

## It's personal -- a Human Rights Day story

Dear Sir or Madam,

I don't want to talk about caste, poverty and gender, with you right now. I don't want to discuss how unfair it is that women in Nepal don't have the same rights and opportunities that I have, just because I won the birth lottery and they didn't. It won't change anything.

If you want to skip the rest of the story, and help protect human rights defenders because of Peace Brigades Canada's crucial work, just **[click here to donate](#)**.

It's Human Rights Day today, and I keep thinking about this idea of 'human rights'. Strip it down. What does it mean? What do human rights mean to you? Honestly, I'm not sure what they mean to me. In theory, yes, I know the definitions. But in *practice*? In *reality*?

I've never had to outrun armed militias. I've never had to face being shunned or shamed by my family for saying that women can have careers. I've never been beaten and left for dead, or raped, just for being a woman. I am a Canadian woman.



What do I know about human rights?

But Peace Brigades Canada knows. They know about human rights because PBI folks are *on the ground*. Every day, in countries around the world, from Colombia to Guatemala to Mexico to Nepal – and very soon, in Kenya – PBI staff and volunteers live, sleep, and eat human rights. **To help PBI continue its work protecting human rights around the world, will you donate now?**

Can we go back to Nepal for a minute? It's frustrating talking about caste, gender and poverty. It's frustrating because traditional social mores don't change fast enough. So imagine being a woman in Nepal from a lower caste, who wants to be a journalist. Not 20 years ago, but now. Pretty frustrating when your family and community strongly discourage you, you're treated unfairly on the job, and your life is threatened.



Uma Singh, 22 and a journalist, was brutally stabbed to death by a group of 15 men in her home. Tika Bista, also a journalist, was badly beaten by Maoist cadres and left for dead in a forest. Manika Jha, 20, was attacked at home by an armed intruder.

They were all Nepalese young women. All were journalists. All were beaten. One was killed. Because they stood up and said 'I deserve equality. I am entitled to my rights as a human being.'

For Uma, Tika and Manika, seen in this photo, human rights meant the right to a career. Is your career worth being beaten to death, or threatened repeatedly?

These women, and the thousands like them, are Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs). Some don't even know that's what they are. No one grows up wanting to be a WHRD. It's a title that you earn. But they'd rather not have the title. They'd rather have fulfilling careers. Normal lives. Not shunned, not threatened, not beaten, raped or killed.

Until the dream of a normal life is realized, PBI will be there. As it has been in Nepal since 2006, in Colombia since 1994, in Mexico since 1999, and in Guatemala since 1983 – almost 30 years. We put staff and volunteers on the ground, to protect and accompany women human rights defenders, like Uma, Tika and Manika.

Today, on Human Rights Day, I want to honour these women. They put their lives on the line, literally and daily. Yes, they are Women Human Rights Defenders, and it's hard work. But they are dreamers too. Human Rights Day is about a dream that we all share. Please help us to realize that dream by **contributing to our work**.

On behalf of PBI Canada, and human rights dreamers everywhere,  
Thank you.  
Sincerely,  
Ryann  
(Dreamer and PBI Canada Board Member)

PS – You really can make a difference by contributing. It's because of your support that our field volunteers are able to help protect human rights defenders with such success. **Here's that link again.**