**Do we have a moral duty to help our fellow humans? (14 votes)**

[**BenChida**](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/1330541)*a day ago*

Posted by: midgic

Do we have a moral duty to help our fellow humans in other countries? For example, leaders like Nelson Mandela and Aung San Suu Kyi were unjustly imprisoned for many years. Was it morally acceptable for the rest of the world to sit back and do nothing (or effectively very little)? For years, citizens of North Korea have been oppressed and forced to suffer in extreme poverty. Again, is it morally acceptable for the rest of the world to sit back and do nothing? I was wondering if any of the ideas we studied in the Justice course could be applied to this issue.

Thanks,

Peter

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(this post is about [Live Question and Answer Session with Professor Sandel, Part 2 / Top Vote-Getting Questions](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/jump_to/i4x:/HarvardX/ER22x/discussion/6efbd5d53d5241b6bf99409448272104))

1. [1](javascript:void(0))[**midgic**](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/1171758)

*a day ago*

It seems that the United Nations believes **in theory** that we should protect basic human rights. Do they (we?) not have a moral duty to actually put these theories into practice?

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* + a)Good Day, let´s say for example, if my job is not just, but my family depends on my salary..what should I do? b) I mean the work is legal..but I believe it is not just for society..but my family and I depends on the salary..What should I do considering the difficulty to get a job. c) What would you do if Harvard CEO sends yoo and order to do something worng but unfair..would you do it? My name is Javier from Quito- Ecuador Thank you!

*–posted about 19 hours ago by*[JavierEduardo](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/342973)

Top of Form



Bottom of Form

1. [1](javascript:void(0))[**EdSilha**](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/1032045)

*a day ago*

The United Nations has taken the position that we do.

<http://www.hrweb.org/legal/undocs.html>

• Universal Declaration of Human Rights • Covenant on Civil and Political Rights • Optional Protocol to the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights • Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights • Convention Against Torture • Convention Against Genocide • The Geneva Conventions • Convention on the Rights of the Child • Convention on Eliminiation of Discrimination Against Women • Charter of the United Nations

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Top of Form



Bottom of Form

1. [1](javascript:void(0))[**milarepa**](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/522254)

*a day ago*

I am not certain that some of the aforementioned people were 'unjustly' imprisoned. At times some of them took up arms against the state. The fact the individuals are viewed as hero's now may be in part that in their name, or the name of their groups, people were killed and bombed to the negotiating table.

An issue with helping our fellow humans is that the states that are able to do the assisting invariably have different cultures. Some cross-contamination of ideologies take place. And like it or not, in this capitalist society, something is never gave for nothing. The after effects can be extreme.

The united nations is like our grandfather. Lots to say, someone we look up to, but has lost their false teeth. The Human Rights act, whilst being blatant common sense, is ignored at will by the state. Yet, even though the state is big, and an individual small, as a group, individuals form society. And society can implement change. Providing we can move our gaze from the latest mobile phone.

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* + Are there are some bright lights for the UN and other NGA'S? Would disaster relief, support for refugees, water projects in Africa, literacy programs, etc. not qualify as caring for fellow humans? The track record leaves much to be desired, but has it improved?

*–posted about 22 hours ago by*[EdSilha](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/1032045)

Top of Form



Bottom of Form

1. [0](javascript:void(0))[**ceebeegeebee**](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/1857383)

*about 19 hours ago*

I think it is important to recognise this universal dimension, however the utilitarian view as to what the consequences of acting to fix the problem needs to be taken into consideration, ie should 100,000 die to correct an injustice? In other words, are we capable of acting to alleviate an injustice in a way that does not cause further pain and injustice? If not, we should not act. - Carolyn

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Top of Form



Bottom of Form

1. [1](javascript:void(0))[**Mr\_Phil**](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/909485)

*about 19 hours ago*

"Duty to help", well ok, but do we in the west actually even go as far as duty not to harm.

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Top of Form



Bottom of Form

1. [1](javascript:void(0))[**MM999**](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/879123)

*about 18 hours ago*

I live by the philosophy that you "do unto others as you would want done unto yourself." I know that isn't the philosophy held by everyone, isn't universal, and yet I do believe it is based on my moral character, values, and ethics. I am a registered nurse, it as ingrained into my moral character to want to help people that is why I became a nurse, along with the flexibility, and variation of duty that career provides. I also work with computers etc. Throughout my education and post education experience I've had the opportunity to work with other health care providers to provide supplies, money, and other necessary resources to support other countries such as Haiti, their country, and nursing program. I believe with our resources we do have a moral duty to help other countries, in improving their conditions, helping in times of need, and to work toward a global improvement. I think as a society we have an obligation to do so. I have volunteered for organizations such as Feed My Starving Children. I believe it nourishes the human spirit, the human soul to devote time and effort to organizations such as this. Donating two hours of your time provides a significant food supply, resources, and support. It also provides a sense of self realization once again to realize how blessed I have been in my life and the need, duty, and justice to want to share that time, resources, education, and talent with others domestically in the US and to contribute globally as well.

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Top of Form



Bottom of Form

Top of Form

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Bottom of Form