

## **Psychology matters in Human Rights - Human Rights matter in Psychology**

EFPA policy and action in the area of Human Rights and Psychology.

Draft developed by the Task Force Human Rights, May 2015.

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The GA has established a Task Force Human Rights and Psychology for the period 2013 – 2015. In the preamble describing EFPA's role regarding Human Rights, it is stated that:

*"Considering the ongoing threat to Human Rights in the world, EFPA should more strongly articulate psychologists' responsibilities and develop a policy for counteracting Human Rights violations.*

*Human Rights are of crucial importance to everyone in the world, psychologists included.*

*EFPA, like any professional organization, shall do what is within its scope and capabilities to:*

- *raise awareness of Human Rights and (risks of) Human Rights violations,*
- *prevent Human Rights violations, and*
- *alleviate the effects of Human Rights violations."* (Tasks and recommendations of new TF Human Rights and TF EU Calls, GA 2013)

EFPA intends to develop a policy that will enable it to take action to pursue these aims based on the unique expertise and competence of psychology. This policy shall concentrate on what psychology can add to what other social actors bring to bear. The Task Force was given the mandate to draft a proposal for this policy and action in the area of Human Rights.

The present document, to be presented at the General Assembly 2015, addresses the relation between Psychology and Human Rights and develops a policy for EFPA to raise awareness and articulate psychologists' responsibilities, capabilities and possibilities in the field of Human Rights.

### **II. HUMAN RIGHTS AND PSYCHOLOGY**

Although it is the duty of any member of a democratic society to act on Human Rights violations and to prevent their emergence as well as to reduce their negative consequences, psychologists by their knowledge and experience, have a special responsibility.

#### **A. Professional responsibilities towards individuals, peoples and society.**

According to their codes of conducts, psychologists have a specific societal responsibility.

International codes like the Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists (2008) and the EFPA Meta Code (2013) and the new EFPA Model Code, as well as national codes like those of the APA and diverse European codes equally emphasize commitment and action in the society at large in order to promote the well-being of humanity. The APA Ethics Code (2002, 2010) distinguishes enforceable rules ("Do no harm") and aspirational goals for psychologists ("Do well"). Although there are no sanctions when a psychologist does not follow the aspirational principles, they do come with obligations. The codes are clear on societal responsibility of the profession. Societal responsibility is not optional: it implies commitment.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) as a foundation for the promotion of well-being of humanity can be an immense inspiration for psychologists. The core idea of the Universal Declaration is Human Dignity. The principles formulated in the EFPA Model Code are in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and imply a professional societal responsibility and they certainly have a commitment to Human Rights. The General Assembly of EFPA has explicitly acknowledged this in July 2013: 'Human Rights are of crucial importance to everyone in the world, psychologists included'.

Professional psychologists have to accept and realize Human Rights as a normative standard for their professional behaviour.

In addition, professional psychologists and their professional organizations have to take a public position as professionals against the violation of Human Rights. Furthermore, professional psychologists are requested to publicly intervene if they with their scientific knowledge have the opportunity to foresee the negative consequences of certain kinds of public actions and threats of Human Rights violations. As stated in the EFPA Model Code (2015): 'Psychologists aim to actively prevent and report such actions as indoctrination, brainwashing or torture. Psychologists will report to the national association or relevant Human Rights bodies.' Finally, psychologists have to offer their support to alleviate the consequences of Human Rights violations if their professional knowledge and expertise can significantly contribute to a reduction in the negative consequences of those violations.

This can be done by

- describing and predicting the psychological consequences of Human Rights violations,
- delivering knowledge about psychological principles to prohibit or reduce Human Rights violations,
- offering psychological help, primarily for victims, when it comes to Human Rights violations and
- actively contribute to the promotions of Human Rights, both in the circle of professional psychologists as well as in society in general.

Responsible for these different contributions of psychology are individual professional psychologists, national psychologists' associations as well as EFPA and the EFPA bodies. Psychological interventions in the context of Human Rights violations have different addressees: Individuals, peoples and societies, but also psychologists in their professional behaviour contributing to Human Rights violations.

#### B. The contribution of psychology as a social and behavioural science to Human Rights.

Psychologists can contribute to the promotion of Human Rights not only as people and citizens, but also especially by their professional knowledge about behaviour.

A precondition for taking Human Rights as a prescriptive norm for psychologists' professional behaviour is *awareness* of the content of Human Rights and commitment to them.

Psychology as a science offers a wide scope for the *prevention of violations and the promotion* of Human Rights and the well-being of people, for example in the field of conflict management, in inclusive psychology, and certainly also in the knowledge of trauma and transgenerational violence. The further development of social science based approaches of Human Rights in all its aspects should be promoted.

Psychologists are aware of the consequences of Human Rights violations and can raise their voice as experts with the public. Many are experts in alleviating the psychological consequences of violations. This implies continuous training in the knowledge of Human Rights and related human and social behaviours: CPD (continuous professional development).

It must be absolutely clear that no psychologist should ever be involved in the planning and conduct of torture.

### III. POLICY PROPOSAL

#### (i) Human Rights and psychology: awareness, responsibility, and action

Human Rights and professional responsibilities refer to all fields of psychology. This policy proposal is tailored to meet the ambition described in EFPA's role regarding Human Rights and can be summarized as follows:

Increased *awareness* in the field of psychology, individual psychologists and member associations of

- Human Rights and (risks of) Human Rights violations;
- The relation between Human Rights and psychology.

