

As the youth of Roots & Shoots Türkiye (Kökler ve Filizler Derneği), on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we believe that the ongoing ecological crises, including the climate and biodiversity crisis, along with inequalities, conflicts, misuse of technological advancements especially in wars, disasters, and other emergencies, and divisive, polarizing, populist and authoritarian governance approaches pose obstacles and threats to the realization of human rights that every individual inherently possesses. As a result of all of such challenges, the outbreak of migration is triggered. But rather than addressing the root causes of migration, migrants seeking a humane life are targeted by populist politicians, which is undermining the very foundation of human rights. Successive crises and conflicts further complicate access to rights such as shelter, nutrition, clean water, health, education, particularly for disadvantaged groups such as children, women, people with disabilities, and the elderly, while irreversibly devastating natural habitats and ecosystems.

With an awareness that human rights cannot be separated from the integrity of nature, starting today, we demand to live within a sustainable system that values quality of life over consumption, respects freedoms and diversities, promotes equality, fairness, and solidarity for all, while not causing harm to the environment. Achieving this can only be possible through the adoption of a non-violence-based approach towards both humans and nature, focusing on resolving root causes rather than symptoms, and embraced by societies and governments.

For the development of human rights, it is crucial for local and national governments, as well as international organizations, to implement principles of democracy and participation at every stage of decision-making. These entities must address global crises such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and migration crisis, by offering comprehensive solutions that span from local to global levels, allocating reasonable and realistic resources for them. Gender equality, inclusivity, youth participation, environmental and ecological policies, climate action, migration, and education rights are all interconnected topics. Decisions should not only focus on acute issues but also on long-term effects and goals. Civil society and “grassroots organizations” are the very mechanisms that must be actively engaged in such issues, while guarding the freedom of expression and association, promoting pluralism, diverse perspectives and innovative solutions, combating authoritarian and antidemocratic governance approaches.

We, as young individuals, can play a significant role in the development of human rights only through learning, teaching, and actively participating in decision-making processes. Although we are far away from being the major source of such problems, we are determined to take an active role in resolving the problems for our own future.