

**Gillian Frost, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario**

*Not for Profit: Multinational Corporations and Human Rights*

***Abstract***

This paper examines the role of multinational corporations (MNCs), as members of a global civil society, to protect and promote internationally recognized human rights. Responses to conflict and humanitarian intervention have primarily taken the form of emergency and rehabilitation assistance for affected populations, the promotion of long-term social and economic development, and the pursuit of peaceful conflict resolution. A related concern that has become integral to humanitarian action is the provision of protection measures to prevent abuses of basic human rights prior, during and after crisis situations. The politics of rights, legal protection, and humanitarian intervention are predicated on the nation-state as the primary actor. With the heightened internationalization of capital markets, communications, and technology, the traditional realist conceptions of state autonomy have been challenged. Coinciding with the changing role of the state has been a gradual development of a transnational civil society advocating the promotion of human values on a global scale. Against the backdrop of increased public sensitivity to human rights violations and the change in the nature of conflicts, MNCs have emerged as significant and powerful actors in the global civil society. The power accorded to these actors carries with it an implied obligation and ethical responsibility to respect human rights and to avoid exacerbating conflicts with severe human rights violations. This article will outline the positive and negative impacts on human rights of multinational activities. It will then examine the interaction of non-governmental organizations and the campaigns against multinationals that reflect the broader humanitarian mandates of human rights organizations and individuals. The paper will conclude by focussing on ways in which business enterprises can re-establish its responsibilities where human rights are concerned.

***Biography***

Completed an Honours BA from the University of Toronto in Political Science and History. Concurrently achieved the Bachelor Degree in Music (Piano Performance) from the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, where I have been a student of the Young Artist's Professional Academy since the age of 8 and extensively performed and competed in national competitions. Following my undergraduate studies, I was based in the Free State Provincial Legislature of South Africa for a period of six months, as part of the youth internship program of the Parliamentary Centre, Ottawa. Conducted research for the provincial legislative committees, and did extensive work in developing a public education/participation program and communications services for the legislature. I also obtained training in website creation which led to the development of both the legislature's and Parliamentary Center's Internship Program web pages. After my return from South Africa I spent a couple of months as researcher with the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, assisting in the organization of a departmental library and reviewing third-party consultation strategies. I then moved to the Millennium Bureau as a Program Officer. Currently I am a first year MA student at McMaster University in the Department of Political Science. My area of specialty is international relations