



ILS CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL LAW



NEWSLETTER



15th April, 2025

Vol. XXVIII No. I

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LETTER

from the

EDITOR

The right to food is a human right. It protects the right of all human beings to live in dignity, free from hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. The right to food is protected under international human rights and humanitarian law. With almost 870 million people chronically undernourished in 2010–12, the number of hungry people in the world remains unacceptably high. The vast majority live in developing countries, where about 15 percent of the population are estimated to be undernourished. The right to food approach to food insecurity is based on the premise that tackling world hunger requires improving not the availability of food, but access to food for the vulnerable and deprived. This entry presents internationally agreed definitions of the human right to adequate food, conceptual developments in the last decades, and an overview of the challenges facing the full realization of this fundamental human right globally. Indeed, lack of access to food is almost never the result of a general scarcity of food. Instead, people are deprived of food because they have no opportunity to produce it, cannot earn a sufficient income to buy the food they

need, or are unable to work at all. Despite the development of new legal frameworks, institutions and mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the right to food, both at the national and international level, violations of the right to food remain a daily reality. Despite decades of growing global wealth, poverty and food insecurity remain pervasive and socio-economic and gender inequalities endure across the world. Individuals and communities face the continuing deprivation and denial of access to essential lands, resources, goods and services by State and non-State actors alike. The full realization of the right to food will require structural changes both at the national and international levels. The elaboration of participatory right to food strategies, ensuring policy coherence across sectors, could go a long way towards addressing the specific needs of the most vulnerable segments of the population, either in urban settings or in the countryside.

Regards

FLAVORS SANS FRONTIÈRES

When Spices Meet Statutes

~Srijan Mukopadhyay, II BA LLB

Borders define nations, but flavors cross them—cuisine transcends across markets, shaped as much by trade and law as by taste and joy. A restaurant down your street can embody this internationalization—it may serve dishes of foreign origins, rely on imported ingredients or crystalware, and may even have a waiter from another country. Food is not just sustenance; but a bridge of geopolitics and culture.

Today's cuisine blends influences; with dishes like chicken tikka masala in London reflecting colonial migration. Its status as the UK's

supposed national dish exemplifies how colonized migration reshapes culinary identities, often rebranded without legal recognition of its origins. Intellectual property (IP) disputes between nations for basmati rice reflect a deeper legacy. The McAlloo Tikki or Starbucks' chai tea latte demonstrate how local flavors are commodified for worldwide appeal, sidelining small producers due to trade agreements favoring large businesses.

Additionally, the rise of food influencers has propelled certain cuisines to global fame, yet IP



law offers little protection to the communities behind them. Viral food trends, from Korean *dalgon*a to Japanese *tamagoyaki*, are reproduced abroad, without benefiting their originators. Celebrity chefs market “fusion” dishes, often bypassing the communities that inspire them. This prompts a question: should international law intervene? The Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) protects trademarks and patents but fails to safeguard traditional knowledge, leaving indigenous culinary innovations vulnerable.

Next, who defines authenticity? Why do French baguettes have UN protection, but Indian curries are diluted into generic, “overspiced” versions for Western palates and command higher prices than their authentic counterpart? Who controls global food narratives—developed nations or the developing ones? It belongs to developed nations; French and Italian cuisines become “fine dining,” while Ethiopian *injera* or Nigerian *jollof rice* are labelled “ethnic.”

Cultural hegemony lets the West define culinary prestige, elevating its cuisine as refined while exoticizing others—through media, institutional ratings, and market power. This reflects structural inequalities in cultural perception. It reinforces historic hierarchies, allowing Western chefs to bank on complex cultural capital, dictating what is considered ‘high cuisine,’ and shower privilege on their gastronomy while diminishing the market value of other culinary traditions.

Global trade policies - tariffs, subsidies, and non-tariff barriers - impact food availability. For instance, the duty on Mexican avocados

under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) increased U.S. expenses, connecting trade policies to an uneven impact on smaller economies and international food markets. Governments now employ cuisine as a tool of soft power, selling national identity through campaigns and diplomatic menus.

