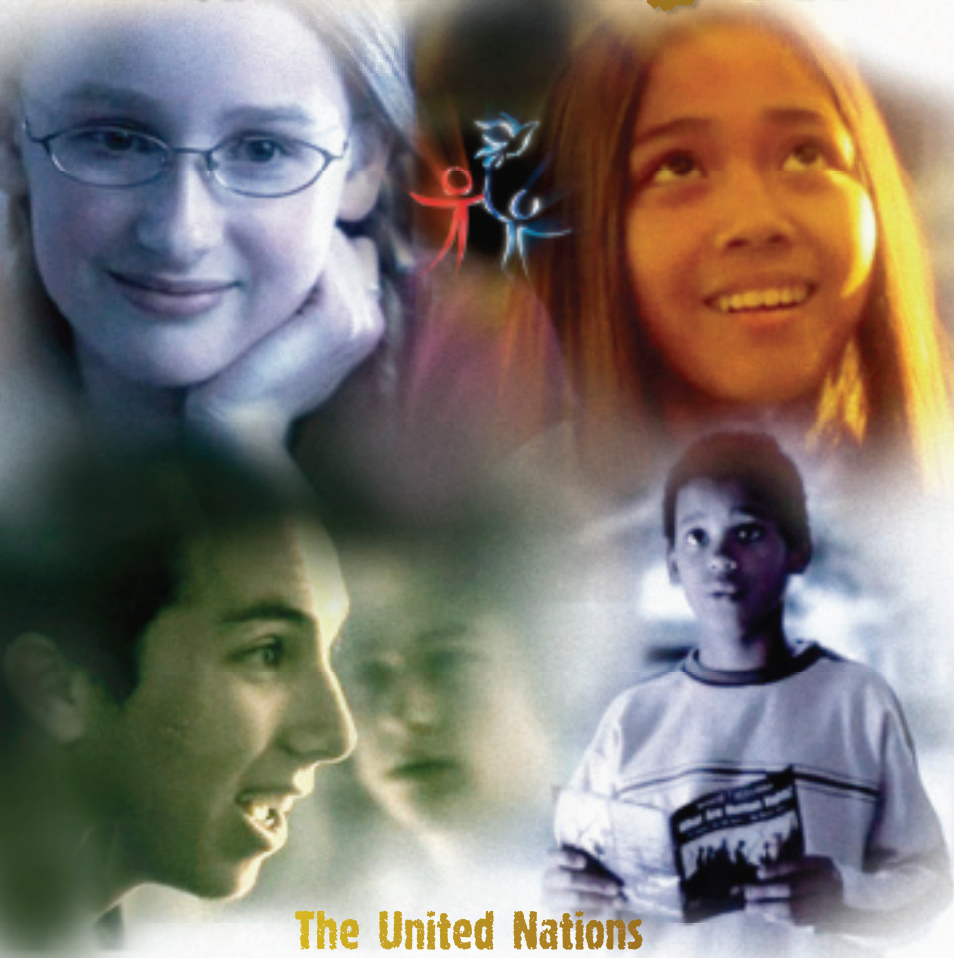


# The Story of Human Rights



**The United Nations  
Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

[YouthforHumanRights.org](http://YouthforHumanRights.org)

**Youth for Human Rights International**

1954 Hillhurst Ave. #416  
Los Angeles, CA 90027 USA

Phone: (323) 663-5799

Fax: (323) 661-1194

**YouthforHumanRights.org**

e-mail: [info@youthforhumanrights.org](mailto:info@youthforhumanrights.org)





*Table of*  
**CONTENTS**

What Are Human Rights?	2
A Look at the Background of Human Rights	4
A Brief History of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights	6
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights	8
Human Rights Are Not Always Respected	14
Famous People Who Promoted Human Rights	16
Do Something to Promote Human Rights	18
Actions You Can Take	19
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (full text)	20





# What Are HUMAN RIGHTS?

If you were to ask people in the street, “What are human rights?” you would get many different answers. They would tell you the rights they know about. But very few people know all their rights.

A right is a freedom of some kind. It is something to which you are entitled.

There are different kinds of rights. If a person belongs to a particular group, he has certain rights as a member of that group. If he is an American, he has the right to vote in an American election, but he does not have the right to vote in an election in France. A Frenchman has the right to vote in France but not in the United States.

