

HUMAN RIGHTS: RANKING

To guide us in having the human rights observed, it is not enough to have a catalogue of such rights. We must rank these rights in order to resolve possible conflicts among them. Thus, certain property rights may conflict with the right to satisfy the basic human needs. Example: Landless peasants occupy a tract of noncultivated land owned by a rich landowner. What will the government do: send the law enforcers to evict the squatters, or distribute the piece of land among the squatters? Will it enforce ownership justice or distributive justice? Will it seek theoretical backing in Robert Nozick or in John Rawls? Most likely, it will seek no such backing, but will consult the interests of its political backers.

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