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Safeguarding Human Dignity in the Face of Hunger: Examining the Role of Human Rights Commissions in Global Food Security

Ashish Shahi

Assistant Professor, Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti Language University Lucknow, UP, India.
[1]***Corresponding Author Email:*** *ashishshahi@kmclu.ac.in*

ABSTRACT:

This paper examines how national and international human rights commissions (HRCs) can contribute to safeguarding human dignity by addressing hunger and ensuring the right to food. Hunger and food insecurity are not merely developmental challenges but represent fundamental human rights issues intrinsically linked to dignity and the right to life. The analysis adopts a rights-based framework to evaluate the mandates of HRCs, their accountability mechanisms, and the international and domestic standards upon which they rely. Through a comprehensive literature review and selected case studies (South Africa, India, Scotland, and Brazil), the paper explores the ways in which HRCs monitor state obligations, handle grievances, and advocate for policy reforms aimed at securing equitable access to adequate food. The discussion also addresses structural factors that intensify hunger, such as armed conflict, climate change, inequality, and governance failures, and demonstrates how these conditions disproportionately heighten the vulnerability of children, women, refugees, and marginalized communities. The analysis reveals that while human rights commissions perform critical functions in translating international commitments into domestic action, their effectiveness is frequently constrained by limitations including weak enforcement powers, political interference, and inadequate resources. The paper concludes that the realization of the right to food as a justiciable human right, supported by empowered and proactive human rights commissions acting as guardians of this right, remains essential to ensure that no individual is deprived of adequate food, thereby genuinely protecting and promoting human dignity.

Keywords: *Global Food Security, climate change, safeguarding, hunger, right to food.*

INTRODUCTION:

Hunger remains one of the gravest violations of human dignity in the modern world. Even as international law recognizes the right to food as part of the right to life, millions of people globally continue to suffer from chronic undernourishment, malnutrition and food insecurity. Food security is intrinsically linked to human dignity and the realization of fundamental human rights, yet pervasive hunger endures. This persistent gap suggests a failure not only of policy but of rights fulfillment.

The right to food is enshrined in international human rights law and global development goals. For example, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) affirm that everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food. The UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food defines it as “regular, permanent and unrestricted access…to adequate and sufficient food…which ensure[s] a fulfilling and dignified life free of fear”. Under these norms, states have legal obligations to respect, protect and fulfill the right to food (e.g. by refraining from actions that deprive people of food, preventing third-party violations, and directly providing food to those in need). They must also guard against discrimination in food access based on race, gender, religion or other status. In short, the global consensus holds that food and nutrition security is both a cause and consequence of human dignity.

Despite this rights framework, achieving food security has remained a challenge. Hunger is driven by multiple structural factors such as armed conflicts, climate shocks, extreme poverty, social inequality and weak governance, which undermine the fulfillment of rights. Armed conflicts, for instance, disrupt food production and distribution, leaving malnutrition and death in their wake. Climate change similarly threatens food availability and disproportionately impacts vulnerable groups who contributed least to its causes. Deep-seated inequalities, whether based on wealth, caste, ethnicity or gender mean that marginalized communities routinely face higher hunger and have less political voice. In such contexts, ensuring that every person eats regularly requires more than food aid or development aid: it demands accountability and justice.

This paper investigates one such accountability mechanism: Human Rights Commissions (HRCs) at national and regional levels. These institutions, sometimes referred to as human rights commissions or national human rights institutions, are statutory bodies mandated to promote and protect human rights within their respective societies. The central question addressed is: How can HRCs leverage a rights-based framework to effectively tackle hunger and food insecurity? More specifically, the analysis examines their legal mandates, functions, and strategies in connecting food policy with human rights obligations. In addition, the paper considers: What limitations do HRCs encounter in this domain, and how might those constraints be overcome? Employing a qualitative, comparative approach, the discussion draws on the provided background and enriches it with examples and insights drawn from multiple countries and international sources. The rights-based framework, centered on the legal obligations and normative content of the right to food serves as the guiding lens for the entire analysis. By integrating scholarly literature with

real-world case studies, the paper seeks to demonstrate how reimagining food as a justiciable human right can empower both human rights commissions (HRCs) and societies to genuinely safeguard human dignity at the level of everyday access to food.

