

GAZA AT THE INTERSECTION OF SOCIAL WORK AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Sosyal Hizmet ve İnsan Hakları Kesişiminde Gazze

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Abstract

Social work is a human rights profession and discipline. One of the main objectives of social work is to ensure human rights at a universal level. In this way, it will be possible to secure the rights of people from all walks of life and geographies without discrimination and to increase their living standards. Within the scope of this ideal, social work carries out studies at the theoretical and practical level and puts every event that can be evaluated on the basis of human rights on its agenda. What happened in Gaza after October 7, 2023 has been included in the agenda of social work as one of the most prominent examples of human rights violations. However, states, organizations and disciplines that advocate for human rights in the face of attacks in which tens of thousands of civilians, many of them women and children, have been massacred have failed to have a concrete impact. As a matter of fact, while Israel's attacks on civilians in Gaza continue unabated, it has been observed that the structures that are expected to react to the events have exhibited a passive attitude.

Öz

Sosyal hizmet, bir insan hakları mesleği ve disiplini-dir. Sosyal hizmetin temel amaçlarından biri, insan haklarının evrensel düzeyde sağlanabilmesidir. Böylelikle ayırım gözetmeksizin her kesimden ve coğrafyadan insan haklarının güvence altına alınması ve yaşam standartlarının artırılması mümkün olacaktır. Bu ideal kapsamında sosyal hizmet, teorik ve pratik düzeyde çalışmalar yürütmekte ve insan hakları temelinde değerlendirilebilecek her olayı gündemine almaktadır. 7 Ekim 2023 sonrasında Gazze'de yaşananlar, insan hakları ihlallerinin en belirgin örneklerinden birisi olarak sosyal hizmetin gündemleri arasına dahil olmuştur. Ancak; pek çoğu kadın ve çocuk on binlerce sivilin katledildiği saldırılar karşısında insan hakları savunuculuğu yapan devletler, örgütler ve disiplinler somut bir etki meydana getirememiştir. Nitekim İsrail'in Gazze'deki sivillere yönelik saldırıları hız kesmeden devam etmekteyken, yaşanan olaylar karşısında tepki göstermesi beklenen yapıların pasif bir tutum sergiledikleri görülmüştür. Bu çalışmada 7 Ekim 2023 sonrasında Gazze'de ya-

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This study focuses on the evaluation of the events in Gaza after October 7, 2023 in terms of the profession and discipline of social work. In this context, both the attacks and the current situation were discussed from the perspective of social work and the concrete steps taken by social work in the face of these attacks were examined. As a result of the evaluation, it has been observed that social work has been limited in exhibiting reactions transformed from discourse to action in the face of the attacks in Gaza. In the context of social work, these reactions were expressed only in the form of written statements by IFSW at the international level. In addition, it has been understood that many roles and functions of social work such as advocacy, mediation, activism, community mobilization and anti-oppression have not been effective enough. In this regard, it is stated that it is important for social work to take concrete steps with a realistic, inclusive, fair and mobilizing approach to achieve the ideal of universal human rights.

Key words: Social Work, Human Rights, Social Work Values, Gaza, Israel Attacks.

şanan olayların sosyal hizmet mesleği ve disiplini açısından değerlendirilmesine odaklanılmıştır. Bu kapsamda hem yaşanan saldırılar ve mevcut durum sosyal hizmet açısından ele alınmış hem de sosyal hizmetin söz konusu saldırılar karşısında attığı somut adımlar irdelenmiştir. Yapılan değerlendirme sonucunda, sosyal hizmetin Gazze’de gerçekleşen saldırılar karşısında söylemden eyleme dönüştürülmüş tepkiler sergilemekte sınırlı kaldığı görülmüştür. Sosyal hizmet bağlamında bu tepkilerin uluslararası düzeyde IFSW tarafından sadece yazılı beyanat verme şeklinde gerçekleşmiştir. Ayrıca sosyal hizmetin savunuculuk, arabuluculuk, aktivizm, toplumu harekete geçirme ve baskı karşıtı uygulama gibi pek çok rol ve fonksiyonunun yeterince etkili olamadığı anlaşılmıştır. Bu hususta sosyal hizmetin, evrensel insan hakları idealine ulaşma konusunda gerçekçi, kapsayıcı, adil ve harekete geçiren bir yaklaşımla somut adımlar atmasının önemli olduğu ifade edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal Hizmet, İnsan Hakları, Sosyal Hizmet Değerleri, Gazze, İsrail Saldırıları.

INTRODUCTION

Since time immemorial, there has not been a complete definition of the human being. The fact that human beings have a multidimensional structure has made many things belonging to human beings a candidate to be a subject of scientific research. One of these subjects is human rights. Although human rights are discussed in many dimensions in the literature, each discipline has examined them from its perspective. This situation is either because a universal definition of what belongs to human beings or what is human is not possible; or due to the relativity of the geography or perspectives of those who deal with the subject. The Western perspective has been and will be one way of dealing with the issue of “human rights” and the Eastern civilizations another way. In this respect, the context in which the notion of “human rights” is discussed is of great importance.

