



Human Rights in Conflict – Securitising or Desecuritising?

Emily Pia (University of Birmingham, piaa@adf.bham.ac.uk) and
Thomas Diez (University of Tübingen, thomas.diez@uni-tuebingen.de)

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1. Human rights – a means to overcome conflict?

Human rights and conflict transformation are often seen to go hand-in-hand: the recognition of human rights is likely to make post-conflict societies more stable, while conflict settlement itself provides the context in which human rights are more likely to be accepted as an important element of the framework in which a society exists. Yet this does not mean that any articulation of human rights has a de-securitising, and therefore conflict-diminishing effect (on securitisation and conflict, see Diez, Stetter and Albert 2006; Pia and Diez 2007). Indeed, invoking a human right in itself in a conflict context tends to take the form of a securitising act in that it articulates the violation of an important aspect of human existence, and therefore an ‘existential threat’ (see the

definition of securitisation in Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998: 21, 24, Wæver 1995), thereby seeking remedy in urgent action against this violation. While the long-term aim of such a remedy is the institutionalised guarantee of human rights, the securitising act may well have a conflict-intensifying effect in the short- to medium-term in reifying existing conflict lines.

Traditional approaches to conflict resolution that emphasise the management of conflict have therefore taken a sceptical view of human rights. Instead of fostering conflict resolution, they have been seen as potentially unsettling negotiations or already agreed solutions. On a more general level, the English School of International Relations has long been grappling with the relationship between order in the international society of states and justice in the transnational, potentially emerging world society, of which human rights can be seen as an expression (see Buzan 2004). On the one hand, advocates of a more traditional form of a pluralist international society, to which the norms of sovereignty and non-intervention are crucial, have given priority to order over justice. In this view, human rights, while important, have the potential to undermine order, yet order is necessary to guarantee human rights (e.g. Bull 1977). On the other hand, those supporting a more solidarist conception of international society, in which transnational norms underpin and are an integral part of more dense relations between states, have greater difficulty of imagining order without justice (e.g. Dunne and Wheeler 2004, Wheeler 2000). The “Westphalian” solution to this problem was to guarantee human rights through states, and therefore the universal through the particular (see Walker 1993). Yet increasing transnational flows have increasingly undermined this solution, while at the same time, conflicts within states and across state boundaries only replicate the basic problem: if subject positions are incompatible and values not shared, how can one guarantee both order and justice?

In this paper, we suggest that such a line of argument neglects differences in the way human rights are articulated. It is therefore not the invocation of a human right per se that is problematic, but *how* it is invoked. We consider two issues in particular: whether there is an ‘inclusive’ notion of a human right or whether the human right is exclusively related

to one conflict party, thereby reifying existing identity borders and thus antagonisms; and whether the reference point of the invoked human right is the individual or a group. Our working assumption, which we present in more detail in the next section, is that the articulation of human rights is more likely to have a desecuritisising effect if it is inclusive and refers to the individual. The following two sections then present evidence first on the individual/group rights dimension and second on the inclusive/exclusive dimension from four case studies that we take from a larger project on human rights, civil society and conflict that we have been engaged in (see www.luiss.it/shur).

2. Differentiating human rights articulations

The concept of human rights has never been uniform. While the big battles of political versus social rights may have calmed down, tensions remain between different strands (see Bhambra and Shilliam 2009). In relation to conflicts, it seems to us that a first distinction is of particular importance, that between individual and collective rights. Collective rights usually take the form of cultural rights (Sanders 1991). They refer to the rights of a collective *as a whole* and cannot be reduced to individual rights (see Dinstein 1976; Stavenhagen 1992: 135) unless one takes a highly individualistic view of society (e.g. Buchanan 1989). There is therefore a difference between the invocation of the right to speak the Kurdish language and the right of the Kurdish culture to exist. Although in this case, both are clearly linked and the collective right may presuppose the individual right, collective and individual rights may also be in conflict with each other to the extent that collective rights are invoked to protect cultural practices that infringe on individual freedoms. Indeed, the underlying problem with collective rights is that they assume the existence of a collective that in fact is contested so that the invocation of the right also inscribes the collective as such into the discourse, thereby often subsuming individuals who may not wish to be part of the collective. This has led some authors to strictly differentiate between (individual) human rights and collective rights. According to Howard (1992: 83), for instance,

the claim for collective rights is a claim for something different from human rights; it is a claim that reasserts the value of the traditional community over the individual. Human rights are an egalitarian means of allocating membership in a collectivity to all physical persons regardless of status. Collective rights imply permissible egalitarian ranking.

