



Freedom from Want

The Human Right to Adequate Food

George Kent

There is, literally, a world of difference between the statements "Everyone should have adequate food," and "Everyone has the right to adequate food." In George Kent's view, the lofty rhetoric of the first statement will not be fulfilled until we take the second statement seriously. Kent sees hunger as a deeply political problem. Too many people do not have adequate control over local resources and cannot create the circumstances that would allow them to do meaningful, productive work and provide for themselves. The human right to an adequate livelihood, including the human right to adequate food, needs to be implemented worldwide in a systematic way.

Freedom from Want makes it clear that feeding people will not solve the problem of hunger, for feeding programs can only be a short-term treatment of a symptom, not a cure. The real solution lies in empowering the poor. Governments, in particular, must ensure that their people face enabling conditions that allow their citizens to provide for themselves.

In a wider sense, Kent brings an understanding of human rights as a universal system, applicable to all nations on a global scale. If, as Kent argues, everyone has a human right to adequate food, it follows that those who can empower the poor have a duty to see that right implemented, and the obligation to be held morally and legally accountable, for seeing that that right is realized for everyone, everywhere.

George Kent is a professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Hawai'i, and author of *The Politics of Children's Survival* and *Children in the International Political Economy*.

Advancing Human Rights Series

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"As a legal claim, the 'human right to adequate food' may seem thin gruel, but George Kent enriches the concept with data-based policy analysis, compelling ethical arguments, and a full review of concerned international, national, and nongovernmental organizations. He persuasively makes the case for accountability where the face of famine, malnutrition, and starvation confront the hands of those who hold political power at every level in our new global economy."

—Richard Pierre Claude, founding editor of *Human Rights Quarterly* and professor emeritus, University of Maryland

"George Kent's book makes it clear that an individual's right to adequate food is a legal human right, grounded in law and public justice."

—*Rev. David Beckmann, president, Bread for the World*

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