

They are cursed and persecuted. Their work is never noticed. They are easily betrayed by the ones they helped . They are being threatened. Mass media tell fables and creepy stories about them. They keep going where it is difficult and unbearable forgetting about themselves. They do work there. Why would they do that? Who are they really?

Human rights activists are the people who peacefully carry out community related activities which represents the protection of human rights and freedom, defined in international documents and the national legislation. First and foremost, a human rights activist is an opinionated person. They help everyone by solving various problems including ecological issues, labour rights violation, as well as draft issues, different problems concerning military service, police tortures and miscellaneous abuses occurring in the obligatory detention camps. These activities are conducted irrespectively of occupation and social status, in order to put an end to the unchecked abuses by the state agencies. Attempts are also made to improve the situation in the field of human rights and freedom. And they do not do it for the money. Why on Earth would they do it then?

Human rights activists commonly come from the group of people who had firsthand experience of having their rights violated. As a result, they made everything in their power to make sure that the justice gets served. By joining their efforts with those who found themselves in similar situations. Once they had gained the invaluable experience in this field they started providing legal support to those subjected to the problem. For example, the first Russian soldiers' Committees appeared when the parents of those eligible for conscription joined their efforts to protect their children from harassment of subordinates, and to help military employees who were wounded while participating in the military conflicts.

One of these days we've met with S.V. Krivenko who is a member of the Presidential Council on the development of civil society and human rights and the director of the

public legal initiative “A citizen and the Army”. He told us about his decision to become a human rights activist and the reasons that had driven him to make this call.



Also we have decided to study the history of the Human Rights Movement.

The International Committee of Red Cross might be considered the first international human rights organization. It was established in Geneva in 1863 for the sake of protection of human rights during armed conflicts. The French human and citizen rights League appeared in 1902. The Anti-Slavery Society was founded in Britain in 1909. It was later reformed into the Anti-Slavery International. The International Human Rights League was created in 1942. The Human Rights Movement in modern form appeared after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>1</sup>. The text of this Declaration was written by the law experts from all regions of the Earth. Having realized the global scale of repercussions of the violation the human rights,

the representatives of different countries have determined a number of basic rights, which all people are entitled to. These rights are to be protected by the state in every country. These rights include the right to life, prohibition of torture, right to a fair trial, right to respect for private and family life, freedom of thought, conscience, religion, expression, assembly, speech and freedom to move; right to participate in governing the state; right to an effective remedy, to education, etc.

In order to work effectively the human rights activists are to master a great number of philosophic concepts, legal acts and international documents ( if you do want to become a professional instead of a consummate liar). A strange as it is, most of those documents are only available in English. That's why the educated people (such as teachers, scientists, writers, poets, psychologists, lawyers) constitute the majority of human rights activists.

Condemning the violation of rights and support from the local community are vital for these organizations to succeed, since their effectiveness is at its best, when the demands for reforms are supported by the common people.

In order to get a clear idea of human rights organizations we visited the oldest one – the Moscow Helsinki Group. In the aftermath of the Helsinki Accords it was originally set up in 1976 by 11 human rights activists led by Yuri Orlov, a well-known physicist, human rights activist, columnist and community service man, who had been previously exiled on a regular basis. As of now, the group comprises scientists, lawyers, former officials of the law enforcement agencies. While communicating with the representatives of MHG we learned about their reasons for joining the organization, which turned out to be quite different. Some people had had firsthand experience of being abused by the state officials and therefore decided to protect human rights and freedom, whereas other people have been human rights activists since their green years and have combined it with majoring in this field at the university. We have also noticed that the activities of the organization are subdivided

into different branches, e.g. the work in the field of police officers' rights violation, the field of convicts' rights violation, the field of cooperation with international human rights organizations, etc. MHG participants state that working in a team provides them with confidence and that it is impossible to achieve the set goals on one's own. In order to achieve these goals they use the following means: mass media coverage, sending enquiries to the international human rights organizations, consulting citizens in the field of law and providing them with legal education.

