

IELTS Academic Reading Sample Paper 10

Read the article about human rights and answer the questions.

Writing and Righting Rights

A ‘Morality is a private and costly luxury’, wrote the author Henry James, in a statement that seems to condemn all the poor and mistreated to the rubbish heap. Indeed, while morality has been defined in the United Nations; ‘human rights’ declarations, upholding such values is neither cheap nor straightforward.

B The declaration, formed and ratified after the Second World War, and in particular the dreadful treatment of those affected by the Holocaust, focused mainly on civil and political rights. Despite international support and the compelling nature of the statements it sought to uphold, the document proved too vague for use in court. Consequently, in the 1960s, two more covenants, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, were added so as to make the declaration more legally binding.

C During the years that followed, support for the two covenants split. Capitalist countries put more emphasis on upholding the political and civil rights enshrined in the former covenant. Communist countries favoured the social and economic rights of the latter. And while the West accused the Soviet Union of neglecting citizens’ civil rights, the Soviet government’s response was that it considered social and economic rights more important. Current communist governments make the same argument today.

D Activist groups, at least those that were founded in the west such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have unsurprisingly focused on civil rights. By exposing the plight of torture victims and political prisoners, they have managed to put pressure on unjust regimes, and, with their not inconsiderable clout, have occasionally managed to shame leaders into improving conditions. Much less emphasis has been placed on the second covenant, meaning that socio-economic rights, such as housing, food, health care and fair wages, have gone unchecked. This is set to change, however, as human-rights groups seek to persuade governments to give equal importance to the right to vote as to the right to a home and regular meals.

E Considering the size of the population who are not currently benefitting from such provisions, this may seem like a fool’s errand. But human rights veterans have achieved the seemingly impossible before. Twenty five years ago, nobody believed that Amnesty International’s letter-writing and lobbying tactics could bring down torturers and censors, yet they have succeeded on multiple occasions.

F However, social and economic rights are new territory for these groups, and the goal that bit harder to achieve. Campaigners within these organizations are understandably apprehensive. Even so, Amnesty International spent several years drawing up provisional changes to its policy in order to explicitly incorporate economic and social

rights into their mandate. These were discussed and adopted at a meeting of hundreds of delegates in Senegal in 2001.

G Amnesty's new mission has enabled it to work on a much wider range of issues. In the Palestine territories, it campaigns against curfews and rights to work. In Kenya, it highlighted how lack of secure tenure leads to people living in slum conditions that lacked basic sanitation and policing.

H Amnesty's workload has been alleviated by the fact that Economic, social and cultural rights are now widely recognized as enforceable in both national and international courts of law. Mechanisms have been developed at the UN and in African, American and European regional systems that enable victims of violations to enforce their economic, social and cultural rights. Policies have been put into place to ensure that aspects such as health, education, housing, food, poverty, cultural rights, sanitation and water are monitored.

I Despite the advances, great challenges remain. Under the Obama government of the US, such ideals are still considered 'goals' and 'aspirations' rather than rights, and a number of influential states continue to be skeptical about the validity of individual claims to economic, social and cultural human rights. Meanwhile, those countries that accept the new rights do not always safeguard them in their national constitutions, or provide effective remedies for the victims of such violations.

J And while some governments make excuses for failing to take action, claiming they lack the necessary resources, Amnesty International sees it as a lack of political will or purposeful discrimination. 'Now that economic cultural and social rights are based on and are enforceable by international law,' they say, 'they demand immediate respect and cannot be deferred to the future'.

1. Match each heading to the most suitable paragraph.

Paragraph A

2. Paragraph B

3. Paragraph C

4. Paragraph D

5. Paragraph E

6. Paragraph F

7. Paragraph G

8. Paragraph H

9. Paragraph I

10. Paragraph J

True, False, or Not given

11. Amnesty fights for both individuals and groups involved in human rights violations.

12. Amnesty workers are worried that, by they are taking on too big an objective.

13. Obama's government has neglected human social and economic rights.

14. The passage gives an example of a campaign to improve education in Kenya.

