The World We See Ahead - Situational Analysis for Amnesty International's Strategic Goals 2016-19

This is not a survey of the state of the world or human rights globally but rather a set of ideas about 'big picture' trends related to changing power relations and other social and technological developments shaping the environment in which we work and our ability to influence it. It is intended to (a) provoke questions and discussion about our preparedness for possible challenges and opportunities in the future; and (b) help us consider what we do, why and how and ensure that when refining a sharper set of priorities for 2016-19, we have a firm eye on how the world might be changing in the longer term and the underlying drivers of these changes.

This analysis draws on thinking generated within the Amnesty International movement - including via regional meetings and written submissions from national entities and teams at the International Secretariat (IS) during the first phase of the Strategic Goals 'conversation', the 'meta' trend event series held at the IS and events and literature produced by the Strategic Studies Project at Amnesty international Netherlands and various other Amnesty International teams - as well as various published trends mapping studies and analyses from other organisations.[1]

Power politics and the future of international and regional human rights protection systems

We are living through a major global power transition. The United States (US) remains the most powerful state, including in economic and military terms, but fast growing economies in the East and South are catching up. By 2050, it is predicted that China and India alone will account for 41% of the global economy[2] (even if their per capita income levels will remain below those of wealthy Western states), and China will have passed the US in defence spending.[3] Global governance is already being reshaped to accommodate these and other emerging powers. The rise of the G20 at the expense of the G8 during the global financial crisis in 2007-8 and the announcement of a new BRICS[4] development bank are a sign of more change to come. Although UN Security Council reform is proving difficult to achieve, India, Brazil and African and other states (including Germany and Japan) are impatient for stronger representation. A deeper question is whether the wider post-World War II international order will endure in the longer term. The potential for armed conflict between major powers means that its survival is not inevitable.

The future of the international human rights system, a part of this order, is also in the balance. Despite its imperfections, Amnesty International relies on this system (which we helped to build) as a key site at which human rights norms are established, interpreted and enforced, and we must be careful to ensure it is protected and strengthened in the transition to a multipolar world.

The UN human rights machinery has already been a focus for reform. The voting rights of Western states were reduced with the establishment of the Human Rights Council in 2006 thereby ensuring a more equitable distribution of power in the UN's key political human rights institution. Council resolutions

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[1] Many are available via the "home" for the Strategic Goals on the Intranet at
https://intranet.amnesty.org/wiki/display/StrategicGoals/How+To+Get+Involved. Written submissions from Amnesty International sections and structures that include information on external trends include those from Canada (English), Mexico, Spain, Sweden, the UK and the USA.
[2] Jean Fouré, Agnès Bénassy-Quéré and Lionel Fontagné, 'The Great Shift: Macroenconomic Projections for the world economy at the 2050 horizon', Centre d'Étude Prospectives et d'Informations Internationales, 2012 (03) February, available at http://www.cepii.fr/PDF_PUB/wp/2012/wp2012-03.pdf at p. 6.
[3] See for example China-US defence spending projections calculated by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, available at http://www.iiss.org/en/iiss%20voices/blogsections/iiss-voices-2013-1e35/march-2013-6eb6/china-us-defence-spending-6119.
[4] Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa

against serious violators (except the most powerful) are possible if cross-regional support can be built and are more credible as a result. Emerging economic powers such as Brazil, India, Indonesia, Mexico, South Korea, and Turkey have voted for or co-sponsored some of the Council's country resolutions in recent years. The Universal Periodic Review process, introduced with the establishment of the Council, enjoys broad state support because it applies equally to all states and is state-led compared with other scrutiny mechanisms. The Special Procedures, however, continue to come under pressure from states seeking to constrain them. Cooperation by emerging powers with the human rights treaty bodies varies. Russia, China and other states attempted to use the recent 'strengthening' process to undermine the independence of the treaty bodies but their most troubling proposals were not adopted.[5] The modesty of the treaty body strengthening process and the five year review of the Human Rights Council demonstrate the difficulties of formal efforts to strengthen UN human rights bodies.

Stronger international methods of enforcing human rights are contentious *in principle* among emerging powers with memories of colonial and other foreign intervention. A belief that NATO exceeded the Security Council's authorisation of the use of force in Libya has hardened views, including among the BRICS countries, about the practical application of the 'Responsibility to Protect' doctrine where states fail to stop atrocities within their borders. Attitudes among both emerging and existing powers towards international criminal justice are mixed. Observers note that the international community is probably moving backwards from a 'high water mark' in this area following the end of the Cold War, driven partially by deadlocks in the UN Security Council and concerns about the high costs of *ad hoc* international criminal tribunals. At the same time new models of hybrid and regionally-backed courts are being used to tackle impunity. Although the International Criminal Court (ICC) is now investigating eight country situations, a major backlash has taken hold among African states and China, India, Russia and the US show no serious signs of becoming parties to the ICC Statute. The exercise of universal jurisdiction remains a largely North-on-South phenomenon, which has also provoked a backlash prompting some states to weaken their legislation.

