



## **Development, Rights, and Human Security**

**By**

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I am very pleased to be part of this conference and have the opportunity to share with you some ideas on human security. I think this is a concept in construction and we are part of this process. In fact, I would like to start by saying that the concept of human security is historically built; therefore, it can be either more or less inclusive, broader or more concise, depending on political structures, religious and cultural systems, and the dynamics of social relations at national and international scenarios. The dynamics of the scale of power, and the way social relations are permeated by power, will allow for certain definitions of human security at certain places, in certain times, and not for others.

When we think of human security as a concept that is molded on a power arena, we can understand why it takes certain meanings in certain countries and not in others. We can understand why at a particular time and in a particular country it's understood basically as related to protection against terrorism and why, for instance, in this same moment in another country, such as Brazil, it is deeply related with food security. Human security is not a neutral concept. It is also important to note that if a certain conceptualization of human security is dominant in a certain place it doesn't mean that it is consensual. And this gives us hope of transformation.

Indeed, different sectors— representing different visions and different interests— interact, struggle, and negotiate at national and international arenas around the definition of human security because this is a key concept. It's a key concept because it affects budget allocation, legitimizes governmental policies in security, and affects the allocation of priorities in public policies and many other government actions. It is a key concept for local and global governance directly affecting people's everyday lives. So I would be very careful in handling the concept of human security because it can and has been used very differently, and for very different purposes, at different moments and in different countries.

Human security is a vulnerable concept. It is too influenced by power relations. And because it is a vulnerable concept we must take care of it. I would say that the

vulnerability of the concept of human security makes this particular conference such an important moment because it provides us the opportunity to combine our efforts, as our keynote speaker, Mary Robinson, said. We have to talk more and more about human security. We have to name it differently from the way it has been named. We have to mold this concept with values other than those of militarism, war, and dominance. I would like to quote Mahnaz Afkhami when she says that to come to the essential idea of what makes the individual human being feel secure, we have to look to a more comprehensive, more inclusive, more interconnected sets of idea. The fact that this conference is also sponsored by the Global Fund for Women, an organization that supports women's human rights in more than a hundred countries, indicates the relevance of this discussion and the need to find a common language for human security that will make sense and be understood in different cultural settings.

The concept of human security should refer to human rights language and its various instruments, such as international and regional treaties, conventions, and international courts. Human rights provide a universal ground to a concept that, in such a globalized world, should have a universal meaning and be understood locally because human security is to be exercised simultaneously at the local and the trans-national level. Because in the 20<sup>th</sup> century there has been an important enlargement in the human rights conceptualization, now understood under the indivisibility paradigm, human security can no longer be understood in a narrow, militaristic perspective of dominance.

Traditionally, security has been understood within the frontiers of national or international conflict, order and disorder, crime and punishment, danger and safety. However, if we agree that human security has to do with human rights, it should be taken in a more comprehensive and encompassing way. And if we agree that human rights are written with a political pen, we understand that to shape and mold human security in a different way requires political action. The recognition at the International Human Rights Conference, organized by the UN in Vienna in 1993, that domestic violence is a human rights violation was only possible because of the political action of women's movements through out the world, converging in an international campaign that brought together thousands of women under the slogan "Women's Rights are Human Rights." This campaign and the presence of women's rights activists at the Conference clearly exemplify the importance of political action in broadening concepts. Charlotte Bunch, who is here and was one of the coordinators of this campaign, would surely agree with me on the need for strong, visible, and coordinated political action to influence the human rights arena.

Mary Robinson has brought up the issue of HIV/AIDS and human security. I would like to say that the Brazilian government's position on HIV/AIDS issues exemplifies clearly that access to drugs is a human security issue. Our government prioritizes access to health as a basic human right, over the protection of drugs patents. This debate, involving a public policy and the pharmaceutical private industry, was taken to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and to the UN Human Rights Commission. Brazil was the first country in the South to have a public health policy of free distribution of retroviral

drugs because prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS was seen as a human security priority.

Another point that I would like to raise is that we should distinguish the idea of human security, which I believe is much more encompassing, from the idea of safety. Human security might include safety, but it's not equal to it, and doesn't finish there. For instance, in theory, a woman who follows all the rigid principles dictated by a secular or a religious group in power, and does not break any rule, should be safe. However, if these rules limit the exercise of her human rights, she lives in a situation where her human security is being violated. You can be "safe" if you don't protest against the state in a dictatorship, or if, in a democratic regime, you don't express your opinion because you're afraid to go against the dominant state position, particularly in moments of high nationalism. The fact that you would feel in danger, however, if you did express your opinion means that your human security is not assured. I would like to take a moment to give a personal example.

Last year I was having lunch with an American friend, a lawyer, and I was interested in understanding the legal situation of the prisoners that were taken to Guantanamo military base in Cuba, after the invasion of Afghanistan. I was asking her if their situation fell under the Geneva Convention or under U.S. laws, that is, what exactly was their situation in terms of human rights protection. And she said, "Jacqueline, you're talking too loud." I was surprised because I don't have a very powerful voice and I hardly speak very loud. And she continued saying, "I don't think you should be talking about these subjects here because people at the table next to ours are listening to us." When she said that it came back to my mind, the sensation of fear that we experienced in Brazil or Chile or Argentina at the time that we were living under dictatorship and were afraid to discuss political or human security issues in public places. I am part of a generation of Diaspora that went from Brazil to Chile, from Chile to Brazil, passed through Argentina. And we wouldn't talk about these things at the lunch table. We would talk about the weather, or whatever. And this American woman was afraid. She didn't know that by being afraid of raising these subjects in public her human security was being threatened.

So, as I said, human security is a concept that is not clear to everyone and that is very vulnerable. In the few minutes that I have left I would like to reaffirm the idea that human security is intrinsically related to the exercise of human rights— at both national and trans-national settings. If we adopt this more comprehensive perspective, human security goes far beyond the idea of immediate danger, encompassing the rights to live free from violence and coercion (including domestic and sexual violence); to have access to justice; to exercise civil, political, sexual and reproductive rights; and to be free from discriminations based on sex, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age or religion— the right to a safe environment, including a safe domestic environment.

The title of my presentation includes the question of development so I would end by saying just a few words about development because human security also encompasses social rights. Social rights provide the ground for the exercise of any other right in that sense. Human security is also a development issue. However, development is not a

neutral concept either. Development is also a historically built concept that is intermediated by the power structures and can be understood very differently in one or another setting, in one or another way. Development can be understood as a tool for social equality, but development can also be understood as a rationale for military decisions and for taking priorities that increase the gap between the rich and the poor as we see now.

As my last words I would invite us to take hold of the concept of human security and shape it with new strategies for action and new partnerships in new avenues of collaboration. Thank you very much.