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ETHICS

Our world is in trouble. What should we do?

OUTLINE

1. Human rights in a global world.
2. The shame of hunger.
3. Migrations.
4. War: the negation of all human rights.
5. Your projects.



1. Human rights in a global world.

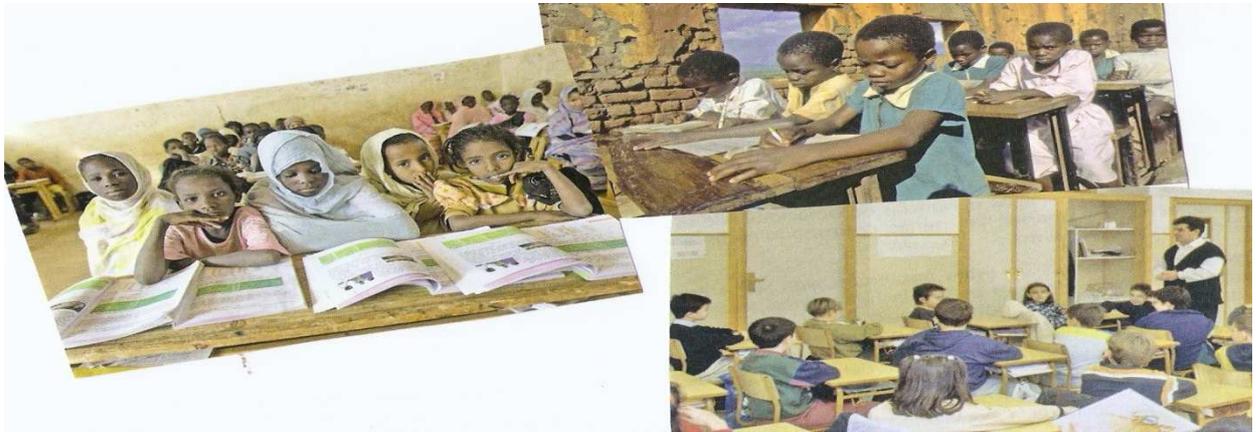
The **United Nations** is the only multilateral governmental agency with international jurisdiction over universal human rights legislation. The **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948, partly in response to the atrocities of World War II. Although the UDHR was a non-binding resolution, it is now considered the criterion to understand the definition and rights of a human life.

The UN Human Rights Council has a mandate to investigate violations of human rights. International nongovernmental organizations such as Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch promote and monitor human rights around the world.

Article 1. *All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.*

In a world of wealth and prosperity, many people still go hungry, live in poor housing without basic services such as water and toilets and grow up without education. This is not an unfortunate reality of life; it is a shocking human rights scandal that has to do with the negation of **economic, social and cultural rights**. These rights include: the rights at work, the right to education, the cultural rights of minorities and Indigenous People, the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, the right to adequate housing, the right to food, the right to water and the right to sanitation. For years it seemed almost impossible to challenge the government if you were denied these rights. In May 2013, the Optional Protocol to the **Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** came into force and, thanks to that fact, people can seek justice from the UN if their own country won't listen to their demands. We all have the **right to housing**, but 10% of people worldwide live in slums or informal settlements without access to clean water, toilets or health-care. In many occasions, their right to live there is not legally recognized, and they are forced to leave (forced evictions), becoming homeless.

The things that help keep us **healthy** (safe water, nutritious food, housing and information) are often absent or limited for people living in slums. But we all have the right to be as healthy as we can, both mentally and physically. This right includes the right to make decisions about our own bodies and health.



Primary **education** should be free and compulsory everywhere. Children need to be able to attend school without walking for hours or through minefields. They should be able to learn and enjoy school life. However, children from poor and marginalized communities are denied an education or experience discrimination.

ACTIVITIES:

1. When we talk about violations of human rights, we normally think of developing countries. However, developed nations are not an exception. Could you find violations of human rights that happen in our country?
2. Many experts make a distinction between “have rights” and “can realize rights”. Do you think this distinction makes sense? Do people have rights if they cannot live according to these rights?

2. The shame of hunger.

ARTICLE 3. *Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.*

ARTICLE 25 (1). *Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.*

The world produces enough to feed the entire global population of 7 billion people. And yet, one person in eight on the planet goes to bed hungry each night. In some countries, one child in three is underweight. The body compensates for the lack of energy by slowing down its physical and mental activities. A hungry mind cannot concentrate, a hungry body does not take initiative, and a hungry child loses all desire to play and study and becomes too weak to fight off disease, infections or diarrheas. Each year, almost seven million children die from hunger before reaching the age of five.

