

‘To Whom It May Concern’

Letters

from the students of class 8

for

10 December

Human Rights Day

From awareness to activism...it concerns you.

WORLD: MISSING PANDEMIC REPORTERS (CHINA)

To Whom It May Concern

Human rights are rights that belong to all of us. They ensure people are treated fairly and equally all across the world and that they have easy access to necessities like clean drinking water and education. They give people freedom to express themselves in any way, shape, or form without fear.

In these troubled times, when the whole world is facing a pandemic, fake news can be fatal. However, news reporters telling the truth about the coronavirus outbreaks in China have suddenly disappeared into thin air. Many reporters like Li Zehua, Chen Qiushi and Fang Bin though have resurfaced were not heard of for quite a long time. This deed violates Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948 that states that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

The international community must strongly rise to condemn this and hold other countries accountable to ensure a better future for humans.

Thanking you,

Niharica Sengupta,
Class 8D
Modern High School for Girls, Kolkata

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WORLD: POLICE BRUTALITY (USA)

To Whom It May Concern

Human rights are certain rights which we are entitled to. They play a crucial role in any society by protecting us from arbitrary and unjust discrimination.

Police brutality is the use of excessive or unnecessary force by law enforcement officers when dealing with suspects and civilians. From the beginning, those who engaged in police brutality have acted with the implicit approval of the local legal system, such as during the Civil Rights Movement

era. In countries with high rates of killings by police, there is often a combination of factors including inadequate laws, racial or other forms of discrimination, insecurity or conflict and favouritism. Racism along with police brutality is deadly, as it colours a law enforcer's opinion about a suspect. Police officers are more likely to stop African- Americans without a criminal record than Caucasian or Asians with criminal records. This depicts a disturbing trend.

On March 13, Louisville police officers knocked down the apartment door of 26-year-old African American Breonna Taylor, serving a no-knock search warrant for drug suspicions. Police fired several shots during the encounter which led to her death. For weeks after Taylor's death, her family, members of the community, and protesters around the world requested that officers involved be fired and criminally charged.

Police brutality is a dangerous situation, as it is an abuse of power by those who are meant to protect us. It violates the right to be free from discrimination, the right to liberty and security, and the right to equal protection under the law.

Thanking you,

Archisha Das,
Class- 8D
Modern High School for Girls

WORLD: BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT (USA)

To Whom It May Concern

Human rights are the foundation stone of mankind. Every man is born free and aspires to live in freedom and peace. Human rights reflect the minimum standards necessary for people to live with dignity.

The Black Lives Matter Movement is the outcome of the injustice suffered by the vulnerable black communities since the beginning of our society and that persist today. The harrowing incident of George Floyd, an African American

who was strangled to death after a white police officer knelt on his neck is a testimony of the fact that racial segregation still exists in the United States and has once again brought to fore the dire need of implementation of international human rights. At its worst, unlawful use of force by police, the law enforcement body of a country, can result in people being deprived of the right to live as it may lead to arbitrary arrests, unlawful detentions, custodial violence and extra-judicial executions.

Human rights kindle in the heart of human beings and are paradoxically extinguished by brutality of human beings themselves.

Thanking you,

Saanvi Somani
Class 8C
Modern High School for Girls, Kolkata

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WORLD: ROHINGYA GENOCIDE (MYANMAR)

To Whom It May Concern

Human rights are basic rights that belong to all of us. They are key values in our society such as fairness, dignity, equality and respect. They are an important means of protection for us all, especially those who may face abuse, neglect and isolation.

A key violation of these human rights is the violence against Rohingya Muslims. The Rohingya genocide is a series of ongoing persecutions and torture by the Myanmar government of the Rohingya people, a minority ethnic Muslim community. The crisis forced over a million Rohingyas to leave behind their homes and lives to flee to other countries. These Rohingya Muslims have gone through targeted killings, gang rapes, torture, and acts so heinous that they are considered genocide. Thousands of Rohingya women have been raped, sexually assaulted, or abused in some way or the other.