In general, human rights are the rights that states, through national/international conventions and laws, guarantee the rights of their citizens regardless of religion, language, race, gender and ethnicity, and that human beings have them “just because they are human” (Erükçü Akbaş, 2022). When the historical process and origin of human rights are analyzed, it is seen that it is quite difficult to find a universal answer. This is because the formation, development and evolution of human rights in the historical process has many dimensions, including philosophical, social, cultural, economic, political, psychological and international law. In other words, the development and maturation process of human rights has been gradually formed by completing various milestones (Ishay, 2004). However, it is stated that the most important historical events that shaped the intellectual, philosophical and developmental process of human rights are the “Renaissance, Reform and Enlightenment Movements”, the “Industrial Revolution”, the “French Revolution” and the “First and Second World Wars”. In addition, globalization and the idea of modernity have been other social developments that accelerated the formation of human rights.

In the context of international law and conventions, it is accepted that human rights evolved and materialized with the “UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights” (UDHR). After the UDHR, various conventions such as “Twin Conventions”, “UN Convention on the Rights of the Child”, “Lanzarote Convention”, “UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities” and “CEDAW” were signed between states under the leadership of the UN for the protection and realization of human rights (Erükçü Akbaş, 2022). However, it is seen that these conventions, which were signed under the leadership of the UN to develop, strengthen and sustain human rights, have become controversial as a result of the attacks launched by Israel against Gaza as of October 7, 2023. Tens of thousands of Palestinian civilians, many of them children, women and the elderly, have been killed as a result of Israel’s bombing of hospitals, places of worship, educational institutions, UNICEF and UN schools, disregarding human rights and international law. The survivors are struggling to cope with many aspects of life, including nutrition, shelter, health and security. While all this is happening, the view that the concepts of “Human rights”, “Human dignity and value” remain “Meta-narratives and meta-discourses” put forward by the West, gains importance.

At this point, the research question is how the events in Gaza are evaluated within the framework of the ideals and reality of social work, which is a human rights discipline and profession. Around this question, firstly human rights from the perspective of social work, then the situation in Gaza and finally the relationship between the ideals of social work and Gaza were mentioned.

1. HUMAN RIGHTS IN TERMS OF SOCIAL WORK: FROM PAST TO PRESENT

Social work and human rights are recognized as two philosophically similar concepts. The common point of both concepts is that values form the basis of the human perspective. The welfare of human beings, who are defined as dignified and valuable beings just because they are human beings, is expressed as a “Right” (depending on the guarantee of certain rights and freedoms). Both social work and human rights treat human beings as “A whole within their environment” and in this direction, both concepts have intertwined in the historical process (Karataş, 2002).

Social Work is defined by IFSW (International Federation of Social Workers) as “A humanitarian discipline that prioritizes human rights, respect for differences, human dignity and uniqueness of the individual and aims to increase the well-being of humanity” (International Federation of Social Workers, 2014). Accordingly, social work uses every phenomenon related to human beings, especially “Rights,” “Values” and “Uniqueness of the individual” as a field of intervention (Yildiz, 2021). At this point, social work, which focuses on the human being and attributes a special meaning to the value and dignity of human beings, emphasizes that every human being is unique and valuable (Özmete and Algan, 2021; Reamer, 2018). In other words, social work, as a right and human-based discipline, is a discipline in which the biological (physical), psychological, sociological (social), cognitive (mental) and spiritual dimensions of human beings are considered as well as affective, emotional and well-being dimensions (Derezotes, 2000).

According to the discipline of social work, which focuses on the uniqueness of the individual, human dignity and value, human rights prioritize that human beings are valuable beings with all their differences (Özmete and Algan, 2021). Although it has developed intervention programs and solution strategies based on individual diversity over time, when it comes to human rights, social work acts

with a measure of universality independent of time and space. It emphasizes that the minimum criteria necessary for people to live a life worthy of the value and dignity they have from birth are an indispensable necessity for human rights. Accordingly, human dignity and value should be put at the center when discussing human rights (Durul, 2023; Genç and Aynacı, 2022). At this stage, a brief history of human rights would be appropriate and useful for understanding the issue.

In the literature, human rights are first traced back to Ancient Greece. The reason for this is the intellectual development of human rights. On the other hand, the institutionalization of human rights in the historical process and the attempts to attain a universal identity have been realized in recent times. The first steps of the conceptualization of human rights, whose intellectual and philosophical foundation dates back to ages ago, were taken with the Magna Carta in the 12th century. Subsequently, developments in the late 16th and early 17th centuries in the UK (Bill of Rights), the USA (Emancipation uprisings and the Virginia Declaration of Rights) and France (French Revolution, French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen) were decisive in the finalization of human rights. At the end of this process, with the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the UN General Assembly on 10.12.1948, the concept of Human Rights was finalized in Western history. With this declaration, it can be said that the socio-cultural, economic and political dimensions of human beings were addressed as a whole, thus concretizing and encompassing human rights (Wild, 1953).

