Sweden ranks among the very top countries in virtually all indices of various aspects of human rights fulfillment. Human rights is a key concept in Swedish foreign policy as well as in that of the European Union. Sweden is also a large ‘exporter’ of human rights through its development cooperation strategy. Sweden has a reputation around the globe as being a country that respects, protects, and fulfills the international human rights law obligations at home, and promotes the world-wide application also abroad. Sweden prides itself on being a human rights advocacy country and to some extent rightly so. Much remains to be done however in order for Sweden to truly and genuinely be the country of its high reputation and indeed expectations.1

For a country to hold high and effectively promote human rights abroad, the own ‘backyard’ must also be taken into consideration. An influential actor in promoting human rights needs credibility. Sweden has enjoyed a good reputation through its past policies of neutrality and non-alliance, for at times standing up to super-powers, for developing the ombudsman-system, for being among the more progressive states within the European cooperation on human rights protection, for equality in various aspects of society, and for its advanced social safety net, to mention some. For the reputation to be well-deserved much needs to be done, especially in order to gain the credibility so essential for the promoter of human rights abroad, but certainly also for the promoter at home. With these pages I want to highlight inadequacies in the approach to human rights in Sweden as a pedagogical tool of self-reflection in order to understand others and as a form of advocacy towards a shift in Swedish official positions. I will in the following briefly2 elaborate on the status of international human rights law obligations in Sweden; the ratification of international human rights treaties; the approach to the full spectrum of rights, ranging from civil and political to economic, social, and cultural rights and from individual to collective; and national implementation mechanisms of these international obligations.
1. THE STATUS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW

Public international law developed as agreements between sovereign states. With the introduction of human rights conventions the inter-state characteristics have fundamentally changed through providing rights to the people living in the sovereign state against the sovereign. For a more efficient supervision of these conventions, international mechanisms have been set up to avoid those being supervised – the states – supervising themselves. The credibility of a sovereign state’s submission requires that the obligations of the conventions are taken seriously in fact certainly, but additionally in more symbolical ways.

Sweden is by tradition a dualistic country. The old distinction between dualism and monism is losing its clear distinctions in many countries, including in Sweden. Sweden’s neighboring country Denmark, it has been argued, has in fact a “practical monism” even though Denmark is not explicitly monistic. The dualistic system is however maintained in Sweden, preventing direct application of international treaties by, for example, national courts. Sweden holds that it is better to incorporate international treaty obligations by ‘law of approval’ when at all needed than to make the treaty directly applicable. This may make sense as an overall approach to international law, however the special nature of international human rights law, granting rights to individuals and groups against the state, questions this approach to international obligations in the specific human rights field.

Sweden made the European Convention of Human Rights part of domestic law by way of incorporation as late as 1995; 42 years after the Convention came into force. Sweden, as one of the first countries to ratify the Convention in 1952, had scrutinized the contents and found Swedish law to conform to all provisions of the text. Given that international human rights law are minimum standards, states may

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