






international law of contemporary media


session 2: international human rights pertinent to media

mira burri, dr.iur., PD

fall term, 23 september 2015

The Institute of International Law in Bern is a member of the Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) on Globalisation and Law. The NCCR is a joint venture of the University of Bern, the University of Zurich, the University of Basel, and the University of Fribourg.







goals of the day

- overview of the int'l human rights framework
- **focus: freedom of expression**
- freedom of expression under the UDHR
- freedom of expression under the ICCPR
- freedom of expression under the ECHR
- scope and limitations
- some case law
- changing aspects under the conditions of digital media

2

The Institute of International Law in Bern is a member of the Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) on Globalisation and Law. The NCCR is a joint venture of the University of Bern, the University of Zurich, the University of Basel, and the University of Fribourg.





int'l human rights: **basics**

- human rights refer to the basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled
- belong to **individuals**
- inalienable and universal rights simply by virtue of their personhood that should trump state prerogatives
- despite different value systems worldwide (cultural relativism), human rights are now a universally accepted concept of int'l law
- however still consistently violated

3

The Institute of International Law in Bern is a member of the Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) on Globalisation and Law. The NCCR is a joint venture of the University of Bern, the University of Zurich, the University of Basel, and the University of Fribourg.

human rights: history

- **origins:** Magna Carta 1215; the American and French revolutions, 1776 and 1789; although these rights were to apply only within the sovereign states
- after World War II, special attention due to the fascist atrocities against humanity
- UN Commission on Human Rights, est. 1946, led by Eleanor Roosevelt
- **International Bill of Rights** as a two-part structure, comprising a non-binding declaration and a binding covenant

[illegible]

human rights: **int'l acts**

- **Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR)**, 1948
- **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR)**, 1966
- **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)**, 1966
- both entered into force only in 1976
- CCPR and CESCR similar but with some important differences (first v. second 'generations' of rights / negative v. positive rights / compliance mechanisms)

[illegible]

human rights: state obligations

- **obligation to respect:** requires states to refrain from interfering with the enjoyment of human rights (passive);
- **obligation to protect:** requires states to prevent violations of such rights by third parties; and
- **obligation to fulfil:** requires states to take appropriate legislative, budgetary, judicial and other measures towards the full realisation of such rights (active)

[illegible]



swiss national centre of competence in research


freedom of expression

- **Article 19** of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- **Article 19** of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- **Article 10** of the European Convention on Human Rights
- **Article 13** of the American Convention on Human Rights
- **Article 9** of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights

The Institute of International Law at the University of Zurich is a member of the Institute of International Law of the Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) in Trade Regulation.





7




swiss national centre of competence in research

freedom of expression: art. 19 UDHR

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

The Institute of International Law at the University of Zurich is a member of the Institute of International Law of the Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) in Trade Regulation.





8




swiss national centre of competence in research

freedom of expression: art. 19 CCPR

1. Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference.
2. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.
3. The exercise of the rights provided for in paragraph 2 of this article carries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:
 - (a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others;
 - (b) For the protection of national security or of public order (*ordre public*), or of public health or morals.

The Institute of International Law at the University of Zurich is a member of the Institute of International Law of the Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) in Trade Regulation.




9




swiss national centre of competence in research

freedom of expression: art. 19 CCPR

- although CCPR binding upon the state parties, weak compliance monitoring and no effective enforcement mechanisms
- the Human Rights Committee (HRC) examines state reports on the implementation of the rights; submits *Concluding Observations* (political effects but no concrete remedies)
- possibilities for inter-state complaints and conciliation procedure under *ad hoc* Committee (never been used so far)
- individual complaints possible under the First Optional Protocol (not all states signatories - US and Switzerland are not)
- decisions have only reporting character; no sanctions

The International Centre of Competence in Research - ICCR is a research institution of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)



10




swiss national centre of competence in research

freedom of expression: art. 19 UDHR

- Art. 19(3) expressly stresses that the exercise of the right to freedom of expression **carries with it special duties and responsibilities** and for this reason certain restrictions on the right are permitted; these may relate either to the interests of other persons or to those of the community as a whole
- restrictions allowed only when: **“provided by law”**; only **for one of the purposes** set out in subparagraphs (a) and (b); and **“necessary”** for the attainment of one of those purposes.