On paper, each of the emerging powers participates in the international human rights system and none has an immediate agenda to dismantle it. This is significant. But what can we expect of them as their international influence grows? Three major challenges will almost certainly persist:

1. China, Russia and others will continue to push for an expansion of state oversight of the UN human rights machinery (including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) and more limited roles for NGOs and there is a risk they will enjoy more success in the longer term if they bring more pressure to bear. The balance between promoting universal values and protecting national sovereignty could shift in favour of the latter over time.

2. Peer pressure on states over human rights violations may be increasingly confined to UN human rights bodies. Western states are already less able or willing to pressure trade partners on their human rights performance in the course of bilateral relations and, in any case, many have vastly damaged their credibility as international advocates for human rights through their own violations in the counter-terrorism context and otherwise. At this stage there is little evidence that emerging powers are prepared to exert economic pressure on other states. Early hopes that emerging-power democracies such as South Africa would use their influence to promote human rights protection appear to have been misplaced.

3. Struggles over the content of norms - particularly for the so-called 'enabling rights'[6] - may lead to a greater state acceptance of diverse interpretations of international human rights standards. In response to the Arab Spring, states such as China, India, Russia, and South Africa seized opportunities at the UN to impress the responsibility of governments to maintain public security and social stability in the context of dissent and public protests. They chose their words carefully to reflect international human rights law, but the signal was clear. More generally, many emerging powers - including democracies such as Brazil and Turkey - are protective of state sovereignty and wary of human rights advocacy that could be perceived as interference in domestic affairs. Together these trends could lead to a growing preference in the longer term for interpretations of human rights focused on protecting the power of the state.

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[5] For example, these states sought to introduce a code of conduct for treaty body members and to prevent both participation in examination processes by NGOs without formal consultative status and promotion by the treaty bodies of material received from NGOs without the consent of the state concerned.

[6] Enabling refers generally refers to those rights – such as freedom of expression, assembly and association and participation in public life – that enable people to know, claim and enjoy other human rights.

Diverse understandings are not always hazardous to human rights and may instead lead to positive innovation – human rights are of course something to be 'lived' in different contexts, rather than static words on distant documents. Regional human rights systems have also led the way in many areas – for example, the European human rights system pioneered application of the right to life and the torture ban to extradition and other inter-state removal cases, the Inter-American system led the development of the right to truth and reparation, and the African system has made important contributions relating to justiciability of socio-economic rights and gone further than any other in recognising the collective rights of peoples. The creation of newer human rights mechanisms by ASEAN, the Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation may hold some potential but to date they have attracted controversy over failure to meet international standards, lack of individual complaints mechanisms, and poor engagement with civil society.

> ''*Regional mechanisms can sway a state toward acting on human rights issues. Regional leaders like the IBSA states [India, Brazil and South Africa], Mexico and Indonesia often can pursue more effective strategies at the regional level, without the presence of the United States or Europe'*
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> - Ted Piccone from The Brookings Institution (comments shared with Amnesty International)

The global power transition will likely lead to a deepening of regional and sub-regional governance in the Global South as emerging powers seek to shape and protect their neighbourhoods and work around global regimes that do not serve their interests. In this context, regional and sub-regional human rights systems may become increasingly important as a means of embedding human rights in different parts of the world. Leaving aside the constant problems of accessibility, under-resourcing and low implementation which affect each of the regional human rights systems to different degrees, there are particular political and institutional challenges ahead in Africa and Europe. The African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights will soon be wound down and merged with the judicial body of the African Union. The new court will be granted criminal jurisdiction but, in a bid by African states to shield leaders from prosecution, will grant immunity to heads of state and senior officials, mirroring the ongoing backlash to the ICC. The European Court of Human Rights will continue to face serious political attacks, the implications of which will be felt more widely given the Court's 'standard bearer' status. China, India and the US will remain without oversight by regional human rights mechanisms for the foreseeable future.

