

# **The Importance of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Advocating Human Rights**

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## **1. Introduction**

The protection of human rights and the establishment of an equitable society are the two pillars of justice. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), an important basis of international human rights, is a landmark document that articulates the essential rights and freedoms of human beings. This essay aims to explore a particular subject in human rights, focusing on its relevance to advocating for human rights. The essay will provide an overview of the purpose and scope of the topic, alongside references from applicable human rights regulations and laws.

### **Purpose and Scope of the Paper**

The aim of this paper is to delve into the significance of a specific human rights topic in terms of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Through this assessment, we can further understand the impact of this topic on furthering and protecting human rights within a global context. The objective of this work is to analyze one particular topic in a comprehensive and focused approach, granting readers a granular insight into the implications of this topic on human sovereignty.

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights - a pivotal moment in history - was declared by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10th, 1948. Comprising thirty articles that decreed the inherent civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights for people of all

nations, races, religions, and genders, the UDHR serves as the gold standard for human rights around the world. This powerful and influential document proclaims a universal set of legal rights that can never be ignored or disregarded, thus ensuring every individual's basic entitlements. Through its rich complexity and various stylistic tones, the UDHR presents an unparalleled commitment to defend and promote universal human rights.

The right to freedom of expression, enshrined in the very foundation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is fundamental for the protection of human rights. This right, which includes the liberty to seek, acquire, and share data and thoughts through any medium, is borderless in its application.

The significance of this right can be summed up in the following points: 1. Democracy: Freedom of expression is essential to the functioning of a progressive democracy. It allows people to articulate their beliefs, partake in public dialogue, and be involved in the decision-making process. By means of free expression, different opinions can be heard, thereby promoting a varied and inclusive society.

2. Dignity: The right to freedom of expression is intrinsic to the underlying dignity and worth of all individuals. It facilitates the communication of ideas, convictions, and identities without the anxiety of retribution or oppression. By safeguarding this right, communities uphold the principle of equal respect for every person's voice.

3. Access to Information: Freedom of expression aids the acquisition of knowledge, which is fundamental for individuals to make informed decisions and exercise their other rights appropriately. It carries forth knowledge, news updates, and perspectives, thus offering transparency, responsibility, and public consciousness.

4. Social Evolution: Freedom of expression plays an important role in driving social progress and growth. It permits individuals and groups to confront established conventions, ask for reform, and oppose social wrongs. With free expression, minority communities can express their issues and demand equity and opportunities.

5. Cultural and Artistic Expression: The right to freedom of expression encompasses cultural and artistic expression, enabling the flourishing of creativity and cultural variety. It provides artists, writers, film directors, and musicians with the ability to share their work, emotions, and cultural heritage, benefiting the population as a whole.

6. Keeping Governments and Institutions Accountable: Freedom of expression has considerable significance in regulating the actions of governments and institutions. It allows for the investigation of human rights infringements, corruption, and misuse of power. Reporters, activists, and whistleblowers depend on this right to expose misdeeds and request redress. By understanding the importance of the right to freedom of expression, according to the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights, its duty in safeguarding human rights, promoting democracy, and engendering a just and equitable environment can be more easily fathomed.

## Human Rights Treaties and Legislations

To support the analysis and arguments presented in this paper, several human rights treaties and legislations can be referenced. Notably, the website of the Human Rights Commission [<https://www.humanrightscommission.ky/human-rights-treaties>] provides a comprehensive list of treaties that have been enacted to protect and uphold human rights. By examining these treaties in conjunction with the UDHR, we can gain a deeper understanding of the specific provisions related to the chosen topic and their implementation at the international and regional levels.

## **2. Background**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a significant marker in human rights history, was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December 1948. Representing various legal and culturally-derived backgrounds, this declaration is celebrated for defining universal standards for nations and people across the world.

