



Mains Practice Question

Case study

An Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer is posted in a host country as the Ambassador of India. The officer is tasked with representing India's interests and promoting bilateral relations between the two countries. However, the host country has a poor human rights record and the government has been accused of committing atrocities against ethnic and religious minorities.

The IFS officer has been approached by representatives of these minorities, who have requested assistance and support from the Indian government. They have also provided evidence of human rights abuses to the officer. However, the officer has been advised by the Ministry of External Affairs to not interfere in the internal affairs of the host country and to maintain good relations with the host government.

If you were in the position of IFS officer, what would you do in this situation?

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Approach

- Start your answer by Briefly introducing the case.
- Discuss about various stakeholders involved and ethical issue involved in the case.
- Discuss the ethical dilemma faced by IFS officer.
- Discuss the course of action that should be taken by IFS officer.
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction

- The above case revolves around an IFS officer, who is posted as Ambassador in a host country with poor human rights record and is faced with a dilemma, when a representative of persecuted minorities approaches him for seeking support.
- The Ministry of External Affairs advises the officer to not interfere in the internal affairs of the host country and maintain good relations with the host government. Therefore, officer needs to navigate this delicate situation and make a decision that balances the needs of the minorities, the interests of India and the advice of the Ministry.

Body

- **Stakeholders involved:**
 - Me as an IFS officer.
 - Ministry of external affairs of India.
 - Persecuted minorities of country where IFS is posted.
 - Human rights NGO's
 - Humankind at large
- **Ethical issues involved:**
 - **Transparency and accountability:** The officer may face ethical questions about transparency and accountability, as they may be privy to information about human rights

abuses that could be of public interest and importance, but still doesn't make them public or help the accused.

- **Professional ethics:** The officer may face the ethical challenge of maintaining the highest standards of professionalism and impartiality while dealing with human rights issues.
- **Human rights violations:** The host country's poor human rights record and alleged atrocities against ethnic and religious minorities raises ethical questions about the responsibility to protect and respect human rights.
- **Human Rights:** The IFS officer has a moral responsibility to respect and promote human rights. This includes not turning a blind eye to human rights abuses and taking appropriate action to address them.
- **Empathy:** The IFS officer would feel empathetic towards the persecuted minorities of the accused country.

▪ **Ethical dilemma involved:**

- **Representing the interests of India vs protecting the rights of minorities:** The officer is tasked with representing India's interests and promoting bilateral relations with the host country, but he may also feel a moral responsibility to support and protect the rights of ethnic and religious minorities who have been the victims of human rights abuses.
- **The duty to respect the sovereignty of the host country vs the duty to protect the human rights of ethnic and religious minorities:** The officer faces a dilemma between respecting the sovereignty of the host country and not interfering in its internal affairs, and the duty to protect the human rights of ethnic and religious minorities who are being persecuted by the host government.
- **Following the guidance of the Ministry of External Affairs vs. using personal judgment:** The officer may be torn between following the guidance of the Ministry of External Affairs and using their own personal judgment to decide how to respond to the situation.

▪ **Course of action:**

- As an IFS officer my course of action would be to approach the issue with a balance of diplomacy and principle.
- First of all, I would try to gather more information before taking any action, it's important to gather as much information as possible about the human rights situation in the host country.
 - This can include meeting with representatives of the ethnic and religious minorities, as well as other local NGOs and human rights organizations and also review the evidence provided by these groups and assess its credibility.
- Meanwhile, I would again ask Ministry of External Affairs that situation is going worse day by day and also provide them with the latest evidence, and despite all this the ministry again reject my plan to provide support then I would write and seek guidance from the foreign minister and other relevant authorities within the Indian government to pursue them to take action so that it becomes easy for them to determine the official stance on the human rights situation in the host country.
 - As they would also consider the potential impact of any actions, they take on India's relations with the host country, as well as the impact on the affected minorities.
- Further, I would try to connect the representatives of ethnic and religious minorities to various global NGOs, as they can provide them with basic necessities and further help in raising their voice on global stage.
 - If these NGOs neglect them, then I would leverage my position as an ambassador and utilize my contacts to provide them with basic necessities like drinking water, food and clothes etc.
- Lastly, I would facilitate the legal and speedy emigration of the persecuted minorities in India.

Conclusion

It is important for the IFS officer to act in accordance with international human rights laws and conventions, and to use diplomatic means to raise concerns about human rights abuses with the host country's government. Further, the officer must balance this responsibility with the need to maintain good relations with the host government and to protect India's interests.

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