Food safety standards also shape food access. Herein comes the Codex Alimentarius - a creation of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Health Organization (WHO) in 1963, it is a worldwide food standards program that makes guidelines, practice codes, and regulations on the production, labelling, and exportation of foods globally. The Codex disadvantages small-scale producers who fight its compliance costs, raising concerns over fair access to international markets because of its one-size-fits-all model. Global disparities in food safety standards often create friction. Stricter countries limit access to foreign markets, while others prioritize open trade. This complicates the balance between domestic safety and global access.

Food embodies one’s life experience. Yet, international law offers limited protection for culinary globalization, which risks erasing the cultural significance behind the food. Expanding IP protections and inclusive policies can safeguard traditional knowledge while ensuring origin communities centre their cuisine. Ethical commercialization, stronger market access for small producers, and cultural awareness through media and tourism can further prevent the erasure of food traditions. These steps uphold the integrity of global cuisines, valuing them as cultural legacies rather than mere commodities.

WEAPONISING WHEAT

Food Security in the Russia-Ukraine War

~Trisha Bangari, II BA LLB



In July of 2022, UN Secretary-General António Guterres at the signing ceremony of the Black Sea Grain Initiative declared that “The resumption of Ukrainian grain exports via the Black Sea amid the ongoing war is a beacon of hope for a world that desperately needs it.”

This prompts the question as to why there is a sudden increase in the discourse with respect to food supply chain stability. Food has long been a silent casualty of war, but in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, it has become a deliberate weapon. Since Russia’s full-scale invasion of

Ukraine in February 2022, the war has not only devastated cities and displaced millions but also disrupted global food supply chains. To protect these delicate supply chains the United Nations and Türkiye brokered the “Black Sea Grain Initiative” (BSGI), a multilateral effort to help bring Russian and Ukrainian food produce to the world.

Before the war, Ukraine was one of the world's largest grain exporters, with over 70% of its produce sent abroad—90% of which was transported via Black Sea ports.

The country was known as the ‘breadbasket of Europe’ supplying grains and other food essentials to countries worldwide especially to the food insecure countries in North Africa and the Middle East (MENA region). However, Russia's blockade of these ports has severely disrupted this supply chain, pushing countries in the MENA region to the brink of famine and causing unsustainable spikes in food prices. The BSGI proved successful, helping lower global food prices by 8.6% in July, 1.9% in August, and 1.1% in September 2022. However, just as markets began stabilizing, Russia unilaterally withdrew from the agreement and reignited food insecurity concerns worldwide.

By obstructing grain exports, Russia has not only violated legal frameworks but also heightened the suffering of millions in food-insecure regions.

The blockade of the Black Sea violates international law on multiple fronts, including humanitarian, maritime, and trade laws. Legislation made in these fields of law is crucial to the well being of populations worldwide, they help protect important maritime supply chains by providing navigational rights, ensure access, right to food and its affordability by minimising impact of wars on the civil population and by protecting free trade between countries.

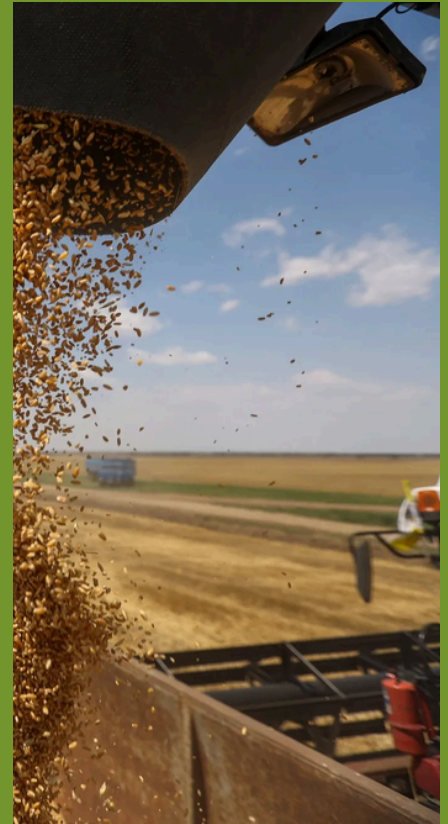
Fundamental frameworks such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) recognize access to food as a basic human right, mandate the free passage of humanitarian aid and prevent war-induced