At the same time, if one agrees that cultural diversity is desirable, collective rights seem necessary as individual rights may not be sufficient to guarantee the survival of cultures, in particular under conditions of globalisation, and thus restrict the right of the individual to exercise his or her freedom in limiting the basis on which an identity can be constructed and lived. In this respect the creation of the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) under the auspices of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), marks the growing appreciation to promote a multicultural state committed to democratic pluralism, prohibiting coercive assimilation measures and actively supporting vulnerable minority cultures (Copenhagen Document, 1990). In negotiating state-minority relations, the HCNM forms part of the more innovative, intrusive human rights or human welfare monitoring mechanisms developed in the post Cold War era. While not a minorities ombudsman per se, HCNM diplomatic endeavours in constructing a regional peace based on civil society, curbing nationalism through constitutionalism, is certainly one that provides an environment supportive of distinct minority identity and autonomy. Human and minority rights are promoted as part of a larger political settlement of conflict borne of aggressive nationalism (Thio, 2003).

While collective rights are not reducible to individual rights, activists nonetheless often have the option to pursue their aims by either invoking individual or collective rights. In the above example, demanding the right to speak a language may not be sufficient to guarantee the survival of group culture, but it may, if successful, be a first step and certainly improve a situation in which public pronouncements in that language are not allowed. Some scholars even go as far as arguing that collective rights do not add much to what individual rights can achieve for oppressed groups (e.g. Donnelly 2003: 204).

Since individual rights apply to all citizens, while collective rights are most often an essential part of the incompatibilities in conflict societies, it therefore seems reasonable to assume that in terms of conflict transformation, it is preferable if human rights are invoked as individual and not as collective rights.

Yet there is, we propose, a second dimension to human rights articulations that is largely ignored in the literature as well as in the political debate despite, or perhaps because of the fact that it is a fairly obvious one. This is the difference between inclusive and exclusive articulations of rights. In relation to collective rights, this distinction makes intuitive sense. Collective rights can be invoked for one specific group only, in which case they are articulated as exclusive rights (even though their articulation in the name of one group only does not in principle foreclose their applicability to others as well), or they can be applied to all collectives within a society, in which case we would call them inclusive. Federal or consociational political institutions, for instance, may well tend to reproduce group identities but their advocacy usually is inclusive in that it asks for the same rights for all collectives. Secessionist movements or demands for a special status within a state in contrast pursue exclusive collective rights, although on the level of the international system, the right to self-determination can be seen as an inclusive right to the extent that it applies, at least theoretically, to all ethnic groups.

Not all exclusive articulations of collective rights are exclusionist to the same degree, however. Some may invoke collective rights for a specific group simply because these rights are taken for granted in the case of other groups; others may seek privileges that imply the superiority of one group over another. In the latter case, we are dealing with articulations that at least border on racism, whereas in the former, the line between inclusive and exclusive articulations becomes a grey zone in that such articulations may implicitly presuppose the rights of other groups as well.

It is more difficult to see how the inclusive/exclusive distinction is applicable to individual rights, for individual rights are by definition universal and therefore inclusive. Yet such rights are often, and especially in conflict situations, only invoked for

individuals that belong to a particular group. As such, they have been labelled “group rights” that need to be distinguished from collective rights: at stake here are individual rights claimed on behalf of members of a group because of discrimination or other forms of disadvantage, not the rights of the collective as such. As above, activists have the choice to articulate rights in a universal manner or to invoke them merely on behalf of the members of the group for which they speak. However, the context of the modern state system may impose restrictions on this choice to the extent that the dilemma of universal rights and particular identities in this system has been solved by granting rights primarily through the state (Walker 1993). This “solution” raises the spectre of conflict in particular when the guarantee of rights through the state is combined with a rigid notion of the nation, excluding those who publicly live another identity (Wimmer 2002). It is in this sense that Gutman (2003: xv) argues against the defence of nationalism from a human rights perspective: ‘Collective self-determination is a human right exercised in groups, which is conditional – as are all such group rights - on the group’s respecting the other rights of individual’ – or, in other words, on articulating collective rights not in an exclusive but in an inclusive manner.

