

Forum: Youth Assembly - Action Paper II

Issue: The consequences of economic crises on human rights

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting lockdown caused 114 million people to lose their jobs over 2020, while the International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates working hours lost in 2020 were equivalent to 255 million full-time jobs, leading to \$3.7 trillion in lost labor income.¹ The pandemic brought numerous companies, factories, and even domestic enterprises to close down, and even those who did not were forced to fire a large number of employees or to take cuts in wages. The pandemic and the quarantine ensued in a global economic recession and in some countries in economic crises. Consequently, unemployment rates increased worldwide and many families were led into poverty.



Figure 1: Animation of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Globe and an Energy Crisis, where the Globe is trying to escape the pandemic and falling onto an energy crisis²

¹ "Covid-19 Has Caused a Huge Amount of Lost Working Hours." World Economic Forum, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/02/covid-employment-global-job-loss/>.

² "Energy Crisis, Here We Go Again." Competere, 22 Mar. 2022, www.competere.eu/energy-crisis-here-we-go-again/.

Economic crises have been detected in global history since ancient times, usually caused by risky human behaviours, ineffective regulation of the economy of the country, excessive and unpaid debts, and even, indirectly, natural disasters. They frequently lead to poverty and severely impede people from exercising their fundamental human rights. These crises may prevent families from having adequate access to food, shelter, or clothing, or they may prevent students from attending school. Economic crises have always had a negative impact on human rights; however, human rights should be protected, regardless, even in such circumstances.

In general, fundamental human rights are the rights and freedoms that an individual is entitled to, despite their qualities or background, just because they exist as a human being. The United Nations, from its foundation, has signed a document, namely the Universal Declaration of Human Rights³, that lays out all the fundamental human rights humans should be entitled to. Nothing and no one is authorized to deprive an individual of their human rights, regardless of the circumstances, and any such abuse is deemed a violation of human rights.

An outstanding example of such violations is the situation in the Ukraine-Russian war, since it has a great impact on the availability of food and energy, not only regionally, but globally too. Essentially, the war has caused a scarcity of natural gas and oil resources, causing their prices to increase rapidly. According to the UN, “many food producers are not able to access the agricultural inputs they need, so the impact of current market disturbances may be felt through 2023”⁴. Both of the aforementioned cases resulted in people having difficulty accessing food and energy; because the amount of each was insufficient, their prices increased, and thus many people were unable to afford them.

DEFINITION OF KEY-TERMS

Fundamental Human Rights

Fundamental Human Rights are the freedoms that are inherent to every individual from the moment they are born, with no discrimination or prejudice. This means that regardless of someone’s race, skin colour, nationality, age, gender or social and economic background, they will receive equally fair treatment as everyone else. Fundamental Human Rights include “the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more.”⁵

³ “Universal Declaration of Human Rights - English.” *OHCHR*, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/human-rights/universal-declaration/translations/english>.

⁴ Brief No.1 Global Impact of War in Ukraine on Food, Energy ... - Un News. <https://news.un.org/pages/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/UN-GCRG-Brief-1.pdf>.

⁵ “Human Rights.” *United Nations*, United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/human-rights>.

Economic crisis

By the term “economic crisis” we refer to a period of time when the economy of a country faces difficulties and productivity declines. Although each country might be affected in a different way, economic crises usually lead to poverty and unemployment, and other socio-economic issues. In the event of a crisis lasting for an extended period of time, there might be severe consequences for the people of the country, including numerous violations of human rights.^{6 7}

Gross Domestic Product

“Gross domestic product, or GDP, is a measure used to evaluate the health of a country’s economy. It is the total value of the goods and services produced in a country during a specific period of time, usually a year. The GDP is used throughout the world as the main measure of output and economic activity. [...] GDP per capita (also called GDP per person) is used as a measure of a country’s standard of living. A country with a higher level of GDP per capita is considered to be better off in economic terms than a country with a lower level.”⁸

Recession

An economic recession is defined as a period of time during which a country’s or a region’s economic activity decreases. It occurs when a nation’s GDP continues to decline steadily for six consecutive months.⁹

Poverty

When a person is in a state of poverty, they lack the means to maintain their basic needs, including access to food, shelter, and clothing. Generally, poverty is correlated with inadequate financial resources.¹⁰

Unemployment

“The term unemployment refers to a situation where a person actively searches for employment but is unable to find work. Unemployment is considered to be a key measure of the health of the economy.”¹¹ Unemployment is many times expressed by the high

⁶ “Economic Crisis.” *Commissioner for Human Rights*, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/thematic-work/economic-crisis>.

