A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY ON CURRENT ISSUES IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

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This bibliography references a selection of French and English books and articles (French texts are asterisked) describing the "French Doctors' Movement," highlighting the challenges encountered today by the humanitarian community, and considering a newly recognized concept: "the right to intervene" or "droit d'ingérence."

Please note that the articles in this issue of Health and Human Rights do not appear in this bibliography.

The “French Doctors’ Movement”


Considers the political and cultural background of these two international organizations of French origin and stresses the principles and the dilemmas they face in their work.

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Discusses the 25-year evolution and details some of the major missions of the three humanitarian organizations currently referred to as the “French Doctors.”

**Contemporary Humanitarianism and its Challenges**


Critically appraises “multi-mandate relief organizations”; analyzes their increasingly political role with the rise of a “political-humanitarian culture,” limited accountability, limited consideration of human rights issues, and lack of self-criticism.


Reflects on the concepts of “complex humanitarian emergencies” and “humanitarianism” from an ethical and moral perspective.


An in-depth review of the history of humanitarian assistance, includes consideration of the increasingly blurred meaning of the word “humanitarianism” as used by media, military, and politicians.


Includes articles on health, human rights and humanitarian assistance by renowned representatives from the foreign affairs, medical, legal, and humanitarian fields, examines the increasingly important role of humanitarian assistance in conflict situations and its potential role in the creation of a “new world order.”

An indictment of humanitarian assistance over the last two hundred years as an ambiguous phenomenon involving both philanthropic acts and political masquerade.


Emphasizes the limited effectiveness of oversimplification and “quick-fix” interventions resulting from lack of understanding; highlights the necessity for serious attempts to understand ongoing internal conflicts and their root causes; suggests that military force be used only as a last resort; and concludes that goodwill, impartiality, and neutrality are no longer the basis of humanitarianism.


Stresses the tendency for development experts to consider complex emergencies as irrational accidents interrupting the linear process of development, rather than more profound phenomena with historical, social, or economic roots.


Interprets the term “humanitarian intervention” as the use of military force by one or more states in opposition to flagrant abuses occurring against a target population; stresses the importance of an underlying strategic rationale and political commitment to this type of intervention; questions the efficiency of these interventions; suggests the need for new models of “humanitarian intervention.”


Provides information on ten conflicts which concern populations in danger.

Reviews five of the bloodiest conflicts of 1995; focuses particularly on the genocide in Rwanda and its meaning at a time when the word “globalization,” so often used, projects a false image of world concern.


Acknowledges the increasing complexity of humanitarian assistance; reviews its main actors, their intervention principles, and their legal basis for action; stresses the need for relief coordination and further development of international law.


Suggests mediation, negotiation, and long-standing peace-building, including addressing the root causes of conflict, as potential new actions for nongovernmental organizations.


Suggests lessons to be learned from humanitarian action in armed conflict in the post-Cold War era.


Highlights the relationship between humanitarianism and politics; stresses that humanitarianism should neither be subordinated to political goals nor used as a substitute for politics; proposes a partnership between humanitarian and political action.
Provides a critical appraisal of contemporary humanitarianism and sees it as an extraordinary example of commitment to the idea of ethical behavior; emphasizes its fragile status as a force in today’s world of financial, political, and moral pressures.

A vibrant and well-illustrated historical and political background to the “humanitarian adventure,” includes its main actors, official documents, successes and failures.

Brings a critical perspective to humanitarian assistance in conflict situations by underscoring its involuntary political role as a “neutral” tool used by powerful states; argues that humanitarian assistance results in prolongation of wars, support of criminal régimes, and encouragement of refugee movements with the creation of “humanitarian sanctuaries.”

Describes traditional and current conflict patterns and outlines principles, conditions, and limits of humanitarian action; includes a reminder that humanitarian aid is only a palliative measure in armed conflicts.

**Le Devoir d’Ingérence/The Right to Intervene**

Mario Bettati, Bernard Kouchner (Eds.), *Le Devoir d’Ingérence: Peut-on les Laisser Mourir?* (Paris: Denoël, 1987)*
Presents dynamic appeal by a group of intellectuals about the right to humanitarian assistance for victims of natural or man-made disasters; proposes that the “droit d’ingérence” or “right to intervene” be added to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Based on a review of UN Security Council Resolutions between 1988 and 1992, demonstrates how the notion of access to victims has progressively become accepted by the international community and embodied in international documents.


Developed by the Task Force on Ethical and Legal Issues in Humanitarian Assistance, the 'Mohonk Criteria' set forth the principles and objectives of humanitarian assistance in an environment complicated by unrest or disaster, and defined the obligations of aid agencies, international bodies and domestic governments.


Demonstrates the need to redefine state sovereignty in the context of the newly recognized “right to intervene”; stresses the tension between inviolability of state borders and the rights of the individual, the right to self-determination of minorities, and the North-South divergence of views regarding the ethics and legitimacy of intervention.


Analyzes the opposition between the principles of state sovereignty and “the right to intervene”; introduces the concept of an “incompressible minimum of human rights” as a decision-making instrument.
Stresses the unresolved tension between the principle of state sovereignty and international concern for human rights violations; concludes that human rights should be increasingly important to international diplomacy and humanitarian interventions.

Underlines the contradiction inherent in the expression “droit d’ingérence”; suggests that international humanitarian law, the Geneva Conventions and the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross already include the concept of the right to assistance.

Considers the need for deployment of United Nations police and peacekeeping forces when the rights of minorities are threatened.