

# Universal Declaration of Human Rights

During World War II allied countries began planning for peace before the war was over. In 1944 at Dumbarton Oaks outside Washington D.C., the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union and China met to discuss how peace might be maintained after the war. Their goal was to create an international organization that would have the power to maintain security and foster prosperity.

Over 1,300 American non-governmental organizations called for human rights to be an integral part of any future international organization. In 1945 delegates to a Pan-American conference held in Mexico City demanded that the United Nations Charter include a strong and clear commitment to human rights.

In 1945 when representatives from forty-six nations gathered in San Francisco to form the United Nations, they brought with them a respect for human dignity and worth. Forty-two American organizations acting as consultants to the U.S. delegation convinced participating governments of the need to provide clear protection for individual human rights. When the United Nations Charter was written, the governments of the world legally committed themselves to promote and encourage respect for the inalienable human rights that belong to every man, woman and child.

The UN Charter gave human rights a new international legal status. It mentioned human rights five times, first in the Preamble, which identified human rights as one of the four founding purposes of the United Nations. The Charter's first article declared that UN member states must work to "achieve international cooperation . . . in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion." Article 55 stated the UN will promote "universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms," and Article 56 stated that members "pledge themselves to take joint and separate action" to achieve that respect.

The UN Charter took the first important steps toward implementing genuine protection of human rights. Article 68 mandated that the UN Economic and Social Council set up a commission "for the promotion of human rights." This "Commission on Human Rights" spent three years drafting the Universal Declaration. U.S. Delegate Eleanor Roosevelt was elected Chairperson.

On 10 December, 1948, forty-eight nations voted for the Declaration, eight countries abstained (the Soviet bloc countries, South Africa and Saudi Arabia) and two countries were absent – the community of nations adopted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* without dissent.

While it is not a legally binding document, it served as the foundation for the original two legally-binding UN human rights Covenants, the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*.



Article	Official Version	Plain Language Version
1	<p>All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.</p>	<p>When children are born, they are free and each should be treated in the same way. They have reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a friendly manner.</p>
2	<p>Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.</p> <p>Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.</p>	<p>Everyone can claim the following rights, despite</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a different sex</li> <li>- a different skin color</li> <li>- speaking a different language</li> <li>- thinking different things</li> <li>- believing in another religion</li> <li>- owning more or less</li> <li>- being born in another social group</li> <li>- coming from another country.</li> </ul> <p>It also makes no difference whether the country you live in is independent or not.</p>
3	<p>Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.</p>	<p>You have the right to live, and to live in freedom and safety.</p>
4	<p>No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.</p>	<p>Nobody has the right to treat you as his or her slave and you should not make anyone your slave.</p>
5	<p>No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.</p>	<p>Nobody has the right to torture you.</p>



6	Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.	You should be legally protected in the same way everywhere, and like everyone else.
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7	All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.	The law is the same for everyone; it should be applied in the same way to all.
8	<b>Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.</b>	You should be able to ask for legal help when the rights your country grants you are not respected.
9	<b>No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.</b>	Nobody has the right to put you in prison, to keep you there, or to send you away from your country unjustly, or without good reason.
10	Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.	If you go on trial this should be done in public. The people who try you should not let themselves be influenced by others.



11	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defense.</li> <li>2. No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.</li> </ol>	<p>You should be considered innocent until it can be proved that you are guilty. If you are accused of a crime, you should always have the right to defend yourself. Nobody has the right to condemn you and punish you for something you have not done.</p>
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12	<p>No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honor and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.</p>	<p>You have the right to ask to be protected if someone tries to harm your good name, enter your house, open your letters or bother you or your family without a good reason.</p>
13	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State.</li> <li>2. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.</li> </ol>	<p>You have the right to come and go as you wish within your country. You have the right to leave your country to go to another one; and you should be able to return to your country if you want.</p>
14	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.</li> </ol>	<p>If someone hurts you, you have the right to go to another country and ask it to protect you. You lose this right if you have killed someone and if you,</p>