The structure of the paper is organized as follows. First, relevant literature on the right to food, food security, and the role of HRCs is reviewed (Section II). This is followed by a brief outline of the methodology employed (Section III). Section IV analyzes the ways in which a rights-based approach shapes the mandates and activities of HRCs, supported by concrete examples. Section V presents selected case studies illustrating HRC engagement with food security issues. Section VI explores cross-cutting themes and persistent challenges. Finally, Section VII offers the main findings and provides recommendations for strengthening the connection between human rights commissions and efforts to achieve food security.

Literature Review

The linkage between hunger and human rights has long been recognized. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Art. 25) and the ICESCR (Art. 11) both enshrine the right to an adequate standard of living, including food. General Comment No. 12 (the authoritative UN Committee on ESCR interpretation) explicitly defines the right to adequate food and outlines state duties. Scholars emphasize that this right includes not only caloric adequacy but also nutritional quality, cultural acceptability and sustainability. Food, in other words, is inherently tied to dignity and life. The OHCHR notes that the right to food must be seen in the context of a "fulfilling and dignified life".

However, the right to food has also been called a "real right", meaning its enforcement often requires active measures by the state, not just passive recognition. This is especially true for the world's poor and vulnerable, who rely on policy entitlements rather than market forces to secure food. As one analysis explains, the right to food is "an enabling right for other additional rights" (health, education, life), and its realization depends on addressing broader issues such as water, land, employment and social security. Literature on food security thus highlights a multi-dimensional, systemic perspective: good food governance requires transparency, participation, accountability, and the rule of law.

A critical theme is that global commitments often falter at domestic implementation. Many countries have ratified human rights treaties and endorsed Sustainable Development Goal 2 (Zero Hunger), yet hunger statistics show enduring gaps. For example, some Latin American constitutions explicitly recognize the right to food, but reality remains challenging: a country's adoption of a right-to-food law is only the first step, and effective enforcement is difficult without supporting institutions and political will. The FAO's "Right to Food: Making it Happen" (2009) study highlights cases (e.g. Brazil, Guatemala, Nicaragua) where framework laws and councils were created, but notes that laws alone do not guarantee change without "people's commitment, the means to implement the laws and a strategy by which to do so". This underscores the need for monitoring and advocacy institutions.

Against this backdrop, Human Rights Commissions have emerged as potentially important actors. National and regional HRCs are generally empowered by constitutions or laws to "promote and protect"

human rights, often by investigating complaints, advising governments, and raising public awareness. Literature on HRCs (or National Human Rights Institutions, NHRIs) suggests they can reinforce the rule of law by aligning domestic policies with international norms. They can fill governance gaps, especially in areas like economic and social rights where courts may be less accessible. For example, the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) is constitutionally mandated to monitor key socio-economic rights (housing, health care, food, etc.) and to collect state reports each year on progress. Similarly, the Philippine Commission on Human Rights and other NHRIs have engaged with issues like land rights and indigence, integrating food security into their mandates.

Previous research has documented some successes: e.g., Zambia's Human Rights Commission has issued recommendations on food and nutrition, and has filed interventions in land-related hunger cases; India's NHRC famously intervened in the mid-2000s starvation crisis in Odisha and pressured the government to introduce the National Food Security Act (2013). In Scotland, the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) advocates formally for the right to food in law. These examples show HRCs using advocacy, inquiry and advisory powers to address hunger through a human rights lens.

