

De-Centering Human Rights: Liberalism, Human Rights, and the Global South

Human rights are one (maybe even the) central component of the Liberal Script, often leading to an equation between human rights and liberalism. At the same time, the nexus between human rights and liberalism is predominantly attributed to the influence of Western/Northern liberal democracies on international human rights law-making. The project aims to expose how representatives of the global South¹ have engaged with the notion of liberalism – as authors, owners, interpreters and con-testers of liberal ideas in discourses on human rights. We focus on these different kinds of contestation to analyze the ways in which actors from the global South have shaped the international human rights regime. We ask:

How, when, and why have actors from the global South endorsed and/or contested human rights as a central part of the liberal script in the history of the making of the contemporary human rights regime?
How, when, and why have actors from the global South used human rights to contest practices of (allegedly) liberal actors?

Our analysis comprises two interrelated parts relating (a) to the historical trajectories of international human rights discourses and (b) contemporary contestations with and over human rights.