	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.</li> </ol>	<p>yourself, do not respect what is written here.</p>
15	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Everyone has the right to a nationality.</li> <li>2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.</li> </ol>	<p>You have the right to belong to a country and nobody can prevent you, without a good reason, from belonging to a country if you wish.</p>

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16	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.</li> <li>2. Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.</li> <li>3. The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.</li> </ol>	<p>As soon as a person is legally entitled, he or she has the right to marry and have a family. In doing this, neither the color of your skin, the country you come from or your region should be impediments. Men and women have the same rights when they are married and also when they are separated. Nobody should force a person to marry. The government of your country should protect your family and its members.</p>
17	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.</li> <li>2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.</li> </ol>	<p>You have the right to own things and nobody has the right to take these from you without a good reason.</p>



18	Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.	You have the right to profess your religion freely, to change it, and to practice it either on your own or with other people.
19	Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.	You have the right to think what you want, to say what you like, and nobody should forbid you from doing so. You should be able to share your ideas also with people from any other country.
20	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.</li> <li>2. No one may be compelled to belong to an association.</li> </ol>	You have the right to organize peaceful meetings or to take part in meetings in a peaceful way. It is wrong to force someone to belong to a group.



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21	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.</li> <li>2. Everyone has the right to equal access to public service in his country.</li> <li>3. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.</li> </ol>	<p>You have the right to take part in your country's political affairs either by belonging to the government yourself or by choosing politicians who have the same ideas as you. Governments should be voted for regularly and voting should be secret. You should get a vote and all votes should be equal. You also have the same right to join the public service as anyone else.</p>
22	<p>Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international cooperation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.</p>	<p>The society in which you live should help you to develop and to make the most of all the advantages (culture, work, social welfare) which are offered to you and to you and to all the men and women in your country.</p>

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23	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.</li> <li>2. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.</li> <li>3. Everyone who works has the right to just and favorable</li> </ol>	<p>You have the right to work, to be free to choose your work, to get a salary which allows you to support your family. If a man and a woman do the same work, they should get the same pay. All people who work have the right to join together to defend their interests.</p>



	<p>remuneration, ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.</p> <p>4. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.</p>	
24	<p><b>Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.</b></p>	<p>Each work day should not be too long, since everyone has the right to rest and should be able to take regular paid holidays.</p>
25	<p>1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.</p> <p>2. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.</p>	<p>You have the right to have whatever you need so that you and your family: do not fall ill, do not go hungry, have clothes and a house and are helped if you are out of work, if you are ill, if you are old, if your wife or husband is dead, if you do not earn a living or for any other reason you cannot help. The mother who is going to have a baby and her baby should get special help. All children have the same rights, whether or not the mother is married.</p>





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26	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.</li> <li>2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.</li> <li>3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.</li> </ol>	<p>You have the right to go to school and everyone should go to school. Primary schooling should be free. You should be able to learn a profession or continue your studies as far as you wish. At school, you should be able to develop all your talents and you should be taught to get on with others, whatever their race, religion or the country they come from. Your parents have the right to choose how and what you will be taught at school.</p>
27	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.</li> <li>2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.</li> </ol>	<p>You have the right to share in your community's arts and sciences, and any good they do. Your works as an artist, writer or a scientist should be protected, and you should be able to benefit from them.</p>



Article	Official Version	Plain Language Version
28	Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.	So that your rights will be respected, there must be an "order" which can protect them. This "order" should be local and worldwide.
29	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.</li> <li>2. In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.</li> <li>3. These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.</li> </ol>	You have duties towards the community within which your personality can only fully develop. The law should guarantee human rights. It should allow everyone to respect others and to be respected.
30	Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.	In all parts of the world, no society, no human being, should take it upon her or himself to act in such a way as to destroy the rights which you have just been reading about.

Official Version:

<http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>

Plain Language Version:

<http://www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/humanrights/resources/plain.asp>

