

PROFESSIONALS' ASSOCIATIONS AND THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

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Introduction

One of the cornerstones of the UN is the notice that nation-states should be willing to cooperate to promote and protect basic human rights, and thereby foster world peace. It is obvious that nation-state cooperation has not occurred as was hoped. The resulting void, with respect to human rights, has been filled by individuals and non-governmental organizations (NGO's). To further enhance the efforts of the organizations, activists and scholars are continuing to call for coordination among the groups in addition to unilateral activities. However, coordination of this kind cannot occur unless there is a detailed understanding of the development, structures, and functions performed by the variety of organizations.

Jerome Shestack, Harry Scoble and Laurie Wiseberg, David Weissbrodt, and others have provided groundbreaking studies in the United States on the structures and functions of human rights NGO's. Despite this, none of their efforts have addressed a relatively new type of organization in the human rights arena: associations of professionals. It is true that organizations such as the Human Rights Law Group (HRLG) and PEN¹ have been included in NGO studies. However, the assumption is made that such professionals' associations belong under the heading of NGO. Because of this, they are perceived to operate in much the same way as organizations such as Amnesty International (AI), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) or Helsinki Watch.² Additionally, the development of an organization *as a continuing process* is often overlooked. Organizational analyses of groups active in human rights have included descriptions of the origins and creation of such organizations. However, the maturation process of the organizations has not been addressed.

Coupling the work of the scholars mentioned above with a case study of one of the associations of professionals, the Committee on Scientific Freedom

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