

Just Business: Multinational Corporations and Human Rights (Norton Global Ethics Series)

By John Gerard Ruggie

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"A true master class in the art of making the impossible possible." ?Paul Polman

One of the most vexing human rights issues of our time has been how to protect the rights of individuals and communities worldwide in an age of globalization and multinational business. Indeed, from Indonesian sweatshops to oil-based violence in Nigeria, the challenges of regulating harmful corporate practices in some of the world's most difficult regions long seemed insurmountable. Human rights groups and businesses were locked in a stalemate, unable to find common ground. In 2005, the United Nations appointed John Gerard Ruggie to the modest task of clarifying the main issues. Six years later, he had accomplished much more than that. Ruggie had developed his now-famous "Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights," which provided a road map for ensuring responsible global corporate practices. The principles were unanimously endorsed by the UN and embraced and implemented by other international bodies, businesses, governments, workers' organizations, and human rights groups, keying a revolution in corporate social responsibility.

Just Business tells the powerful story of how these landmark "Ruggie Rules" came to exist. Ruggie demonstrates how, to solve a seemingly unsolvable problem, he had to abandon many widespread and long-held understandings about the relationships between businesses, governments, rights, and law, and develop fresh ways of viewing the issues. He also takes us through the journey of assembling the right type of team, of witnessing the severity of the problem firsthand, and of pressing through the many obstacles such a daunting endeavor faced.

Just Business is an illuminating inside look at one of the most important human rights developments of recent times. It is also an invaluable book for anyone wanting to learn how to navigate the tricky processes of global problem-solving and consensus-building and how to tackle big issues with ambition, pragmatism, perseverance, and creativity.

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Just Business: Multinational Corporations and Human Rights (Norton Global Ethics Series) By John Gerard Ruggie Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #363937 in Books
- Brand: Brand: W. W. Norton Company
- Published on: 2013-03-25
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.60" h x 1.10" w x 5.90" l, 1.01 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 304 pages

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Editorial Review

From Booklist
Nations aren't the only entities that marginalize, abuse, and even murder citizens; in a globalizing economy, multinational corporations are often far more powerful than their host countries. By the time Secretary General Kofi Annan asked Kennedy School of Government professor Ruggie to study the issue in 2005, negotiations had reached an impasse, with businesses demanding voluntary mechanisms and human rights activists insisting on mandatory approaches. Ruggie strove to reconceptualize the issues, and developed a "Protect, Respect, Remedy Framework" and "Guiding Principles" for implementing that framework. So far, his approach, which blends voluntary and mandatory enforcement mechanisms, has generated considerable consensus, though some activists remain skeptical. The Framework clarifies the obligations of governments to protect citizens' rights, of corporations to respect those rights, and of both to ensure that injured parties have access to appropriate remedies. By introducing new concepts, like "human rights due diligence," and novel understandings, like the special challenge of ensuring human rights in conflict zones, Ruggie's work has the potential to move multinationals beyond "happy talk" about corporate social responsibility into deeper and more effective analysis and implementation of responsible corporate behavior. --Mary Carroll

Review
By developing the 'UN Guiding Principles, ' John Ruggie brought thoughtful and principled pragmatism to a topic of decades-long controversy. Just Business is a great guide for anyone taking on the task of reconciling interested and apparently irreconcilable parties and, indeed, for further progress in this field of business and human rights. --Sir Mark Moody-Stuart, former chairman of Royal Dutch/Shell

Ruggie... provides a shining example to leaders that apparently insurmountable global issues are not lost causes.

A must-read for anyone wishing to understand how to navigate the choppy and turbulent waters of the UN system and succeed. Just Business is the embodiment of the man who wrote it sharp, intuitive, honest, pragmatic, witty, and humble passionate in his resolve and commitment to human rights. --Paul Polman, CEO of Unilever"

John Ruggie is a great scholar, leader, and humanitarian. Just Business recounts the story of one of the most effective human rights initiatives undertaken in recent memory in a way that makes it essential reading for activists, scholars, students, policy experts, and business leaders alike. --Ann-Marie Slaughter, Bert G. Kerstetter 66 University Professor of Politics and International Affairs at Princeton University"

By developing the UN Guiding Principles, John Ruggie brought thoughtful and principled pragmatism to a topic of decades-long controversy. Just Business is a great guide for anyone taking on the task of reconciling interested and apparently irreconcilable parties and, indeed, for further progress in this field of business and human rights. --Sir Mark Moody-Stuart, former chairman of Royal Dutch/Shell"

Business and human rights challenges became permanently implanted on the global policy agenda twenty years ago. However, there was no universally accepted framework to address or reduce corporate-related human rights harm. John Ruggie took up the challenge to fill that gap and achieved a great deal in a short space of time. It is all too easy when looking at seemingly intractable problems to believe that nothing can be done or that only governments or political leaders can act. Just Business shows us the opposite and

underlines how all segments of society must play their part to achieve results that benefit all. --Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary-General (1997-2006)"

Ruggie provides a shining example to leaders that apparently insurmountable global issues are not lost causes. "

About the Author
John Ruggie is the Berthold Beitz Professor in Human Rights and International Affairs at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

Users Review

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