

RIGHTS OF GROUPS

Only individuals have rights, because only individuals can have responsibilities and liabilities. But, of course, one may speak of the rights of a group in an elliptic way, namely as short for "the rights of all the members a group".

The refusal to acknowledge collective rights and responsibilities has both a theoretical and a practical motivation. The theoretical motivation is that every right concerns the behavior of some individuals; likewise for responsibilities and liabilities. The practical motivation is that, if rights and liabilities are vested in groups, entire ethnic or social groups could be held responsible for the (real or imaginary) action of some of their individual members, and consequently be discriminated against to the point of persecution. Thus, antisemites, in particular Nazis, blamed the Jews

for all ills, and demanded that they be punished or even exterminated.

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