According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), **hunger** means consuming less than a minimum level of kilocalories. The energy and protein that people need depends on their age, sex, body size, physical activity and climate. On average, a person needs more than 2.100 kilocalories per day to allow a normal healthy life. So if you do not have enough to eat to meet energy requirements, you are hungry. Hunger can lead to **malnutrition**: a person’s diet does not provide adequate

nutrients for growth and maintenance or this person is not able to adequately utilize the food consumed due to illness. Malnutrition causes **undernutrition** (being too thin or short, suffering from micronutrient deficiencies) and **overnutrition** (being overweight, obesity). Acute hunger or **starvation** is often shown on television: hungry mothers too weak to breastfeed their children, refugees queuing for food rations, helicopters airlifting high energy biscuits...

ACTIVITY: Malnutrition includes both hunger and obesity. How can you explain that half the world is worried because they cannot eat while the other half is worried because the swimming costume does not fit?

There are 805 million undernourished people in the world today. That means one in nine people do not get enough food to be healthy and lead an active life. Hunger and malnutrition are in fact the number one risk to health worldwide –greater than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined. **However**, hunger is entirely solvable: there is enough food in the world to feed everyone in the world. Then, **why does hunger exist?**

- **Poverty trap:** people living in poverty cannot afford nutritious food for themselves and their families. This makes them weaker and less able to earn the money that would them to escape poverty and hunger. The poor are hungry and their hunger traps them in poverty. Rights are the key for people to break out the poverty trap.

- **Lack of investment in agriculture:** too many developing countries lack of agricultural infrastructure (roads, seeds, irrigation...). Researche by the FAO show that investment in agriculture is more effective in reducing poverty and hunger than investment in any other sector.

- **Climate and weather:** natural disasters such as floods, tropical storms and long periods of drought are on the rise. The world's fertile farmland is under threat from erosion, desertification and deforestation.

- **War and displacement:** across the planet, conflicts disrupt farming and food production and also force millions of people to flee their homes without the means to feed themselves. In war, food sometimes is used as weapon: soldiers will starve opponents by destroying food and local markets. Fields are often mined and water contaminated, forcing farmers to abandon their lands.

- **Unstable markets:** in recent years, the price of food products has been very unstable. When prices rise, consumers often have to buy cheaper and less-nutritious foods.

- **Food wastage:** one third of all food produced is never consumed. Producing this food also uses up precious natural resources that we need to feed the planet and adds a billion tons of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere, with comes with consequences for the climate and for food production.





3. Migrations.

ARTÍCULO 13. (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state. **(2)** Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

ARTÍCULO 14. (1) Everyone has the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution. **(2)** This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Every day, all over the world, people make the most difficult decision of their lives: to leave their homes in search of a better life. Throughout history, migration has been a fact of life. The reasons people migrate are varied and often complex: some people move to new countries to improve their economic situation or to improve their education; other leave their countries to escape human rights abuses, such as torture, persecution, armed conflict, extreme poverty and even death.

A **migrant** moves around within their own country or one country to another, usually to find work, although there may be other reasons. People who migrate into a territory are called immigrants, while at the departure point they are called emigrants. Some move voluntarily, while others are forced to leave because of economic hardship or other problems. People can migrate “regularly”, with legal permission to work and live in a country, or “irregularly”, without permission from the country they wish to work and live in. Most international migrants live in Europe followed by Asia and North America.

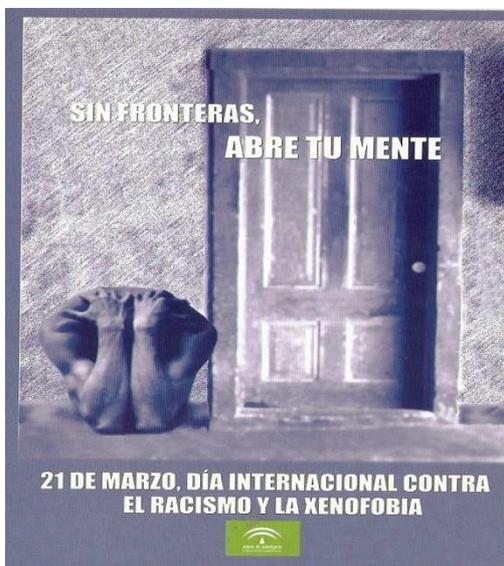
A **refugee** is a person who has fled their own country because they have suffered human rights abuses. Their government cannot or does not want to protect them so they need to ask for international protection. The 1951 UN **Refugee Convention** protects refugees from being returned to countries where they risk persecution.

An **asylum-seeker** is someone who has left their country in search of international protection, but has to be recognized as a refugee.

The journey of migrants and refugees can be full of danger and fear. Some face detention when they arrive, most of them face racism, xenophobia and discrimination. On the other hand, migrant workers are usually exploited; some suffer slavery, forced work and all sorts of abuses.

