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SPACE LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS: THE FUTURE IN ITS CONVERGENCE

**Abstract**

Technology has always played a vital role in bringing about political, economic and social transformation. Any development in technology is immediately inquired from a human rights perspective. Over the years, space exploration has also been subject to this scrutiny. Many governments and organizations are criticized for their spending on space exploration, which can be alternatively used for resolving many terrestrial issues that affect humans. Progress in space exploration in the form of communication, navigation, spin-offs, etc, have certainly benefited humans rather than increasing human suffering, as is claimed sometimes. A strong impact has thus, been created on human rights issues as well.

While so, the answer to such criticisms and questions lie in recognizing that international space law and human rights are inherently connected. The growth of space law and modern human rights is contemporaneous. Space Law, in expanding its scope, has at all times adhered to the values of human rights, since the cold-war era. At the core of either fields of law is the 'benefit of mankind'. Space Law has evolved through collective efforts, not heeding to individual egos of States. Deterrence in the placement of weapons in space, benefit sharing, are proof of its collective applicability too. At the same time, space law and human rights, share the many shortcomings inherent to international law, such as the lack of a strong enforcement mechanisms.

Both Space law and human rights are dynamic in nature, often demanded to change along with new interventions and innovations. At a time when space activities are graduating from a phase of space exploration to that of space exploitation, the legal community is keen on revisiting the existing framework to determine if, new technology and aspirations of not only governmental organizations, but also those of private actors, can be accommodated. The convergence of human rights and space law need to be made more explicit to approach and address such challenges.

This paper is an attempt to correlate space law and human rights, in establishing that their convergence will settle the debate between space technology and human rights issues. A human rights centric approach to space law will not only help in building public confidence in the law and its application towards protecting their interests collectively, but will also aid in the development of States' .