⁷ “What Is Economic Crisis.” *IGI Global*, <https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/economic-crisis/47360#>.

⁸ “Gross Domestic Product.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., www.kids.britannica.com/students/article/gross-domestic-product-GDP/627635#.

⁹ Rodeck, David. “What Is a Recession?” *Forbes*, Forbes Magazine, 12 July 2022, <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/investing/what-is-a-recession/>.

¹⁰ “What Is Poverty?” *Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation*, 25 Nov. 2010, https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/esic/overview/content/what_is_poverty.html.

¹¹ Hayes, Adam. “Unemployment Definition and Types.” *Investopedia*, Investopedia, 26 June 2022, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/u/unemployment.asp>.

unemployment rate, which represents the percentage of unemployed individuals in proportion to the total labour force. Economic crises are one of the leading causes of unemployment, while poverty is one of the main outcomes.

Most Economically Developed Countries (MEDCs)

More Economically Developed Countries, also referred to as MEDCs, are countries that have a higher GDP and a higher quality of life. Also, an indicator that classifies a country as a more economically developed one is its education level and industrial development.¹²

Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs)

LEDCs, or Less Economically Developed Countries, are countries that have a really low GDP. In most cases, the standard of living is not that high, and industrial development and education are of inadequate quality..

Economic Crash

A crash occurs when stock prices significantly decline over a very short period of time. When there is a crash in the stock market, it is very common for an economic recession to break out.

Inflation

“Inflation refers to a general increase in the prices of goods and services in the economy over time that corresponds with a decrease in the value of money.”¹³ This means that people in a country with a high inflation rate need more money to buy a specific product, that would be cheaper in a country with a lower inflation rate (providing that we refer to countries with the same currency). Inflation is not always a bad thing; however, when it becomes excessive, with inflation rates rising at an alarming rate, it threatens a country's economy.

Humanitarian Crisis

A humanitarian crisis is a period of time when recurring events are detected that threaten the well-being of the residents, as far as their access to healthcare or adequate security and safety are concerned. Economic crises, as well as internal and external conflicts are some of the most common causes of humanitarian crises, but there are other factors that may also contribute.¹⁴

¹² “MEDCs.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., <https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/more-economically-developed-countries/476297#>

¹³ Kennon, Joshua. “Inflation.” *The Balance*, The Balance, 5 Apr. 2022, <https://www.thebalance.com/what-is-inflation-357610>.

¹⁴ Bloxham, Lucy. “What Is a Humanitarian Crisis?” *Concern Worldwide*, <https://www.concern.org.uk/news/what-is-a-humanitarian-crisis>.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Economic Crises

Economic crises can be caused by a variety of factors, each of which has its own set of consequences. In many cases, the consequences remain the same regardless of the cause of the crisis, but in any case, based on the underlying cause of each crisis, this is classified as one of the four main categories of economic crises. First and foremost, one of the most common types is the currency crisis. This occurs when the currency of a country suddenly declines and does not have the same value as it used to. This implies that a certain amount of money in one currency can no longer buy the same amount of money in a different currency, as it once did. Furthermore, another type of crisis is the debt crisis. A country is said to be going through a debt crisis when it is rendered incapable of paying back the government debts it has. When a country has internal financial issues, it might need to borrow money from another country, and if this “debt” is not utilized wisely and efficiently, the nation is driven to a crisis. The third type of crisis is a sudden stop; it can be triggered by either external or internal factors, but in both cases it is associated with an unexpected reduction in the flow of money in a country, implying that economic activity declines. Finally, the last of the main types of economic crisis is the banking crisis. Such crises occur when a country's banks suffer considerable difficulties in repaying contracts and generally fulfilling obligations, and when transactions are generally problematic. All in all, there may be different types of economic crises that a state may suffer from, but the consequences of all of them range from violations of basic human rights to internal governmental issues.