On the other hand, scholarship cautions that HRCs often lack effective enforcement powers. By design, many can only recommend or report; they cannot impose remedies. Their impact therefore depends on moral authority, public pressure and cooperation from other state bodies. Political interference or insufficient funding can stymie their work. Critics have noted, for instance, that India's NHRC has remained largely advisory ("toothless tiger"), and Scotland's SHRC has lamented that the right to food, though recognized internationally, is not legally enforceable domestically. These limitations are a recurring theme in the literature on human rights commissions broadly.

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative, rights-based approach. The study is supplemented by current academic and policy literature on the right to food and human rights institutions. A comparative case analysis serves to illustrate diverse contexts: the mandates and actions of human rights commissions (HRCs) in several countries (South Africa, India, Scotland, Brazil) as well as those of international organizations (OHCHR, FAO) are examined. Global normative documents, such as UN resolutions, the ICESCR General Comment No. 12, and relevant FAO reports provide the foundational framework for the analysis. Through the synthesis of these varied sources, key themes emerge regarding the manner in which HRCs engage with and address issues of food security. No new primary data were collected for this study; instead, the research relies entirely on secondary analysis of documented examples, institutional practices, and legal texts. This methodological approach proves particularly suitable for exploring complex policy and institutional questions within an interdisciplinary context.

Analysis

Rights-based Framework and State Obligations

At the core of a rights-based approach to food security is the recognition that individuals are rights-holders and governments (and other actors) are duty-bearers. This framing shifts the conversation from charity or economic planning to legal entitlement and accountability. Under the ICESCR and UDHR, states must take "appropriate steps" to ensure everyone can enjoy adequate food. The Covenant's General Comment No. 12 elaborates that states have obligations to respect (not to arbitrarily deprive existing access to food), protect (to prevent others from depriving access), and fulfill (to facilitate or provide food when people cannot get it for themselves). These obligations have immediate core elements: for example, states must immediately prevent discrimination in food access and must take steps to curb hunger and malnutrition even during crises.

In practice, this means that food policies should be designed to target those in greatest need, and all individuals should have legal recourse if denied access. The human rights approach also demands transparency, participation and accountability in food governance. For example, the South African Human Rights Commission emphasizes that "the right to food is intrinsically linked to one's right to life and dignity", implying that each part of the food system , from distribution to pricing must be monitored. Indeed, the SAHRC's constitutional mandate explicitly requires it to collect information annually on state measures for realizing socio-economic rights (housing, health, food, etc.). This mandate gives it authority to challenge failures in implementing the right to food.

Furthermore, the right-to-food framework focuses on the most vulnerable. Poor households, or marginalized groups, are considered priority "rights-holders" who should be at the center of policies. For example, OHCHR highlights that climate change will "disproportionately impact" groups like rural farmers, indigenous peoples, women and children, who often have contributed least to global warming but are most at risk of food shortages. Structural inequalities (e.g. socio-economic status, caste, or gender) interact with shocks like conflict or climate to worsen hunger among these groups. A rights-based analysis thus requires that policies not only boost aggregate food production but address disparities in access and ensure non-discrimination.

Human Rights Commissions as Accountability Mechanisms

Within this rights-based landscape, Human Rights Commissions can serve as vital accountability bodies. HRCs are vital accountability mechanisms by monitoring state obligations, addressing grievances, and promoting policy reforms to ensure equitable access to food. In other words, they can help bridge the gap between a country's international commitments on the right to food and the day-to-day realities of domestic implementation. They do this in several ways:

Monitoring and Reporting: HRCs often have the legal power to require governments to report on how they are implementing human rights. For instance, South Africa's constitution mandates that each year "the Human Rights Commission must require relevant organs of state to provide…information on the

measures they have taken towards the realization of…rights concerning…food, water, social security…". By systematically gathering this information, the SAHRC can identify shortcomings (e.g. which regions lack food aid, or which policies have not been enacted) and publicize them. This function holds governments to account for their Article 11 obligations under ICESCR, and it creates an official record of progress or lack thereof.