More strongly articulate the *responsibilities* of the field of psychology, individual psychologists and member associations to do what is within its/their scope and capabilities to promote Human Rights, counteract/prevent Human Rights violations and to alleviate the effects of Human Rights violations.

EFPA's policy and action on Human Rights and Psychology acknowledges the links and mutual importance of psychology and Human Rights.

The field of psychology, EFPA and its member associations and the acts and practices of the individual members must be in accordance with the fundamental Human Rights.

A Human Rights based practice means to actively relate to the content of existing international Human Rights conventions and relevant national legislation, work to ensure that rights are respected, and react when Human Rights are at risk of being violated.

#### (ii) Recommendations for action

1. Anchor and integrate a Human Rights perspective into all EFPA activities and bodies: Boards, Standing Committees and Task Forces.
  - Make Human Rights visible in EFPA through integrating and inscribing Human Rights into statutes, codes, plans, strategic/policy documents; examine written material and add/revise; implement a check, e.g.: any Human Rights issues? How to deal with it in accordance to Human Rights?
  - Make Human Rights visible in EFPA through integrating and inscribing Human Rights into the bodies, e.g. Board of Professional Development, SC on Psychology in Education, SC on Crisis and Disaster Psychology,
  - Encourage and assist MAs to do the same as above.
  - Give due attention to Human Rights and Psychology issues in communication to MAs and the general public, e.g. press releases.
  - Develop a strategy to promote a positive Human Rights attitude.
  - Stimulate membership of psychologists in national Human Rights bodies.
  - Invite every MA to make a Human Rights group and a strategic plan for Human Rights.
2. Educate psychologists about Human Rights, their possible implication in Human Rights fulfilments, violations, and their professional responsibilities.
  - Articulate Human Rights aspects in the ethical codes of Member Associations, and inform the public about this.
  - Education in Human Rights in general, and Human Rights and Psychology in particular. An expert meeting on Education in Human Rights for Psychologists is being organized in cooperation with the EIUC in Venice.
  - Gather experts in the field to collect, discuss, and develop a Human Rights curriculum for psychologists.
  - Get to know social science theories of Human Rights, like e.g. the Human Rights Capability approach of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum.

([http://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/Human\\_Rights\\_and\\_Capabilities.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/Human_Rights_and_Capabilities.pdf); <http://hd-ca.org/>)

- Promote a basic knowledge of the UN-apparatus, its conventions, control- and reporting mechanisms, and jurisdiction; psychologists have to know the Human Rights landscape in order to navigate in it.
  - Provide easy access to relevant literature, tests and tools to arrange courses, and assist MAs to do the same.
  - Examine how Human Rights are taught in regular courses.
  - Learn to translate psychological concepts related to Human Rights to the public.
3. Stimulate research into the impacts of Human Rights violations and the way in which they can be prevented, contained, remedied and repaired.
- With the help of the Task Force on EU calls, looking for research funding.
  - Ask the EIUC to cooperate to establish a databank concerning psychology and Human Rights. (<http://www.eiuc.org/>)
  - Make a tradition of a Human Rights and Psychology-strand at the coming ECP's.
  - Stimulate research in Children's Rights (e.g. in cooperation with the Innocenti Institute in Florence). (<http://www.unicef-irc.org/aboutIRC/index.html>)
  - Write thematic issues in The European Psychologist.
4. Strengthen the profession's capacities and qualifications to promote Human Rights and to prevent violations and to alleviate the effects.
- Raise awareness of the contextual influences on basic Human Rights' principles,
  - Awareness of psychological practices involving detention, incarceration, forced treatment,
  - Awareness of Human Rights as protection and support to children's development, as well as the harm of Human Rights violations for caregivers and children.
  - Spread awareness of tools to identify trauma, torture, like for example the Istanbul Protocol - Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/training8Rev1en.pdf>) and the Protect questionnaire. (<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/training8Rev1en.pdf>; [http://www.pharos.nl/documents/doc/protect\\_booklet-2-english.pdf](http://www.pharos.nl/documents/doc/protect_booklet-2-english.pdf))
  - Help psychologists to obtain the professional knowledge and tools needed to assist victims of Human Rights violations in obtaining remedy and reparation; build capacity in treatment of tortured, traumatized persons.
5. Join forces with other European Human Rights agencies.
- FRA - European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
  - Regional Representative for Europe of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.
6. Collect and publish evidence and information, and support defenders of Human Rights.
- Collecting and publishing evidence, and issuing statements that draw attention to the psychological dimensions of Human Rights violations – at the side of victims as well as that of perpetrators and social systems.
  - Collecting and publishing information about the incidence of Human Rights violations in which psychological aspects are manifest, and issuing recommendations and guidelines for signalling the risk and occurrence of such violations.
  - Issuing recommendations and guidelines for preventing Human Rights violations at an institutional or societal level (e.g. "institutionalization", intolerance, interrogation, torture, etc.) with due attention for potential groups of victims (such as children, patients, detainees etc.) and perpetrators.
  - Support psychologists who in the capacity of health professionals or Human Rights defenders are exposed to injustice, risk, or violations of their own Human Rights.
7. Make a plan of action with priorities for each two years (mandate of an EFPA body).