Causes and effects of Economic Crises

The causes of economic crises

Numerous human actions or monetary problems have the potential to start an economic crisis. One of the leading causes of a crisis is high inflation rates for a prolonged period of time. High inflation rates, or even hyperinflation (the state where inflation rates are extremely high and basically money has lost its value), is, essentially, the severe rise of prices in the market; it leads to recession and, consequently, to an economic crisis if not managed properly on time. Another cause of economic crises is high interest rates. “Interest rates reflect the cost of taking on debt for individuals or companies. The rate is typically an annual percentage of a loan that borrowers pay to the creditors until the loan is repaid.”¹⁵ High interest rates are associated with a decline in economic activity since they increase the amount of money that a company must return along with the repayment of the loan, reducing the company's profit. Due to the fact that the producers spend more money on repaying the debt and, hence, they need to make up for the

¹⁵ TEDEducation. “What Causes an Economic Recession? - Richard Coffin.” *YouTube*, YouTube, 15 Oct. 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SwaCg7Gwtzw>.

lost money, they increase the prices of their products. As a result, people may struggle to purchase goods, causing economic activity to slow. Slower economic activity means, after a point, economic recession. In addition to these, economic crises may arise due to insufficient financial management by the government, such as borrowing large amounts of money and failing to repay the debts, and natural disasters, such as damaging plantations or wrecking industries, leading to a decrease in production.

The effects of economic crises

Citizens, individually, and the community, as a whole, are almost immediately affected by even the slightest downturn in the economy, let alone an economic crisis, either directly or indirectly. Despite the repercussions of economic crises being interwoven with human rights threats or violations, which are indeed numerous, the consequences, in general, are far more than that. Such crises can lead to problems arising inside of a country as far as its government and constitution are concerned, leading to political turmoil. If the government, for example, doesn't manage to handle an economic crisis or, even worse, makes decisions that drive the country into one, the community will lose trust in them, and, thus, there will be social upheaval and political commotion. Aside from that, an economic crisis in one state may affect its neighbouring states as well, resulting in a global economic recession. Economic crises might also influence the activities in other sectors of people's everyday lives. Leading examples include the trade and tourism sectors, which will be impacted immediately and directly.

Case Studies on Economic Crises

Throughout history, there have been hundreds of economic crises detected, either local ones, that affected one country or a few neighbouring ones, or on a global scale.

The Great Depression

The Great Depression is considered to be one of the worst downturns in the global economy of the industrialized world. In 1918, the First World War ended. European economies had faced damage, but America, being one of the victors, emerged as one of the dominant economies worldwide. During the 1920s, the USA was experiencing economic prosperity. There were more available job positions, and women started entering the workforce as well, meaning that there was an increase in money circulation. In addition, people started borrowing loans from financial institutions so that they could buy new inventions, such as vacuum cleaners, electric washing machines, or even cars. The high demand for such goods led to higher production, which subsequently led to more available job positions and higher wages. Many of them became richer and richer, and, hence, many of them decided to engage in the stock market of the US. In many cases, people even from banks in order to buy shares since the stocks were constantly rising and people were able to make a profit out of them.



Figure 2: People living under adverse conditions during the Great Depression¹⁶

However, that situation was not sustainable. In 1929, financial prosperity began to slow down. The Wall Street stock market crashed in October, and at the same time, many financial institutions went bankrupt since they had given loans that customers never paid off. They ended up running out of money and not being able to give money to the financial institution's customers. The ten following years were characterized by a terrible economic crisis where the global GDP declined by -26.7%. This economic crisis was named the "Great Depression." Having had the US as its starting point, the Great Depression spread around the world for various reasons, including recent globalization and the government debts of European countries to the US. The great depression caused numerous social issues, such as rising poverty and mass unemployment. We're at peak unemployment today at 24.7%. Additionally, there were multiple political issues noted, with even democracy being threatened in some cases.

¹⁶ Rhp. "These Sad Photos Show Destitute Great Depression Families Waiting for Aid, 1937-1939." *Rare Historical Photos*, 7 Mar. 2022, <https://rarehistoricalphotos.com/poor-great-depression-families-waitig-for-aid/>.