Investigating Complaints and Grievances: Many HRCs can receive complaints from citizens about human rights violations. When hunger is at issue, commissions can investigate cases of food denial, corruption in food programs, or denial of social protection. For example, the National Human Rights Commission of India actively took up cases of starvation deaths in the tribal districts of Odisha (the Kalahandi-Balangir-Koraput region). The NHRC's proactive intervention in those early-2000s crises , prompted by complaints of malnutrition deaths , earned praise even from India's Supreme Court. By treating starvation as a violation of the right to life (Article 21 of India's Constitution), the NHRC framed hunger as a rights issue. Such cases create legal and moral pressure: governments may be compelled to act on these findings or face court instructions.

Policy Recommendations and Advisory Roles: HRCs can review existing laws and policies and advise on reforms. For example, after investigations, the NHRC (India) compiled recommendations on food schemes, children's nutrition, and employment programs like the Public Distribution System. In another example, Brazil's 2006 food security law (LOSAN) was preceded by civil society advocacy (through CONSEA) and ultimately required the government to "respect, protect, promote, provide, inform, monitor… the realization of the human right to adequate food". While Brazil's CONSEA is not an HRC per se, it functions similarly as an institutional mechanism. The upshot is that commissions or councils can help integrate international standards (like ICESCR Article 11 and General Comment 12) into national law and strategy.

Public Education and Empowerment: HRCs also raise awareness of rights among citizens. By clarifying that food entitlements are not mere charity but legal rights, they empower individuals to demand entitlements. In India, right-to-food activists and civil society worked with NHRC staff to push for the National Food Security Act (NFSA) of 2013, which provides statutory subsidies for 800 million people. Although NGOs led that campaign, the NHRC's backing of hunger cases helped create a political climate for the law. Similarly, the Scottish Human Rights Commission ran public workshops so that food-insecure people could voice their experiences in a policy consultation on "Good Food Nation" legislation. These outreach activities ensure that human rights principles shape food policy at the community level.

Coordination and Multi-stakeholder Dialogue: Human rights commissions often have convening power. The FAO's Right to Food report recounts that, for example, the Philippines' Anti-Poverty Commission organized national dialogues on hunger's root causes, bringing together government agencies, NGOs, and citizens, which eventually led to a coherent national food policy. Commission leaders can play similar broker roles in other countries, ensuring that the voices of the hungry are heard in policy forums.

In all these roles, HRCs operate within a rights-based framework. They interpret food issues through legal standards: food must be sufficient, safe, nutritious, accessible, and culturally acceptable. They emphasize that governments must ensure not only that food is available on paper (through programs), but that it truly reaches all people without discrimination. The South African example illustrates this link: the SAHRC's definition of the right to food states that food must be "available, accessible, appropriate and adequate for everyone without discrimination". By monitoring these criteria (e.g. checking if food distribution schemes reach poor or rural areas), HRCs help operationalize international commitments at the local level.

Case Studies

To ground the above analysis, the discussion examines how these principles manifest in diverse contexts. Each case illustrates distinct mechanisms employed by human rights commissions (HRCs) as well as the specific challenges they encounter in addressing hunger and food insecurity.

South Africa: Constitutional Mandate and Reporting

South Africa's constitution explicitly guarantees a variety of socio-economic rights, including food (implicitly via Section 27 on "sufficient food and water") and dignity (Article 10). In implementation, the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) is mandated to monitor the realization of these rights. As noted above, Section 184(3) of the constitution requires the SAHRC to obtain annual reports from state bodies on measures taken for socio-economic rights. This unique constitutional role gives the SAHRC concrete authority in food security: it can probe departments of agriculture, social development and others to document progress on hunger reduction.

The SAHRC's 2016, 17 "Right to Food" research brief illustrates this approach. The brief first assessed the National Policy on Food and Nutrition Security, then gathered data through literature review and stakeholder interviews. It defined the right to food in human rights terms: "it is a human right… that requires food to be available, accessible, appropriate and adequate for everyone without discrimination". It noted that South African law (e.g. Sections 27, 28 of the constitution) places duties on government to realize this right, including non-discrimination and affirmative measures (e.g. land reform, nutrition for children). The SAHRC report then outlined themes affecting food access (such as poverty, unemployment, and inadequacies in the Integrated Food Security Strategy). Importantly, the commission made recommendations to government (for example, to improve coordination between departments, to train officials on rights obligations, and to empower communities to claim food entitlements).

