

International Human Rights Law and Communication Strategies

Maria Edet Umo

Faculty of Law Kampala International University Uganda
Email: umomaria@kiu.ac.ug

ABSTRACT

International Human Rights Law (IHRL) serves as a crucial framework for safeguarding fundamental human rights worldwide. However, its effectiveness is deeply influenced by communication strategies that promote awareness, advocacy, and policy implementation. This paper examines the relationship between IHRL and communication strategies, highlighting the role of media, digital platforms, and advocacy techniques in advancing human rights. It examines challenges such as misinformation, censorship, and state control over media, as well as the opportunities presented by technological advancements and grassroots activism. Through case studies, the paper demonstrates how effective communication can mobilize public opinion and influence policy, ensuring that human rights advocacy remains resilient and adaptive in an evolving global landscape.

Keywords: International Human Rights Law, Communication Strategies, Human Rights Advocacy, Media Influence, Digital Activism, Misinformation.

INTRODUCTION

International human rights law (IHRL) is among the most important social mechanisms for the promotion and protection of humankind's dignity and fundamental rights. It is practised holistically and globally, expressly invoking international law for the protection, redress, and recognition of rights. The practical applications of implementing IHRL are diverse, affecting rights protection and mechanisms for numerous nations and people, including the training of human rights experts and programs of national implementation projects. IHRL delineates worldwide codes for rights enforcement and seeks to make the law understandable and usable for rights advocates at all jurisdictional levels. Yesterday's theories and policy practices shape today's political, civil, and economic rights; today's practices shape tomorrow's, and so on. IHRL is an extensive network of treaties, rules, and standards developed over the past fifty years that affect international, domestic, regional, and national levels of law. Unlike other disciplines, IHRL is an evolving discipline developing transnational and globally binding resolutions. Nowadays, IHRL improves hundreds of undemocratic nations' legal frameworks aimed at policy development, legislation drafting, and direct advocacy for sustainable solutions and projects, according to countries' specific needs and prevailing rights abuse, in collaboration with GoNGO organizations. Understanding IHRL is vital for the effective creation, promotion/belief advocacy, implementation of policies, and the drafting of complaints to uphold a particular human rights view. It is essential for understanding and useful in shaping public opinion, which in turn is critical for the aforementioned. In case somebody's specific rights are violated, the knowledge of law can be used to challenge the violator through judicial means. Judges are primarily focused on the interpretation and practical application of the law rather than on real moral considerations. IHRL is a system that acts as a catalyst to focus thinking on fundamental rights when attempting to redress an injustice [1, 2].

Key Concepts and Principles

International Human Rights Law (IHRL) is based on the notion that all humans are entitled to certain fundamental rights because they are human or because they are members of a particular group. These rights are inalienable and universal, and therefore applicable to all individuals regardless of their nationality, citizenship, or adherence to any particular ideology or religion. The international community has acknowledged these basic rights through the drafting of numerous conventions and treaties that must be adhered to by its member states. One of the fundamental principles underlying IHRL is that of non-discrimination. Although most legal systems have been based on the principle of equality, it is widely acknowledged that to ensure that equal rights are guaranteed to marginalized groups, affirmative action must be taken. In this sense, rights do not necessarily have to be identical but must be suitable and adequate for the disadvantaged group to safeguard their full and equal enjoyment. The rationale for this is that in the same way that immigrants have the right to receive information in their mother tongue, indigenous people have the right to receive technical information in a way they understand. Although there is no single, straightforward answer as to what is meant by “human rights,” for this text, it might be helpful to conceptualize them as enshrined in the International Bill of Rights. Broadly defined, human rights are “rights and freedoms that it is generally believed should be available to every person.” The essential key terms related to this multidimensional concept are interdependent. They define and inform each other, meaning that to respect and ensure the “civil and political rights” of an individual, there must be certain conditions present, such as the “realization of economic, social, and cultural rights.” Similarly, the “denial of social and economic rights” not only undermines an individual’s “efforts to enjoy civil and political rights” but also stands as a “stark violation of standards of accountability, which requires states and other actors to answer for the enjoyment or denial of all these rights” [3, 4].