In August 2018, the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights declared that Burmese military generals should be tried for genocide

when they reported their findings of the investigation into the August–September 2017 events. On 23 January 2020, the International Court of Justice ordered Myanmar to prevent genocidal violence against its Rohingya minority and to preserve evidence of past attacks.

The international attention and condemnation this issue has received pales compared to the atrocity of acts committed against the Rohingyas. They need to be helped, and Myanmar must ensure that its minority populations are safe.

Thanking you,
Ritisha Singh
Class 8D
Modern High School for Girls, Kolkata

WORLD: CURTAILING THE RIGHT TO DISSENT (MYANMAR)

To Whom It May Concern

Human rights are the basic rights and freedoms that belong to every person in the world. They are based on values like dignity, fairness, equality and respect. They protect vulnerable groups from abuse, allow people to stand up to societal corruption and encourage freedom of speech and expression.

In Myanmar, many young poets have been arrested for criticizing government policies. Paing Pho Min, a talented poet is now spending six years behind bars, just for peacefully exercising his rights. It is indeed sad that he has to spend six years in prison, simply because he criticized or gave his opinion on the government. This issue is even more critical now, when people in overcrowded prisons such as Paing Pho are at a greater risk of contracting Covid-19.

International outrage and widespread condemnation of this violation can go a long way in helping Myanmar embrace democratic ideals and help save Paing Pho's life.

Thanking you,
Nandini Jhunjhunwala

Class 8
Modern High School for Girls, Kolkata

WORLD: CHILD LABOUR (AFRICA)

To Whom It May Concern

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a document that mentions the human rights we are all entitled to. Human rights make sure that everyone, irrespective of who they are or where they come from, gets a right to the basic facilities like shelter and food. They give humans freedom, equality, and protection.

Child labour and low wages are both violations of human rights. The coffee plantations in Africa involve intensive manual work for which workers often work under intense heat for up to ten hours a day. Many face health risks because of exposure to dangerous agrochemicals. The pay scale is so low that often children have to leave school to meet a family's basic living. Forced labour is common and labourers suffer from physical violence and threats of loss of work or wages. They live in miserable conditions and do not even receive enough to put food on the table for themselves and their families.

We must advocate for a more stringent enforcement of the number of hours people are supposed to work, the minimum wage and that everyone has the right to work in dignity and be treated with respect. We have to help safeguard the rights of these vulnerable workers.

Thanking you,
Sharanya Isha Sengupta
Class 8D
Modern High School for Girls, Kolkata

WORLD: MALE GUARDIANSHIP SYSTEM (SAUDI ARABIA)

To Whom It May Concern

Human rights are certain inalienable rights that belong to all of us because we are human. They acknowledge that we all deserve to be treated fairly, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, nationality, or anything else that divides us because, after all, we are human. They help minorities or those who might need protection stand up for themselves.

Many women's rights defenders in Saudi Arabia face unfair punishment and are imprisoned for standing up for their rights. Nassima-Al Sada is a prominent women's rights activist who campaigned fiercely to end the male guardianship system. However, she was imprisoned for her human rights work. Defending others' rights should not be a crime.

Women's rights work is crucial and is a prerequisite for true equality, empowerment, and development. Therefore, we must advocate for them.

Thanking you,

Saanvi Fatehpuria
Class 8D
Modern High School for Girls, Kolkata

WORLD: HUMAN TRAFFICKING

To Whom It May Concern

As global citizens and young adults, we must advocate for human rights. It is our responsibility to ensure that we as a global community, do not stray from our values of liberty, equality and democracy.

One of the most horrendous human right violations is human trafficking. In human trafficking, children and women are smuggled across borders for the purpose of forced labour and slavery. Human trafficking is one of the worst crimes ever, as not only does it work on exploiting the vulnerable, but its foundations also lie in seeing humans as objects, which we can own and sell.

