



# MIGHT MAKES RIGHT

Human Rights Watch chronicles the often  
oppressive abuses perpetrated by people in power

**O**n Monday, the nation honors Martin Luther King Jr. for his groundbreaking work promoting civil rights. Though much progress has been made, the struggle to fully realize his dream of equality for all continues to this day around the world.

Human Rights Watch is an organization dedicated to many of the same ideals as King. It has its roots in the late 1970s and '80s when several "watch committees" were formed to monitor unstable political situations around the world. Groups

such as Helsinki Watch, Americas Watch, Asia Watch, Africa Watch and Middle East Watch joined forces in 1988 to become Human Rights Watch. Its mission is to investigate human rights abuses around the world, shine a spotlight on them and lobby governments in hopes of improving the situations. You can follow its work at [HRW.org](http://HRW.org).

This isn't a site you would visit for entertainment or light fare. The articles, pictures and videos deal

with the human suffering that has happened and is happening around the globe. The content is educational — and it is depressing.

#### Weighty issues

The sad stories come from all over the world. Syrian refugees, especially women and girls, suffer a loss of basic freedoms under the Sharia law imposed by Islamic extremists. Innocent civilians caught up in Mexico's drug war disappear without a trace while corrupt officials look the other way or, worse, share culpability with the cartels. Christians and Muslims slaughter each other in the Central African Republic in the name of religion. Russian authorities infringe on the rights of local residents for the build up and presentation of the Sochi Olympics in February. Egypt, Israel, Tunisia, Honduras, the United States — it seems nowhere is immune to human rights violations.

#### Strictly business

The site has a very "newsy" look to it. On the home page, photographs and blocks of type are organized in a grid by topic or region of the world. A subdued color palette of mostly shades of gray, with selected accents of bright color, helps the photos act

as the dominant visual elements. A gallery of larger pictures sits at the top of the page highlighting the featured stories. A row of columnists' mugshots with headlines of their topics separates the gallery from the grid below.

There are several ways to navigate around the site. Tabs across the top of the page take you to the different sections: Our Work, News, Publications, Multimedia, About Us, or back to the home page. The tabs are repeated at the bottom of the page with a few additions: Contact Us, Film Festival and Donate. You also can click on any of the story links in the gallery or grid to get to the related pages. A column of breaking-news-story links runs down the right side of the page.

#### Important stories

The bulk of the site's content consists of articles by Human Rights Watch writers. These pages tend to be very text heavy, with just a small photo or graphic at the top.

The reporting for the articles appears to be pretty solid, with the writers often visiting the scene of the human rights violations or interviewing eyewitnesses. Most of the abuses are not isolated cases of lone police

officers or soldiers violating the rights of a citizen. It's more often a systemic violation of the rights of groups of people who share common political or religious beliefs, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or some other traits that the forces in power are opposed to. The violations range in severity from being denied the right to dress as you please to being prevented from expressing your opinions freely to torture and death.

The multimedia section of the website is more visually dynamic. A slide show of large video stills plays across the top of the page. A grid of a dozen smaller stills on a charcoal background fills up the rest of the page. The videos I watched were all well done. They featured footage shot on location and interviews with people who experienced or witnessed human rights violations. The publications section features more detailed reports on violations that can be downloaded.

You won't feel good about the human race after visiting this site, but the stories need to be told.

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