At the same time as possibly entrenching human rights protection, emerging regional systems also present the risk of fragmentation or dilution of human rights norms. Serious regression in the international and regional human rights protection systems, especially less international pressure on states to comply with their human rights obligations and dilution of global norms, would be a major setback for Amnesty International's vision and mission. Even if these systems are too often inaccessible to victims and those working at grassroots levels, it would make the job of activists on the ground much harder. In the context of debates about our Strategic Goals, one Amnesty International section has cautioned that '*If we were to focus on particular human rights issues only, there is a risk that we lose sight of a general regressive trend in the international human rights regime (in terms of political support and compliance), that Amnesty needs to counter*'.[7]

> '*Insofar as the foreign policy of powerful states, or groupings of states, has been an important (if hardly consistent) tool for bringing pressure to bear on states that flout international human rights standards, then advocates will need to turn to newly emergent powers to defend these rights.*'
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> – Trends analysis for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2013)

Although some advocacy groups have sought to influence human rights in the *foreign policy* of emerging powers there is scope to strengthen this approach considerably, including through identification of issues that are de-politicised and where there is a convergence of interests, perhaps in connection with the Sustainable Development Goals (see below). While pressure to improve their domestic human rights records remains important, progress at home does not necessarily lead to policies that support human rights abroad – as the cases of India and South Africa arguably illustrate – or vice versa.

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[7] Phase 1 written submission by Amnesty International Netherlands available via the "home" for the Strategic Goals on the Intranet – see footnote 1.

Challenge(r)s to the state – the rise of corporations and other powerful quasi- and non-state actors

Power in the world is not only about states. Indeed the diffusion of power away from governments, both within countries and in the international system, is a hallmark of the era. For this reason Lucia Nader of Conectas argued during our 'meta' trend event on the future of the international human rights system that the phenomenon of multipolarity is not just about the rising power of states from the Global South but also the 'multiplicity' of influential global actors.[8]

Corporations will control an ever greater share of the world economy in the coming years. Already in 2011, 111 of the top 175 global economic entities were corporations and only 64 were states (and the EU).[9] Amnesty International has documented and challenged weak accountability for human rights abuses committed by these powerful non-state actors, but as corporations from China, India and other emerging powers grow in importance, there is bound to be further far-reaching implications for the business and human rights agenda. On the one hand there is considerable potential to turn respect for human rights into a competitive advantage between corporations, provided there is freedom in society to expose and debate negative human rights impacts. On the other hand, increased global competition may make home states more cautious about imposing human rights-related restraints on 'their' businesses.

The increasing economic power of corporations has led to disproportionate political influence which has influenced public policy-making in favour of business interests in many states. This is one of a number of key drivers of a long term decline in public trust in government in many democracies which creates a vicious circle for human rights: the more people disengage from the political system, the less accountable elected governments become for complying with their human rights obligations.

Through corruption or tax avoidance or both, many corporations are depriving governments of funds needed for services and infrastructure to better deliver on human rights. Action Aid has calculated that the amount of money Associated British Foods has withheld from Zambia through tax avoidance would, in a single year, cover the entire cost of child malnourishment interventions in that country.[10] With momentum building in the G20 and elsewhere, a window of opportunity for international tax reform may be opening.

Privatisation of public services is another trend that looks set to continue in many parts of the world. This increases the risks of inequitable access for those perceived by private providers as threatening profit margins, including the poor (and especially those with high levels of need due to age or disability). It also creates ambiguity for rights holders about who are the 'duty bearers' for relevant human rights legal obligations.

Of course corporations also directly commit and collude in human rights abuses. The long term ambition to create a treaty on the human rights obligations of corporations received a stimulus recently with the passing by the Human Rights Council of a resolution launching a process to negotiate a legally binding instrument that would apply only to transnational corporations. Deep divisions in the vote – Western states, Japan, and South Korea voted against and many Latin American and other states abstained – suggest this will be a difficult process that could detract from and undercut other efforts to improve corporate respect for human rights. There is a small but increasing trend of some states seeking to hold individuals running corporations involved in human rights abuse criminally or civilly liable, but there is also a strong opposition to legislation that permits this.

Criminal syndicates, linked to the drug and arms trades or cyber crime, and terrorist organisations and other armed groups are likely to expand their capabilities in coming years and will increasingly undermine the ability of states to control their territory and critical infrastructure – while states may also use such concerns to justify violent crackdowns or overly restrictive practices that limit civil liberties (see below). Criminal networks may consolidate economic and even territorial control in fragile states in Central

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[8] Recordings of the 'meta' trend events are available on the Intranet – see footnote 1.
[9] 'Top 175 Global Economic Entities 2011' available at http://dstevenwhite.com/2012/08/11/the-top-175-global-economic-entities-2011/. The list was generated using Gross Domestic Product figures from the World Bank and Total Revenue figures from the Fortune Global 500.
[10] ActionAid 'Sweet nothings - the human cost of a British sugar giant avoiding taxes in southern Africa' (February 2013), at p. 1, available at http://www.actionaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/doc_lib/sweet_nothings.pdf.

America and sub-Saharan Africa and possibly elsewhere.[11] Clarifying the obligations of quasi- and non-state actors under international human rights and other areas of law and developing effective accountability frameworks is an increasingly urgent challenge.