starvation. The collapse of the BSGI has disproportionately harmed vulnerable nations, exacerbating food insecurity in already fragile economies.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) promotes the right of free passage Article 38 (right of transit passage) guarantees the right of peaceful passage in straits used for international navigation. Additionally, Article 87 (freedom of the high seas) and Article 90 (right of navigation) prohibit any state from unilaterally restricting access to international trade routes without lawful justification. While UNCLOS permits temporary restrictions for military reasons, they must be justified, proportionate, and short-term. Russia's prolonged blockade without any ends in site fail to classify as ‘temporary’ or ‘short term’, there is lack of official declaration for the blockade post the end of the BSGI, the targeted attacks on Ukraine’s grain-exporting infrastructure indicate a deliberate strategy to use food insecurity as a weapon of war. This also violates the principle of proportionality as merchant vessels not carrying arms are not targets under law of war and lastly as discussed this blockade causes disproportionate harm to third-party food importing countries.

Beyond maritime law, the blockade also contravenes global trade regulations. The World Trade Organization (WTO) advocates for free and non-discriminatory access to markets. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), Article XI, explicitly prohibits unjustified export restrictions, particularly on essential food commodities. Furthermore, the WTO Agreement on Agriculture (Articles 12 and 16) discourages unilateral trade barriers that exacerbate food crises.

Russia's withdrawal from the BSGI effectively imposed an unjustified blockade on Ukrainian grain, violating these global trade principles. The weaponization of food has far-reaching humanitarian and geopolitical consequences. By obstructing grain exports, Russia has not only violated international legal frameworks but also heightened the suffering of millions in food-insecure regions. The United Nations Security Council and General Assembly must reinforce legal mechanisms to prevent further weaponization of food in armed conflicts. It is also important that legislation is developed regarding war and food security especially in the present globalised world where supply chains overlap and intermingle. A renewed or alternative agreement must be brokered to prevent future disruptions and upkeep human rights, ensuring that food security remains a global priority rather than a tool of conflict.





Modifying the Global Food Market

Regulatory Complexities & Jurisdictional Issues of GMOs

*~Rajvansh Deshmukh, I BBA LLB &
Varun Gawande, I BA LLB*

Assume you go to a store and take one product with the GMO label. You wonder: What is GMO? Is GMO good or bad? Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) are produced after using biotechnology by introducing changes in the genetic composition of plants, animals, or microbes in a manner to incorporate useful features such as resistance to insects or improved nutrition.

Why are some products labeled GMO products and others as non-GMO? Although various

research studies backed that GMO products are as safe as their counterparts, the markets run on consumer perception, which may vary across regions. In some places, the GMO label is necessary, while in other places, there is a more liberal approach. This ambiguity between the national and international regulations is creating conflict, trade barriers, and contentious debates.

World Trade Organization (WTO) mandated Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement,

which necessitates the application of health-targeted alternate measures and science and chance evaluation measures primarily based on technological know-how and risk assessment. In addition, the Cartagena Protocol on biodiversity permits countries to regulate the importation of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) to the international market, even without complete scientific certainty, if there is a possibility that biodiversity and human health may be threatened. The Codex Alimentarius Commission, aided with the aid of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), establishes international food requirements, which consist of GMO requirements. Differences in utility and utilization of the standards among nations can create confusion and affect trade.

Divergent legal systems in various countries go an extended way in complicating worldwide trade patterns. Labeling of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) is mandatory in some countries, but no longer in others.

The European Union (EU) is strict with GMOs, with mandatory labeling and rigorous approval methods. Although the EU has been careful, there are contentious arguments regarding the capacity repeal of a few GMO regulations. In the USA, the National Bioengineered Food Disclosure Standard has been set up, mandating labeling of bioengineered meals to offer accelerated customer cognizance.