Human rights have evolved through various social, cultural, economic and political processes and have been subjected to different classifications over time. Karel Vasak is the best-known of these classifications and the one that best summarizes the evolution of human rights. According to Vasak, human rights are divided into three generations (Vasak, 1977). However, social developments and technological innovations have led to the emergence of a new classification of human rights called the "Fourth generation" in addition to Vasak's three-generation classification. Accordingly, today's human rights - for the time being - consist of four generations.

First Generation Rights are also called classical or civil and political rights. These are the rights that emerged as a result of the struggle between the nobility and the bourgeoisie. These are the rights that are based on the concepts of "Free-

dom and equality” and are formed by the demands for rights in the political sphere of the various rights gained by the bourgeoisie class with its economic empowerment. The most developed form of this generation of rights is listed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as “Right to life, inviolability of person, freedom of religion and conscience, freedom of thought, inviolability of dwelling, right to property, right to work, etc.” (Macklem, 2015; Kalabalık, 2023).

Second Generation Rights emerged as a result of the struggle between the bourgeoisie class, which was getting richer economically, and the working class, which worked in difficult, limited conditions and demanded socio-economic rights, starting in 18th century England and continuing until the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century. In other words, inadequate and limited access to housing and health services and unfavorable working conditions are the factors that prepared the emergence of these rights. These rights, which are positive-based rights that require the state to intervene and create the necessary grounds, include “The right to work, the right to rest, the right to social security, the right to form trade unions, the right to strike and collective bargaining, the right to health, the right to participate in cultural life, etc.” (Cornescu, 2009; Das, 2018).

Third Generation Rights, unlike the first two generations of rights, have emerged in the form of collective/solidarity rights. The main active subjects of rights are not only individuals but also groups, communities, classes, and states (Tomuschat, 2008). In these rights, the participation of groups, communities and states is prioritized and prioritized rather than the participation of individuals alone. The most fundamental feature of these rights is that they emerged after the Second World War and aim to minimize the devastating effects of this war on individuals, the environment and society, and to make human and environmental life more sustainable and livable. At this point, third generation rights, which include rights such as “The right to environment, the right to peace, the right to development, etc.”, have focused on the impact of technological developments on ecological balance and individual life (Das, 2018).

Fourth Generation rights have emerged as a new generation of rights due to the dynamic nature of human rights as a result of the acceleration of the development of science and technology. In other words, these rights, which are expressed as “Genetic rights”, are expressed as rights that belong to all humanity, including

controversial and ethical issues such as the human genome and embryo, in vitro fertilization, and genetic manipulation. In this context, scientific and technological developments, innovations in the field of health, social media and risks in the field of medicine, and issues that cannot be placed in the first three generations of human rights have necessitated the emergence of fourth generation rights. Although it is not yet clear exactly which rights are included in this generation of rights, it is accepted that their scope is broad. For example, a wide range of rights from the right to water to biogenetic rights, from energy rights to the right to play for children, from the right to special education to the right to cyber security are included in this generation of rights (Cornescu, 2009; Durul, 2023).

1.1. Universality of Human Rights

Many different views have been put forward to explain the world we live in. One of them centers on the differences between the “Existing” and the “Ideal”. From the existing perspective, the human being is characterized as a biological creature consisting of flesh and bones. From the perspective of the ideal, the human being is considered as a being that exists with honor and dignity (Durul, 2023). Human rights is a concept expressed by evaluating human beings from the perspective of the ideal. The fact that it represents the ideal reveals the dynamic nature of human rights and the goals it seeks to achieve.

Human rights can be defined as the product of a deep-rooted philosophy in which the individual is stripped of all his/her attributes and is only human. As mentioned above, the understanding of human rights, which centers on human dignity and honor, has been given a concrete identity to prevent a repetition of the situation that emerged after World War II. This identity was signed in 1948 under the name of the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights”. Although this international document, which was put forward by the United Nations, was prepared as a non-binding text, the understanding it put forward enabled human rights to permeate national and international legal texts (İşıldaklı, 2020).

Human rights are an idea and a philosophy in terms of legal texts. Human rights reveal what should be, not what is. Therefore, the universality of human rights is among the ideals that should be, not what is. Therefore, it is not the case that human rights have a universal character in practice. The ideal of human rights is different from the legal terms such as “Fundamental rights and freedoms”,

“Rights and freedoms of the individual” and “Public freedoms” defined in constitutional texts. Human rights are nothing more than an intellectual understanding that feeds these constitutional texts (Yıldırım, 2003).