Seen from this angle, the difference between the articulation of individual and collective rights in terms of their impact on conflict transformation seems less clear. Instead, one would presume that inclusive articulations are more likely to be met with understanding by the other party and therefore have a desecuritising effect than exclusive articulations. It is only within this differentiation that the articulation of individual rights may be preferable, although within the inclusive bracket, this may also depend on political circumstances. In Turkey, for instance, where the preservation of the unitary state is part of the conflictive subject positions, even the inclusive articulation of collective rights may be seen as an existential threat. In Bosnia, by contrast, the multiethnic nature of the state makes it unavoidable to include collective rights and thus we would expect their inclusive articulation to be more likely to have a positive effect.

Table 1 summarises the two dimensions in a 2x2 table:

<i>Articulation of rights as...</i>	Individual rights	Collective rights
Inclusive	Universal	Integrational
Exclusive	Group	Exclusionist

Table 1. Types of Human Rights Articulations

It is important to note that following the above discussion especially with reference to exclusionist rights, the table is not meant to imply that there are no differences within these categories. Instead, it may be better to think of these four kinds of articulations as tendencies that come in stronger and weaker variations. In the following, we present the empirical findings from workshops and interviews that took place in 2007-2008 with different civil society actors in order to illustrate the different forms of human right articulations and trace their effect in conflict. This will allow us to see whether our expectation about the impact of these different forms of human rights articulations matches the experience of practitioners in the field.

3. Articulations of human rights

In this section, we examine how the four different articulations of human rights that we summarised in table 1 are instantiated in various examples from workshops and interviews that took place in 2007-2008 as part of a project on human rights, civil society and conflict, which included the cases of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus, the Kurdish-Turkish conflict and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The empirical work was conducted by teams in the four case studies through interviews, workshops and news research in 2007 and 2008.

3.1 Articulations of universal human rights

For many civil society organisations the option of advocating individual, universal rights seemed the most straightforward solution that would not hinder their aspirations, and which generally would result in desecuritisation. Yet as the following examples will

reveal, other factors – co-operation, political opportunity structures, timing - have impinged on their actions.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Social Justice Movement in Sarajevo focuses on the social and economic rights of exploited people, mostly for workers (Marcon et al, 2008:21). As workers in Bosnia and Herzegovina face the strong consequences of privatisation, economic transition and bankruptcy, a huge number of reform processes very often discriminate their basic human rights. Also, legal protections do not apply to all workers who lost their job as a result of discrimination and compensations, when awarded are inadequate and regarded as ‘symbolic’ (Amnesty International report for BH 2006). The organization disseminates information for victims of discrimination and how to seek protection of their rights: thus it helps to desecuritize conflict as it initiates discussion on elimination of obstacles for the realization of labour rights and makes possible the effectiveness of workers’ access to justice across the boundaries of conflict parties. The promotion of a non-ethnic and global human rights discourse is very important as ‘human rights violations are felt and understood in broad terms, activities which may not be directly related to human rights violations in a narrow sense may be seen as such’ (Marcon et al, 2008:21). For the Social Justice Movement, the choice of protecting the social and economic rights of all workers in BH enables it to construct a discourse that is inclusive and accepted by the public without fostering further dichotomization.

The work of the Palestinian Centre of Human Rights (PCHR) shows how the invocation of human rights which endorse diversity, recognition and heterogeneity and which has the support of international actors, can sustain a more transformative effect in a conflict. The PCHR was established in Gaza in 1985 and it monitors reports and documents human rights violations in Israel as well as in the Palestinian Authority (PA). It enjoys good relations with a variety of international organisations like ECOSOC, ISJ, FIDS and the EUROMED network. One campaign it has launched in relation to the right of movement is to follow ‘the problem of Israeli denial of patients at check points and for travel abroad for treatment’ (Brown, Fourest and Hovdenak, 2008:38). As Jabr Wishah stated: ‘We follow up these cases closely, sometimes to the Israeli High Court of Justice. When we manage to save lives with our intervention these are big successes for us’

(interview, 27.3.08). PCHR has very close ties and relations with the local community and it offers its service without discrimination and puts pressure on both parties to respect human rights as a condition for sustainable peace and democracy in the area.