The revival of "people power" as a force for change

Over the past two decades, some civil society organisations have gained greater access at the UN and other global governance institutions, at times leading to greater influence. However, many feel that this entry to the corridors of power has come at the cost of grassroots legitimacy and question who is being represented, how effectively and at what expense. At the same time, empowerment at the local level has continued to drive advances in human rights protection for many groups – grassroots activism in support of women's rights or the land rights of indigenous people are two of many examples.

The extraordinary resurgence of popular mobilisation during the Arab Spring, Occupy and other protest movements in Turkey, Brazil, different parts of Europe, India and elsewhere was for the most part organised outside of established civil society organisations by informal, in some cases transnational, networks often youth-led using social media (see below) and favouring more disruptive methods of protest. In some cases, distance has emerged between 'formal' civil society organisations and people's movements and with democratisation of information and the rise of citizen journalists, some are asking what role organised groups should play in the future.

The Arab Spring led to power transfers in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen but, with the exception of Tunisia where a successful democratic transition appears to be underway, the hopes of many protestors have been disappointed by illiberal developments in the post-revolutionary phases. In authoritarian states across the world, these and other examples of heroic mass protests prompted systematic crackdowns on dissent including violent attacks on, detention and intimidation of dissidents, protestors, journalists and human rights defenders, and tighter control of the Internet. In Bahrain, China, Egypt, Russia, Syria and beyond, freedom of expression, information, association and assembly and the right to privacy remain under attack. According to Freedom House, the state of political rights and civil liberties in the world declined for the eighth consecutive year in 2013.[12] Including for reasons connected with the growing international power of states with especially poor human rights records (see above), this trend is likely to continue in the years ahead unless major shifts can be achieved.

We should also prepare for a continuation in many parts of the world of intense government pressure on civil society organisations via restrictions on national and international funding, difficult registration processes, surveillance, blocked access to communication technologies, and public vilification including labelling individuals and organisations as agents of foreign interference. Many of our partner organisations as well as Amnesty International offices and our the broader environment in which we operate will be affected.

The recent history of 'people power' movements is linked to the 'youth bulge' in many developing countries associated with high fertility rates coupled with success in reducing infant mortality. Adolescents and youth now represent one quarter of the global population and 90% of this group live in developing countries. In the face of dramatic new forms of youth activism, many traditional campaigning NGOs at the local, regional and global levels are 'soul searching' about how to reinvigorate their activism methods and, more profoundly, whether their agendas appeal to a younger generation that may be developing more structural critiques of the systems that NGOs are often part of. Phase 1 of the 'conversation' about our next Strategic Goals confirmed strong support across the Amnesty International movement for investment in refreshed activism models that modernise our platforms and workflows – including through technologies that strengthen our research and campaigning capabilities and link online and offline engagement – and are rooted in the concept of active participation of rights holders. As one Amnesty International section emphasised, we need '*a central focus and technological solutions… as well as the ability to utilize the strengths of AI's national base*'.[13]

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[11] European Union Institute for Security Studies, European Strategy and Policy Analysis System report 'Global Trends 2030 - Citizens in an Interconnected and Polycentric World' (March 2012), at p. 19, available at http://europa.eu/espas/pdf/espas_report_ii_01_en.pdf.
[12] Freedom House, 'Freedom in the World 2014' available at http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Freedom%20in%20the%20World%202014%20Booklet.pdf.
[13] Phase 1 written submission by Amnesty International Denmark available on the Intranet – see footnote 1.

For the human rights movement there are specific questions about the perceived public appeal of human rights tools and concepts in both the Global North and South.[14] This is a critical issue for Amnesty International because our organisational level theory of change rests on a faith in the willingness and ability of ordinary people to bring about human rights change through solidarity and mobilisation within and across borders and we are investing heavily in supporting this through changes to our organisational structures and ways of working.

'*There is a perception shared by many people that we have become lawyers and lobbyists and policy wonks and that we belong more to the 'Davos Men' rather than the 'Square People', and that perception has to change*'

– Hossam Bahgat, Egyptian human rights defender speaking at our 'meta' trend event on the rise of people power and transformation of civil society

The explosion of the middle class in the Global South over the coming decades is sometimes viewed as an opportunity to grow the international human rights movement through a powerful combination of the spread of progressive global values, individual empowerment and technological interconnectivity. This is the world prefigured in a 'Global Citizens' scenario developed by Amnesty International Netherlands in which a large group of globally oriented activists work together with rights holders to pursue progressive social change.[15] This positive outlook is perhaps supported by global public opinion analysis confirming wide support for human rights and rejection of the argument that active promotion of human rights by the UN would be an improper interference in domestic affairs.[16] Assuming global public support for human rights can be translated into stronger activism at the national, regional and global levels, challenges will include ensuring that the movement achieves strategic and diverse growth, including among young people, and that energies are focused on supporting empowerment of people to claim their rights.

