Do we live in Peace? Human Rights Cities, Democracy and Practice
2017 World Human Rights Cities Forum, Gwangju

Local voices for Human Rights
#Cities4Rights
The World Human Rights Cities Forum is an international forum held annually in Gwangju, aimed at promoting the world human rights cities network and the values of the “Gwangju Guiding Principles for a Human Rights City”.

Gwangju Guiding Principles for a Human Rights Cities

1) Right to the City
2) Non-discrimination and affirmative action
3) Social Inclusion and Cultural Diversity
4) Participatory Democracy and Accountable Governance
5) Social justice, solidarity and sustainability
6) Political leadership
7) Human Rights mainstreaming
8) Effectiveness and Policy coordination
9) Education and training
10) Right to remedy

Know more about the Forum
Read the principles
What is the Gwangju Spirit?

Gwangju is a city known for its public spirit and strong commitment with human rights. Its citizens have collectively fought against injustice on many occasions, such as the 1980 Gwangju uprising: a mass protest against South Korea’s military government that gathered nearly a quarter of a million people.

“Although brutally repressed and initially unsuccessful in bringing about democratic reform, the 1980 uprising is considered to have been a pivotal moment in the South Korean struggle for democracy”

Encyclopaedia Britannica

Know more about the May 18 Uprising

The Gwangju Human Rights Office was the first office of its kind in Korea. It has created a master plan for a "Human Rights City" including the vision, strategy and practical tasks for its development.
What is the Gwangju Spirit?
Yoon Jang Hyeon
Mayor of Gwangju

“Gwangju brings with pride the spirit of the city in the promotion of Human Rights, peace and democracy through all its history; that is why we promote the World Human Rights Cities Forum, to demonstrate that cities are key to defend and fulfil Human Rights”

Read Mayor Yoon speech on the Right to participate and see our full news about it
2017 edition: Do we live in peace?

The WHRCF 2017 edition gathered more than 700 participants. It hosted two plenary sessions, nine thematic sessions and seven special sessions and events focused on “exploring implementable measures to expand and strengthen participatory democracy and civil autonomy as a practical mechanism for guaranteeing human rights” as well as on “seeking a human rights-based approach to the right to the city (…) as a way to overcome social conflicts and to build tolerant cities”

Check the overview to the 2017 edition
Check the programme
Check the Forum’s final declaration in
French
Spanish
English
“The Right to the City has become a shared vision for local governments and civil society organizations where to work together for the same goals; nonetheless, strong social movements are still necessary to fight for social, economic and cultural rights such as the Right to Housing”

Irene Escorihuela
Directress at the Observatori DESC on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights
Explore the work of the Barcelona-based Observatori DESC
“Bethlehem, the city that spreads peace, love and justice to the whole world, does not live in peace due to the arbitrary measures of Israeli occupation; walled with discrimination, continuous land confiscation and multiple checkpoints along the way, our daily life is drastically affected”

Anton Salman
Mayor of Bethlehem (Palestine)

Read Mayor Salman speech on Palestinian cities under Israeli occupation
This plenary session gathered local authorities from Indonesia and France, as well as scholars and activists from Korea’s Candlelight Movement, Spain’s Right to Housing movement and the Global Platform for the Right to the City. It aimed at discussing how can local governments and civil society collaborate in advancing participatory democracy at the local level in a moment where “human rights are threatened by neoliberalism, authoritarianism and militarism” all over the world.

Read the session’s concept paper
“The Office of the High Commissioner has already stressed the importance of local governments in implementing human rights. In the following years it will continue to engage with them and their representing network, UCLG, supporting all their initiatives aimed at making cities places to live in security, dignity and peace”

Read the Human Rights Council Report “Local Administration and Human Rights”
Bernard Macret
Deputy Mayor of Grenoble on International Relations

“Grenoble resists and wants to be a welcoming and solidary city towards migrant population. The City Council has created a Foreign Residents’ Consultative Council to enhance their participation in local decision-making on the basis of residence. A foreign residents’ guide has also been published to brief migrants on the universal rights they hold”