The fact that human rights represent an idea and an ideal raises some questions in terms of inclusiveness. Which philosophical understandings, which cultural practices, and which ideologies underpin the idea of human rights? Does the understanding of human rights have the same acceptance and representation in all parts of the world? For example, is an event or attitude that is considered “Good” in Western civilization also considered “good” in Eastern civilization or Africa? These and similar questions fuel the debate on the cultural relativism of human rights. Those who embrace the universality of human rights emphasize the indivisibility and integrity of human rights by grouping them under the umbrella of “Fundamental good” (Sane, 2018). However, the opposing views state that rights are local and social in origin (İşildaklı, 2020). Moreover, some express the universality of human rights as an intellectual and legal manifestation of Western expansionism (Pekel, 2019). As such, it is difficult to come to a final decision on whether to simply accept the universality of human rights or to cut corners. One of the most important issues to be emphasized at this point is how the defenders of the idea of human rights position themselves in practice in the face of various events. For example, the attacks in Gaza after October 7, 2023 ignore both the idea of human rights and the legal provisions on fundamental rights and freedoms. In this regard, it can be seen that the views that aim to eliminate all kinds of discrimination of language, religion, race, color, gender, etc. at the global level face a test of consistency.

As explained in detail in the previous section, human rights have been subjected to certain classifications within themselves. These classifications are defined under the name of generational rights as first, second and third generation rights, and even today, references are made to the existence and scope of fourth generation rights (Kara, 2023). This classification reveals the limits of human beings that should ideally be protected and the powers they should have. The ideal of human rights, which is categorized as mentioned above and guides legal texts, carries personal and collective responsibilities. This is exemplified by first-generation rights that clarify personal space and responsibilities, second-generation rights that encourage social participation, and third-generation rights that require collective effort. In theory, the idea of human rights seeks to provide security and equality by

emphasizing these spheres and responsibilities. In practice, however, serious problems are encountered in the observance of even the most fundamental right of the individual, the right to life. To go back to the example given earlier, it is discussed in detail in the following sections of the study that the massacres carried out by Israel in Gaza, which can be said to have reached the level of genocide, violate every generational right. Considering the attitude of the political authorities representing the Western civilization, which is considered to be the origin of the idea of human rights, to the events that took place, the theory-practice incompatibilities regarding the universality of human rights come to the fore. The passive attitude of the West toward the events in Gaza brings to mind the view that Western expansionism lies behind human rights (Pekel, 2019).

This framework on the universality and scope of human rights is expanded and evaluated through the case of Gaza in the rest of the study.

2. DE FACTO IN HUMAN RIGHTS: EVENTS IN GAZA IN THE CONTEXT OF RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

“What happened in Gaza?” and “What is happening in Gaza?” ... These two questions were asked to describe what has happened in Gaza from the past to the present and the current situation. It is necessary to devote a great deal of space to assessing the historical trajectory of Gaza and the Palestinian territories more broadly. However, rather than focusing on what the Palestinian region has faced in the distant past, this study focuses on the current situation in Gaza¹.

According to the information on the United Nations website (2024), on October 7, 2023, Palestinian armed groups attacked Israel from Gaza, firing rockets, crossing the border, killing and capturing Israeli forces and civilians, whereupon Israel declared a state of war and launched a counter-attack on Gaza. The Israeli attack targeted residential and health facilities, killed thousands of people, displaced more than a million people and leveled parts of Gaza. The details of the events reflected in the statements of the United Nations in this way have a much more striking content.

1 According to the report prepared by Hamas (2024), between January 2000 and September 2023, Israel killed 11,299 people and injured 156,768 people in Palestine according to official figures. In other words, the situation in Gaza did not start on October 7, 2023. Therefore, we are talking about an incident with a long history. However, within the limits of the study, this historical process is not emphasized.

As of January 13, 2024, the number of Palestinians killed as a result of Israeli ground and air strikes reached 23,843 and the number of injured reached 60,317. The region suffered 60 percent infrastructure damage and 2 million people were displaced due to basic humanitarian needs (Kouachi, 2024).

In addition to the loss of life and injuries in the region, Philippe Lazzarini (2024), the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), stated that “the bombardment has caused the largest displacement of Palestinians since 1948” and pointed out that “1.4 million people have taken refuge in UNRWA shelters” while “they are forced to live in inhumane conditions”.

According to Euronews (2024), one percent of Gaza’s children have died since the operations began on October 7, 2023. This number also accounts for more than 40 percent of the total casualties. Save The Children (2024a) reports that more than 10,000 children have been killed, with thousands more missing and under rubble, based on data from the Gaza Ministry of Health.

However, the situation for children in Gaza is not limited to death. Again, according to Save The Children (2024), serious risks continue for surviving children. Injuries, burns, loss of limbs, loss of relatives, inadequate medical care, and the need for continuous care are among the important problems awaiting children here. On the other hand, it is stated that children face difficulties under six important headings:

- Killing and disabling children
- The use of children by armed forces
- Sexual violence against children
- Attacks on schools and hospitals
- Abduction of children
- Lack of humanitarian access for children

In addition to the situation of children, which should be emphasized and protected, it should be noted that access to the right to health, which is a human

right, is not possible in Gaza. The health situation in Gaza after the attacks were reported to be “totally catastrophic”. The main hospitals are out of service and the remaining hospitals do not have sufficient capacity. The wounded had to wait to be examined on the ground (Asmar, 2023). The attacks are likely to lead to the collapse of the health system in less than a month and more serious health problems in the long term.