Social trends that the movement will have to confront include the resurgence of fundamentalist religious values and other reactionary forms of identity and nationalist politics that may be hostile to human rights, at least for some groups including women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people and ethnic and religious minorities. While identity across national boundaries can be a force for progressive ideals – with solidarity among LGBTI activists, for instance, strengthening their work – it can also lead to replication of regressive practices within and across regions. Religion is another highly important mobilising force that can be used to both progress or undermine respect for universal human rights.

The rise of a populist backlash against the concept of human rights in the West, particularly in Europe, is particularly worrying. Drivers of this trend include the economic downturn, terrorism threats, anti-immigration and anti-human rights messaging from populist politicians and increasingly powerful right wing media outlets (all of which are fuelling rising xenophobia), growing disillusionment with representative democracy (and the regional integration project in Europe) and rejection of values associated with cosmopolitan elites. Apathy among constituencies that in the past fought back has been detected in many states in which Amnesty International has a strong presence and further thinking is needed to tackle this trend of shrinking horizons and a focus on individual circumstances meaning people lack the energy to unite for change.[17]

'*Shared values will not spread evenly, and they will be challenged by old and new forms of extremism, often linked to identity-based politics arising from an expectations gap and a concomitant sense of marginalisation*'

– EU Institute for Security Studies trends analysis

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[14] These issues are explored in the Amnesty International Netherlands Strategic Studies Project publication *Debating the Endtimes of Human Rights – Activism and Institutions in a Neo-Westphalian World* (edited by Doutje Lettinga and Lars van Troost) available at http://www.amnesty.nl/endtimes.
[15] The scenarios are available at http://www.steenconsultancy.nl/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Global-Engagement-Scenarios.pdf.
[16] Council on Foreign Relations, 'Public Opinion on Global Issues - Chapter 8: World Opinion on Human Rights' (December 2011) available at http://www.cfr.org/thinktank/iigg/pop/.
[17] Possible trends in this direction are well captured in the 'Lonely Losers' scenario developed by Amnesty International Netherlands – see footnote 15.

Digital futures and the frontiers of technology

The Internet will continue to radically reshape communications, activism, commerce, education and other public services, security, leisure and many other aspects of life in the coming decades. Access to the Internet is set to become a critical issue for development and realisation of various human rights and there are debates about whether a right to Internet access should be recognised. Cisco, the internet networking company, predicts that by 2017 nearly half of the world's population will be online.[18] Mobile technology is fast bridging the digital divide in Africa, China and other parts of the developing world and it is estimated that by 2030 there will be 5 billion mobile-only Internet users (out of a total world population of around 8.3 billion).[19]

As the Arab Spring and other recent mass protest movements around the world illustrate, social media and related digital technologies can be enormously empowering for activism, enabling new forms of organising, communicating and real-time citizen journalism. Authoritarian states have responded by blocking content and shutting down access, justifying these moves at the UN as necessary in the interests of public safety and order (see above), while also pushing for new global models of Internet governance that would place regulation firmly in the hands of states. They also have sophisticated online surveillance capabilities, but are not alone in this regard. Revelations by whistleblower Edward Snowden of mass surveillance and data storage programmes run by the US and UK have sparked intense national and international debates and litigation (including by Amnesty International) about the right to privacy in the digital age.

It is possible that censorship-driven filtering by states or alliances of states will lead to divisions in the Internet. For example, Iran is building a 'halal' Internet with an aim to seal it off from the World Wide Web. Google's Eric Schmidt has suggested that a system of 'visas' will be introduced to control entry to virtual spaces and that 'virtual asylum' could be granted to allow dissidents to connect to spaces they are blocked from accessing in their countries.[20] These Internet-based developments and others – including the online 'right to be forgotten' being developed within the EU – will have far-reaching human rights implications which Amnesty must respond to quickly and consistently.

The protection of online rights was one of the only 'new' issues proposed for prioritisation by a wide range of voices from the movement in phase 1 of our Strategic Goals 'conversation' including on the basis that it represents a crucial new battleground for 'signature' Amnesty International concerns including freedom of expression. There are also calls from across the movement for us to invest further in digital technologies to enhance meaningful and active participation; speed up and otherwise modernise our activism, campaigning and research methods and the tactics we use to ensure the safety of those working at the grassroots level to document human rights abuses, organise and advocate; and contribute to the building of ethical frameworks for tech-powered activism.

The Internet is also reshaping modern warfare with critical infrastructure at risk through hacking without a single conventional weapon being fired. There is much discussion of whether the existing rules of international humanitarian law and principles of state responsibility cover cyber warfare sufficiently or whether new frameworks need to be developed.

Other technological developments that will continue to have a profound impact on human rights include biological weapons, drones and 'killer robots'. Biotechnological innovations will continue to transform medicine and agriculture, with significant implications for the rights to life, privacy and food, while raising deep issues of ethics, environmental stewardship and equity of access in the context of commercialisation.

