

Human Rights and Social Justice Field Guide



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Overview

The international human rights field is comprised of a broad spectrum of governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations which focus on the alleviation of human suffering and the protection and promotion of human rights. The field overlaps with key issue areas of peace and security, development, law, humanitarian assistance, and economic and social affairs. Organizations use a variety of disciplines in their approach to social justice, including direct service, advocacy, policy development, and research. Social justice often refers to the overall fairness of a society and the manner in which it divides its rewards and burdens upon groups of people. Working with marginalized groups, social justice agents or advocates are concerned with bringing equality within society. For example, social justice work may include building a bridge to give a certain community better access to the rest of the country or ensuring that a business sector's hiring practices include considerations for candidates among all ethnic, age, and socio-economic classes.

Career Opportunities

The field of human rights is broad and multidisciplinary. Activities include research focusing on preventing and ending rights abuses in all regions of the world, monitoring development, conducting on-site investigations, writing reports on conditions, engaging in advocacy to publicize and curtail violations, litigation, lobbying, and promoting human rights and social justice practices in social and political structures. In addition, professionals provide advisory and educational services, refugee assistance, policy analysis for institutions, assistance in institution building, and economic development monitoring. Social justice and human rights organizations are perhaps best organized according to the issue(s) they are concerned with. Positions for candidates with a relevant master's degree are most frequently in the capacity of monitoring, reporting, administrative, and organizational efforts. The jobs that do exist can be found primarily with non-governmental organizations or, in some cases, with the federal government. There are also short-term positions for those on leave from other jobs who might want to lend their expertise to the human rights arena, i.e. lawyers, teachers, social workers, doctors. Domestic careers in human rights include work with refugees who have emigrated to the U.S., civil rights, and women's issues.

Types of Jobs

- Human rights monitors
- Media specialists
- Grant writers
- Researchers
- Financial analysts

Qualifications + Skills

- Excellent written and oral communication skills
- Cross-cultural skills
- Grassroots organizing
- Both analytical and creative thinking
- Dedication to social justice

Sample Employers

- Aging: National Consumer Voice for Quality, Long-term Care, Justice in Aging
- Children, Youth & Family: Children's Defense Fund, City Limits, Juvenile Law Center, UNICEF
- Civil Liberties & Human Rights: American Civil Liberties Union, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Institute for Global Communication, UNHCR, Freedom House, Death Penalty Information Center, Center for Economic and Social Rights
- Community Development: Center for Neighborhood Technology, The Urban Institute
- Disease and Disability: American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, American Disability Association, Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, Mental Health America

- Education: Education Law Center, National Education Association, Rethinking Schools
- Environment & Agriculture: Corporate Accountability International, Global Exchange, Greenpeace, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Sierra Club Foundation, United Farm Workers
- Homelessness: Food First, National Coalition on the Homeless, National Low Income Housing Coalition
- Indigenous Peoples: Cultural Survival, Native American Rights Fund, International Indian Treaty Council
- Labor: AFL-CIO, Clean Clothes Campaign, International Labor Organization, Jobs with Justice, Legal Aid Society-Employment Law Center
- Non-violence: Prison Activist Resource Center, Violence Policy Center, States United to Prevent Gun Violence
- Poverty: Oxfam America, The Urban Institute, United for a Fair Economy, U.N. Development Program, Food Research & Action Center
- Welfare: Methodist Healthcare Ministries, National Center for Law and Economic Justice, Physicians for Social Responsibility
- Women: Center for Reproductive Rights, Equal Rights Advocates, MADRE, Women's Law Project, National Women's Law Center, National Partnership for Women and Families, Women's Environment and Development Organization

Sample Maxwell Classes

- Fundamentals of Post-Conflict Reconstruction
- Health and Development
- Girls' Education in the Developing World
- Child and Family Policy
- Culture in World Affairs
- Urban Policy
- Food Security
- Education Policy
- Social Welfare Policy

Resources

- Idealist.org
- UNHCR
- HumanRights.com
- Amnesty International
- Human Rights Action Center
- Human Rights Watch

Related Career Guides

- Humanitarian Aid & Relief
- Nonprofit Management
- International Development

PRO TIP: There are opportunities in fields which might overlap with human rights and social justice such as governmental affairs, law, and lobbying. Look at your strengths and experience to see if there is a possibility of working towards a human rights position through other avenues first.