One of the points where health institutions have fallen short in service delivery has been due to power outages. Power cuts, lack of fuel for generators and ongoing attacks have disrupted the functioning of hospitals. Premature and newborn babies and those in intensive care are at high risk of death. Health personnel are trying to fulfill their duties in the light of cell phones (Aljazeera, 2024).

Another important variable in access to the right to health as a human right is access to clean water. Access to clean water is related to both consumption and use. In other words, access to water is important both for the use of water for cleaning purposes and the prevention of dehydration. However, there is a serious problem in Gaza in this regard as well. It is reported that children in Gaza have access to only 1.5-2 liters of water per day. It is stated that diseases such as diarrhea, dehydration, scabies, lice and chicken pox are on the rise due to limited access to water. It is also predicted that diseases will increase due to a lack of personal hygiene (UNICEF, 2023).

UNICEF Spokesperson James Elder’s (2023) remarks at the press conference summarized the inhumane situation especially for children. It was stated that thousands of children have died and continue to die in Gaza, that Gaza has turned into a graveyard and hell, and that more than a million children are facing a water crisis. On the other hand, it was also stated that the experiences of children are traumatic and that children need psychosocial support.

Another dimension of what is happening in Gaza is related to the delivery of humanitarian aid. Hundreds of thousands of people’s lives have been jeopardized as a result of Israel’s attacks, which have not only directly killed or injured people, but also created obstacles in the provision of basic needs such as food, water and medicine. The Government’s Media Office in Gaza (2024) states that 1300 trucks should deliver humanitarian aid to the region daily, but this support is not being provided and Israel is causing a famine in the region.

The food supply problem in the region brings with it a high level of risk. According to the World Health Organization's (2023) declaration dated 21 December 2023, 93 percent of Gaza's population is facing hunger. However, it was also stated that the people of the region expect food from the World Health Organization teams.

The daily writings of an aid volunteer on the website of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) (2024) provide a closer picture of the situation in the region. Hala, a volunteer with the NGO Alianza-ActionAid, is herself a victim of the war. Hala mentioned that she was displaced, cut off from communication with her relatives, unable to meet her needs such as electricity, internet, water, lack of access to food, deprived of quality housing, lost a relative to kidney failure without dialysis access, and many other difficulties. Hala is only one of the victims in the region. The example given here through Hala also points to the unlivable humanitarian conditions in the region.

Dominic Allen (2024), the Palestine Representative of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), stated that Gaza is full of insecurity, fear, hopelessness and despair. He also stated that giving birth is a serious risk factor for women, there are not enough supplies and the situation in hospitals is very bad.

Israel's actions in Palestine have not been limited to attacks on Gaza and restrictions on humanitarian aid. On the other hand, Israel has arrested nearly 6000 Palestinians in the West Bank. By the end of December 2023, the number of Palestinians detained in Israeli prisons reached 8800 (Abu Shamala, 2024).

Human rights violations in Gaza are not limited to basic rights such as the right to life, the right to health, and the right to freedom, but serious problems are also encountered in the field of education. The bombing of schools, which provide access to education for people who need to be educated, as well as the removal of people and educators from their lives, carries the violation of rights in this field to the next level. In Gaza, schools at all levels, starting from the kindergarten level, have been destroyed and rendered unusable. According to 12 December 2023 (Ebu Ayşe), Israel destroyed half of the kindergartens in Gaza (215 kindergartens), about 319 out of 615 schools of the Gaza Ministry of Education and Training, about 50 out of 183 schools managed by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the Unit-

ed Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), four out of 60 schools of private institutions, and about 14 institutions of higher education, including the highest capacity Islamic University and Al-Azhar. A spokesperson for the Palestinian Ministry of Education stated that education has been disrupted in Gaza and hundreds of thousands of students have been deprived of their right to education. In addition, it was also stated that education in Gaza may be disrupted for at least a year.

On December 20, 2023, Anadolu Agency reported that 254,000 houses were damaged in total and 52,600 houses were destroyed by Israeli attacks. In addition to this situation, which also means the violation of people's right to housing, there are also different types of structures damaged. As mentioned above, in addition to health institutions and educational institutions, 126 government facilities, 3 churches and 112 mosques were destroyed and 200 mosques were damaged (Canik, 2023). In other words, along with residences, health institutions and educational institutions, official and religious buildings have also been damaged, and the risk of serious loss of rights has emerged in these areas.

While all this was happening, it should be noted that people from various parts of the world reacted to the current situation. Millions of people took to the streets and organized demonstrations in support of Gaza in many central regions of the world such as Istanbul, London, Paris, New York, Washington, Madrid and Berlin (Başay, 2023; NTV 2023; Oktay, 2023; Bolelli, 2024; NTV, 2024a). In addition to these civilian reactions to Israel's actions, legal and bureaucratic means have also been used. For this purpose, with the application made by South Africa, the International Court of Justice (2024) decided that Israel's actions should be considered within the scope of genocide and should be stopped (Decision date January 26, 2024).