KAMER is a Kurdish CoSO with a civic identity working on women's rights as individual rights thus distinguishing itself from organisations that construct their demands in the form of collective rights for Kurds. The slow but steady development of governmental and non-governmental mechanisms and institutions (Directorate General of Women's Status and Problems) enabled women's groups to penetrate and influence the state apparatus, to become familiar with their rights and the international gender agenda and above all to create a common platform for dialogue (Ferree and Tripp, 2006). KAMER adopted a more neutral and universal language of human rights and left behind the prevalent discourse of many Kurdish human rights organisations that are interested exclusively in the protection of Kurdish rights supported by the Kurdish nationalist movement. As it was suggested by one of the interviewees 'KAMER and other Kurdish organisations are trying to distance themselves from the Kurdish movement, voice democratic demands and identity claims within the context of citizenship rights. They do not base these claims on the demands for an autonomous Kurdish state (Tocci and Kaliber, 2008:14). KAMER managed to rephrase the language of human rights of women and hence alter the framework in which the debates on the solution of the Kurdish question and human rights take place in Turkey. The desecuritising move of KAMER has been its struggle on the link between language rights and the elimination of violence against women. KAMER strives for the amelioration and betterment of the condition of all women that experience economic and linguistic difficulties in Turkey without using a securitising or exclusionary discourse.

Another example from this case is Vakit Geldi, a Kurdish-Turkish bicomunal network of women, mainly because it touches upon issues that are not divisive and represents women from a variety of areas and positions in the working sphere, which yields objectivity in the eyes of the public. Vakit Geldi is 'opted not to organise itself as an association and refused to set out principles of what a solution to the Kurdish question

should entail in so as this would alienate some members' (Tocci and Kaliber, 2008:14). Their efforts have been focused on revealing the dangers of escalating violence regarding the Kurdish question and one of their campaigns focused on the de-mining of the southeastern region. Given the fact that landmines explicitly were the cause of death of many civilians (289 people were killed between 1983 and 2003) and that Turkey ratified the Mine Ban Treaty in 2004, the campaign on de-mining offered the opportunity to many civil society actors to come together and desecuritize the discourse of human rights (Tocci and Kaliber, 2008:15). Vakit Geldi has the capacity to unite the voices of women coming from different production areas like business, academia, art, activism, research etc, in this way, it desecuritises 'the sphere of human and minority rights in Turkey and breaks the monopoly of a limited number of NGO's which have been vocal on the Kurdish question and have received mistrust and scathing criticisms of establishment organisations' (Tocci and Kaliber, 2008:19).

The last example of the articulation of universal rights is taken from the Cyprus case and it manifests how the invocation of individual human rights can in due course to lead to desecuritisation where the conditions are mature enough to permit it. The discourses that furnish the invocation of the right to education by the Teachers' Union in north Cyprus manifest the important role that education can play in creation, prevention or transformation of societal crises in a conflict. Until recently, the school curriculum, books, and conferences in the TRNC were under extreme scrutiny by the authorities. They were expected to show 'how Turkish nationalism is good' (Mine Yucel, SHUR workshop 01.02.08). Also, the contacts and the meetings of teachers and University Staff were monitored and files were completed with the Turkish Army; articles that were criticizing the TRNC and Turkey were not published in the academic journal *Cyprus Studies*, edited at the Eastern Mediterranean University in north Cyprus. Complaints about this kind of behaviour were never heard by the officials (SHUR workshop, 01.02.08). The situation though changed dramatically after 2004 as a new government took over and pursued a more pro-resolution course. In addition, the revision of educational policies was helped by international campaigns, especially when they were backed up by European Parliamentarians and Amnesty International. (SHUR workshop,

01.02.08). As a consequence, the Teachers' Union achieved widespread acceptance within civil society and contributed immensely to working with cultural heterogeneity in TRNC's educational reform. Thus, educators are more aware of teaching methodologies in relation to history, more sensitive and critical in order to see and accept different perspectives and more open to advance historical dialogue in all educational levels.

While in some of these examples, the desecuritising impact of the invocation of universal human rights remains a potential for the time being, at least in the Bosnian and Cyprus case, we would claim that these invocations have already made a contribution to desecurisation. In both cases, however, it is also fair to say that this impact has been part of a broader conflict transformation so that the possibility for the articulation of universal human rights was helped by a broader context which in turn it has reinforced.

3.2. Articulation of human rights as group rights

The following examples demonstrate how the invocation of group rights can advance securitisation within conflict as the exclusionary discourse of the organisation polarises the two sides. In our cases, we found fewer of these articulations than of universal rights. This suggests that if individual rights are invoked in a conflict, they tend to be articulated as universal rights.

