

Essential, Educating in the subject of Human Rights

Even when the reform takes the civil rights to a constitutional level, the performance of these depends on the fact that the society knows them and asserts them.

Photo caption – Director of Youth for Human Rights

Upper photo caption – Youth for Human Rights

Youth for Human Rights Mexico is a nonprofit organization which is part of Youth for Human Rights International, organization formed in Los Angeles, California, and with presence in more than 80 countries.

The objective is to educate the population about human rights in order to make them a reality.

Photo caption below 2nd picture

Make human rights known

The constitutional reform of human rights can be one of the most important advances in the history of the country, as it takes all of the civil rights to a constitutional level established in the international treaties signed by Mexico.

Nevertheless, for human rights to be respected, besides having a law that guarantees them, there must be the support of the society. But the reality is that currently, according to a survey done by Youth for Human Rights to more than a thousand people, 92% answered that they “haven’t heard about the Declaration of Human Rights”, from these none was able to name more than 3 of the 30 rights contained in such declaration, and less than 1% was able to name five. None of them was able to name ten.

It is this ignorance that permits that these rights are not enforced by the State and the society itself.

Therefore, Raul Arias, director of Youth for Human Rights, states that it is important that the government carries out campaigns of promotion and explains that without the commitment of the society in this subject, no effort is enough.

“The truth is that civil rights are not a reality in any part of the world, even First World countries have their human rights problems. The fact is that they are words on a paper that are kept in a drawer. Mexico and all of the countries that belong to the UN signed the declaration 62 year ago. Now, with the human rights reform approved by the Congress, it is the moment to demand their fulfillment. We need to raise our voice, but also participate, propose, bring about activities that permit to know these rights and this would be the first step to make them a reality”, he says.

Education

Regarding education, he stresses the importance that the State promotes the Universal Convention of Human Rights, but at the same time he indicates that we must invest in making youth to understand and promote its importance.

“The reform was historical, now we must look that within the general law of studies that comes out once is enacted, it includes the universal declaration so that the elementary school children know what are the universal rights, that any person in the world has them, and that they don’t depend on anybody”, he says.

Besides, he states that the organization which he chairs, has achieved important advances: “In the ends of September 2010 we had a meeting with the governor from Chiapas and we did a presentation of our campaign and education tools to him. He was so moved that there then he instructed his legal advisor to include the 30 rights of the Declaration in the Constitution of Chiapas and to make the teaching of such obligatory in middle and higher education. A few days after, in 17 October, the reform had already been approved by unanimity and published in the Periodico Oficial (Official Newspaper). The intention of the governor is to already have a chapter in the textbooks in the next school year. I don’t know of another case where the 30 rights were exactly put in some Constitution and made a such a clear drafting of the obligation of teaching them in schools. It is something historical”.

Therefore, the interviewee stresses the importance of promoting human rights:

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Photo caption – In Chiapas its teaching is already obligatory

“Human rights have a very big impact. When you teach this, awareness is created that it is a personal subject, as if we make them part of our everyday life, part of the decisions we make everyday, then we will be able to have a culture of respect and tolerance; that is why it is so vital to teach them. It must be a priority to struggle so that the teaching on this subject in basic and middle education is made obligatory, besides including the declaration in the syllabus.

In this sense, he highlights the importance of the promotion to strengthen human rights starting with youth, as he indicates that “youth reacts very well when they are taken into account and given a knowledge; and something such as human rights that belong to them by nature, makes the commitment happen and they don’t doubt in taking responsibility and being part of the solution”.

Youth

Regarding this, the director of Youth for Human Rights talks about the importance of the approval of the human rights reform, especially for youth, as this represents an important opportunity for this sector of the population to demand their rights.

“Youth should be given opportunities and a good education: To give knowledge to a youth is to give them weapons so that he can better handle his problems in life. We should have a little bit of creativity, imagination to do programs and take advantage of those who don't work or study, I don't think because of pleasure but because of the given conditions. But we can change this between all, not only the government, which obviously has the responsibility”.

Besides, he adds that the purpose of Youth for Human Rights is that “youth become advocates of tolerance and human rights, this way we can make them aware that there is hope and to take advantage of the energy of youth and organize groups to recover the Mexico that we love”.

Therefore he stresses that its fulfillment rather than depending on a government , depends of all who are part of the society, as he states that “human rights start in small places, close to home— so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world, meaning your school, your home, your work. If they are not respected there, they will not be respected anywhere else; so then it starts with the decisions that we make everyday, because if we make them a reality, the example that we give is of a bigger influence. That is the beginning”.