This unevenness influences exchange for instance when the USA exports GMO feed, the EU holds them for hazard assessment, decreasing US farm exports to Europe. Divergent labeling needs, varying chance check

and protectionist obstacles are different causes of demanding situations. These issues will no longer be eased without harmonization. Countries should collaborate to align guidelines with the WTO SPS Agreement and Codex standards to cause them to be uniform. Ongoing scientific consultations and cooperative policymaking are crucial to bridge regulatory gaps.

This ambiguity between the national and international regulations is creating conflict, trade barriers, and contentious debates.

Regardless of overwhelming scientific evidence, the safety of GMOs is an argumentative issue. There is evidence to suggest that GMOs are as safe, if not safer, than non-GMOs and are an important component of the world food trade. Harmonization of world standards is required to avert disruption of trade. Countries must unite, carry out research, and come up with harmonized legislation to enable ongoing world trade and achieve food security.



FOOD AND WARS

Starvation as a War Crime

~Nimilika Bhandary, I BBA LLB

Food is an integral part of human existence. When it comes to wars, food can often be used as a weapon. Deliberate deprivation of food during wars is a common strategy used to punish and control civilians during an armed conflict. The starvation of civilians is not just a humanitarian issue, it is a violation of international law. In 2016, 815 million people suffered from chronic malnutrition, and of those, 60 percent lived in areas affected by wars. On May 24, 2018, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed Resolution 2417 condemning the use of food insecurity

and starvation as a tactic during war. However, the questions that we need to ask are, “Is this resolution being respected? And are necessary steps being taken to hold the defaulters accountable?”

To understand this, we must look at recent armed conflicts. The Yemen Conflict is one such example of how this resolution is being violated. Decades of civil war had already displaced thousands of Yemeni Civilians when the Saudi-led coalition decided to block the Red Sea Port at Hodeida, the main entry point

for food imports. In 2024, it was the second-hungriest country in the world based on the Global Hunger Index. In the Russia- Ukraine war, Russia blocked Ukraine's vital Black Sea ports and attacked Ukrainian grain storage centers, leading to widespread hunger. These might just seem like examples, but we must remember this is about real people with real families who do not know if they will have food on their plates tomorrow.

Despite the legal prohibitions against using starvation as a weapon, enforcing these laws remains a major challenge. The Geneva Conventions (1949) forbid the starvation of civilians as a strategy of warfare, and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) classifies it as a war crime. Yet, there has been *no* prosecution of world leaders or military commanders for starvation-related crimes. While all these actions were in the right direction, they lacked enforcement measures. Countries could impose targeted sanctions on leaders and military officials who weaponize food, and food diplomacy efforts could be undertaken. Sanctions and food diplomacy can also play a role.

“Is this resolution being respected? And are necessary steps being taken to hold the defaulters accountable?”

One of the few success stories comes from South Sudan. After reports of aid being blocked, the United Nations (UN) adopted Resolution 2417 and imposed targeted sanctions on those responsible, humanitarian corridors were reopened, and peace agreements followed. Beyond sanctions and diplomatic efforts, legal mechanisms must also

be implemented. The creation of an independent international tribunal dedicated to prosecuting starvation-related war crimes could ensure more accountability. Expanding the jurisdiction of the ICC to allow for universal prosecution of these crimes, could also eradicate the existing legal shortcomings. Humanitarian organisations also help on the ground. Groups like the *World Food Programme (WFP)* and *International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)* have often negotiated temporary ceasefires to deliver food in recent wars which has helped the situation of civilians from warring countries, but there is still a long way to go to prevent starvation as a war strategy.

Starvation during war is a calculated tactic used by those in power. The world cannot turn a blind eye to the suffering caused by these actions. It is not enough to condemn them with just words, the international legal system must take real, enforceable steps to hold perpetrators accountable so that no human being should have to face hunger as a weapon of war.

FOOD WITHOUT BORDERS

The Quest for International Cooperation

~*Sania R. Shaikh, III BA LLB*

Between January 2023 and January 2025, 509 salmonellosis cases were detected in over nine European countries, all linked to exposure to alfalfa sprouts from a common seed supplier in Italy, confirmed by EU centralized whole genome sequencing (WGS) analysis.