Zochrot is a group of Israeli citizens working to raise awareness of the Nakba, the Palestinian catastrophe of 1948, and takes its name from the Hebrew word for "remembering" (www.zochrot.org). The organisation believes that the acknowledgment of the right of the Palestinians refugees from 1948 and 1967 to return is 'an essential step for any future reconciliation' (Eitan Bronstein, interview 2008). The group is advocating the recognition of the Nakba through a variety of research programmes, related publications but also on the ground campaigns, for instance for the geographical recognition of the villages that have been destroyed in 1948. Acknowledgment and

implementation of the right to return for Zochrot is pertinent because it 'will not only begin the task of correcting the historical injustice committed against the Palestinian people, but may also usher in a new beginning for Jews in the country. The right of return can open up an opportunity for Jews to encounter the country in a new way, no longer as occupiers, but as equals. An injustice cannot be corrected by another injustice, and the right of return, like any other right, must be implemented with care to ensure that other rights are protected' (www.zochrot.org/index.php?id=582). Pursuing the right of return in Israel by Zochrot has already caused vehement reactions; the right-wing newspaper 'Maariv' reviled the association's members as 'collaborators in the Palestinian terror organisation Hamas' and on Independence Day in Israel, the banners and the sign that were used by Zochrot members to commemorate the historical background of different places were torn and demolished (www.qantara.de).

Thus, although Zochrot is interested in including and accepting the most important narrative of the Palestinians like the nakba, the majority of people in Israel are not willing to recognise it. It is possible that Zochrot's discourse alienates most people in Israel because it is considered to be quite radical or maybe too giving to the demands of the Palestinians, but most importantly that the founding narratives of these two people don't allow space to each other to co-exist and co-develop so that on the one hand, Zochrot resorts to articulate rights as exclusive, and on the other, the Israeli public reacts with further antagonisation.

Similarly, *Turkiye Kamu-Sen* a confederation of trade unions and public employees has an assimilationist identity and its main objective is to promote the rights of its members. Turning the usual perception of the Kurdish-Turkish conflict on its head, it has focused on the human rights of Turks, above all the right to live, and adamantly denied the collective dimension of the Kurdish question. Its securitising character lies on the 'objection to the definition of the Kurdish question as a 'Kurdish problem'' and on perceiving it as a 'problem of terror' that could only be resolved with a resort to violent means' (Tocci and Kaliber, 2008:6). More specifically, *Turkiye Kamu-Sen* even rejects the existence of a distinct Kurdish culture and identity. One of the interviewees said

‘Kurdish is a language born out of a mix of Persian, Arabic and Turkish. At the international level, you cannot find any scientific research or debate among the linguists about Kurdish being a distinct language. We can see it as a dialect of Turkish language rather than a separate one. Demands for education in Kurdish are mere political rhetoric and thus cannot be seen as demands for democratic rights. Here the objective is rather to squeeze and weaken Turkey and to construct a new ethnic group in the country. ‘No one in Turkey has a problem in expressing himself and his ethnicity’ (interview 16.01.08). In the case of Turkiye Kamu-Sen, the promotion of rights of its members and the silencing of the Kurdish voices of expression generates further misunderstandings, hostilities and discriminations for the Kurds.

3.3. Articulations of human rights as integrational rights

Ta’ayush (Arabic for “life in common”) is a grassroots movement that was formed in 2000 from Arab and Jewish Israeli citizens in an effort to ‘break down the walls of racism and segregation by constructing a true Arab-Jewish partnership ... [with] daily actions of solidarity to end the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and to achieve full civil equality for all Israeli citizens’ (www.taayush.org). The group’s decisions for specific activities are taken in plenary meetings where sufficient representation of both peoples is necessary and where consensus is sought. All actions aim to secure the co-operation of the community that they are working with in order to avoid patronage and have more concrete results as people are more committed (Doudouet 2004). The main project of Ta’ayush is ‘The Wall must fall’ campaign which has multiple facets like marches, demonstrations, press releases, tree planting, raising awareness meetings etc. An interesting example of the activities is the massive and non-violent struggle in Budrus, a village very close to the Green Line. Israeli and international activists managed to mobilize people from the ‘neighbouring villages to their struggle against the fence threatening to surrounding them in a closed prison (as well as confiscating their agricultural land), this new phase attracted huge media interest, and even yielded some success: after a couple of months of protest, the route in Budrus moved closer to the Green Line’ (Halevi 2004).

