



freedom rights project

Press release 14th June 2012

Group: Restore Liberty as the Heart of Human Rights

Challenging international institutions and the human rights community, the *Freedom Rights Project* will document and analyse the inflation and dilution of human rights in international law, which has resulted in undermining the principle of human rights as liberty.

A group of jurists, scholars, and human rights activists today launched the **Freedom Rights Project** to draw the focus of human rights activism back to the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms – the rights most important for those who seek liberty, democracy, and the rule of law. The Project will “defend the very idea of human rights,” which they said has become “a weapon in the hands of despots and exploited as a pretext to undermine individual liberty.”

“For decades, the concept of human rights has been attacked, politicized and exploited - in international institutions such as the United Nations, by repressive governments, and by those who seek to classify their grievances as human rights violations to be addressed by international law mandating state assistance,” according to managing director of the Freedom Rights Project *Jacob Mchangama*.

Hiding behind an inflated human rights regime, bloody dictatorships like those in Iran, Syria, and Libya have diverted attention from their egregious violations of life and freedom with reports about their social programs.

“The result is that today, human rights has come to stand for such a broad range of claims that it has lost meaning as the principle of freedom from tyranny,” Jacob Mchangama said.

The founders and Principal Investigators of the Freedom Rights Project are:

- Jacob MCHANGAMA, Director of legal affairs of the Danish think-tank *CEPOS*, external lecturer on human rights at Copenhagen University, and a prominent political commentator;
- Paulina NEUDING, lawyer, journalist and publisher of the Swedish magazine *Neo*;
- Dr. Aaron RHODES, human rights advocate who was director of the *International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights* (1993-2007) and a founder of the *International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran*; and
- Professor Dr. Guglielmo VERDIRAME, Professor of International Law at of *King's College London* and a practicing barrister, who has written extensively on international human rights law, and on public international law in general.

The Project will bring together jurists, historians and other scholars, as well as human rights activists, to re-focus the concept of human rights on the protection of freedom. The group will monitor and report on trends that weaken human rights, and advocate in international institutions and before the public with articles and books.

The work of the Freedom Rights Project is supported by the John Templeton Foundation and other private donors.

For more information and to arrange interviews:

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