The way migration issues are presented by politicians and mass media has had a big impact on how people view migrants. Migrants are often described as “illegal immigrants”, “gate-crashers” or “invaders” who exploit host countries’ generosity. This creates the impression that migrants have no rights at all, and leads to racism and discrimination, and we forget the benefits migrants bring with them: skills, resources

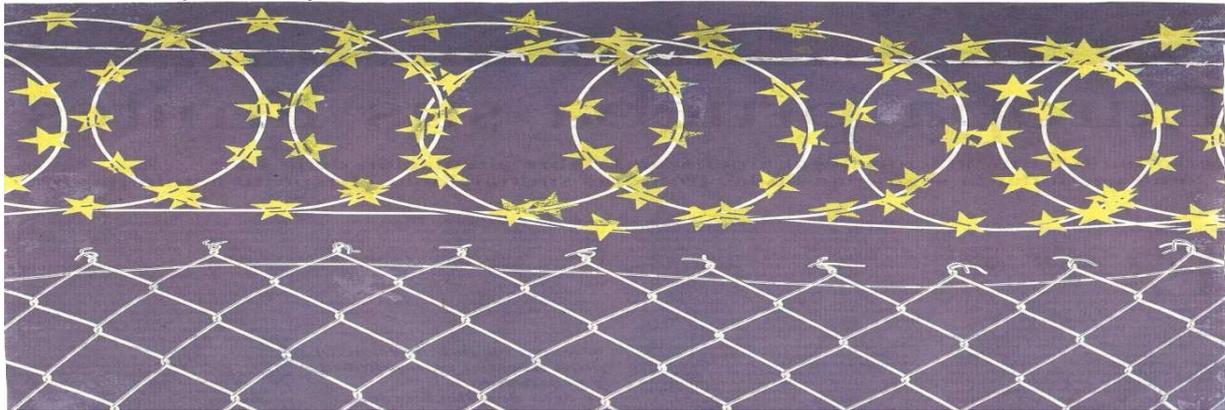
and diversity. According to the World Bank, international migration is good because workers can move to place where they are most productive. And the money migrants send home to developing countries (“remittances”) is worth three times more than what governments spend on development aid.



ACTIVITY: A lot of Spanish workers and students are around the world looking for a better life for themselves and their families. How do you think they would be considered if they were treated as we do?

4. War. The negation of all human rights.

In a recent past, the majority of nations thought that war was not a horrible act that humanity should avoid in any case, but a useful means to achieve political goals. When the interests of one's own country was at risk or could be improved, war was seen as a rational instrument. Nowadays international treaties and the common opinion consider war the worst answer to a conflict. However, war, armies and weapons still exist, and there are many places in the world where people are suffering their effects. War is a problem that extends beyond boundaries, and its solution is a common responsibility.



War (*bellum, polemos*) is an organized and often prolonged conflict that is carried out by states or non-state actors. It is generally characterised by extreme violence, social disruption and economic destruction.

ACTIVITIES:

1. If all human beings are brothers, are not all wars civil wars?
2. Maybe we are more worried about **terrorism** than about war itself. Why? What is the difference between war and terrorism?
3. In which aspects do the consequences of war affect the next generations of a country?

Wars have effects of many kinds and in several fields, although nations usually measure the **“cost of war”** in dollars, lost production, or the number of soldiers killed or wounded. But we can also measure the costs of war in terms of **individual human suffering**. And not only that of soldiers; civilians are also victims of wars, maybe the most innocent victims. Many wars have been accompanied by significant depopulations, destruction of infrastructure and resources (which can lead to famine, disease, and death in the civilian population). On the other hand, war leads to forced migration causing displacements of population (artists, scientists, writers...).

Fortunately, we have a chance at pacifism.

The history of humanity is full of violent acts, but there are also a lot of men and women who have expressed their opposition to them. We call **pacifism** all those initiatives which disagree with the idea that violence is the only means to solve conflicts, and propose other ways to solve them and to achieve a **positive and permanent peace**, a peace which includes justice and cooperation. We have to investigate what the causes of war are and try to eliminate them. Pacifist ethics views **justice, democracy and peace** as innately joined. To sum up, peace is an ethics need that cannot be reduced to the absence of war.

Activity. It is a convention to consider war as any conflict that causes a thousand victims at least. How many “silent wars” and ongoing conflicts are there in process nowadays?

5. Your projects.

Project 1. Elaborate a glossary with the most important concepts of the unit. Remember: you have to give a definition in your own words, not look for a dictionary definition.



Project 2. Explain to the class what the United Nations are and which are its most relevant organizations for peace, human rights, against hunger and war, etc.

Project 3. Design a campaign against racism and xenophobia and in support of migrant people and refugees. Look for a good slogan for your campaign.

Project 4. Discuss the problem of war and terrorism and if the fear of their consequences is only an excuse in order to close our frontiers

Project 5. You have learnt how the world is nowadays. Explain us how it could be and what we should do to make our wishes come true.



It would make your presentation more interesting if you combined your written proposals with a visual presentation.

It is also important that you do not learn the text by heart: the thing is to explain as best as possible what you have thought about in your own words and to inspire your classmates to make questions.