Thus, the SAHRC acts both as an analytical body (studying hunger issues from a rights perspective) and a catalyst (pushing policy changes). It leverages its constitutional monitoring power to hold the state accountable, and it frames its guidance in terms of international law. Nonetheless, its influence is mainly advisory: it can expose gaps and lobby for action, but it must rely on the goodwill of government to implement reforms. The commission's annual reports and research briefs do contribute to public debate, and they provide a transparent basis for civil society to pressure authorities.

India: Advocacy and Legal Action

India's experience illustrates how an HRC can engage in legal and policy advocacy to advance food rights. The National Human Rights Commission of India (NHRC) and allied state-level commissions have addressed hunger on multiple fronts. A landmark chapter was the NHRC's intervention in the 1990s and 2000s when starvation deaths occurred in Odisha's remote districts. The NHRC dispatched investigations and collaborated with the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) in a petition to the Supreme Court. In 2001, the Supreme Court in PUCL v. Union of India recognized that the right to food is integral to the fundamental right to life under Article 21. The NHRC's follow-up report explicitly affirmed that "right to food is an integral part" of the right to life, and it called on states to strengthen public distribution of food. This judicial acknowledgment and pressure were factors leading to the enactment of the National Food Security Act (2013). The NFSA now legally entitles a large portion of India's population to subsidized grains, explicitly linking food to dignity: its preamble speaks of ensuring "access to adequate quantity of quality food…to live a life with dignity". In effect, the NHRC helped transform food security from welfare into enforceable right.

The NHRC continues to play a watchdog role. It receives thousands of complaints each year, including those about food, nutrition and welfare programs. It can issue notices to state governments and even approach courts. However, like in South Africa, its powers in India are limited. Its recommendations are not legally binding (the NHRC Act allows only "recommended remedies"), so the commission can be ignored or delayed by states. Moreover, governance challenges (such as corruption in the Public Distribution System, or lack of funding in rural areas) mean that violations persist despite NHRC orders. For example, enforcement of the NFSA has proven difficult in remote villages; one study notes that far-flung communities still often lack reliable access to subsidized grain. The NHRC's effectiveness often depends on public campaigns (e.g. civil society groups using NHRC reports to mobilize local demands) rather than on coercive power.

At the state level, some human rights commissions have also engaged. For instance, the Rajasthan State Human Rights Commission conducted a "Right to Food" project in 2010, in cooperation with NGOs, to monitor local nutrition programs. Although state commissions vary in capacity, they too adopt a rights-based approach in their inquiries. These activities illustrate that even without strong enforcement, HRCs in India act as important advocates for food rights, bridging activism and government policy.

Scotland (United Kingdom): Policy Advocacy in an Integrated Rights Regime

In European contexts, human rights commissions often operate within a broader legal framework (including the European Convention and national laws). Scotland (a country within the UK) has a Human Rights Commission that is increasingly focusing on socio-economic issues like food. While the UK has not formally recognized a constitutional right to food, the Scottish HRC emphasizes that food is part of the right to an adequate standard of living.

The Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) has pursued a rights-based strategy by engaging policymakers and raising public awareness. For example, in 2019, the Scottish Government initiated a "Good Food Nation" consultation to improve food policy. The SHRC responded by explicitly calling for the right to food to be incorporated into Scots law. In its submission, the SHRC noted that although Scotland is party to ICESCR Article 11, the right to food is currently unenforceable domestically; it held that embedding this right in law would "show human rights leadership" and address UN treaty recommendations.

