



European Master's Degree in Human Rights and Democratization

Export Processing Zones

Creating Human Rights Blind Spots

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ABSTRACT

This paper will analyze Export Processing Zones (EPZs), a mechanism created by developing states namely to attract foreign investment and increase their export earnings. An economic analysis will bring to light the reasons explaining why the very concept of EPZs has often not had the economic benefits expected. The economic analysis will then criticize the free market ideology behind EPZs. This will be followed and is directly linked to the numerous human rights abuses that can be found as a result of the creation of export zones. These violations will then be confronted to the human rights obligations of States and explanations for why States do not comply with and enforce human rights on their territories will be proposed. Finally I will look at a possible solution for assuring greater compliance by introducing human rights conditions in International Trade Law. The basis of the research and analysis is made from a legal perspective. Nonetheless, elements of economy, politics, and philosophy are introduced throughout the essay because of the inherently interdisciplinary aspect of human rights and more specifically of this thesis that analyzes an aspect of the link between the international economic system and human rights.

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Acronyms

AGOA: African Growth and Opportunity Act

EC: European Community

ECA: Export Credit Agency

EPZ: Export Processing Zone

EU: European Union

FDI: Foreign Direct Investment

GATT: General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

GSP: Generalized System of Preferences

ICFTU: International Confederation of Free Trade Unions

ILO: International Labor Organization

IMF: International Monetary Fund

LaRRI: Labour Resource and Research Institute for the Namibia Trade and Poverty Programme

MNE: Multinational Enterprise

OECD: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

NAFTA: North American Free Trade Agreement

PTA: Preferential Trade Agreement

UN: United Nations

UNSC: United Nations Security Council

US: United States of America

WTO: World Trade Organization

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