

Introduction to Global Classroom on Securitisation

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To provide human beings with the possibility to live in security is the overarching goal of the international order, as established by the United Nations (UN) and other international organisations in reaction to the Great Depression, two World Wars and the Holocaust. It also constitutes the basis of the international human rights regime. The human right to social security obliges states to create a system of social justice which enables human beings to live in freedom from want and poverty.

In the 'Agenda 2030', the heads of state and government of all member states of the UN have solemnly proclaimed 17 Sustainable Development Goals, above all to eradicate poverty and to leave no one behind. The human right to personal security requires states and the international community to create an environment in which all human beings can live in freedom from fear and violence. The UN Charter prohibits any use of military force against another state, and entrusts the UN Security Council with the exclusive power to prevent armed conflicts and to react with all available means to any threat or breach of international peace and security. Within their own borders, states have been entrusted with the monopoly of the use of force in order to protect their own populations against violent crime, terrorism, domestic violence, natural disasters and other threats to their human and personal security and safety. However, states have to take into account that any measures taken to protect the right to personal security must comply with other human rights, above all the rights to privacy, personal liberty and integrity, as well as the freedoms of movement, speech, assembly and association.

Since the end of the Cold War, and in particular since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, we have been witnessing a dangerous trend towards securitisation and militarisation which seriously threatens and violates many human rights. In the name of fighting real or perceived threats to our security, states increasingly take measures that disproportionately restrict and undermine human rights. One of the root causes of this development is the globalisation driven by neoliberal economic policies. Radical policies of deregulation, privatisation and minimising the role of the state have led to global economic and financial crises; climate change; failed states; economic inequality; corruption; organised crime; armed conflicts; terrorism; and other forms of violence which create a feeling of economic, social and personal insecurity among many sectors of our societies.

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The rise of private military and security companies (PMSCs) is a direct consequence of far-reaching privatisations, which have even reached the administration of justice, prisons, the police, military and intelligence agencies. PMSCs have a vested interest in spreading a feeling of insecurity among the population in order to offer their services for profit. Armed conflicts, organised crime and terrorism are real threats, but responding to these threats by disproportionate and military means increases the level of violence and human rights violations rather than addressing the underlying causes. Experience shows that the 'war on drugs', first declared by United States (US) President Richard Nixon and later re-enforced by other political leaders, including President Duterte of the Philippines, has led to a rise in drug-related crime. Similarly, the global 'war on terror' declared by US President George Bush has not only led to serious human rights violations, including arbitrary detention, disappearances, excessive surveillance and torture, but it also stimulated terrorism instead of defeating it. The same can be said about any attempts of fighting criminality by a 'war on crime' rather than by combating the underlying social causes.

The Global Classroom on 'Securitisation and the Impact on Human Rights and Democracy: Human Security in a Time of Insecurity', organised by the Institute for Human Rights and Peace Studies at Mahidol University in Bangkok from 22 to 26 May 2017 as an activity of the Global Campus of Human Rights, brought together professors, experts and students from seven Master's Programmes in Human Rights and Democracy from all world regions with the aim of analysing and discussing the phenomenon of securitisation from a global and different regional perspectives. The participants agreed that there are real threats to our security, such as armed conflicts, organised crime and terrorism. However, addressing the root causes of these phenomena might be a better strategy than simply fighting the symptoms by means of securitisation and, thereby, contributing to the vicious circle of rising violence. In addition, many case studies provided by students, experts and professors confirmed the theory that states also react to perceived or constructed threats by means of securitisation, such as criminalisation, excessive surveillance, restrictions to mobility and migration, arbitrary detention, increased presence of security forces, restricting the space of civil society and the freedom of journalists and other human rights defenders. A typical example of perceived threats leading to securitisation are migrant workers and refugees in Europe, the United States, Australia and many other states, including in the Asia-Pacific region. Examples from Latin America include the perceived threat by indigenous peoples, who defend their ancestral lands and their indigenous culture against the extractive industries, land grabbing and other interference by transnational corporations. Many case studies show that securitisation primarily is an excuse of states to fight perceived threats and limit human rights in order to defend business interests in the global economy. Often, vulnerable groups, such as refugees and migrants; indigenous peoples; minorities; the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and questioning (LGBTIQ) community; and poor people, are most directly affected by securitisation and are used as scapegoats to stimulate fears.

The participants of the Global Classroom agreed that securitisation threatens human rights and leads to an erosion of democracy. What is needed, instead, is to start a process of de-securitisation in order to break

the vicious cycle of increasing violence, to address the root causes of real threats and to return to a more rational discourse regarding perceived and constructed threats to our human right to security.