The Role of Communication in Advancing Human Rights

Over the past few decades, it has been increasingly realized how pivotal communication is in the progress to the fulfillment of human rights. The White House Conference on Libraries and the Great Society City Libraries later became pivotal in the installation of LSCAs in state libraries. They were 3.1 targeted for the Native Americans by the LSCA. A report was prepared regarding the luncheon and putting the Senate in some kind of confrontation with the House of Congress [5, 6]. Efforts began anew regarding discriminatory practices in libraries and in getting New Jersey Libraries going cooperatively. Again, there were Davis's ventures with the Progressive Party, but it was a gimmick to promote the party of that he was a candidate. Any growth on that issue in NJ was thwarted and set back by the antics of Drumthwacket, who followed Nixon in that regard. Rather than let it grow, as was done in other states, NJPL maidcrushed it, just as it later moved to suppress free hosting in Newark and elsewhere. Whether the South was under siege due to such training Jackson had been provided, I do not know. The drums were beating before the decision in Brown II, soon after the primaries for 1960, which included the bid for the nomination by J&K. By that time, there was also a Lowell K. Bridwell in the state, with LaRouche and Kennedy political connections. At Brown and in Newark, Peter Wenning had been the contact point, from what I was given to understand [7, 8].

Types of Communication Strategies

Communication strategies in the field of human rights are diverse and varying. Accordingly, they can be classified into different sets. A possible typology of communication strategies for human rights advocacy is discussed below. Communication strategies are grouped into three main categories, which at the same time are divided into a series of subcategories. It is important to note that the categorization of communication strategies should be understood to a certain extent as artificial. In general, a comprehensive human rights advocacy should include a mix of these strategies, depending on the specific moment and context. The impact of these communication strategies is always contingent on the audience, its context, the credibility and power of the sender, the channel used, and many other unknown variables. Therefore, the discussion on the theoretical effectiveness assumes a conceptualized average situation of a comprehensive implementation of the strategies. In general, successful communication is also a matter of being responsive and adaptive to conditions. Furthermore, these days, communications and advocacy can happen transnationally and between nearly everybody all over the world. While this opens new forms of communication and opportunities for change, it also makes it more complex and fragile. No hubris should lead advocacy to believe that the strategy that has been so carefully designed is “correct” or will work. Human rights, furthermore, involve moral judgments, which different actors comprehend differently. Advocacy should, therefore, always be conducted ethically and be aware of limitations. The strategies

must be seen as ways to strengthen a message and increase the probabilities of achieving the generally assumed desired outcome [9, 10].

Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing Communication Strategies for Human Rights

Communication strategies have been moving onto the human rights agenda in recent years. Progress is being made, and much remains to be done. The task is a big one, bogged down by a host of challenges. Even the most simple of messages, if they are critical of a government or reflect poorly on a powerful corporation, are likely to be countered by denials or a string of counter-accusations. Often, the truth is murky or buried under mountains of paper. Censored media is common, either by direct ownership by authorities or through exclusive dependence on state-owned news outlets. Tactics are easily bent against activists in hostile environments, branding them as traitors or foreign agents. Misinformation comes in many guises. Yet there is also progress, and that is why communication strategies are increasingly seen as a field of opportunity. In trying to shut out a torrent of critical narratives, governments and unscrupulous corporations open up opportunities for new narratives. Modes of communication are changing. New technologies are making news more instant and difficult to suppress. Although often filled with the same misinformation on air as any medium, they can also bring hope for a wider interpretation of events, particularly where national news sources are limited or suppress free expression. Activists and journalists innovate and, in doing so, can outmaneuver authorities who do not have a monopoly on what is meant by the truth. Thus, strategies necessarily have to be as nimble as the regimes that seek to suppress them. If a publication or a conference is canceled, a meeting banned, or a report confiscated, then alternatives should always be at hand. But as with any other aspect of best practice, there are inherent difficulties in building and adopting communication strategies. Much can depend on context, where regulatory frameworks governing media can vary greatly. In many countries, severe restrictions place heavy limits on effective communication. This can be evident through barriers to entry through charges and bureaucratic obstacles, restriction on movement and access to sources, intimidation of journalists, and direct censorship. Conversely, in certain countries, freedom of the press and civil society is far more advanced, and there are more opportunities to mount a coherent communication strategy. Finally, funders may focus on other campaign activities, neglecting what needs to be a basic starting point. Moreover, communication techniques are rapidly expanding with changing technology, and to be effective, key advocates must have appropriate skills, training, and resources [11, 12].