Human rights, however, are the rights to which everyone is entitled—no matter who they are or where they live—simply because they are a human being.

There are thirty human rights. They include: the right to live in freedom and safety; the right to travel; the right to belong to a country; the right to own things and share them; the right to believe what you want to believe; and the right to say what



## *Human Rights are defined as:*

“The basic rights and freedoms to which all human beings are entitled, often held to include the right to life and liberty, freedom of thought and expression, and equality before the law.”

you think. They even include the right to do the things you enjoy doing.

Human rights, then, are very important. Long before the phrase “human rights” came into existence, men and women fought and died for these freedoms. In fact, this struggle has lasted thousands of years and still continues today.

A long time ago, human rights did not exist at all. Then the idea emerged that people should have certain freedoms. At first, only rich people benefited from the new rights. The ordinary man and woman still had no rights and no protection against injury and abuses.

Over the centuries, the idea that everyone should have rights became more accepted. But it wasn't until after World War II, the most terrible war in history, that the leading nations realized they had to create a document to include all human rights.

That document is called the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and it contains the thirty rights to which all people are entitled. The first of these rights states that everyone is born free and equal. Everyone has their own thoughts and ideas. And everyone should be treated the same way.





# *A Look at the Background OF HUMAN RIGHTS*

Originally, people had rights only because of their membership in a group, such as a family. Then, in 539 B.C., Cyrus the Great, after conquering the city of Babylon, did something totally unexpected—he freed all slaves to return home. Moreover, he declared people should choose their own religion. The Cyrus Cylinder, a clay tablet containing his statements, is the first human rights declaration in history.

The idea of human rights spread quickly to India, Greece and eventually Rome. The most important advances since then have included:

**1215: The Magna Carta**—giving people new rights and making the king subject to the law.

**1628: The Petition of Right**—setting out the rights of the people.



DES DROITS DE L'HOMME

ET DU CITOYEN

Décrétés par l'Assemblée Nationale dans les séances des 20, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31



The clay cylinder of Cyrus the Great, first king of ancient Persia (585–529 B.C.), is hailed as the first document of human rights.