Men, woman and children who are victims of human trafficking are separated from their families. They have to undergo conditions that are too

horrible to even describe. Once they are sold, it gets worse as they are made to live in filth, work continuously without time to breathe. They undergo sexual and mental abuse and trauma. These horrors scar them forever and human trafficking is one of the worst affronts of human rights.

We must work together to crack down on human trafficking and help to make the world a better place.

Thanking you,

Krttika Mahipal
Class 8 D
Modern High School for Girls, Kolkata

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WORLD: RELIGIOUS TERRORISM (YEMEN)

To Whom It May Concern

Everyone needs access to medicine, food and water, clothes, and shelter. By including these in a person's basic human rights, everyone has a baseline level of dignity. Unfortunately, there are still millions of people out there who do not have these necessities. Human rights protect vulnerable groups from abuse. Human rights encourage freedom of speech and expression. We can speak freely without fear of brutal reprisal. Human rights give people the freedom to practice their religion (or not practice any).

Violence has occurred repeatedly throughout history, from the Crusades to the Holocaust to modern terrorism in the name of religion.

The war in Yemen is a prime example of this. Saudi Arabia is financially aiding the Yemeni government, but they have gone to extreme measures. The number of civilian bombings in Yemen is atrocious. Thousands of people have lost their lives. This is a humanitarian crisis. The Saudi coalition has launched more than 18,000 airstrikes. This is unacceptable and we must rise in action to prevent such crises in the future.

Thanking you,

Vanishri Bajaj
Class - 8D
Modern High School for Girls, Kolkata

WORLD: WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION

To Whom It May Concern

Human rights are about recognising that we all are human and should not be differentiated on the basis of caste, creed, gender, etc. In many workplaces still discrimination is prevalent. We all have the right to work and also the right to get the same treatment and same amount of payment. It is the duty of the government and the duty of the people to see that our rights are being followed properly.

In many jobs some women are still not receiving promotions because of their gender. The pay gap is a negative indication of our society. If we make it harder for half of the world population to earn fair wages, we are doing something wrong. We must work towards this issue to achieve equality in the workplace.

Thanking you,

Pearl Kaur
Class 8
Modern High School for Girls, Kolkata

WORLD: DISABILITY RIGHTS

To Whom It May Concern

Human rights are certain rights that we are entitled to that play an important role in modern societies. A prime example of the importance of human rights is that they protect the vulnerable, like those with special needs. People with special needs continue to be at a heightened risk of abuse and face serious barriers in the justice system, despite legal provisions to safeguard their rights. Some people with psychosocial disabilities are even

shackled and chained or locked up in small, confined spaces—due to stigma associated with mental health conditions and lack of appropriate community-based support services. We must work towards addressing mental health stigma.

Disability rights are important because it is a tool for ensuring that people with disability have access to the same rights and opportunities as everybody else. Unless we advocate for the strict enforcement of the provisions provided to those with special needs, we will never be able to ensure an equal society with equal opportunities for all.

Thanking you,

Kamakshi Baid
Class 8D
Modern High School for Girls, Kolkata

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WORLD: ILL TREATMENT OF TRANSGENDER PRISON INMATES

To Whom It May Concern

Human rights are the basic rights that every human is entitled to irrespective of their caste, gender, nationality or financial status. These rights form the standard which allows all people to live with equality, dignity, freedom, justice and peace.

Human rights guarantee people the means necessary to satisfy their basic needs such as food, housing, and education. They protect people against abuse and oppression by those who abuse their power.

Many human rights have been violated nationally. An example is the deplorable treatment of transgender inmates in prison. In most prisons around the globe, transgender inmates are mistreated, discriminated against and threatened. According to Amnesty International, an organization focused on human rights, transgender inmates have been the victim of violence, ill treatment and torture by fellow inmates as well as prison officials

internationally. Many transgender inmates are also in need of special resources and support, which is missing in these prisons. This is a violation of their identity and gender as well as of the human rights protecting them against gender-based violence and abuse. We must work towards changing our prisons from jails to correctional homes.