The Global Economic Recession 2008

The main reason behind the great recession is the fact that interest-rate was low for an extended period of time. In general, low interest rates are linked with a more intense circulation of money since people can take more and larger loans from banks. This happens because low interest rates mean that money is easier to borrow. Therefore, more companies are in a position to borrow money from financial institutions and, thus, expand their business, and in the same way, consumers could borrow more money to purchase things from said businesses. Production levels increased and more people could find jobs; there was economic prosperity and growth. However, this reached an unsustainable level when people started borrowing excessive amounts to buy houses. Due to the prosperity, banks gave loans even to people who were likely to not be able to pay them back, because the borrowers thought they would make the money because of the rising value of the houses. This value, however, dropped, and people were rendered unable to pay. This led to both the banks' and the homeowners losing money. Thus, the banks reached a point where they didn't want to risk their finances by giving out loans to neither companies nor consumers. This led to a vicious cycle that started in 2007, where "No lending meant no buying. No buying meant no production. No production meant no jobs. No jobs meant defaults on loans"¹⁷. The GDP of the US started falling a year after, and a recession was declared.

The Recession impacted both people and businesses and led the economy to being totally damaged. More than 8 million Americans were unemployed, with the peak of global unemployment being at 10%. Considering that the world nowadays is totally globalized, the Great Recession affected the global economy shortly after, declining the global GDP to -5.1%.

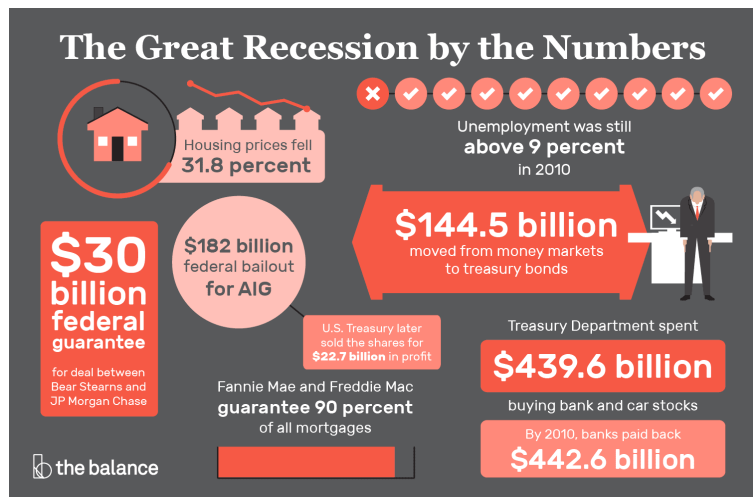


Figure 3: Infographic for the Great Recession of 2008

¹⁷ "Great Recession." *Study.com* | Take Online Courses. Earn College Credit. Research Schools, Degrees & Careers, <https://study.com/learn/lesson/great-recession.html>.

The consequences on human rights

“During times of financial and economic crisis, households often adopt coping strategies, such as making changes in household expenditure patterns. However, these can negatively influence education, health and nutrition, which may lead to lifelong deficits, especially for children, and thus perpetuate the intergenerational transmission of poverty.”¹⁸

The implications that economic crises have on human rights might vary among regions, regarding the economic status of each state. More Economically Developed Countries may suffer from the implementation of rights of a more intellectual nature, while at the same time, Less Economically Developed Countries may face issues related to rights like the one to an adequate standard of living.

Effect on MECDs

More Economically Developed Countries are considered the countries that have a high, relatively, GDP and, therefore, when they suffer from an economic crisis, the rights that are being threatened or violated are usually related to owning property, having access to a safe working environment and to advanced healthcare. An economic crisis in those countries mostly influences the GDP of the country, meaning that the amount of money made is declining. That doesn't necessarily mean, though, that people will end up being unable to meet their basic needs.

Effect on LEDCs

Meanwhile, when a crisis strikes in an LEDC, the situation is way more dangerous, in comparison with the crises in MEDCs, since the right that is mostly being threatened is the right to adequate living. An economic crisis could potentially cause the GDP in less developed nations to fall to extremely low levels, forcing many people to live in adverse conditions, and putting their lives at risk. Therefore, it's evident that economic crises in LEDCs are the cause of humanitarian crises as well on many occasions.