The International Centre of Competence in Research - ICCR is a research institution of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)



11



swiss national centre of competence in research

freedom of expression: art. 19 UDHR

- HRC has given state parties relatively broad margin of appreciation to interpret the goals that justify restrictions and has not been very strict as to the necessity and proportionality test
- examples: *Hertzberg v. Finland* (1979) and *Faurisson v. France* (1993)

The International Centre of Competence in Research - ICCR is a research institution of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)


12

ncer trade regulation

swiss national centre of competence in research

freedom of expression: ECHR

- **Council of Europe (CoE)**; 47 members
- signed 4 November 1950 in Rome; entry into force 3 September 1953
- ECHR developed in the gap between the completion of the UDHR and of the CCPR and CESCR
- **ECHR: foundation for the strongest and most institutionally developed human rights framework**
- first steps towards making the International Bill of Rights truly operational

The International Centre of Competence in Research (ICCR) is an initiative of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and the Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR).

ICCR

Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research

13

ncer trade regulation

swiss national centre of competence in research

freedom of expression: ECHR

- **European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR)** (based in Strasbourg; <http://www.echr.coe.int>)
- individual and inter-State petitions
- advisory opinions concerning the interpretation of the Convention and its protocols
- since 1998, **all alleged violations of human rights referred directly to the Court**
- **after all domestic remedies have been exhausted and within a period of six months from the date of the final decision**
- ECtHR reform: Interlaken Declaration and Protocol No 14 (2010)

The International Centre of Competence in Research (ICCR) is an initiative of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and the Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR).

ICCR

Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research

14

ncer trade regulation

swiss national centre of competence in research

art. 10(1) ECHR

Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. This article shall not prevent States from requiring the licensing of broadcasting, television or cinema enterprises.

The International Centre of Competence in Research (ICCR) is an initiative of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and the Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR).

ICCR

Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research

15


nccr trade regulation

swiss national centre of competence in research

art. 10(2) ECHR

The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary.

The Institute of Comparative Law in Research (ICLR) is a research institution of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF).


 Swiss National Science Foundation

16

nccr trade regulation


swiss national centre of competence in research

freedom of expression: ECHR

“The Court’s supervisory functions oblige it to pay the utmost attention to the principles characterising a ‘democratic society’. Freedom of expression constitutes one of the essential foundations of such a society, one of the basic conditions for its progress and for the development of every man”.

Handyside v. the United Kingdom, (5493/72) [1976] ECHR 5 (7 December 1976)

The Institute of Comparative Law in Research (ICLR) is a research institution of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF).


 Swiss National Science Foundation

17


nccr trade regulation

swiss national centre of competence in research

art. 10 ECHR: scope of protection

- freedom to hold opinions
- freedom of expression
- **active**: freedom to express an opinion and to impart information and ideas (incl. freedom of art)
- all forms of expression, any media, any content (facts, opinions, entertainment).
In *Groppera Radio AG* (1990, 12 EHRR 321), the Court stated that both broadcasting of programmes over the air and cable are covered by Article 10, “without there being any need to make distinctions according to the content of the programmes”.
- also commercial statements covered, incl. criticism of business practices and commercial publicity
- **passive**: freedom to receive information
- freedom of the press and of the media

The Institute of Comparative Law in Research (ICLR) is a research institution of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF).


 Swiss National Science Foundation

18

nccr trade regulation

swiss national centre of competence in research

ECHR and Swiss Federal Constitution

ECHR:

Art. 2 Right to life

Art. 3 Prohibition of torture

Art. 4 Prohibition of slavery and forced labour

Art. 5 Right to liberty and security

Art. 6 Right to a fair trial

Art. 7 No punishment without law

Art. 8 Right to respect for private and family life

Art. 9 Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

Art. 10 Freedom of expression

Art. 11 Freedom of assembly and association

Art. 12 Right to marry

SFC:

Art. 7 Human dignity

Art. 8 Equality before the law

Art. 9 Protection against arbitrary conduct and principle of good faith

Art. 10 Right to life and to personal freedom

Art. 11 Protection of children and young people

Art. 12 Right to assistance when in need

Art. 13 Right to privacy

Art. 14 Right to marry and to have a family

Art. 15 Freedom of religion and conscience

Art. 16 Freedom of expression and of information

Art. 17 Freedom of the media

Art. 18 Freedom to use any language

Art. 19 Right to primary school education

Art. 20 Freedom of science

Art. 21 Freedom of artistic expression

Art. 22 Freedom of assembly

Art. 23 Freedom of association

Art. 24 Freedom of domicile

Art. 25 Protection against expulsion, extradition and deportation

Art. 26 Guarantee of ownership

Art. 27 Economic freedom

Art. 28 Right to form professional associations

Art. 29 General procedural guarantees

Art. 30 Judicial proceedings

Art. 31 Deprivation of liberty


Art. 32 Criminal proceedings

Art. 33 Right of petition

Art. 34 Political rights

Italicised are rights contained in the Swiss Federal Constitution but not in the ECHR.

