

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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In today's modern world, the developmental gap between peoples, nations and countries is getting bigger and bigger. On one end, the pace of living and development of western world is growing faster and faster, and on the other end, the deterioration of living conditions and struggle to survive of other peoples and nations is also growing faster. In the midst of this struggle for survival, usually the conflicts are born. Conflicts between people can have many faces and characters and can be caused by many factors. The most evident one is the poverty, poor living conditions, unfairness and denial of human rights.

The issue of human rights has been discussed and challenged since the beginning of human civilization. Throughout the history human rights have been regulated and protected, but also violated by many nations, and peoples, mostly as a result of a democratic on one hand, or non-democratic political establishments or events on the other (democratic regimes, non-democratic regimes, dictatorships, military coups, armed and violent conflicts and wars on small and large scales).

After many such experiences throughout the human history, people have come together and established the United Nations and its various bodies, where all the world countries equally participate in making decisions to prevent disasters caused by the humans, and wars in the world and help each other secure a prosperity and future for their peoples. One such initiative resulted in the "UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS" brought to light in 1993 by the UN General Assembly. This Declaration is: "a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction."

The Declaration has 30 Articles, 29 of which regulate various human rights (check www.hrweb.org/legal/udhr.html to find the complete document).

There is a brief summary of basic human rights identified in the Declaration:

Article 1: Right to be free and equal in dignity and rights, and act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood

Article 2: Everyone is entitled to all rights regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status

Article 3: Right of life, liberty and security

Article 4: No one will be held in slavery or servitude and efforts shall be made to eliminate the slave trade wherever it exists

Article 5: Nobody will suffer torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

Article 6: All people shall be seen as a person before the law everywhere

Article 7: Right of recognition before the law and equal protection against discrimination

Article 8: All people have the right to get an effective outcome in their nation's courts for violations against their basic human rights

Article 9: No one can be arbitrarily arrested, detained or exiled

Article 13: Right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state. Right to leave any country, including own, and to return to own country

Article 15: Right to nationality

Article 16: Right to marry of full age with free will and consent and have a family, regardless of race, nationality or religion

Article 17: Right to own property

Article 18: Right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and freedom to express and manifest religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance

Article 19: Freedom of opinion and expression

Article 20: Freedom to peaceful assembly and freedom to belong to an association

Article 21: Right to take part in government, right to equal access to public services, right to vote

Article 22: Right to social security, economic, cultural and social rights, right to work and freedom of choice of employment, equal pay for equal work, right to join trade unions

Article 23: the right to employment, equality in treatment when employed, the right to protection when unemployed.

Article 24: Right to rest and leisure even for reasonable amounts of time during the work day and to receive pay for holidays

Article 25: The right to an acceptable standard of living and special rights to Mothers and children to protect their standard of living

Article 26: Right to education; elementary education is compulsory

The Declaration is officially signed and recognized by all the UN Members. There are many other UN documents that regulate various issues of human rights in more specific way. Such documents are, for example:

- Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- Covenant Against Torture
- Covenant Against Genocide
- The Geneva Conventions
- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
- Charter of United Nations

Check www.hrweb.org/legal/undocs.html for details on each of these documents.

Organizations dedicated to the protection of human rights

In order to be able to implement the rules of the above documents and to assure their application through out the world, there are many organizations world-wide whose main mandate is protection of human rights. Such organizations are:

Amnesty International : <http://www.hrweb.org/resource.html#AI#AI>

Amnesty International/International Secretariat <http://www.amnesty.org/>

Amnesty International USA : <http://www.amnestyusa.org/>

Committee to Protect Journalists : <http://www.cpj.org/>

Human Rights Watch : <http://www.hrw.org/doc?t=balkans>

Lawyer's Committee for Human Rights : <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/index.html>

Physicians for Human Rights : <http://www.phrusa.org/>

UN and Government Human Rights Sites: <http://www.hrweb.org/resource.html>