In Turkey, the Human Rights Association (IHD) was founded in 1986 and it was initiated by the families of detainees who were victims of torture and ill treatment. Its activities initially have focused in underlining the state's responsibility in the persistence of violence in the region as it continuously violates the human rights of Kurds. As one interviewee characteristically said 'violence and PKK are by-products of human rights violations of the Kurdish people' (interview 21.01.2008). There were many criticisms that IHD doesn't condemn the violence of PKK and that it promotes only the human rights of the Kurdish people as a result of misinterpretation and misinformation of their actions in the nationalist Turkish media. But as the organisation started having a more multicultural identity without focusing exclusively on Kurdish rights but rather the rights of all Turkey's citizens, and as it participates in the recently established Common Platform for the better co-ordination of human rights activities, it has managed to modulate its human rights discourse in a less securitising manner (Tocci and Kaliber 2008:26)

It seems extremely significant for a civil society organisation that operates within a conflict site to break free from the demonising images that the political and media rhetoric has pictured for it through libelling. The above examples of Vakit Geldi and IHD manifest the importance of coming up with a common platform that unites the 'disruptive voices' of civil society actors as well as with a discourse that protects human rights for all people. There are some more examples from the SHUR case studies that illustrate better this argument.

The International Peace Center was founded in 1990 and its main purpose is to protect human rights and freedoms in Bosnia-Herzegovina. During the war, its main activity was to help 'Anti-war centers' in Zagreb, Belgrade and other towns to voice their objection to nationalist propaganda and to criticise the political parties that were pursuing policies based on ethnicity and not citizenship (interview Ibrahim Spahic, 1.12.07). After the war, one of the primary goals of IPC was work on the reconciliation process and the return of refugees. For Ibrahim Spahic the founder of IPC, there are many links among the communities to establish reconciliation, and the role of the European institutions should advance the protection of universal human rights and not the parochial interests of local

authorities in order to avoid regional instability (www.ipcsa.ba). IPC also initiates and organises a variety of cultural events like the ‘Sarajevo Winter’ festival, publishes a magazine in favour of human rights called ‘Why’ in an attempt to open the process of re-identification through the ‘protection of the cultural heritage of the whole country, so that it should be for one and all and not only for a nationality’ (interview Ibrahim Spahic, 1.12.07). IPC invests in cultural projects and initiatives that avoid nationalistic coronas which marginalise people that do not ascribe to a close and particularistic narrative and with the aid of international actors like the EU vocalises an all embracing human rights discourse.

An aspect of this practice can be seen also in the ‘Let’s unite Famagusta’ initiative in Cyprus. Post-2003 and the opening of the borders in Cyprus after a unilateral move by the authorities in the north to normalise border traffic, a cooperation and bi-communalist work began to structure the efforts and activities of civil society. The issue of property rights is not so prominent in this reconciliation agenda ‘because of its complex nature and the indeterminate character of what an actual solution may involve (including in terms of territorial re-adjustments and in terms of the parameters on which rights of access and use will be determined)’ (Demetriou and Gurel, 2008:38). A notable exception is the ‘Let’s unite Famagusta’ initiative, which brought together the German-Cypriot Forum, the Association of Rights and Freedoms and other groups and lobbied the EU for the return of the town to its residents under UN administration, in the form of an experiment for co-existence in the absence of a more comprehensive solution (www.letsunitefamagusta.net). This initiative manifests that there is an on-going process of interaction, communication and cooperation of Greek and Turkish Cypriots that are supporting co-existence and are looking for specific ways for a future reunited Cyprus.

3.4 Articulations of human rights as exclusionist rights

The issue of missing persons is considered one of the most salient aspects of the Cyprus problem. The role of the civil society actors in this respect over the course of years

provided initially support for the nationalistic and oppositional rhetoric of both sides while later, post-2003 and after the referendum, bi-communal projects promote more reconciliation initiatives. More specifically, the Turkish Cypriot organisation Martyrs' Families and Disabled Veterans Association that was founded in 1975 has always stressed the aggression and the provocation against the Turkish national identity. The association emphasises the attacking character of the Greek Cypriot side from 1955 to 1974, the security and comfort that bizonality brings to the area and characteristically as Ertan Ersan said it is 'best if everyone stayed on their side' (interview 8, 2008). The Martyr's Families association prefers an isolationist position that exonerates the absence of people only from the Turkish Cypriot community.