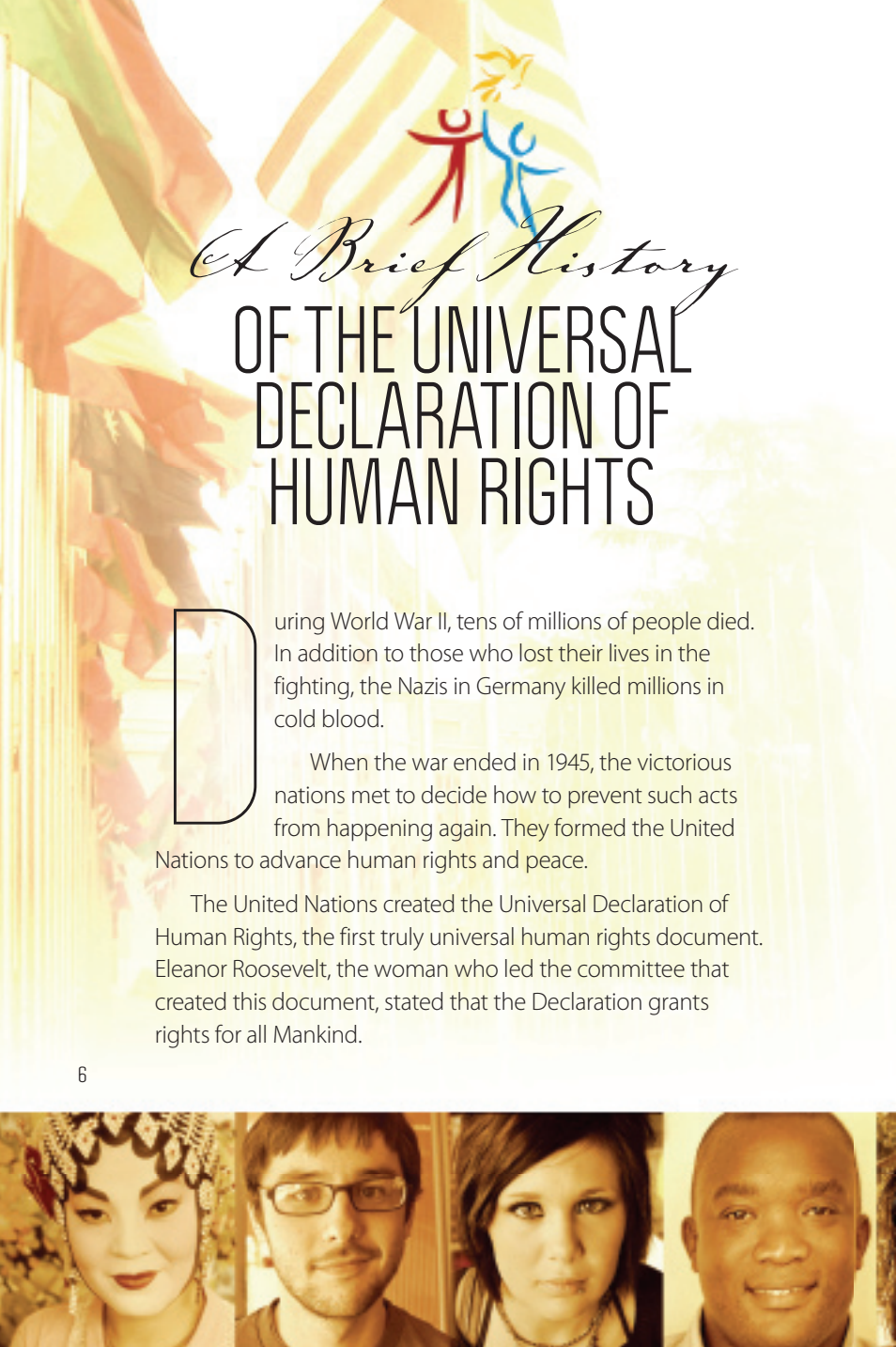


**1776: The United States Declaration of Independence**—proclaiming the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

**1789: The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen**—in France, stating that all citizens are equal under the law.

**1948: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights**—the first document listing the thirty rights to which everyone is entitled.



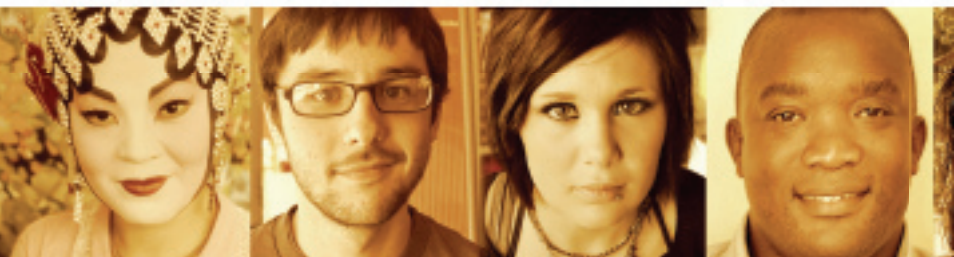


# *A Brief History* OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

**D**uring World War II, tens of millions of people died. In addition to those who lost their lives in the fighting, the Nazis in Germany killed millions in cold blood.

When the war ended in 1945, the victorious nations met to decide how to prevent such acts from happening again. They formed the United Nations to advance human rights and peace.

The United Nations created the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the first truly universal human rights document. Eleanor Roosevelt, the woman who led the committee that created this document, stated that the Declaration grants rights for all Mankind.





The United Nations also took other steps. One was to create international laws to protect human rights, a process that took almost twenty years. International laws are laws agreed upon by many countries, and so they apply not just in one country but in all the countries that agree to them.

The countries that belonged to the United Nations also brought these rights to the rest of the world. As a result, the basic laws of many nations today include the rights contained in the Declaration.



On December 10th, 1948, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Eleanor Roosevelt holds a copy of the document she helped create.





# *The* UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS



hat follows are all the rights contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. When the Declaration was first published in 1948, the United Nations asked all member countries to circulate the document and to teach these thirty rights. In this way, the Declaration

8

becomes very well known and understood, resulting in a better, more peaceful world.

- 
- 1 **We are all born free and equal.** We are all born free. We all have our own thoughts and ideas. We should all be treated in the same way.
  - 2 **Don't discriminate.** These rights belong to everybody, whatever our differences.
  - 3 **The right to life.** We all have the right to life, and to live in freedom and safety.
  - 4 **No slavery.** Nobody has any right to make us a slave. We cannot make anyone our slave.
  - 5 **No torture.** Nobody has any right to hurt us or to torture us.
  - 6 **You have rights no matter where you go.**  
I am a person just like you!
  - 7 **We're all equal before the law.** The law is the same for everyone. It must treat us all fairly.
  - 8 **Your human rights are protected by law.**  
We can all ask for the law to help us when we are not treated fairly.