Technological Advancements and Human Rights Advocacy

Technological advancements have had an irrevocable impact on human rights advocacy and, by extension, communication strategies. Innovations such as social media, text and image-based mobile applications, and data analytics are changing the way human rights advocacy organizations disseminate and generate content. Opportunities for engaging audiences in new ways have multiplied. New tools, designed to boost interaction around shared or original content, have the potential to capitalize on engagement. Organizations have developed tools for public petitions that target corporations and global governments. Online petitions generated by these tools reach the target audience through a variety of platforms, maximizing the potential for real-world change [13, 14]. One of the most exciting tools in the digital sphere is the capacity for real-time reporting and mobilization that platforms permit. Digital crowdsourcing can result in viral exposés of human rights abuses. Moreover, social media can facilitate more dynamic and decentralized forms of grassroots advocacy. Simple mechanisms, such as a 'share and tag' of posts and images, can spread information and associated calls to action far beyond the initial stakeholder. The transformative power of this broad sharing is evident when it is accompanied by hashtags, some of which subsequently go viral. Yet, for all the potential that digital communication has in the realm of human rights advocacy, significant negating factors also exist. Wide coverage means a wider avenue for surveillance. Digital communications are bound to leave a 'data trail', concerns over which have spurred the 'Thurber effect'; that is the propensity to self-censor potential cyber activities out of fear of being monitored, blacklisted or prosecuted. Put simply, when digital rights advocates are 'over-surveilled', they are less likely to speak out and more likely to curtail their internet activities [15, 16].

Case Studies on Effective Communication Strategies in Human Rights Advocacy

The struggle for human rights, an essential part of development, is based on the idea that every human being is entitled to dignity and security. These rights cannot be achieved unless developing communication strategies becomes an essential part of human rights advocacy efforts. Informed individuals who recognize violations and are willing to take action are necessary for advocacy campaigns to gain significant impact. Here, there are several case studies where effective communication strategies

that different human rights advocacy campaigns employed are analyzed. There is a useful tool that practitioners and advocates, be they policy-makers, grassroots, or a combination, can hopefully adapt or imitate to promote their causes [17, 18]. In 2007-2008, the need became increasingly evident to intensify efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. The successful communication strategy was based on a step-by-step approach to engage the active participation of all interested parties and to generate local interest through a series of activities. The strategy went further than merely organizing a business training workshop by setting up a self-sustainable system for ongoing training and networking. The plan included: (1) joint planning workshops with relevant local authorities and local stakeholders; (2) organization of a series of three training workshops; (3) translation and publication of training materials; and (4) follow-up training, networking and informal events to link participants and attract women to the project. In this way, even with a limited budget, the relevance and desirability of the gender project was immediately recognized by the population, making project implementation much easier and the proposed activities truly sustainable [15, 19]. In the mid-1990s, nearly 30 civil wars were waged globally. The majority of these wars were fought over national identity. As a result, the world was globally and simplistically classified into two categories, 'jihad' and 'McWorld,' both deemed threatening, particularly to democracy and human rights. Having fought a civil racial war, South Africa was approached by people and countries struggling with their identity issues. The newly developed communication strategy was based on the implicit promotion of a generic alternative approach rather than the explicit promotion of one's approach. Local culture and communication channels were used where possible. Advisory and facilitation services were also offered to those seeking assistance. For example, South Africa unofficially hosted various groups, Indonesian authorities seeking to deal with the East Timor issue, Sri Lanka, and several European countries [20, 21].

CONCLUSION

The relationship between International Human Rights Law and communication strategies is fundamental to the protection and promotion of human rights. Effective communication is essential for educating the public, influencing policy, and ensuring accountability. While challenges such as censorship, misinformation, and digital surveillance pose significant threats to advocacy efforts, advancements in technology and innovative communication techniques provide new opportunities for engagement and mobilization. By leveraging diverse communication strategies—ranging from traditional media to digital activism—human rights advocates can strengthen their efforts and create lasting social impact. Moving forward, a dynamic, ethical, and adaptive approach to communication is necessary to navigate the evolving landscape of human rights advocacy.