Thanking you,

Krittika Chakraborty
Class 8 C
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WORLD: MINORITY LANGUAGE BAN (SLOVAKIA)

To Whom It May Concern

Human rights reflect the minimum standards necessary for people to live with dignity. Human rights give people the freedom to choose how they live, how they express themselves, and what kind of government they want to support, among many other things. Human rights also guarantee people the means necessary to satisfy their basic needs, such as food, housing, and education. This is why human rights are important for every citizen living in the world.

One of the cases where international human rights are violated is forbidding the use of indigenous languages (the right to participate in cultural life). The Slovak parliament made it largely illegal for its citizens to use any language other than Slovak. The use of minority languages in “official” situations is now punishable by fines of up to €5,000. The 2009 amendment has been severely criticized by Hungarians in Slovakia, as well as the government, civil organizations and general public of neighbouring Hungary, for being discriminatory toward Hungarians and their rights to use their Hungarian language.

It is necessary for people living in Slovakia to have the right to speak whatever language they want. It is their space, their area and therefore they should be comfortable living in it. It will not be possible until they can communicate freely in their regional/known language.

Thanking you,
Yashvi Khetawat
Class 8D
Modern High School for Girls, Kolkata

WORLD: BOKO HARAM ATROCITIES (NIGERIA)

To Whom It May Concern

Human rights are a set of rights which every human is entitled to. Today, with the advent of social media, almost all the nations of the world promise to ensure its citizen's human rights. However, the meaning and extent of it differ from place to place.

In recent times, the central African state of Cameroon has been grappling with diverse security challenges that present a potent threat to its national stability and development which include the Boko Haram jihadist sect infiltration in the Far North region that has killed millions of people and forced an estimated hundred thousand Nigerians from the North-eastern states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa to flee to Cameroon as refugees, the dominance of the political dynasty of President Paul Biya that has continued to undermine the prospects of democratization in Cameroon and the simmering poverty, unemployment and absence of democratic deliverables in the Anglophone regions.

Thanking you,
Maahi Agarwal
Class 8C
Modern High School for Girls, Kolkata

WORLD: CURTAILING THE RIGHT TO PROTEST (ALGERIA)

To Whom It May Concern

Human rights are the moral principles that describe certain standards of human behaviour and are regularly protected in municipal and international law. They are commonly understood and known as inalienable, fundamental rights. They are applicable everywhere and at all times and, in that sense, they are universal.

Khaled Drareni, an Algerian journalist, was arrested on the 7th March 2019 while covering a protest. He was released later but was arrested again on the 27 March 2019 and has been locked up ever since. His arrest and imprisonment signal an escalation in the crackdown on freedoms in Algeria and are a major blow to Algerians' hopes for reform. On 15th September Khaled was sentenced, on appeal, to two years in prison for "incitement to unarmed gathering" and "harming the integrity of national territory". It is crucial for the future of human rights in Algeria that he is set free. His voice was an important one and no democracy can survive by silencing voices, rather than creating dialogue.

Thanking you,

Abhyuditi Choudhary

Class 8

Modern High School for Girls, Kolkata

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INDIA: CURTAILING THE RIGHT TO DISSENT

To Whom It May Concern

Human rights are a set of principles that apply to all individuals- regardless of their race, ethnicity, sex, age, religion, caste or socioeconomic status. These rights guarantee freedom, equality, security and well-being. No individual or government should be allowed to violate these rights.