¹⁸ “The Social Impact of the Economic Crisis | DISD.” United Nations, United Nations, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/world-social-report/2011-2/the-social-impact-of-the-economic-crisis.html>.

Specific Cases of Human Rights that are being violated

Right to Standard Living

“The right to an adequate standard of living requires, at a minimum, that everyone shall enjoy the necessary subsistence rights: adequate food and nutrition, clothing, housing and the necessary conditions of care when required.”¹⁹ During economic crises those rights are threatened. When the cost of necessities rises sharply and, since unemployment and poverty, people don't have as much money to spend, they are forced to forgo purchasing them, especially in Less Economically Developed Countries. People are thus rendered unable to receive the necessary nutrients, for example, endangering their lives.

Right to Education



Figure 4: Animated picture of people suffering from unemployment

This right refers to inclusive and quality education for all. In particular, for primary education, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), states that it is mandatory for all students, free and universal while regarding secondary and higher education, it is progressively free and accessible to all. Furthermore, it entails “fundamental education for individuals who have not completed education, professional training opportunities, and the freedom of choice.”²⁰ Additionally, the promotion of

inclusive education and lifelong opportunities for everyone is a part of the fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), "Quality Education," which is intended to be accomplished by 2030. People's rights to education can be violated to varying degrees depending on the severity of the economic crisis and whether an MEDC or an LEDC is hit. Such violations range from students not having access to primary education, in the most severe crises, to being denied admission to the university of their choice.

¹⁹ “The Right to an Adequate Standard of Living.” Icelandic Human Rights Centre, <https://www.humanrights.is/en/human-rights-education-project/human-rights-concepts-ideas-and-fora/substantive-human-rights/the-right-to-an-adequate-standard-of-living>.

²⁰ “What You Need to Know about the Right to Education.” UNESCO, 10 Dec. 2021, <https://en.unesco.org/news/what-you-need-know-about-right-education>.

Right to Work

One of the main consequences of economic crises, regardless of the region suffering, is unemployment. During economic crises, the unemployment rate is heightened, which implies that a great proportion of people are deprived of the right to work. The said right refers to the freedom of choice regarding the profession of one, equal wages with no discrimination, protection from unemployment and favorable working conditions. During times of crisis, people that lose their jobs and are in need of some kind of financial support tend to find jobs that are underpaid and they are forced to work under unfavorable conditions.

Right to Own Property

According to the 17th Article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, “everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.”²¹ When it comes to collaboration, when one member of a deal has more financial power, the other might be manipulated and underprivileged in the dealership, since they may compromise on unfavorable decisions. But even in the event of no collaboration, an economic crisis may lead one to be deprived of their property, since it might be seized by the bank if the owner has unpaid debts.

Right to Adequate Housing

The right to adequate housing includes the freedom of an individual to choose their residence without having anyone interfere with it. This right condemns forced evictions and fully protects people from it. “Forced evictions can be broadly defined as the permanent or temporary removal against the will of individuals, families and/or communities from the homes and/or land which they occupy, without the provision of, and access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection.”²² Economic crises frequently result in forced evictions, which is a flagrant violation of the Right to Adequate Housing.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

The United States of America (USA)

The United States of America has suffered from various economic crises throughout the years, while some of the world’s most destructive economic crises have started in the USA. The severity of them varied from crisis to crisis, but in all cases, the outcome of the crises has been destructive to human rights. Although the United States Constitution has passed acts regarding

²¹ “Universal Declaration of Human Rights - English.” *OHCHR*, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/human-rights/universal-declaration/translations/english>.

²² “Forced Evictions.” *OHCHR*, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-housing/forced-evictions>.

the protection of human rights, there are still certain violations that threaten to occur with the outburst of an economic crisis. Furthermore, while the United States is classified as an MEDC, some states may face financial difficulties. According to the World Bank, the annual GDP of the US was 23 trillion USD in 2021, which implies how strong of an economy it has.