Discussing public problems with people of different backgrounds, united by the common cause, we got the impression of a strong team that would help you to restore justice without any strings attached.





The representatives of MHG recommended us to watch the performance “HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS”, dedicated to the first Russian Human Rights activist Fyodor Haas who was a Moscow doctor of German ethnicity , also known as the “holy doctor” who was a member of the Moscow Prison Committee and the Chief Doctor of Moscow prisons. As ironic as it is, the doctor Haas used to live not far from the present location of the theatre, which symbolically justifies the mission of the theatre.





The performance is devoted to the most interesting stories from famous human rights activists' lives. From the very beginning we enjoyed the atmosphere of the old friends' amicable meeting, during which the human rights activists shared the feelings and experiences, emerging from their work. The play has enabled us to learn what has been encouraging people to become human rights activists, and to understand their attitude and the feelings the experience every day. The characters of the performance told us about many cases of bullying, assassinating they had experienced, not to mention the failed attempts on their lives. What is the reason of such an aggression? Human rights activists regularly face hostile reactions from particular groups of people and opposition of the local authorities while carrying out their duties. Thousands of human rights activists from different countries are threatened and prosecuted and subjected to slander, illegal arrest, torture. As a result, they are forced to emigrate. Moreover, the number of assassinated human rights activists has been increasing, alone with the number of countries where such crimes are carried out. Many assassinations are either conducted by the state employees or abetted by them.

In UNO Resolution passed in November 2015 which seeks to protect those who face risks and attacks for their work to defend and promote human rights , it is pointed out that the human rights activists' activity facilitates the enforcement of international human rights standards to a great extent, and that the human rights activists themselves often need additional protection due to the occupational hazards.

Total suppression of the independent human rights movement takes place along with the limitation of human rights and freedoms by the state and the general suppression of the civil society.

If the ruling class is prone to repressions, it sees human rights activists as a threat to its domination. Human rights activists' actions are declared illegal, slander campaigns are launched against them; they are threatened, bullied, arrested and murdered.

The contemporary human rights movement have been actively developing in Russia since 1993. But the conditions of this work has significantly deteriorated since 2012. Once the foreign agents bill was passed the human rights movements have been threatened by administrative terror disguised as an endless examinations by the state organizations, huge fines, compulsory dissolution. In the meantime, despite the general deterioration of the human rights and freedoms situation in Russia, new kinds and forms of human rights activists suppression are introduced. Unable to continue their activities due to ongoing pressure, a number of organizations were forced to dissolve. The organizations which managed to continue their activities are making great efforts to ensure legal protection from the increasing pressure and to minimize the risks.

Nevertheless, the human rights movements in Russia continue to fulfill their mission and provide the common people with legal support despite the difficulties.

When it comes to the assertion of human rights both at the state level and in everyday life, Russia still has a long difficult way to come. The presence of an independent

human rights movement in the country guarantees that the implementation of human rights will continue.

Having examined the most acute problems human rights activists are facing, it is necessary to ponder the following question: “ Is one born a human rights activist or does one become one?”

We’ve come to the conclusion that a great number of factors contribute to one’s becoming a human rights activist. Some qualities are revealed when one is born, for example, persistence and dedication, whereas other qualities are gradually acquired as one grows up, for example, responsibility, sympathy and philanthropy.

Human rights activists are the most active representatives of the civil society. Human rights protection is a daily routine job. That means working with particular citizens – countless correspondence, studying laws, various consultations, elaborating the mechanisms of protection of the citizens’ rights, as well as establishing the communication between the society and the authorities.

The state must interact with human rights activists instead of fighting them – i.e. provide them with better working conditions as well as social benefits, including at least small allowance, since human rights protection is not an occupation, it’s a calling!

As future police officers, we are human rights activists, too, and therefore should understand better than anyone else that it’s important to remain humane under any circumstances. Since we are a new generation, we want to live our lives the way that will make the next generation proud of us. And that we can do. And the very state we serve will be proud of us!

Reference list:

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