dignity is the sacred heart of human rights and may never be jeopardized. In Germany, the notion of democracy and the rule of law ensure an awareness of the need to observe human rights. In many other countries, these elementary framework conditions—required so that human rights can prosper long-term—are missing. Programs to promote the rule of law are, thus, needed to introduce valuable measures for establishing a political environment, which values human life, in these countries.

Supporting the democratic process and domestic powers in different countries, as well as local educational programs, are important parts of the work of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. This edition of *Auslandsinformationen* focuses on the emergence and the work of human rights courts. Institutions such as these have the potential to ensure that human rights are observed in regions where such protection has, up to now, been limited.

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung aims to make human dignity an immutable basic value and to use the guarantee of liberty as a measure of independent and collective action. This is unthinkable without an ethical dimension to politics.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gerhard Wahlers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'G'.

Dr. Gerhard Wahlers
Deputy Secretary-General