Germany

The German economy is currently in fear of a recession, which is thought to be more than 50% likely. The country's economy is in danger with the high inflation rates combined with the war in Ukraine. Both global and local economic crises have been devastating for Germany in the past. A leading example is the period that followed WWII; Germany's citizens experienced shortages of basic necessities like food, shelter, energy, and healthcare, and as a result of the overall situation, the country's currency lost value, creating issues for the government. Similar was the situation after WWI for Germany, as well as following international economic crises, such as the Great Depression, the economic recession of 2008, or the International Debt Crisis. Germany, being a European Union (EU) member, follows the guidelines set by EU bodies.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka in 2022, went through one of the most alarming humanitarian crises, that was caused by an economic crisis. The crisis was caused by the fact that Sri Lanka borrowed more money than it was able to pay off, making debts unmanageable. The political leaders have been accused multiple times of taking questionable decisions. The country's government acknowledged that it couldn't pay its debts in full in April 2022, which resulted in price increases for food and fuel. While they were going through a humanitarian crisis, many people were protesting against the government. 'The government blames the Covid pandemic, which affected Sri Lanka's tourist trade - one of its biggest foreign currency earners. It also says tourists have been frightened off by a series of deadly bomb attacks on churches in 2019. However, many experts say economic mismanagement is to blame.'²³

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN Human Rights)

Being the world's leading entity regarding human rights, the UN Human Rights aims to protect and promote the fundamental rights of all people. The OHCHR was established in December 1993 with the signing of a resolution from the UN General Assembly. This institution emphasizes At the same time, focusing on the most vulnerable groups of people is the key to solving the most pressing global issues regarding human rights and possible violations. ²⁴

²³ Perera, Ayeshea. "Sri Lanka Petrol: Why Is the Country in an Economic Crisis?" *BBC News*, BBC, 4 July 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-61028138>.

²⁴ "Homepage." *OHCHR*, www.ohchr.org/en/ohchr_homepage.

ILO (International Labor Organization)

The International Labour Organization (ILO) was founded in 1919 under the auspices of the League of Nations and since then it has been actively trying to achieve its main aims, that is, the promotion of workers' rights and equality regarding job opportunities. The ILO is in charge of developing international labor standards, programs, and guidelines and fostering dialogue on labour-related issues. The ILO is actively working against unemployment in any form, with youth unemployment being one of its main concerns. Furthermore, this UN body is attempting to prevent any type of human rights violation in the workplace. The ILO supports workers' rights to work and other related rights, as well as their recovery from potential violations.

Amnesty International

Amnesty International is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that works for equitable access to human rights for everyone globally. It was initially founded in the United Kingdom, but now it has subsidiaries in many other countries around the globe, some of them being Amnesty International USA, Amnesty International France, Amnesty International Australia and many more.



Figure 5: Peaceful protests from Amnesty International for the advocacy of human rights.

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Collectively, there are over 10 million people supporting Amnesty International from all over the world, either as active members or just as supporters. This NGO instigates peaceful movements on human rights and it supports that “we are funded by members and people like you. We are independent of any political ideology, economic interest or religion. No government is beyond scrutiny. No situation is beyond hope.”²⁶

²⁵ (www.dw.com), Deutsche Welle. “Amnesty International: 2021 Was the Year of BROKEN PROMISES: DW: 28.03.2022.” DW.COM,

www.dw.com/en/amnesty-international-2021-was-the-year-of-broken-promises/a-61285728.

²⁶ “Who We Are?” Amnesty International, 26 Nov. 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/who-we-are/>.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
1918	The First World War ends.
11 April 1919	The International Labour Organization (ILO) is established.
1920s	The USA experiences economic prosperity and growth.
October 1929	The Wall Street crashed, and there is a massive economic turndown in the US that influenced the global economy as well.
10 December 1948	The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) passes a resolution, resulting in the establishment of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
14 December 1960	The UNESCO adopts the "Convention against Discrimination in Education." ²⁷ This conversion is put into force one and a half years later, and it supports that all humans have the right to education without being discriminated against due to their personal characteristics.
28 May 1961	Amnesty International is founded in London, in the United Kingdom, aiming in facilitating equity regarding human rights and tackling discrimination. .
August 1982	There is an International Debt Crisis that affects the global economy to a great extent

²⁷ "Convention against Discrimination in Education." OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-against-discrimination-education>.

