

History of human rights, and in particular Nordic human rights histories

In the recent surge of works on the history of human rights, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden are often referred to as examples of leading forces for the development of aspects of international human rights, such as the early ratification of the European Convention on Human Rights, protection of refugees, same sex marriage, women's rights and indigenous rights. Some mention Scandinavian countries as significant providers of funding for human rights activism and the active involvement of Nordic non-governmental groups in international politics since the 1970s, such as in the aftermath of the Chilean coup. Yet others have noted that this enthusiasm for global human rights has been coupled with hesitancy towards recognizing human rights as principles with domestic relevance. However, these assessments offer only ephemeral mentions of the Nordic states' relation to human rights developments, and they have so far triggered few fine-grained contextual accounts. Hardly any studies are based on Nordic archival materials. To date, we have only a few studies on when and how the Nordic states began to employ human rights as a device in their foreign policies. The same is true for when and to what extent human rights eventually has evolved into a topic of domestic politics in the Nordic countries.

Master thesis are encouraged on specific periods of Norwegian and Nordic engagement with international human rights norms or on specific rights such as the rights of children, minority rights, freedom of speech and religion, right to life, prohibition of torture etc. Studies can explore the dynamic relations between local, national and international developments or focus on the international level or on the significance of international level developments for domestic events and processes. Thesis can also be written on non-Nordic actors and topics.

At the moment students supervised by Vik are for example writing on the phenomenon of stateslessness; the role of Saudi Arabia in international human rights diplomacy; the UN convention prohibiting racial discrimination; and indigenous peoples and management of water in the United States. Among recently completed studies are thesis on the rise of anti-torture politics; collective memory of violence against women during the Rwandan genocide; and the forced population exchange between Greece and Turkey.

Language of supervision will be Norwegian or English; thesis will be written in English. Students who understand Norwegian may take part in writing workshops with history students supervised by Vik.

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