As food production spans global trade networks, international cooperation is essential to ensure safety within the food industry. A single contamination incident can impact public health, trade relations, and consumer confidence and rapidly escalate into an

international crisis. A 2019 World Bank report estimated the aggregate annual productivity deficits attributed to these foodborne diseases in emerging economies were approximated to be US \$95.2 billion, while the annual costs for treatment of these foodborne diseases was estimated to be US \$15 billion. Incidents like China's melamine milk scandal (2008), Ireland's dioxin-contaminated pork (2008), and Japan's radionuclide-tainted food post-Fukushima (2011) are all examples of how minor instances can lead to extensive food safety emergencies.



A major issue is the lack of consonance in food safety standards across the borders. These standards may be regulatory or voluntary depending upon countries, often creating issues due to multiplicity and overlapping. For instance, the United States and the European Union have a history of conflicts regarding the regulations concerning hormone-treated beef, making it evident how divergence in policies results in ineffective responses of the authorities towards foodborne outbreaks. This conflict over hormone-treated beef is a prime paradigm of how differing policies can result in a complex and often challenging approach toward food safety.

Blind spots in food supply chains facilitate food fraud wherein to make an economic gain, consumers are intentionally deceived by way of substitution, addition, misrepresentation, etc, of food, its ingredients, or food packaging; or false or misleading statements about a product. Many countries lack the infrastructure capable of recognizing and reacting to food-borne problems. Without surveillance, cases go unidentified, and the contaminated products are circulated globally.

Other food safety concerns stem from local food unavailability, market fluctuations and restrictions, and emergency trade bans. The World Trade Organization (WTO) has established a dispute settlement method to minimize disputes amongst nations. The WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) enables countries to take up necessary measures for public safety. The standards and guidelines established by the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) are to be followed for trade in animals and animal

To break this cycle, the international community must transition from reactive measures to proactive systemic reforms.

products. Furthermore, the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) is part of the joint Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Health Organization (WHO) Food Standards Programme to protect consumer interest and promote fair practice. It is the international food standards-setting body, but these standards are voluntary and do not have a binding effect on national food legislation.

The series of food safety crises reveal that no nation can unilaterally safeguard its food supply in our interrelated world. Fragmented regulations, uneven detection potential, and voluntary standards make global trade networks vulnerable. To break this cycle, the international community must transition from reactive measures to proactive systemic reforms. Policymakers need to be informed about the risks and benefits that arise in their respective food systems efficiently, and Codex should be informed about the same to continue to adapt to change. It is essential to involve knowledgeable and engaged representatives from member states. Participation can be promoted by setting incentives for developing countries or countries with less technological capacity. Sustainability and accessibility should also be taken into account when developing new innovations. There is also a need to also ensure sufficient funding by FAO and WHO for the scientific advice programmes to make sure that all Codex measures reside on a sound and impartial scientific basis.

NEWS AT A GLANCE



Amnesty International released a report detailing prevalent gender-based and sexual violence against women and girls in Sudan by Rapid Support Forces (RSF), indicating probable war crimes and crimes against humanity. The report, titled “They Raped All of Us,” shared the story of 30 women and girls who were raped from April 15, 2023, to October 2024. Amnesty International stated that the RSF carried out sexual violence in towns and villages to humiliate, control and punish the victims. Occurrences of sexual violence included rape, gang rape, sexual exploitation, abduction and enforced disappearance, forced prostitution, forced marriage, and human trafficking. The report stated that the sexual violence occurred openly and during attacks on Darfur and Greater Khartoum. For more information, view [here](#)

An international media monitoring group [said](#) on that press freedom in Serbia is facing a “critical” situation, with an increased level of attacks and threats against journalists. The Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR) [sent](#) a delegation comprising representatives from multiple international organizations to Belgrade to meet with people working for the press as well as civil society groups in Serbia to garner information about violations of press freedom by the authorities in the country. The visit came amid ongoing [protests](#) by students, teachers, farmers and other citizens in Serbia’s capital over the Novi Sad railway station roof collapse in November 2024, which resulted in 15 deaths. The protesters were demanding the release of information related to the incident and accountability for the disaster. For more information, view [here](#)

