

Rights

Rights are legal, social, or ethical principles of freedom or entitlement; that is, rights are the fundamental normative rules about what is allowed of people or owed to people, according to some legal system, social convention, or ethical theory. Rights are of essential importance in such disciplines as law and ethics, especially theories of justice and deontology. Rights are often considered fundamental to civilization, being regarded as established pillars of society and culture, and the history of social conflicts can be found in the history of each right and its development. According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "rights structure the form of governments, the content of laws, and the shape of morality as it is currently perceived." The connection between rights and struggle cannot be overstated — rights are not as much granted or endowed as they are fought for and claimed, and the essence of struggles past and ancient are encoded in the spirit of current concepts of rights and their modern formulations.

fish > Your Human Rights

What are human rights?

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible.

Universal human rights are often expressed and guaranteed by law, in the forms of treaties, customary international law, general principles and other sources of international law. International human rights law lays down obligations of Governments to act in certain ways or to refrain from certain acts, in order to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals or groups.

Universal and inalienable

The principle of universality of human rights is the cornerstone of international human rights law. This principle, as first emphasized in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights in 1948, has been reiterated in numerous international human rights conventions, declarations, and resolutions. The 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, for example, noted that it is the duty of States to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems.



All States have ratified at least one, and 80% of States have ratified four or more, of the core human rights treaties, reflecting consent of States which creates legal obligations for them and giving concrete expression to universality. Some fundamental human rights norms enjoy universal protection by customary international law across all boundaries and civilizations.

Human rights are inalienable. They should not be taken away, except in specific situations and according to due process. For example, the right to liberty may be restricted if a person is found guilty of a crime by a court of law.

Interdependent and indivisible

All human rights are indivisible, whether they are civil and political rights, such as the right to life, equality before the law and freedom of expression; economic, social and cultural rights, such as the rights to work, social security and education, or collective rights, such as the rights to development and self-determination, are indivisible, interrelated and interdependent. The improvement of one right facilitates advancement of the others. Likewise, the deprivation of one right adversely affects the others.

Equal and non-discriminatory

Non-discrimination is a cross-cutting principle in international human rights law. The principle is present in all the major human rights treaties and provides the central theme of some of international human rights conventions such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The principle applies to everyone in relation to all human rights and freedoms and it prohibits discrimination on the basis of a list of non-exhaustive categories such as sex, race, colour and so on. The principle of non-discrimination is complemented by the principle of equality, as stated in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."



Both Rights and Obligations

Human rights entail both rights and obligations. States assume obligations and duties under international law to respect, to protect and to fulfil human rights. The obligation to respect means that States must refrain from interfering with or curtailing the enjoyment of human rights. The obligation to protect requires States to protect individuals and groups against human rights abuses. The obligation to fulfil means that States must take positive action to facilitate the enjoyment of basic human rights. At the individual level, while we are entitled our human rights, we should also respect the human rights of others.

Related links

[Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)
[Human Face for Human Rights](#)
[Human Rights Day](#)
[List of Human Rights issues](#)
[Human Rights in the World](#)
[International Human Rights Law](#)

Home

Frequently Asked Questions

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OHCHR Memorial

Employment

Mobile App

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What Are Human Rights?

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more. Everyone is entitled to these rights, without discrimination.

International Human Rights Law

International human rights law lays down the obligations of Governments to act in certain ways or to refrain from certain acts, in order to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals or groups.

One of the great achievements of the United Nations is the creation of a comprehensive body of human rights law—a universal and internationally protected code to which all nations can subscribe and all people aspire. The United Nations has defined a broad range of internationally accepted rights, including civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. It has also established mechanisms to promote and protect these rights and to assist states in carrying out their responsibilities.

The foundations of this body of law are the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly in 1945 and 1948, respectively. Since then, the United Nations has gradually expanded human rights law to encompass specific standards for

DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

*As passed and proclaimed by the General Assembly
of the United Nations on the tenth day of
December 1948*



most translated document in the world - and has inspired the constitutions of many newly independent States and many new democracies. The UDHR, together with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its two Optional Protocols (on the complaints procedure and on the death penalty) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and its Optional Protocol, form the so-called International Bill of Human Rights.

Economic, social and cultural rights

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights entered into force in 1976. The human rights that the Covenant seeks to promote and protect include:

- the right to work in just and favourable conditions;
- the right to social protection, to an adequate standard of living and to the highest attainable standards of physical and mental well-being;
- the right to education and the enjoyment of benefits of cultural freedom and scientific progress.

Civil and political rights

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its First Optional Protocol entered into force in 1976. The Second Optional Protocol was adopted in 1989.

The Covenant deals with such rights as freedom of movement; equality before the law; the right to a fair trial and presumption of innocence; freedom of thought, conscience and religion; freedom of

opinion and expression; peaceful assembly; freedom of association; participation in public affairs and elections; and protection of minority rights. It prohibits arbitrary deprivation of life; torture, cruel or degrading treatment or punishment; slavery and forced labour; arbitrary arrest or detention; arbitrary interference with privacy; war propaganda; discrimination; and advocacy of racial or religious hatred.

Human Rights Conventions

A series of international human rights treaties and other instruments adopted since 1945 have expanded the body of international human rights law. They include the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), among others.

Human Rights Council

The Human Rights Council, established on 15 March 2006 by the General Assembly and reporting directly to it, replaced the 60-year-old UN Commission on Human Rights as the key UN intergovernmental body responsible for human rights. The Council is made up of 47 State representatives and is tasked with strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe by addressing situations of human rights violations and making recommendations on them, including responding to human rights emergencies.

human rights emergencies.

The most innovative feature of the Human Rights Council is the Universal Periodic Review. This unique mechanism involves a review of the human rights records of all 192 UN member states once every four years. The Review is a cooperative, state-driven process, under the auspices of the Council, which provides the opportunity for each state to present measures taken and challenges to be met to improve the human rights situation in their country and to meet their international obligations. The Review is designed to ensure universality and equality of treatment for every country.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights exercises principal responsibility for UN

Human Rights and the UN System

Human rights is a cross-cutting theme in all UN policies and programmes in the key areas of peace and security, development, humanitarian assistance, and economic and social affairs. As a result, virtually every UN body and specialized agency is involved to some degree in the protection of human rights. Some examples are the right to development, which is at the core of the Sustainable Development Goals; the right to food, championed by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, labour rights, defined and protected by the International Labour Organization, gender equality, which is promulgated by UN Women, the rights of children, indigenous peoples, and disabled persons.

Human rights day is observed every year on 10 December.

Resources:

- Status of Ratification of 18 International Human Rights Treaties
- Human Rights Indicators
- Universal Human Rights Index