9 **No unfair detainment.** Nobody has the right to put us in prison without good reason and keep us there, or to send us away from our country.

10 **The right to trial.** If we are put on trial this should be in public. The people who try us should not let anyone tell them what to do.

11 **We're always innocent till proven guilty.** Nobody should be blamed for doing something until it is proven. When people say we did a bad thing we have the right to show it is not true.

12 **The right to privacy.** Nobody should try to harm our good name. Nobody has the right to come into our home, open our letters or bother us or our family without a good reason.

13 **Freedom to move.** We all have the right to go where we want in our own country and to travel as we wish.

14 **The right to seek a safe place to live.** If we are frightened of being badly treated in our own country, we all have the right to run away to another country to be safe.

- 15 **Right to a nationality.** We all have the right to belong to a country.
- 16 **Marriage and family.** Every grown-up has the right to marry and have a family if they want to. Men and women have the same rights when they are married, and when they are separated.
- 17 **The right to your own things.** Everyone has the right to own things or share them. Nobody should take our things from us without a good reason.
- 18 **Freedom of thought.** We all have the right to believe in what we want to believe, to have a religion, or to change it if we want.
- 19 **Freedom of expression.** We all have the right to make up our own minds, to think what we like, to say what we think, and to share our ideas with other people.
- 20 **The right to public assembly.** We all have the right to meet our friends and to work together in peace to defend our rights. Nobody can make us join a group if we don't want to.

- 21 **The right to democracy.** We all have the right to take part in the government of our country. Every grown-up should be allowed to choose their own leaders.
- 22 **Social security.** We all have the right to affordable housing, medicine, education, and childcare, enough money to live on and medical help if we are ill or old.
- 23 **Workers' rights.** Every grown-up has the right to do a job, to a fair wage for their work, and to join a trade union.
- 24 **The right to play.** We all have the right to rest from work and to relax.
- 25 **Food and shelter for all.** We all have the right to a good life. Mothers and children, people who are old, unemployed or disabled, and all people have the right to be cared for.
- 26 **The right to education.** Education is a right. Primary school should be free. We should learn about the United Nations and how to get on with others. Our parents can choose what we learn.

**27 Copyright.** Copyright is a special law that protects one's own artistic creations and writings; others cannot make copies without permission. We all have the right to our own way of life and to enjoy the good things that art, science and learning bring.

**28 A free and fair world.** There must be proper order so we can all enjoy rights and freedoms in our own country and all over the world.

**29 Responsibility.** We have a duty to other people, and we should protect their rights and freedoms.

**30 No one can take away your human rights.**



# *Human Rights* ARE NOT ALWAYS RESPECTED

In 1948, when the Declaration was adopted, only 58 countries belonged to the United Nations. Today there are 192 member nations and many laws exist to protect human rights.

Yet millions of people continue to suffer because their rights are not respected. Although the Universal Declaration protects the right to adequate food, more than 15,000 children die of starvation every day. The Declaration also protects the right to free speech, but thousands are in prison for saying what they believed to be true. The Declaration forbids slavery, but 27 million people live as slaves today—more than twice the number in the days







of the slave trade. And more than a billion people are unable to read, although the Declaration includes the right to an education.

These are very serious abuses of human rights. Yet 90 percent of people are unable to name more than three of their thirty rights. If more people understood all of them, more respect would be shown for human rights around the world.

Who, then, will tell them?

Perhaps those who helped create the human rights we have today can show where the answer lies.





# *Famous* PEOPLE WHO PROMOTED HUMAN RIGHTS

**M**any humanitarians have advanced human rights by working bravely for what they believed in. Their examples have inspired millions and can inspire you. Learn from what they said.

Kofi Annan, for many years the head of the United Nations, had a special message for young people about human rights:

“Young friends all over the world, you are the ones who must realize these rights, now and for all time. Their fate and future is in your hands.”