However, it is observed that both civilian reactions and the statements of official institutions have not changed the process on the ground. As of January 30, 2024, the attacks continued on the 116th day, dozens of people lost their lives and civilian settlements were subjected to attacks (The Palestinian Information Center, 2024).

3. DISCUSSION AND EVALUATION: GAZA IN TERMS OF SOCIAL WORK IDEAL

Individuals and societies need the social work profession due to the pressures/oppression systems and unfair practices in individual and social life. As a matter of fact, social work aims to correct the social conditions that hinder people's social functionality and individual and social welfare under any circumstances and to develop the individual (IFSW, 2024c). In other words, the ultimate goal of social work is to ensure that the individual is better positioned in his/her environment in terms of social welfare and social functionality. At the same time, based on the principle of "dignity and value of the individual", the social work profession builds on four basic concepts: "freedom", "equality", "respect for diversity" and "social justice" to increase the well-being and welfare of individuals and societies. At this point, the value and importance given to the individual/human by social work, which has a direct parallelism with human rights, focuses on the individual's ability to lead a meaningful life in personal and social life and to prioritize human rights regarding the provision of the necessary social life (Şahin, 2002; Karataş, 2002).

People need social justice in order to make "free" decisions about their individual lives. Indeed, social justice provides the individual with the right to freely choose his or her own life and future. It is precisely here that the events in Palestine show that the people of Gaza have been deprived by the Israeli forces of their rights to "freedom and equality", which are the basic rights of individual life, as well as their rights to "respect for diversity and social justice" and "social functionality", which constitute the basic principles of social life, and thus a society's right to life and basic human rights have been restricted. What happened as a result of the asymmetric attacks launched by Israel in Gaza is a "crime against humanity" in its simplest form, even though it is expressed in different ways by the international community. On the other hand, the current picture in Gaza shows that the ideals and basic values of social work are far away.

Social work, which IFSW defines as a human rights profession from the past to the future (IFSW, 2014), is also a profession that focuses on people, participates and takes an active role. In this respect, the social work profession has something in common with human rights: "Human". The main purpose of social work, which acts on the premise that every human being is valuable, is to mediate the construc-

tion of a social structure based on equality and justice in society and to realize this process by protecting the dignity and honor of human beings in the context of human rights. In this direction, social work, which has the mission of fighting against human rights violations, appears as an anti-oppression practice. At this point, the profession of social work and the concept of human rights are closely related to each other, and this close relationship has been presented to all professional social workers by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW, 1996) as a universal guideline and a common/standard set of principles under 8 main headings: “life”, “freedom”, “non-discrimination and prioritizing equality”, “(social) justice”, “social responsibility”, “solidarity”, “peace and non-violence” and “environment”. These principles are explained as follows (IFSW, 1996):

1. To counter violations of the fundamental human right to life and human rights abuses that may threaten the quality of life and to promote the realization of life-enhancing and life-nurturing activities,
2. To make the necessary efforts to minimize all conditions that restrict the freedom of the individual/human being (freedom from arbitrary detention, torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, etc.),
3. To prioritize the defense of the rights of individuals and communities subjected to discrimination and inequality and to have specific responsibilities to ensure equal access to public services and social welfare and to combat all forms of discrimination (age, sex, gender, religion, language, race, color, disability, political belief, religious belief, social class, property and sexual orientation, etc.) in accordance with the resources of national/international governments,
4. To establish social justice in both individual and community life and to protect equality of opportunity in basic issues such as health and education,
5. Defending the rights of disadvantaged individuals and communities in solidarity and taking a stance against systems of oppression in order to achieve social justice; in other words, to stand with the disadvantaged in solidarity against the conditions that cause the suffering and sorrow of individuals and communities, or to stand with the disadvantaged in campaigns for social justice,

6. In the context of social responsibility, which means the realization of the principle of solidarity on the basis of human rights towards the individual, the family, the nation and the world community, to stand by and defend the rights of suffering and disadvantaged individuals, groups and communities, or to convey to people that individuals, families and communities have a responsibility towards disadvantaged groups,
7. Advocate for non-violence and pacifism without consenting to the perpetuation of social injustice²,
8. To fight against environmental degradation and environmental living conditions that threaten human health and to put forward efforts to minimize these damages (IFSW, 1996).

Within the framework of the principles emphasized by the IFSW mentioned above, social work appears as a profession that deals with the problems and needs of the individual and society. In other words, the impact of human rights on the way the discipline of social work deals with and evaluates human beings has been quite decisive. In cases where these problems are not solved and needs are not met, there are violations of human rights at various levels. In a place where human rights are violated or individual and social systems are in a disadvantaged position, social work examines the individual and society within the framework of fundamental rights and freedoms and creates and implements an intervention plan accordingly. At this point, what happened in Gaza is also a violation of human rights by Israel and the humanitarian dimension of this violation falls within the field of social work. When we look at it from the perspective of social work, human beings should have certain fundamental rights just because they are human beings, and in this respect, having human rights also means that every human being has a common assurance of life. However, it is an indisputable reality that the struggle to protect human rights is accepted as a requirement of being human and human dignity and has a universal character. The universal human rights we have mentioned in this regard are also the rights that apply to the civilian population living in Gaza.