The Federal Office of Communications Research (FCCR) is an independent institution of the Swiss Federal Government.



nccr trade regulation

swiss national centre of competence in research

freedom of expression: ECHR

“Freedom of expression is applicable not only to ‘information’ or ‘ideas’ that are favourably received or regarded as inoffensive or as a matter of indifference, but **also to those that offend, shock or disturb the State or any sector of the population.** Such are the demands of that pluralism, tolerance and broadmindedness without which there is no ‘democratic society’”.

Handyside v. the United Kingdom, (5493/72) [1976] ECHR 5 (7 December 1976)

The Federal Office of Communications Research (FCCR) is an independent institution of the Swiss Federal Government.



20


nccr trade regulation

swiss national centre of competence in research

art. 10 ECHR: interference

- interferences with the freedom of expression permitted only when prescribed by law, adopted in pursuance of one of the objectives listed in art. 10(2) and necessary in a democratic society; all conditions must be met
- art. 10(2) objectives:
 - national security
 - territorial integrity or public safety
 - for the prevention of disorder or crime
 - for the protection of health or morals
 - for the protection of the reputation or rights of others
 - for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence
 - for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary

The Federal Office of Communications Research (FCCR) is an independent institution of the Swiss Federal Government.



21

art. 10 ECHR: examples



Caroline von Hannover v. Germany : public versus private persons; freedom of the media versus the right to privacy

22

art. 10 ECHR: licensing broadcasters


- art. 10(1) notes expressly that: **“This article shall not prevent States from requiring the licensing of broadcasting, television or cinema enterprises”**
- **leading case:** *Informationsverein Lentia and others v. Austria* (Appl. No 13914/88, 15041/89, 15717/89, 15779/89, 17207/90, decision of 24 November 1993)
- **Swiss case:** *Demuth v. Switzerland* (Appl. No. 38743/97, decision of 5 November 2002)

23

freedom of expression: wrap-up (1)

- there are a number of acts on the regional and int'l levels that protect the freedom of expression
- the UDHR is the underlying act but has no binding force; the CCPR is binding upon its signatories but lacks enforcement mechanism
- the ECHR has had much impact on the evolution of human rights practice because of the ECtHR and the possibility for individuals to go to court against the CoE Member States


24



freedom of expression: wrap-up (2)

- freedom of expression has a broad scope and encompasses the **freedom to hold opinion, passive and active freedom of information, freedom of the press and of the media, as well as freedom of art**
- interferences are permissible only if **prescribed by law**, in serving **one of the mentioned goals** and if **necessary in a democratic society**
- while allowing margin of appreciation for the Member States in the definition and the concrete contents of the noted goals, the court has tested these carefully according to the subject of protection (e.g. commercial or non-commercial speech) and according to the principle of proportionality


25



freedom of expression: wrap-up (3)

- the ECtHR has stressed the critical importance of freedom of the press and of the media for the functioning of a democratic society
- quite importantly, it has also stressed the need for **media pluralism** as an institutional dimension of the freedom of expression

26



freedom of expression under the conditions of new media (1)

- **changing landscape: access** and the conditions for access become critical
- **new dimensions:**
 - **filtering** (state filtering but also private filtering)
 - **net neutrality:** discrimination of internet traffic
 - **interoperability** of networks, devices and applications
 - **copyright:** private ownership of information (digital rights management systems as automatic enforcement mechanisms)
 - **practical barriers to access** (digital divide; media literacy)

27

nccr trade regulation

swiss national centre of competence in research

freedom of expression

under the conditions of new media (2)

- need for a new right?
- right to communicate?
- the **balancing of rights** (e.g. Wikileaks /Snowden v. state security; freedom of speech v. the right to be forgotten) more difficult
- questions beyond media law
- examination of the concrete practical, economic and legal implications of digital media for freedom of expression in the following sessions

The National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) is a research institution of the Swiss Academy of Sciences (SARF).





28



nccr trade regulation

swiss national centre of competence in research

the right to be forgotten



The National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) is a research institution of the Swiss Academy of Sciences (SARF).



29

nccr trade regulation

swiss national centre of competence in research

- thank you.
- contact: mira.burri@wti.org

The National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) is a research institution of the Swiss Academy of Sciences (SARF).

30

10