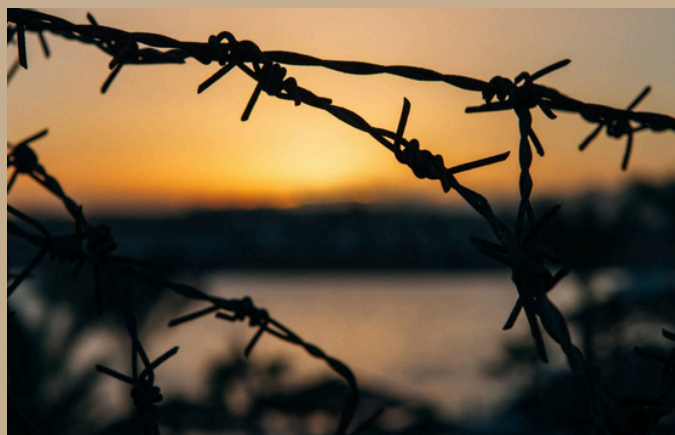




The European Union's border protection agency announced that it is investigating possible human rights violations by Greece related to undocumented migrants, according to a report by the Associated Press. The agency, Frontex, is investigating incidents in Greece that took place in 2024, though it has not yet disclosed which incidents in particular are being investigated. The Greek government maintains that it takes active measures to prevent unlawful crossings to its eastern islands, a key entry route into the EU. However, officials deny conducting summary deportations. In December 2024, Frontex began a new operational command structure in Greece and Cyprus to cover smuggling and illegal immigration by land, air, and sea. For more information, view [here](#)

Amnesty International and the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, called the Egyptian authorities to urgently halt the arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, and deportations against the Ahmadi Muslim minority community. Amnesty International researcher Mahmoud Shalaby stated: "The Egyptian authorities have legal obligations to respect and protect the right to freedom of religion of everyone in the country which includes those with religious beliefs not

recognised by the state." The rights organizations highlighted the case of Ahmed al-Tanawi, a Syrian national who is at imminent risk of deportation to Syria. For more information, view [here](#)



UN experts on urged Switzerland and other European Member States to increase their efforts in meeting their international commitments on mitigating climate change, a year since the landmark ruling by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). The group of experts recommended that Switzerland and other European states refer to the guidance on intersectionality provided by the UN Special Procedures and Treaty Bodies to ensure that adaptation measures for climate change do not discriminate against certain social groups. For more information, view [here](#)



UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Overcoming Negotiation Deadlocks – 2025 Edition (May 19 – June 15, 2025)

This four-week online course equips participants with the skills to navigate and resolve complex negotiation impasses. It explores key negotiation approaches (distributive and integrative), psychological dynamics in high-stakes discussions, and practical tools for preparation, conduct, and resolution. Through case studies and expert insights, participants will enhance their capacity to manage deadlocks effectively across diplomatic settings. For more information, view [here](#).

Summer School on AI, Ethics and Human Rights (June 23–27, 2025)

This hybrid training programme, hosted by UNICRI and LUMSA Human Academy, will explore the ethical and human rights challenges posed by AI, including issues of bias, surveillance, and discrimination. It offers an interdisciplinary approach to AI governance, legal frameworks, and emerging technologies like neuro-AI, with a focus on human dignity and vulnerable communities. For more information, view [here](#).

Specialized Course on Cultural Heritage, Crime and Security (June 9– 13, 2025)

Organized by UNICRI and The American University of Rome, this online course will explore the threats to cultural heritage from conflict, trafficking, and terrorism, while examining legal and institutional responses. It offers interdisciplinary training on protecting heritage in times of crisis, with sessions on criminal networks, decolonization, and the role of law enforcement and international bodies. For more information, view [here](#).

Human Rights, Environmental Protection and Climate Change – 2025 (11–24 August 2025)

This two-week online course explores the link between human rights and environmental protection amid climate change. It covers key issues in international environmental law, the role of human rights in environmental advocacy, and climate litigation. It also examines the right to a healthy environment, the relevance of SDGs, and indigenous rights, along with concepts like anthropocentrism and ecocentrism. For more information, view [here](#).

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