2 At this point, social workers are professionals who dedicate themselves to a non-violent pursuit. However, non-violence does not mean being passive from unjust behaviors and practices, on the contrary, it means that social workers do not engage in any acts or attempts of violence within the framework of their professional activities. At this point, social workers save all their professional and human energies for constructive and integrative efforts to achieve social justice against systems of oppression and use them for the establishment of peace on the basis of social justice.

Within the scope of social work values, it is a requirement of the principles of “human dignity and value”, “social justice” and “social responsibility” to take a stance against human rights violations in Gaza and to stand by the people of Gaza, who are in a disadvantaged position and trying to hold on to life in indescribable deep pain. What distinguishes the social work profession from many other disciplines centered on human beings is that it has an anti-oppression and rights-based approach with the principles of social justice, social advocacy and solidarity. At this point, the issue of human rights for social work is not just a mere theory created in the context of various declarations and (or) documents such as the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights”, but also prioritizes the discursive and actional construction and practice of these rights (Zengin and Altındağ, 2016). It is precisely at this point that social work professionals, in the face of what happened in Gaza, offer us a form of advocacy and mediation/conflict resolution roles that have been put into action/practice by being on the side of the civilian population who are in a disadvantaged position as required by social justice and anti-oppression practices. In Gaza, where Israel is trying to take away basic rights to life, it is a professional obligation to defend the dignity and value of human beings against this genocide through governments, international institutions, non-governmental organizations and associations within the framework of the principles of “social justice and social responsibility” of “rights-based social work”. Again, the context of “power relations”, another principle of rights-based social work, is aimed at changing the current situation (Zengin and Altındağ, 2016). In this regard, it is essential and necessary for all national and international public and private institutions and organizations that are directly and indirectly related to the social work profession to take a stance against what is happening in Gaza, and to take an action-oriented stance that shows that they are against oppression, on the side of those who are subjected to pain, and on the side of vulnerable groups who are forced into a disadvantaged position.

Since October 7, 2023, the social work profession has some responsibilities towards the events in Gaza as a result of Israel’s attacks on Gaza. The most important of these responsibilities is that social workers should actively use their international “advocacy” and “mediation or conflict resolution” roles at the macro level on behalf of the disadvantaged people of Gaza in this process where human rights are clearly violated by Israel. Social work professionals should be in the field with an “activist spirit” in order to protect and secure the rights of the Palestinian people in general and the people of Gaza in particular against Israel, which has been pursuing an

occupying policy throughout Palestine as of October 7, as required by the basis of human rights and freedoms, and should advocate for the disadvantaged people living in Gaza within the scope of social justice and social responsibility principles. As a matter of fact, due to the essence of human rights and the basic ethical principles and codes of social work, the basic framework used in defending and protecting the rights of individuals and societies who are unable to exercise their rights and cannot defend themselves due to their conditions is the advocacy and mediation roles of social workers within the scope of “human rights” and “human dignity and value”. It is obvious that people living in Gaza are not in a position to defend their rights while trying to struggle for life under intense bombardment by Israel. Therefore, in line with the principles and values of the social work profession, it is a humanitarian, professional and conscientious responsibility for social work professionals to advocate for the rights of Gazans within the framework of “advocacy and mediation roles of social work”.

When we think about what happened in Gaza, the social work profession and the social workers practicing this profession have the responsibility to protect human rights and macro practices centered on social justice at every stage of the professional intervention to be made towards the Palestinian people, especially children, women, the elderly and the disabled. As a matter of fact, the principles of “solidarity” and “social responsibility”, which are among the 8 principles defined by IFSW (mentioned above) as a universal guideline for the social work profession within the framework of human rights, suggest that social work should stand by the suffering and disadvantaged position of the individual and be on the side of the suffering. However, the events in Gaza have left us with the impression that this issue has been ignored by social service institutions and organizations in the international conjuncture.

At this point, over thirty thousand people have lost their lives and many more have been displaced. In other words, many people have been subjected to human rights violations. In such a situation, the reaction of the IFSW, one of the pioneering organizations in the field of social work on a world scale, has become even more important for social work. At this point, it has been reached that the IFSW has made several statements on the subject under the following headings:

- Israel / Palestine: IFSW Calls For Immediate Ceasefire and to Address The Root Causes of the Conflict (30 October 2023) (IFSW, 2023).

- IFSW Supports Global Statement of Humanitarian Leaders Calling for an Immediate Ceasefire in Gaza (27 February 2024) (IFSW, 2024a).
- Unconditional Humanitarian Aid to Gaza Now (8 March 2024) (IFSW, 2024b).

In the IFSW statement of October 30 (IFSW, 2023) the federation articulates its position and demand in the following words:

Since 2014 IFSW has consistently held a position of promoting peace and self-determination, with equal rights and freedoms for all people living in the region. The Federation recognizes that Palestinians have the right to live without occupation and to be able to build their independent state, and that Israelis have the right to live with security and without fear. The Federation therefore fully supports calls for an immediate ceasefire, provision of aid, and urging each side towards discussions that address the roots of the conflict to protect Palestinian and Israeli civilians from further escalation of violence and catastrophe.