In September, the Government of India passed three farm bills and received fierce backlash from the farmers in Punjab and Haryana. They travelled to Delhi in peaceful protest. When they were not granted their desirable spot for protest, they took to the streets. The police threw tear gas and water

cannons to stop them. According to the Chemical Weapons Convention of 1993, tear gas is too dangerous to be used in warfare. If it is so harmful that we had to ban it in international wars, how can the police use it against citizens of our own country? No nation can survive without its farmers, and they feed us. It is our duty to simply allow them the right to protest peacefully.

This is a complete violation of one of our most fundamental human rights- the right to dissent.

The police reaction was completely unlawful. They should be held accountable for their actions.

Thanking you,

Ishana Kandhari
Class 8C
Modern High School for Girls, Kolkata

INDIA: CENSORING THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND EXPRESSION

To Whom It May Concern

The right to freedom of expression is an essential part of any democracy and a vital part of our constitution. This right includes freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. The ability to express our opinion and speak freely is essential to bring about change in society. Putting limits on freedom of speech only creates a slippery slope where more and more beliefs and stances become censored, edited, or never heard.

In May 2012, police in Tamil Nadu filed sedition complaints against thousands of people who had peacefully protested the construction of a nuclear power plant in Kudankulam. This is nothing short of an abuse of power. If we keep censoring voices that need to be heard, we will not remain a democracy.

Despite a ruling by the Indian Supreme Court that freedom of expression cannot be suppressed on account of threats of violence, the police routinely arrest individuals based on the reactions to their speech.

Stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra faced contempt charges over a series of tweets criticising the Supreme Court for granting TV anchor Arnab Goswami interim bail on Wednesday. This was a controversial judgement, and his right to comment on it was encroached upon.

We must protest against the constant political censorship, as we fight to hold on to our shared values as a nation, and fight for democracy.

Thanking you,

Khyati Jaju

Class 8D

Modern High School for Girls, Kolkata

INDIA: FORCED EVICTIONS DURING A PANDEMIC

To Whom It May Concern

Human rights are rights that protect the vulnerable in society. Every year, millions of people around the world are forcibly evicted from their homes and their land, often leaving them living in extreme poverty and destitution. Forced eviction is the permanent or temporary removal against their will of individuals, families or communities from the homes or land which they occupy, without the provision of other sources of protection.

The mantra we all chant in this Covid-19 situation is 'stay safe, stay home.' However, how will one stay safe if they are evicted? India forcibly evicted at least 20,000 people from their homes during this pandemic. Furthermore, nearly 15 million people across India currently live under the threat of displacement. These numbers may shock us, but we need to remember that these are not mere statistics. These are real people. People who have lost not just their livelihood, income, health, but also now their homes and a sense of safety.

We must work towards reducing evictions, by helping change the guidelines where eviction is legal. We must work towards delayed rent options and the

federal and state governments supporting people who cannot afford rent. With millions of people taking pay cuts, this situation has to be addressed effectively to minimise the disastrous fallout.

Thanking you,

Brishti Daruka
Class 8D
Modern High School for Girls, Kolkata

INDIA: HATHRAS -MULTIPLE VIOLATIONS

To Whomever It May Concern

Human rights are basic rights that belong to all of us simply because we are human. Human rights are the articulation of the need for justice, tolerance, mutual respect, and human dignity. To protect human rights is to ensure that people receive some degree of decent, humane treatment. It is, in a sense, to treat them as if they are less than others and undeserving of respect and dignity.

A Dalit woman was raped and brutally assaulted by four upper-caste men in Hathras. The family members of the Dalit woman, who died days after the assault, were pressured into withdrawing the case and were also being stopped from talking to the media. Apart from a complete ban on media in Hathras, reporters and journalists were intimidated and roughed up by the police.

They were physically prevented from taking pictures and shooting videos of protests being staged by activists, students, or politicians. There was an attempt to cover up the case.

This is a violation of freedom of speech, right to information and violation of social security. It is a grave issue and one that we must work towards. This was an atrocious attempt to curb the freedom of expression and limit the powers of the press. This was a horrible human rights violation which needs to be addressed. National outrage at the incident is necessary if we want the

respective authorities to apologise and make sure that the family members of the victims are safe.

