



# POLI 150: Human Rights

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## Today's Class

- What Are Human Rights?
- Human Rights Violations
- Why Do States Care?



# What are Human Rights?

- Rights possessed by all individuals regardless of their characteristics
- Mentioned in UN Charter, clarified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)
- Contains a huge number of rights relating to human dignity regardless of individual factors
- Also includes **First Generation** rights (e.g. freedom of speech, equal protection of law) and **Second Generation** rights (e.g. social/economic equality)



# Legally Binding Agreements

- UDHR is not legally binding
- Two legal agreements were born out of UDHR: one for civil and political rights, and one for economic, social, and cultural rights
- The former was favored by Western states, the latter by the then Communist states
- These agreements, especially the second generation rights, can be controversial



# Why Are Human Rights Controversial?

- Different rights are emphasized by different countries
- For example, the US has not ratified the legal agreement pertaining to economic rights
- Human rights laws reflect Western ideals
- Some human rights are not agreed upon (e.g. freedom from torture)



# Why Do States Violate Human Rights?

- Poor state capacity
- National security (e.g. Red Scare, Japanese internment)
- Concerns over remaining in power (e.g. Dirty War in Venezuela)
- Autocracies and unstable democracies usually violate HR more than consolidated democracies



# Why Do States Sign Agreements?

- New democracies have incentives to institutionalize norms of human rights
- Could create negative incentives for consolidated democracies that don't want to cede authority
- Linkage can also play a role in the form of aid, membership in IOs, etc.
- States join agreements to constrain actions of other states



# Why Do States Care About Others?

- States care about the human rights practices of others for altruistic and self-interested reasons
- Altruistic: empathy for disadvantaged, as framed by HR orgs.
- Fear of conflict spillover
- Pressure from labor unions to include provisions in trade agreements
- Individual pressure on governments from all origins





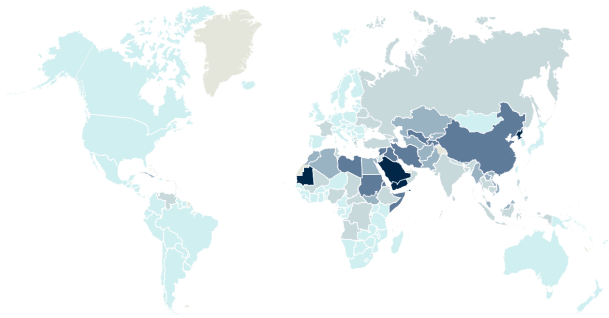
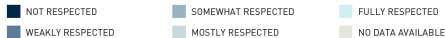
# Do States Respect Human Rights?

- Legal agreements have been enacted
- Abuses still continue
- Overall, HR violations appear to be diminishing



# Respect for Freedom of Religion

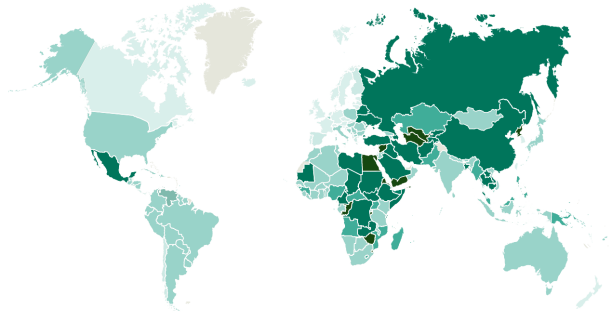
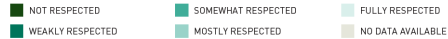
MAP 12.1 *Respect for Freedom of Religion by Public Authorities, 2016*





# Respect for Norms against Torture

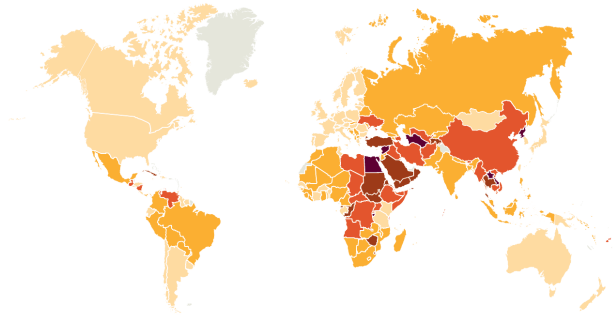
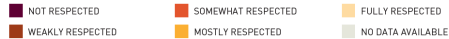
MAP 12.2 *Respect for Norms against Torture by Public Authorities, 2016*





# Respect for Women's Freedom

MAP 12.3 *Respect for Women's Freedom of Discussion by Public Authorities, 2016*





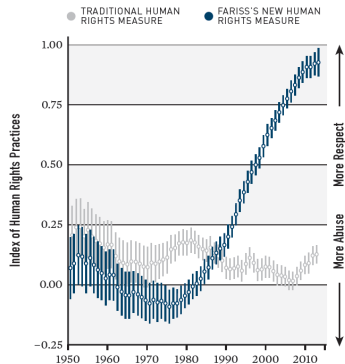
# Measuring Human Rights Adherence

- Part of the answer to whether or not human rights are respected depends upon how they are measured
- States don't advertise human rights abuses/adherence
- Some organizations track them the best they can
- The standard for human rights has changed over time



# Measuring Human Rights

FIGURE A *Estimates of Human Rights Practices around the World, 1946–2015*





# Are Human Rights Agreements Effective?

- This is a different question than ‘do states respect human rights’
- Could be the case that states who sign agreements are most likely to respect human rights in the first place
- Findings of a negative relationship driven by multiparty dictatorships (e.g. Cameroon)
- Findings of a positive relationship only when other factors are at play (courts, NGOs, etc.)



## HR Violations & Punishment

- Should states punish human rights violators?
- One of the most common forms of punishment take the form of economic sanctions
- Mixed findings on effectiveness of sanctions
- Questions arise of whom sanctions affect





## HR Violations & Punishment

- Few human rights violators are punished
- It's costly to punish violators; knowing this, states feel free to violate HR
- Domestic pressure, alignment with other political interests, and alignment with principles of sovereignty make punishment more likely