According to the first statement, the federation states its position and recognizes that Palestinians have the right to live without occupation and Israelis have the right to live in security. The Federation therefore supports the call for an immediate ceasefire and the provision of aid. The organization's statement of February 27, 2024 (IFSW, 2024a) supports the humanitarian leaders' call for a ceasefire in Gaza. The March 8 statement (IFSW, 2024b), accompanied by a video from a social worker living in the region, draws attention to what is happening in the region and calls for unconditional humanitarian aid for Gaza.

Although these statements of the IFSW as an international social work organization have a high importance on the subject, the fact that different actors of social work are not very visible points to a situation open to criticism. On the other hand, the fact that a pioneering organization such as the IFSW has only made a few statements and that its statements have not had the desired level of impact has led to the social work community to present an obscure picture. Moreover, the fact that the first statement for the events that started on October 7, 2023 was made on October 30 and that a limited number of posts were made in total suggests that the Gaza issue is not a top agenda item for the relevant institution.

CONCLUSION

The discipline of social work has an understanding that does not take into account human characteristics such as language, religion, race and color and sees them as diversity and richness. What is happening in Palestine -a deep-rooted geography where people from many different nations, states and religious beliefs have lived throughout history- does not comply with any understanding adopted by social work. Many social work values such as human dignity, honor, freedom and uniqueness have been under a brutal, unfair and unilateral attack. Moreover, while this attack has continued systematically for decades, after October 7, 2023, it has taken on a massive form that ignores all rights and laws, including all civilians. As a matter of fact, as of March 28, 2024, when the conclusion of this article was written, thousands of children and women in Gaza approximately 33,500 thousand were killed by Israel and thousands of people were displaced. In addition, the surviving children approximately 31% (or one in six children) faced the danger of death due to starvation (NTV, 2024b; TRT Haber, 2024; UNICEF, 2024).

It is thought-provoking that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is the cornerstone of human rights in modern Western thought, has no binding force/function at the sanction level. To close the gap in the sanctioning power of this declaration and to create an institutional basis for human rights issues, the European Convention on Human Rights was first laid intellectually and then legally, but it has been observed that a concrete mechanism has not yet been formed.

In the ideals of social work, the issue of human rights as well as the universal level of human rights in the international community is as important and as functional and valuable as it is able to move beyond discourse to practice. At this point, it cannot be said that the institutions, conventions and international law, which emphasize the universality of human rights in the international context, can hardly transfer their theoretical/discursive emphasis to practice in Gaza. In fact The "Court of Human Rights" established as a supervisory mechanism under the Twin Conventions, the "Human Rights Councils and Commissions" established as a human rights protection system through the United Nations to commit to protect human rights and freedoms at the international level under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the "UN High Commissioner for Human Rights", The "International Criminal Court", the "European Court of Human Rights", the "Council of Europe

Commissioner for Human Rights”, the “European Commission against Racism and Intolerance”, and other international institutions and organizations that have a direct or indirect relationship with human rights - with the exception of a few feeble statements - have all failed to take action to protect human rights, human dignity and human law with regard to what is happening in Gaza. All these events have shown that the West’s rhetoric of “protecting human rights and human dignity” has failed to resonate with societies outside their geography. Israel’s destruction of UNICEF schools with “bombs” alone is enough evidence to explain the West’s helplessness against Israel and the duality and dysfunctionality of its human rights discourse. This situation has paved the way for the formation of a common opinion that the discourses and views expressed about the universality of human rights should be re-evaluated with a scientific and critical eye.

After October 7, 2023, the attitudes and attitudes of institutions related to human rights in general and international law towards what happened; in particular, the issue of human rights in social work ideals and the emphasis on the universality / all-encompassing nature of human rights; It has shown us that when it comes to Gaza, it remains only in discourse and is not reflected in practice. Every issue that belongs to human beings, that is human, that is directly or indirectly related to human beings falls within the field of social work and human rights. In this regard, social work defines itself with the mission of “anti-oppression practice” in cases where power is used as a tool of oppression. In addition, the advocacy, social justice and social responsibility roles of the social work profession have been mentioned in detail in various parts of this study. In this direction, in cases where power is used ruthlessly by oppressive/oppressive systems, standing by the oppressed/oppressed individuals/groups/societies with an “activist attitude” is an active and actional responsibility that is always on the agenda of social work in the context of human rights. From the perspective of the social work profession, macro-level social work practices such as the organization of activist movements, lobbying, and influencing decision-makers are equally important in order to get one step closer to the ideal of human rights and to ensure that concrete steps can be taken against the situation in Gaza. Ultimately, it is imperative to eliminate all violations against human beings in order to provide a life in accordance with human dignity and value and to make human well-being more livable. Otherwise, human rights will be nothing more than an ideal that remains only in theory but can never be applied to all societies in real terms.

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