	and it is considered one of the major economic recessions in history.
20 December 1993	The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) passes a resolution that leads to the facilitation of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
15 November-3 December 1999.	The twenty-first session of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) is being held.
15 March 2006	The UNGA passes a resolution for the creation of the United Nations Human Rights Council, which is a UN body that works for the protection of human rights globally. It consists of 47 Member States that change every 3 years, and its headquarters are located in Geneva, Switzerland.
December 2010	The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights publishes a working paper related to the implications of economic crises on human rights and ways to protect them.
23 September 2019	The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) holds a high-level meeting on Universal Health Coverage, where multiple discussions are held on the right to health.
18 June 2020	The ECOSOC passes the resolution E/RES/2020/7, namely the “Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness”
April 2022	Sri Lanka has excessive increases in the prices of oil and fuels.

RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

Universal Declaration of Human Rights²⁸

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was signed by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on December 10th, 1948, soon after the establishment of the United Nations. This declaration is regarded as a major milestone in human rights history since it inspired and influenced subsequent documents. The UDHR outlines all of the fundamental human rights that everyone should be able to exercise regardless of their background or economic class. The UDHR includes all the human rights that could potentially be violated due to economic crises. The right to work, to education, to a standard of living, to own property and many more rights, that are being violated by economic crises, are mentioned in the UDHR.

General Comment No. 13: The Right to Education (Art. 13 of the Covenant)²⁹

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) held its twenty-first session, from 15 November until 3 December, in 1999. The official commentary on the committee's discussions includes General Comment No. 13, which refers to the right to education. Being the 13th article of the respective Covenant, the commentary is divided into three major sections; The said sections are classified as follows: "1. Normative content of article 13", "2. States parties' obligations and violations" and "3. Obligations of actors other than States parties".

The specific comment, along with other observations, states that "Education is both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realizing other human rights. As an empowerment right, education is the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalized adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participate fully in their communities."³⁰ Therefore, it is evident that the right to education is mandatory, especially when we refer to primary education, and should be accessible for all, regardless of the economic status of a country or the financial status of a family.

²⁸ "Universal Declaration of Human Rights - English." OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/human-rights/universal-declaration/translations/english>.

²⁹ CESCR General Comment No. 13: The Right to Education (Art. 13). <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4538838c22.pdf>.

³⁰ CESCR General Comment No. 13: The Right to Education (Art. 13). <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4538838c22.pdf>.

E/RES/2020/7³¹

On June 18th, 2020, the Economic and Social Council, signed the resolution E/RES/2020/7, also referred to as “Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness”. This resolution highlights the need to eliminate poverty and homelessness, while it emphasizes on the need for implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, a set of 17 goals that promote sustainability and equality and are said to have achieved it until the year of 2030. The resolution, also, mentions the need for affordable access to all basic services, by asking the Member States to further advance their strategies regarding the issue.

The 74th United Nations General Assembly/High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage³²

Held on September 23rd, 2019 in New York, the high-level meeting on Universal Health Coverage, under the auspices of the United Nations General Assembly has as its theme “Universal Health Coverage: Moving Together to Build a Healthier World”. The main purpose of the UNGA meeting was “to accelerate progress toward universal health coverage (UHC), including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.”³³ All the discussions conducted in the meeting were revolving around the Right to Health and to what extent this is accessible by every individual, stressing, amongst others, the implications of poverty

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

There have been multiple endeavours in the past to address the specific topic. Particularly, the issue has tried to be tackled from different perspectives. There have been attempts to find ways so that economic crises are avoided, human rights are safeguarded in the event of crises, and, in cases of violations, quick recovery is ensured. Many Member States have tried this individually and in the context of a larger group to

³¹ “United Nations Official Document.” *United Nations*, United Nations, https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E%2FRES%2F2020%2F7.

³² “Universal Health Coverage | General Assembly of the United Nations.” United Nations, United Nations, <https://www.un.org/pga/73/event/universal-health-coverage/>.

³³ “Universal Health Coverage | General Assembly of the United Nations.” *United Nations*, United Nations, <https://www.un.org/pga/73/event/universal-health-coverage/>.