Rising inequality

While poverty remains a pressing problem in many parts of the world, in recent decades the number of people living in *absolute* poverty has fallen dramatically, albeit unevenly across regions. It is estimated that by 2050 it will be largely confined to parts of sub-Saharan Africa and India where it is profoundly

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[18] Cisco press release, 'Cisco's Visual Networking Index Forecast Projects Nearly Half the World's Population Will Be Connected to the Internet by 2017' (29 May 2013) available at http://newsroom.cisco.com/release/1197391/.
[19] http://www.rolandberger.com/gallery/trend-compendium/tc2030_c-t5/.
[20] Eric Schmidt and Jared Cohen, 'Web censorship: the net is closing in' writing in The Guardian (23 April 2013) available at http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2013/apr/23/web-censorship-net-closing-in.

linked to the caste system.[21] Wealth inequality is, however, increasing in most parts of the world and this is becoming an urgent global issue not only for anti-poverty campaigners but also for economists and others who see it as a source of unrest and thus a threat to the global economy. Women, young people, older people, indigenous people, ethnic minorities and disabled people are disproportionately excluded from the benefits of economic growth which points to the connections between wealth inequality and unequal access to education, employment and political participation. Even international financial institutions, often identified as part of the problem, have begun to accept that deepening wealth inequality poses serious risks to human rights. The head of the International Monetary Fund, Christine Lagarde, recently warned that excessive inequality was causing democracy to *'fray at the edges'* and could '*undermine the principle of equal rights proclaimed in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights*'.[22]

The global financial crisis of 2007-8 and the austerity policies that followed have heavily impacted on women, single-parent families, the poor and the young. In many countries there are long term concerns about the economic and social implications of a 'lost generation' of young people deprived of education and employment opportunities.

There are major concerns that fault-lines remain in the global economic order which will lead to further instability. Reforms, including to the international tax and banking regulation systems, are being explored but economic justice campaigners consider that a more fundamental overhaul of the global economic system is required.

Amnesty International has traditionally avoided debates about the economic order, focusing instead on more legalistic questions about compliance of different rules and regimes with human rights standards. Some within the movement, however, consider that our silence on the justness or otherwise of structural aspects of the global economy reinforces the status quo and leaves us vulnerable to criticisms that we do not understand and cannot effectively challenge the structural causes of many human rights abuses. They argue that developing a deeper critique as a basis for advocacy and campaigning is critical to our ability to offer meaningful solutions to victims of human rights abuses and grassroots social justice groups in the Global South and elsewhere. Others caution that by going down this route we would politicise human rights, compromise our reputation for political impartiality and lose our identity by becoming 'just another social justice organisation'.[23]

'*I do not see how we can eliminate discrimination… without entering into the arena of … economic issues or issues of social policy… We need to formulate rights further… because when we are tackling only poverty, in fact we are not changing the shape of the social pyramid, we are just lifting the whole social pyramid upwards*'

– Dimitrina Petrova from the Equal Rights Trust speaking at our 'meta' trend event on inequality

In any case, deepening wealth inequality raises a raft of issues relating to specific socio-economic and participation rights, discrimination, and the rights of particular groups including women. The Sustainable Development Goals, the initiative following the Millenium Development Goals, will likely focus on ensuring more equitable sharing of the benefits of economic growth. The precise focus of the goals is still being negotiated but access to basic services (including water, sanitation, health, and sexual and reproductive health) and a focus on gender are likely. The Sustainable Development Goals will be a key platform for advancing socio-economic rights in the years ahead.

There have been impressive achievements in the struggle for women's equality in recent decades, including constitutional and other protections and in health outcomes and educational attainment. However, structural gender inequality remains the norm with women continuing to enjoy less economic and political power than men.[24] It is predicted that the fastest progress in closing the gender gap over

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[21] Uri Dadush and Bennett Stancil, 'The World Order in 2050' *Policy Outlook* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace) (April 2010) at p. 1, available at http://carnegieendowment.org/files/World_Order_in_2050.pdf.
[22] Christine Lagarde, 'Economic Inclusion and Financial Integrity - an Address to the Conference on Inclusive Capitalism' (27 May 2014) available at https://www.imf.org/external/np/speeches/2014/052714.htm.
[23] Some of these issues were debated during our 'meta' trend event on inequality – see footnote 1 above.
[24] World Economic Forum, *the Global Gender Gap Report 2013* pp. 7,16 available at http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2013.pdf.

the next 20 years will be in East Asia and Latin America, and the slowest progress will be in the Middle East, South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.[25]

Discrimination against LGBTI people is becoming a flashpoint issue in many parts of the world. There has been an escalation of repression, often violent, in parts of Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, and in Russia. At the same time, there has been progress on marriage equality in many other states, reflecting emerging polarised positions on certain human rights issues engaging religious and other 'traditional' values. Issues of cultural and religious nationalism also fuel structural inequality, keeping certain groups marginalised on the basis of their identity.