REFERENCES

1. Gaggioli G, Sobol I. What role for IHL and HRL in the fight against terrorist networks?. In *Research Handbook on Human Rights and Humanitarian Law 2022* May 3 (pp. 309-339). Edward Elgar Publishing. ssrn.com
2. Luque Macías MJ. The States' Duty to Regulate Foreign Investment Activities Under IHRL As a Paradigm for Re-politicising IIL. In *Re-Politicising International Investment Law in Latin America through the Duty to Regulate Paradigm 2021* May 23 (pp. 105-170). Cham: Springer International Publishing. [\[HTML\]](#)
3. Cheng J, Liang X, Zhang J, Yu H, Chen Y, Ge J. Post-traumatic Reactions and Social-Emotional Competence Among Chinese High School Students Experiencing COVID-19 Lockdown: A Network Analysis. *Child Psychiatry & Human Development*. 2024 Sep 20:1-2.
4. Popa D, Ristea GA. THE RIGHT TO LIFE IN THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW. *International Journal of Communication Research*. 2021;11(1):12-9.
5. Santoso P. Television Journalist: The Challenge of Mass Communication Post the Covid-19 Pandemic. In *3rd Jogjakarta Communication Conference (JCC 2021)* 2021 Nov 29 (pp. 112-115). Atlantis Press. atlantispress.com
6. Rinaldi K. Efforts of Class IIA Pekanbaru Women's Penitentiary in Fulfilling the Rights of Inmates to Interact with Family in the Covid-19 Pandemic. *Mimbar Keadilan*. 2023 Aug 31;16(2):169-80.
7. Breland M, Venturella K, Shapiro S. Looking Back, Looking Ahead: Lessons Learned from the Pandemic (Are we Prepared for the Next Pandemic). *Library Leadership & Management*. 2023 Jul 19;37(2).

8. Wang J. How fruit moves: Crop systems, culture, and the making of the commercial blueberry, 1870–1930. *Plants, People, Planet*. 2024 Sep;6(5):1080-93.
9. Ruškus J. Transformative justice for elimination of barriers to access to justice for persons with psychosocial or intellectual disabilities. *Laws*. 2023 Jun 5;12(3):51.
10. Tampi PP, Nabella SD, Sari DP. The influence of information technology users, employee empowerment, and work culture on employee performance at the Ministry of Law and Human Rights Regional Office of Riau Islands. *Enrichment: Journal of Management*. 2022 Aug 9;12(3):1620-8. iocspublisher.org
11. Hunkenschroer AL, Kriebitz A. Is AI recruiting (un) ethical? A human rights perspective on the use of AI for hiring. *AI and Ethics*. 2023 Feb;3(1):199-213.
12. Webb A, McQuaid RW, Webster CW. Moving learning online and the COVID-19 pandemic: a university response. *World Journal of Science, Technology and Sustainable Development*. 2021 Mar 2;18(1):1-9. stir.ac.uk
13. Mustafa SM. Leveraging Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare: Safeguarding Human Rights through State Policies. In *Intersection of Human Rights and AI in Healthcare 2025* (pp. 285-308). IGI Global Scientific Publishing.
14. Gibbons ED. Toward a more equal world: the human rights approach to extending the benefits of artificial intelligence. *IEEE Technology and Society Magazine*. 2021 Mar 15;40(1):25-30.
15. Kassa BE, Sarikakis K. Shrinking communicative space for media and gender equality civil society organizations. *Feminist Media Studies*. 2022 Oct 3;22(7):1745-62.
16. Kiritchenko S, Nejadgholi I, Fraser KC. Confronting abusive language online: A survey from the ethical and human rights perspective. *Journal of Artificial Intelligence Research*. 2021 Jul 15;71:431-78. jair.org
17. Fatorić S, Daly C. Towards a climate-smart cultural heritage management. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*. 2023 Nov;14(6):e855.
18. Thornicroft G, Sunkel C, Aliev AA, Baker S, Brohan E, El Chammay R, Davies K, Demissie M, Duncan J, Fekadu W, Gronholm PC. The Lancet Commission on ending stigma and discrimination in mental health. *The Lancet*. 2022 Oct 22;400(10361):1438-80. google.com
19. Flood M, Dragiewicz M, Pease B. Resistance and backlash to gender equality. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*. 2021 Sep;56(3):393-408. deakin.edu.au
20. Conrad CR, DeMeritt JH. Unintended consequences: The effect of advocacy to end torture on empowerment rights violations. In *Examining Torture: Empirical Studies of State Repression 2014* Sep 4 (pp. 159-183). New York: Palgrave Macmillan US.
21. Wanniarachchige MK. Effects of macroeconomic disturbances on the banking sector and equity markets in Sri Lanka: with special reference to civil war and COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Innovation and Sustainable Development*. 2024;18(1-2):71-90. [\[HTML\]](#)

| |
|--|
| <p>CITE AS: Maria Edet Umo (2025). International Human Rights Law and Communication Strategies. NEWPORT INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LAW, COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGES. 5(1): 22-26. https://doi.org/10.59298/NIJLCL/2025/5.1.2226</p> |
|--|