To ground these proposals, the SHRC also held a workshop with people who had experienced food insecurity, gathering testimonials on barriers to accessing food. This approach , combining high-level legal advocacy with grassroots consultation , is emblematic of HRC tactics. While the SHRC cannot itself pass legislation, it can urge elected bodies to act. Indeed, its public statements were widely reported, putting pressure on the Scottish Parliament to consider human rights in food policy. Thus, even in the absence of a direct judicial remedy, the commission leverages its mandate to mainstream the right to food into policy. At the time of writing, Scotland has taken steps (e.g. recognizing food in strategic plans) but has not yet created an explicit legal right to food; the SHRC continues to push for this reform.

Brazil: Institutionalizing the Right to Food

Brazil provides a case of national institutional innovation in food rights. In 2006, Brazil passed the Federal Law on Food and Nutrition Security (LOSAN), which formally declares that "adequate food is a basic human right, inherent to human dignity". This law mandates that the government must "respect, protect, promote… the realization of the human right to adequate food", and it establishes a National Food and Nutrition Security System. This system includes a multi-stakeholder council (CONSEA) comprised of civil society and government representatives, and inter-ministerial coordination bodies.

The Brazilian Human Rights Commission (Instituto Brasileiro de Direitos Humanos) is not an official NHRI, but several state-level commissions do engage with food and poverty issues in light of LOSAN. More importantly, CONSEA acted in many ways like an NHRI for food: it monitored policy implementation, facilitated participatory planning, and worked to hold agencies accountable. For example, it helped create a national registry of poor families so that food programs could be better targeted. By 2009, the LOSAN's ten-year anniversary was celebrated as a human rights achievement, and the rights-based language had become entrenched in Brazilian law. This example shows how formal legal frameworks, supported by inclusive institutions, can align state policies with the human right to food. It also suggests that when states adopt strong rights-based food laws, the role of monitoring bodies becomes even more critical, to ensure the laws are implemented and to give communities channels to demand enforcement.

Other countries in Latin America have followed similar paths (e.g. Guatemala's 2005 law and Honduras's 2014 constitution both recognize the right to food). The Right to Food report notes, however, that passage of such laws is only a first step. Sustaining them requires continuous oversight, and here national human rights institutions or commissions can play supporting roles.

Cross-cutting Discussion

The case studies and analysis above illustrate several common themes. First, human rights commissions frame hunger as a justice issue. Across diverse contexts, commissions explicitly interpret food scarcity as a violation of the right to life and dignity. By doing so, they expand the usual development discourse to emphasize entitlements and state duty. This framing empowers marginalized groups: when people understand food as a right, they can hold governments accountable rather than passively awaiting charity.

Second, HRCs use a variety of tools to influence policy and practice. They monitor (requiring reports and conducting research), they inquire (investigating complaints and field visits), they advocate (submitting policy recommendations and reports), and they mobilize (engaging rights-holders in awareness activities). In countries like South Africa and India, commissions have constitutional or statutory powers to request information from the state. In others like Scotland or Brazil, commissions or analogous bodies form part of a consultative mechanism. The key is that HRCs try to convert abstract standards into concrete accountability: for example, the SAHRC's research highlighted gaps in the Integrated Food Security

Strategy, and NHRC's activism led to legal entitlements under NFSA.

Third, limitations are significant. The provided framework and external literature agree that most HRCs lack coercive enforcement powers. Their decisions or recommendations are generally not legally binding , they can only request or urge. For instance, the SHRC notes that without formal incorporation, the right to food "cannot be directly enforced in court" in Scotland. Similarly, even in India the NHRC can only advise or file a case in the Supreme Court; it cannot itself compel legislation or punish officials. This "soft power" nature limits how much hunger they can actually alleviate. Political interference compounds this: commissions can be under pressure from ruling parties, and their independence is not always guaranteed. The Indian commission's repeated "deferred" accreditation by the global alliance of NHRIs (due to lack of transparency) is one symptom of these structural weaknesses.