The case of the Kyrenia Refugees Association shows how the invocation of human rights that focuses exclusively to one part of the population cuts the bridges for any possible reconciliation or peaceful unification of the island. The Kyrenia Refugees Association (Adouloti Kerinia) was founded in 1974 and the purpose of the organisation is to 'Kyrenians together, nurse the memory of our homeland in our people's hearts, teach our children about it and, to co-ordinate our people's struggle for the liberation of Cyprus from Turkish occupation and the return of all refugees to their homes and property' (www.agrino.org/Kyrenia/Association). The association runs a variety of cultural events that aim in 'keeping the memory of the occupied areas alive in the hearts of our people who lived there before the war' and equally 'teaching the young ones, who are born after the occupation, all about their hometowns and villages' (ibid). This Greek Cypriot discourse of human rights that perpetuates the injustices and brutality of what happened in 1974 and the demand for justice in the form of returning of all refugees to their homes promotes nationalist understandings of the conflict and advances perceptions of human rights as primarily related to ethnic communities. Characteristically, one representative of the association emphasised the organisation's opposition to the 1977 and 1979 agreements which was publicised as an effort to guard the community's interest. Although that the above activity was in disagreement with the official position, 'is seen nevertheless as providing 'ammunition' to the government who may use the seeming

extremism of such positions to claim more concessions from the other side on the negotiating table' (Demetriou and Gurel, 2008:31).

This exclusivist position that feeds more securitisation acts and minimises the negotiating and reconciliatory space in a conflict can be seen also in relation to the work of the Mesopotamia Cultural Centre in Turkey. The Mesopotamia Cultural Centre (Mezopotamya Kültür Merkezi) is an organisation that has advanced the securitisation of the Kurdish issue because it is advocating exclusively Kurdish collective rights and 'thus raising fears of a hidden separatist agenda' (Tocci and Kaliber, 2008:8). More specifically, the Centre aims to institutionalise the identity and the culture of the Kurds, and as one interviewee stated 'We aim to survey and document Kurdish culture and prevent its erosion since it is under threat and not guaranteed by law as opposed to Turkish culture' (interview, 18.01.08). Their main financial sources come from different plays and concerts they organize and from selling CDs and tapes that they release. Their relation with the state is quite precarious as initially they have experienced physical pressure like imprisonment and prohibition of their activities like concerts. The situation changed a little bit from the 2000 and onwards as freedom of expression was enhanced but they still need to acquire authorisation from the authorities for their cultural activities which is denied sometimes for security reasons (interview, 18.01.08). The Centre stresses the importance of establishing dialogue with the state apparatus but at the same time sets as a prerequisite for this dialogue the definition and recognition of Kurdish identity in the constitution (interview, 18.01.08).

4. Conclusions

While we recognise that the inferences that can be made from a few examples taken from four cases are limited, we would nonetheless want to suggest that they show, as one would expect, that inclusive articulations of human rights tend to have a desecuritising effect, if they have any effect at all. It is less clear whether within the inclusive category, universal or integrational articulations are preferable. Clearly, from our empirical survey of the four cases considered, it appears that universal rights articulations are by far the

most popular ones, partly perhaps because this is the “hard core” of the international human rights discourse, and partly because the articulation of integrational rights presupposes the acknowledgment of the existence of the other group, which is more difficult than recognising the existence of individual human beings. Our examples have also indicated that the success in terms of desecuritisation hinges on contextual factors, and above all on the timing of the articulation. An inclusive human rights articulation is more likely to have a desecuritisising effect if the conflict is already in a desecuritisising phase, and likewise, an exclusive human rights articulation is more likely to fuel the conflict if it is already in a heating-up phase.

More research is clearly necessary to examine further and more systematically across a wider set of cases how the four types of human rights articulations affect the trajectory of a conflict. Our results do however warn against positing a simple correlation between conflicts and human rights. Likewise, they suggest that the decisive division is not between individual and collective, but between inclusive and exclusive rights. Policymakers and analysts alike should therefore not take the rights language employed by many actors in conflicts to make their claims at face value but always carefully assess the character of human rights articulations they are confronted with.

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