

# NEW REALITY



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| One-on-one Discussion

## | HUMAN RIGHTS IN TIMES OF CHANGE

In times of change, rising insecurities or perception of such insecurities, coupled with fear of the unknown, often give rise to human rights violations. Human rights and fundamental freedoms – designed to protect the individual from the possible oppression of the powerful – are pushed to the side by populist movements using people's fears for political gain, by conflict, by economic disenfranchisement, and sometimes by pure ignorance. We bear witness to human rights violations in the form of discrimination, hate speech and crime on a daily basis. In addition, retaliations against human rights defenders, the shrinking space for civil society in some environments, and increased non-cooperation with international mechanisms are further reasons for concern.

On the other hand, history teaches us that protecting human rights and dignity helps us prevent conflict, cure ignorance, instil respect for others, and build better societies that are more resilient to threats from within and from without. In times of risks, we should therefore be looking to strengthen human rights, not limit them.

What is the role of human rights in today's society, why we need them, and how they can help us face the insecurities of modern times will be explained in a conversation with the man charged with protecting human rights at the global level – the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein.

## | GUIDING QUESTIONS

- The worrying trend of neglecting human rights standards is well documented. Why do you think governments, and people, turn away from human rights, and what concrete solutions can be applied to reverse the trend?
- Bearing in mind the growing distrust among the general population towards politicians, how can policy- and decision-makers better protect human rights standards?
- What more can the international community do to protect and promote human rights at the national, regional and international levels?