Another recurring challenge is resource constraints. Many HRCs have tiny staffs and budgets relative to the scope of the problems. Investigating widespread hunger or monitoring food programs across a country can stretch them thin. The SAHRC, for example, conducts its annual socio-economic rights review with a small team, making it difficult to ensure follow-up on recommendations. Civil society partners often have to step in to do on-the-ground surveys. Additionally, while commissions can produce valuable reports, there is no guarantee those reports will translate into policy if governments lack either capacity or political will. The FAO report warns that "adoption of a law does not automatically lead to change: what is needed is… the means to implement the laws and a strategy". HRCs can highlight this gap, but they cannot implement programs themselves.

To overcome these constraints, the literature suggests strengthening HRCs and integrating food security into broader human rights dialogue. For example, international mechanisms (such as the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food) have started soliciting input from national institutions to produce

country reports. In the climate context, UN resolutions have specifically requested reports on how to minimize climate impacts on food rights, involving NHRIs and commissions in consultations. This signals growing recognition that HRCs should be part of global governance networks on food and climate. Moreover, multi-country partnerships (e.g. between organizations like FAO, WFP, UNICEF, and HRC networks) can build capacity and share best practices.

Finally, global cooperation and legal evolution are needed. The seminar theme implies an aspiration toward "global food security" through rights. One way commissions can contribute is by pushing for supranational norms. For instance, the UN Human Rights Council has debated resolutions on the right to adequate food and even on nutrition as part of the right to health. HRCs can input into these processes (as some did via submissions to the climate and food dialogues) and help make commitments more tangible. Another approach is judicialisation: in some countries, strategic litigation (in which commissions sometimes intervene as amici) has enforced food entitlements. The interplay of such legal developments with commission advocacy creates a reinforcing cycle: stronger jurisprudence amplifies the commission's moral authority, and vice versa.

Conclusion

Safeguarding human dignity in the face of hunger requires treating food security not as charity but as a human rights imperative. This paper has shown that Human Rights Commissions, both national and international, can play a constructive role in this regard. By interpreting food entitlement in terms of law and accountability, HRCs help ensure that the right to adequate food is given due priority in public policy and social discourse. They serve as watchdogs that monitor government efforts, as advocates that influence legislation and programs, and as bridges between people's needs and international human rights norms.

However, our analysis also underscores that HRCs cannot do it alone. The commissions' recommendations must be backed by political commitment, legal reforms, and resources. States need to empower these institutions, for example, by making their findings binding or by allocating funds to implement recommendations. Global actors (UN bodies, NGOs, international financiers) should also support HRCs in building capacity.

Ultimately, dignity on an empty plate cannot be secured merely through benevolence. It demands justice. The analysis calls for reimagining food security as a justiciable human right, in which human rights commissions (HRCs) assume a proactive and transformative role to ensure that no individual is denied adequate food. In practical terms, this entails continuing to institutionalize the right to food (as exemplified by Brazil's adoption of LOSAN), granting legal standing to hunger-related claims, and strengthening the independence and enforcement powers of human rights bodies. When commission reports, court rulings, and community voices consistently affirm the same core principle, that every person is entitled to sufficient food as a matter of right, global food security will genuinely align with and uphold human dignity

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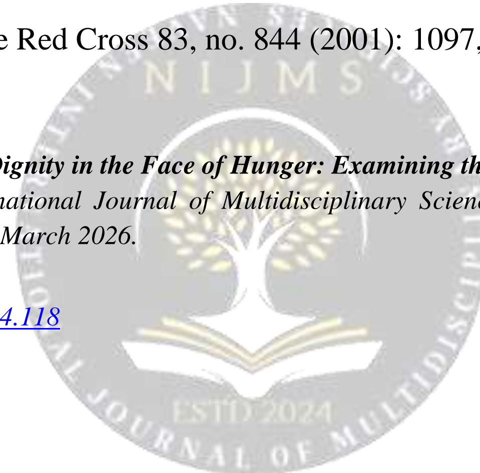

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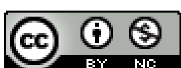

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