Thanking you,

Adrija Mukherjee.
Class 8D
Modern High School for Girls, Kolkata

INDIA: INTERNET SHUTDOWN IN KASHMIR

To Whom It May Concern

Human rights are basic rights that belong to all of us simply because we are human. They embody key values in our society such as fairness, dignity, equality and respect. They are an important means of protection for us all, especially those who may face abuse, neglect and isolation.

Internet shutdowns are more like collective punishment than a tactical response. When the internet is off, people's ability to express themselves freely is limited, the economy suffers, journalists struggle to upload photos and videos documenting government overreach and abuse, students are cut off from lessons, taxes cannot be paid on time, and those needing health care cannot get consistent access. India- the world's largest democracy- is the global leader in shutdowns. When the Indian government blocked access to the internet in Kashmir for months in late 2019, Indian officials justified the action by saying it was necessary to temporarily limit access to the internet during periods of crisis to avoid "permanent loss of life".

This was an affront of the right to free speech, and we must work towards making sure this right is not violated.

Thanking you,

Vrinda Sarda
Class 8
Modern High School for Girls, Kolkata

INDIA: DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY

To Whom It May Concern

Human rights are basic rights that belong to all of us simply because we are human. They embody key values in our society such as fairness, dignity, equality and respect. They are an important means of protection for us all, especially those who may face abuse, neglect and isolation. Violations of human rights are cruel and unjust.

A pressing issue is the trials and hardships members of the LGBTQIA+ community have to go through to avail these rights.

Progressive Supreme Court rulings such as the one decriminalising consensual sex between same-sex couples are paving the way towards a brighter future. The Madras High Court issued a verdict in April 2019 to allow transgender women to marry under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. However, it is not uncommon for these couples to face widespread discrimination and abuse. We must work towards ending these stereotypes. Many LGBTQIA+ people are beaten up and feel unsafe expressing their sexual orientation in public. The community needs all our support for a brighter future where all humans are treated equally.

Thanking you,

Gargi Patel
Class 8D
Modern High School for Girls, Kolkata

INDIA: DISPLACEMENT OF TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

To Whom It May Concern

Human rights are basic rights that should be granted to us all. They incorporate important values in society such as justice, equality and respect. They are important since they act as a protection for us all, especially those who face abuse, neglect and injustice. They also allow us to speak up and challenge the authority without being persecuted.

The displacement of tribal communities in India is a significant issue. After the order of the Supreme Court directing state governments to evict members of tribal communities and other forest communities, on February 13, 2019, nearly another 2 million people from tribal communities and forest-dwellers remain at risk of forced displacement and loss of livelihoods. New development projects are the main reasons for the displacement of the tribal communities. While these are important, we must ensure that our indigenous communities do not have to lose their homes as a result. They are now being persecuted by the government and legal institutions to acquire the forests and their resources.

Thanking you,

Lipika Jhunjhunwala.

Class 8 D

Modern High School for Girls, Kolkata

INDIA: COW-VIGILANTES AND MOB LYNCHINGS

To Whom It May Concern

Human rights ensure that everyone has access to basic human needs of food, clothing and shelter. These rights are in place to provide protection to vulnerable groups in the society in each country. The main objective of human rights is to see that nobody is discriminated on the basis of their colour, religion, gender, ethnicity and similar factors.

‘Mob lynching’ is a term we hear frequently in India in recent times. The self-proclaimed cow-vigilantes engage in lynching people who they suspect to be transporting beef. The Muslim community faces the maximum brunt of this violence; people have faced death due to violent beatings by mobs. Mob lynching is a violation of the Indian Constitution which states that everybody

has the right to consume what they want without any discrimination and in most of these cases the victim does not get justice. It is high time that we condemn these acts of violence.

Thanking you,

Tisha Mitter

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