Working paper from European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights³⁴

In December 2010, a working paper for “Protecting Human Rights during Economic Crises” was published by the Agency for Fundamental Rights. After the 2008 Economic Recession that was catastrophic for EU countries, both economically and socially speaking, FRA, considering all the effects of previous economic crises on human rights, set forth this paper to report the issue and suggest possible solutions. The working paper includes examples of economic crises and emphasizes the implications of them as well as examples of how the EU countries acted and institutions responded to the crises and their impact on human rights. Aside from that, at the end of the working paper, there are some proposals for the authorities regarding many different sectors of the issue.

Reports from NGOs

Center for Economic and Social Rights³⁵

The CESR had uploaded the specific study in order to sensitize and encourage people and governments to take immediate action on managing the issue. In general, the document refers to the causes and effects of economic crises on human rights as well as responses to them. It extensively analyzes the consequences on the realization of human rights as well as on the implementation of them.

Social Watch³⁶

The Social Watch is an organization that was established in 1995 with the aim of eradicating poverty and promoting human rights while eliminating discrimination. The “a human rights-based response to the financial and economic crisis”³⁷ is a report written and published in 2009, after the Great Recession, stressing the reformations that need to be done as well as multiple other decisions that need to be taken for the issue to be eliminated.

It specifically mentions that “The magnitude of the crisis is shedding altogether new light on the consequences of the traditional approach to human rights and the regulation of finance. Under this paradigm, human rights advocates are told that matters

³⁴ *Protecting Fundamental Rights during the Economic Crisis.*

https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/1423-FRA-Working-paper-FR-during-crisis-Dec10_EN.pdf.

³⁵ *Human Rights and the Global Economic Crisis Final.*

https://cesr.org/sites/default/files/CESR-Human_Rights_and_the_Global_Economic_Crisis.pdf.

³⁶ Social Watch, www.socialwatch.org/.

³⁷ *A Human Rights Based Response.* www.socialwatch.org/sites/default/files/coc2009_eng.pdf.

of financial regulation are entirely technical and to be left to the experts, while human rights policy and concerns should either be addressed independently”³⁸

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Raising Awareness

Many people are aware of the fact that economic crises affect them negatively, but there is a great proportion of people that do not know how their human rights are directly affected. Raising awareness regarding the consequences of the economic crisis on human rights and how everyday actions can protect human rights from being violated in such cases, is a necessity and an easily implementable solution. Delegates could state and analyze ways that awareness can be raised in the everyday lives of people so that violations can be avoided, as well as ways that they can contribute to the recovery of human rights violations in regions that have already been through, or currently going through, an economic crisis. Additionally, there could be research and advocacies on the ongoing situation in countries around the world, so that reports can be written and uploaded and therefore the wider public could be able to find documents regarding human rights violations.

NGOs

Another way of tackling the problem is through volunteering and donating. Delegates could propose the facilitation of a nonprofit and nongovernmental organization or the further development and support of existing organizations, which would have as their main aim to collect money to help regions and people from all around the world that have suffered from economic crises and try to deal with the consequences. The money could be raised either from charity or from activities, campaigns, and projects that would be initiated by that organization. The money could be distributed equally throughout the territories in need.

Ratification of Conventions

There is a vital difference between the ratification of a convention and the signing of it. When we refer to a country signing a convention, we mean that that country agrees with what is being stated in the convention and intends to follow it later, in the future. On the other hand, when we refer to the ratification of conventions, we imply that the country is legally bound and obliged to strictly follow what is being said in the convention. The delegates could, for instance, urge all Member States to ratify conventions like the "Convention against Discrimination in

³⁸ Caliar, Aldo. "A Human Rights-Based Response to the Financial and Economic Crisis." *Social Watch*, https://www.socialwatch.org/sites/default/files/coc2009_eng.pdf.

Education," which would guarantee that every child can exercise their right to education without being excluded due to the economic circumstances of their family.

Establishing accessibility to human rights

One major issue that arises when economic crises hit is the fact that many nations' governments are proven incapable of securing the fundamental human rights of their citizens, and thus many of them end up not being in a position to enjoy their rights and exercise them properly. A feasible, yet highly needed solution, is to ensure the funding of initiatives that would promote and protect human rights at times of economic crisis. The World Bank and other relevant UN entities could put money into campaigns or other projects that would make human rights more accessible.

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