Conflict in the world

Although it may not feel this way for those working in the human rights and humanitarian sectors, the global trends relating to armed conflicts are positive overall. The number of conflicts between states has declined dramatically since the 1950s and the number of conflicts within states has generally been falling since the end of the Cold War.[26] Where conflicts arise, there are fewer civilian and military casualties. Some analysts predict a continuation of these trends as populations age leading to a contraction of the 'demographic arc of instability' - recognising that roughly 80% of all armed civil and ethnic conflicts (with 25 or more battle-related deaths per year) since the 1970s have originated in countries with a median age of 25 years or less[27] - combined with falling levels of extreme poverty in most parts of the world (see above) and the increase in peace support operations.

The Middle East and North Africa is, however, bucking the positive trend. The number of conflicts in this region began to rise in the late 2000s and many risk and security experts are forecasting a further security deterioration.[28] A full-blown sectarian war in the region would have enormous humanitarian and geopolitical consequences.

Many parts of sub-Saharan Africa are also afflicted by ongoing and emerging conflicts and there is a risk of inter-state conflicts related to, among other things, territorial disputes and natural resource competition. The African Union, particularly the Peace and Security Council, is under pressure to play a stronger role in conflict management and prevention in the region, and is making incremental progress.

In the world more generally, structural issues that create a risk of conflict include deepening wealth inequality, the potential for further turbulence in the global economy, intensifying resource competition (often linked to climate change – see below), rising tensions between world powers, crackdowns on political rights and civil liberties (see above), the rise of militant Islamist groups, increasing sectarian tensions particularly in the Islamic world, and the ease with which many non-state actors have access to guns and other arms. Situations that could lead to armed conflicts in the coming decades include border tensions, particularly in Asia, disputes in the South China Sea, unresolved conflicts in Eastern Europe, rising political violence in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, and the possibility of internal strife or conflict between China and South Korea if regime collapse occurs in North Korea.

The changing nature of conflict – including the rise of cyber warfare, remote wars relying on drone strikes, and an increase in armed non-state groups (see above) many of which are resorting to desperate measures including suicide attacks to counteract their inferior military strength – will continue to pose questions for existing international humanitarian law frameworks. Application of international human rights law to conflict situations is likely to expand although, as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

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[25] National Intelligence Foundation, *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds* (Dec 2012) p. 11, available at globaltrends2030.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/global-trends-2030-november2012.pdf.
[26] See Uppsala Conflict Data Program data on armed conflicts by conflict type and year available at http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/charts_and_graphs/#intensity.
[27] National Intelligence Foundation, *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds* at pp. 22, 59-61 – see footnote 27.
[28] See for example Maplecroft Political Risk Atlas 2014 summary available at http://maplecroft.com/portfolio/new-analysis/2013/12/12/instability-and-conflict-mena-and-east-africa-drive-global-rise-political-risk-maplecroft-bpolitical-risk-atlas-2014b/, and Bruce Jones and Thomas Wright with Jeremy Shapiro and Robert Keane, 'The State of the International Order' Foreign Policy at Brookings - Policy Paper Number 22 (February 2014) at 25-6 available at http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2014/02/state-of-the-international-order.

was recently warned, '[t]here may be unforeseen consequences... such that, like [international humanitarian law], human rights becomes less aspirational, less idealistic'.[29]

The new global political momentum on preventing sexual violence in conflict is one of the strongest opportunities yet for concerted action to reduce such violence, promote prosecutions and provide support for survivors of sexual and gender based violence. Yet, this momentum may disappear without continued strong leadership among a wider group of states and human rights actors.

Securitisation of public policy

The counter-terrorism agendas that took hold following the 9/11 attacks will continue to shape public policy in many states. This brings a danger that unchecked excesses by democratic governments combined with pressure from authoritarian states will result in weakened interpretations of international human rights standards. Mass digital surveillance and intercept programmes are a particular test in this regard. As discussed above, authoritarian states are increasingly relying on security concerns – as well as the often inter-connected issue of limiting foreign influence – to justify criminalisation of dissent (as well other forms of 'difference'), reduced government transparency and crackdowns on protestors, independent media and human rights defenders.

Other areas of domestic policy that are becoming increasingly securitised include immigration, housing, health and education, with very troubling implications for marginalised ethnic and religious groups, including Muslims in Western states.