"I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."  
 –Voltaire, French writer of the 18th century. ▲



"The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only legitimate object of good government."  
 –Thomas Jefferson, principal author of the American Declaration of Independence. ▲



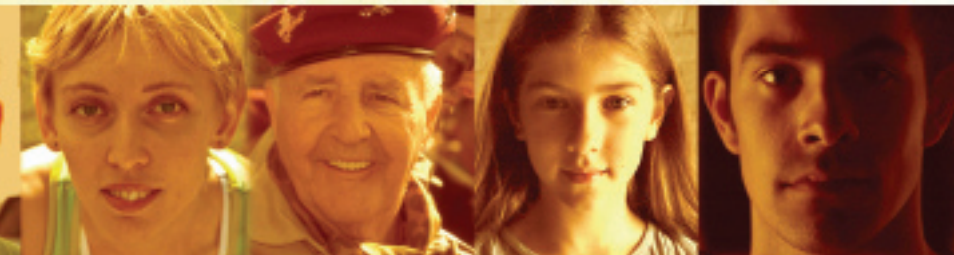
"I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear."  
 –Nelson Mandela, South African statesman and Nobel Peace Prize winner. ▲



"You must be the change you want to see in the world."  
 –Mahatma Gandhi, 20th century political and spiritual leader of India. ▲



"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."  
 –Martin Luther King, Jr., who worked for the rights of African-Americans. ▲





# *Do Something to* PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS

Those who work for human rights today may or may not be famous. But they all share a belief that everyone is entitled to their full human rights.

In reply, then, to the question, “Who will tell people about human rights?” the best answer comes from Eleanor Roosevelt, who gave the world the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

“Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home—so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.”

Like Eleanor Roosevelt and many others, you can make a difference.



# ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE

- 1 Visit **YouthforHumanRights.org**. Find out what other youth are doing for human rights. E-mail [info@youthforhumanrights.org](mailto:info@youthforhumanrights.org) if you have questions.
- 2 **Get and watch the following:**
  - *TV public service messages*: 30 different ads, each promoting one of the rights of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
  - The human rights music video **UNITED**. This is the story of a kid with a heart for basketball who unites the youth of the world to fight for the right to play.

You can order these from [YouthforHumanRights.org](http://YouthforHumanRights.org).
- 3 **Start a human rights group** in your area. We will help you.
- 4 **Obtain more copies of the DVDs** and this booklet from Youth for Human Rights International.
- 5 **Teach others about human rights** and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Tell us about your successes and results. We can give you help and advice. We want to hear from you.

**Youth for Human Rights International**  
[YouthforHumanRights.org](http://YouthforHumanRights.org)  
[info@youthforhumanrights.org](mailto:info@youthforhumanrights.org)





# The UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS


Adopted and proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) of December 10, 1948. On December 10, 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the full text of which appears here. Following this historic act the Assembly called upon all member countries to publicize the text of the Declaration and “to cause it to be disseminated, displayed, read and expounded principally in schools and other educational institutions, without distinction based on the political status of countries or territories.”

## Preamble

*Whereas* recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

*Whereas* disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted





in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

**Whereas** it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

**Whereas** it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

**Whereas** the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

**Whereas** Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in cooperation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

**Whereas** a common

understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, therefore,

The General Assembly,  
Proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Rights as 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.

## Article 1

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.

## Article 2

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. 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.

### **Article 3**

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

### **Article 4**

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

### **Article 5**

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

### **Article 6**

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

### **Article 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.

### **Article 8**

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.

### **Article 9**

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

### **Article 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.

### **Article 11**

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 defence.





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.

### Article 12

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

### Article 13

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.

2. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

### Article 14

1. Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

2. This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from nonpolitical crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

### Article 15

1. Everyone has the right to a nationality.

2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

### Article 16

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.

2. Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

3. The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

### Article 17

1. Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.

2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

### Article 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.



## Article 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.

## Article 20

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

2. No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

## Article 21

1. Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.

2. Everyone has the right to equal access to public service in his country.

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.

## Article 22

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation 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.

## Article 23

1. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

2. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

3. Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.

4. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

## Article 24

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

## Article 25

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.



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.

### Article 26

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.

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.

3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

### Article 27

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.

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.

### Article 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.

### Article 29

1. Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.

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.

3. These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

### Article 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.





[YouthforHumanRights.org](http://YouthforHumanRights.org)

© 2009 Youth for Human Rights International. All Rights Reserved. The Youth for Human Rights International logo is owned by Youth for Human Rights International. Printed in U.S.A. Item C6233-ENG.