Know more about the [Conseil Consultatif des Résidents Étrangers Grenoblois](#)
The Forum was a good opportunity to bring forward the human rights cities agenda in Asia. Local governments and leaders from South Korea, Indonesia, Japan, Nepal and India were well represented in the Forum. A motion was adopted denouncing the situation of Rohingya people and human rights defenders in the Philippines, calling for the international community’s attention. A motion also called for a diplomatic resolution of the conflict between the United States and North Korea, as well as to advance the agenda for peace and reconciliation between the two Koreas. The process of boosting the Asian Human Rights Charter (1998) was advanced in several meetings during the Forum and received wide attention by worldwide local leaders and press.
“Global problems demand local actions: in Mexico City we approved a new Constitution that is based on Human Rights and the Right to the City, mainstreaming these values into all our local action. Our city is equally engaged in fulfilling Sustainable Development Goals at the local level”

Stefany Campins
Social Development Secretariat of Mexico City

Read Mexico City’s 2016 Constitution
Mauricio Valiente
Deputy Mayor of Madrid on Human Rights

“Human Rights should be a priority for every local administration; because when we speak about rights we speak about daily needs of our citizens (...) In Madrid we developed a Strategic Plan for Human Rights in the City aimed at mainstreaming the Human Rights approach into local action in order to turn citizens from policy recipients into human rights holders”

See [Madrid’s Strategic Plan for Human Rights in the City](#)
Mainstreaming Human Rights!

The 2017 Forum hosted up to nine thematic sessions with representatives of more than twenty nationalities. These thematic sessions were focused on (T1) City and gender, (T2) Social Economy and Community Vitalization, (T3) City and Elderly, (T4) City and Child, (T5) Village Democracy, (T6) City and Environment, (T7) State Violence and Human Rights, (T8) Disability and Human Rights, (T9) Migrants, refugees and Human Rights.

Read the concept notes of all thematic sessions.
“For local governments, Human Rights are strong principles for democracy and governance. Proposing guiding principles in this regard constitutes the basis for a renewed social contract between elected officials and citizens at the local level (...) When calling for more decentralization, local governments should also reclaim all the necessary resources to be able to fulfil these rights. Otherwise, in a moment of harsh budgetary cuts, this would actually threat human rights fulfilment”
Emmanuel Carroz
Deputy Mayor of Grenoble on Rights Equality

“Local authorities face restrictive control mechanisms from the national level preventing them from developing an inclusive idea of local democracy (...) We only want our country to respect the first sentence of its own Constitution, which states that people born and live equal in Rights. We don’t care if someone is a woman, a migrant or LGBTI, we just want this sentence to be true”

Read Grenoble’s guide on foreign residents’ Rights
The Village and Democracy session explored concrete ways to implement participatory democracy mechanisms at the city level, with a special focus on the Korean scenario after the Candlelight Movement. The Korean WAGL platform and Decide Madrid were presented as positive examples in this regard. Miguel Arana, from Decide Madrid, noted how “citizen participation is deeply related with Human Rights, that is why Madrid developed its Plan for Human Rights in the City hand by hand with its citizens”

See our full interview with Miguel Arana on Decide Madrid
“Although Human Rights are openly dying in the United States, we have also seen an increase of local mobilization and the importance of local administration in promoting Human Rights. More space and concrete participation mechanisms should be cleared for civil society organizations in this regard.”

Know more about the National Human Rights Alliance
“It is vital that the Right to the City and Human Rights are well included in global agendas for sustainable development; in order to make them effective on the ground, however, we must count with communities participation, encouraging and recognizing their contribution. Local governments have a key role to play in tackling this gap”

Kaori Cabrera
Kota Kita Foundation (Indonesia)
Sweden’s Human Rights policy

A Plenary Session was devoted to showcase the Swedish system of Human Rights protection. It counted with a varied representation of Diplomats, a representative from the city of Lund, as well as scholars and activists from organizations such as the Raoul Wallenberg Institute for Human Rights, the Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility and the University of Gothenburg.
Mugiyanto
Senior programme officer at INFID (Indonesia) and representative of Asia Democracy Network

“Several factors pervade Human Rights fulfillment at the local level: corruption, lack of corporate accountability in the light of human rights as well as weak institutional leadership. Local action and commitment between communities, local governments and the national level can effectively tackle these phenomena and build sustainable human rights cities’ systems”

Know more about *INFID* and *Asia Democracy Network*
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Sources: UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights & World Human Rights Cities Forum