As one Amnesty International section stressed in its written submission for phase 1 of the Strategic Goals, '*In the coming years there will likely be a need to re-legitimise the need to defend human rights at the global level as well as international solidarity, especially if the defenders of the discourse of security over freedom and other rights continue to gain strength with citizens*'.[30]

People on the move

Migration across borders will accelerate, including as a consequence of income inequality across regions and countries, with South-South migration flows set to increase as birth rates fall in growing economies such as Brazil, China and Turkey. These trends will create new challenges for the protection of migrants.

A range of factors including improved education will drive up the number of independent women migrants. While this may boost economic equality and empowerment of women, there are risks of double discrimination (on the grounds of sex and immigration status) and gender based violence. Low-wage migrant workers in general are at risk of exploitation due to a combination of insecure status, ineffective regulation of business practices and lack of access to effective remedies, with many of these problems linked to the prioritisation by governments of investment over human rights (see above).

In 2013, the number of internally displaced people, refugees, and asylum-seekers worldwide exceeded 50 million for the first time in the post-World War II era.[31] By far the heaviest burden falls on conflict states (with high numbers of internally displaced people) and their neighbours. The proportion of refugees hosted by the developing world is rising.[32]

In many Western states, public debates about immigration and refugees have become toxic resulting in pressures for tougher border control and erosion of refugee protection systems. These issues are associated with rising xenophobia in Europe (see above). Australia is leading the way among Western states in undermining the Refugee Convention through a series of initiatives blocking access to effective asylum determination processes for boat arrivals. On a more optimistic note, it is possible that in the

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[29] David Petrasek, 'Global trends and their possible implications for the promotion and protection of human rights – a revised version of a report prepared for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights' (April 2013) p. 24, available via the "home" for the Strategic Goals on the Intranet – see footnote 1.

[30] Phase 1 written submission by Amnesty International Spain available (in Spanish) via the "home" for the Strategic Goals on the Intranet – see footnote 1.

[31] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 'World Refugee Day: Global forced displacement tops 50 million for first time in post-World War II era' (20 June 2014) available at http://www.unhcr.org/53a155bc6.html.

[32] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 'Displacement – The New 21st Century Challenge – UNHCR Global Trends 2012' at p. 2, available at http://unhcr.org/globaltrendsjune2013/UNHCR%20GLOBAL%20TRENDS%202012_V08_web.pdf.

years ahead the US will deliver immigration reforms to regularise the status of 11 million undocumented migrants.

Urbanisation has been described as a 'tectonic shift' in our global environment.[33] By 2030, almost 60% of the world's population will live in urban areas[34], with a steep rise in the number of megacities (cites with a population of more than 10 million) up to an expected 29 in 2025 compared with 16 in 2009.[35] Cities will grow fastest in Africa followed by Asia.[36] It is predicted that by 2040, roughly 25% of the world's population will live in slums which will intensify human rights problems including urban and police violence, lack of access to essential services, vulnerability for women and marginalised groups and political exclusion, as well as wider societal concerns around food production.[37]

Climate change

The heating of our planet will in time become one of the most significant threats to human rights although the speed at which these changes will take effect remains unclear. It has been estimated that an additional 600 million people will face malnutrition due to climate change, with a particularly negative effect on sub-Saharan Africa.[38] Climate change will threaten food security, exacerbate competition and even conflicts over water resources and – through land lost to rising sea levels, desertification and erosion – deprive indigenous groups and residents of many small islands of territory. According to the most commonly cited estimate, by 2050 there will be 200 million people displaced by climate change[39], a group for whom there is a gap in international legal protection.

Although some Amnesty International sections have suggested that now is the time for us to prioritise this issue in our Strategic Goals, the majority position appears to be that it should not form a main focus of our work in itself, even if it should inform our understanding of and approaches to other priorities we adopt.

'*To date, negotiations on climate change mitigation and adaptation have taken little account of human rights language or input. The latter is regarded as overly adversarial and possibly irrelevant to an issue that lacks clearly defined victims or perpetrators. For their part, human rights thinkers and actors too have generally ignored climate change*'

– International Council on Human Rights, *Catching the Wind - Human Rights* (2007)

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[33] National Intelligence Foundation, *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds* (Dec 2012) p. 26 - see footnote 27.
[34] As above.
[35] European Union Institute for Security Studies, European Strategy and Policy Analysis System report 'Global Trends 2030 - Citizens in an Interconnected and Polycentric World' (March 2012), at p. 134 – see footnote 11.
[36] As above.
[37] See the trends analysis prepared by David Petrasek for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, p. 8 – see footnote 29.
[38] 'Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the relationship between climate change and human rights' A/HRC/10/61 at p. 10, citing the UN Development Programme and the Independent Panel on Climate Change.
[39] This estimate was made by Norman Myers and has been used by the IPCC etc. See http://www.iom.cz/files/Migration_and_Climate_Change_-_IOM_Migration_Research_Series_No_31.pdf