It has been translated into over 500 languages and has been influential in the establishment of around seventy human rights treaties on a global and regional level. This influential document has left a permanent imprint on people's notions of human rights, and its impact is discernible in the multiple legislative frameworks since its invention. The spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights contemplates that no matter an individual's background or situation, they are to be treated with value and respect. Although steps have been taken to secure human rights, much has yet to be done; countless people still experience discrimination, oppression, and brutality. The manifesto of this declaration is more essential than ever, and it is our duty to guarantee its progression.

To concoct the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, an authoritative committee was assembled, headed by Eleanor Roosevelt from the United States. Her authority and repute with the two major superpowers of the Cold War enabled her to direct the drafting process. Moreover, Zhang Pengchun, a Chinese playwright, philosopher, and educator, praised China's outlook on human rights while resolving disagreements that cropped up. Charles Habib Malik from Lebanon, a diplomat and former Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, drew on his experience in philosophy and theology to facilitate debates surrounding major regulations of the Declaration. Professor from Canada John Humphrey, the Director of the Human Rights Division of the UN Secretariat, gives the credit for the original draft of the International Bill of Human Rights to himself. René Cassin from France, a member of the Human Rights Commission, wrote a version of the statement in par with the Greek temple. The composition of the committee was rounded off with Alexander Bogomolov (USSR), Hernán Santa Cruz (Chile) and Charles Dukes (UK).

Finally, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has changed how we view human rights and has spurred numerous regulations, protecting people all over the world. Every one of us has a duty to guarantee that the ideals inscribed in this revered manifesto are brought to life.

Significantly, there is still more civic effort to carry out, making sure that individuals from all walks of life are respected equally. It has been referred to as humanity's Magna Carta by Eleanor Roosevelt, who chaired the United Nations (UN) Commission on Human Rights that was responsible for the drafting of the document.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948, is a landmark document in the history of human rights. It was drafted by representatives from diverse legal and cultural backgrounds, spanning all regions of the world, and proclaimed as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and nations. The main purpose of the UDHR was to establish fundamental human rights that should be universally protected and respected, forming the foundation for freedom, justice, and peace globally. It has since become a source of inspiration for numerous human rights treaties and continues to be a guiding force in promoting respect for human rights worldwide.

### **3. Preamble and Foundation**

The Preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights sets the tone and context for the document. It emphasizes the recognition of the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all individuals as the basis for freedom, justice, and peace in the world. The Preamble condemns acts that disregard and violate human rights, emphasizing the aspiration for a world where individuals can enjoy freedom of speech, belief, and freedom from fear and want. It also stresses the importance of protecting human rights through the rule of law and fostering friendly relations between nations. The Declaration's foundation lies in reaffirming faith in fundamental human rights, human dignity, and equality, as well as promoting social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

### **4. Provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

The magnificent and profound UDHR comprises a myriad of 30 awe-inspiring articles that delineate the rights and freedoms that ought to be universally safeguarded and upheld. Here, I present to you an abridged rendition, accentuating some of the paramount provisions:

Article 1: Let it be known that all individuals, dissimilar in their origins, are blessedly born unchained and indistinguishable in the grand tapestry of dignity and entitlement. Blessed also with unfettered faculties of reason and conscience, they should, in the spirit of fraternal kinship, accord one another the respect they themselves desire.

Article 2: Behold, for the primal stratum of human existence, devoid of any discrimination based upon race, hue, gender, linguistic preference, creed, ideological affiliation, nationalistic proclivity, societal lineage, material possessions, birthright, or other such variable, provides every being with an innate right to partake in the full gamut of prerogatives and liberties.

Article 3: Let it resound from the depths of our beings that each and every individual, regardless of circumstance, is intrinsically sanctified with an irrevocable entitlement to the sacrosanct triumvirate of life, liberty, and security of person.

Article 4: Affirm with solemnity that the grim specter of bondage, in any of its unyielding forms, shall be banished from the human experience. In this noble quest, every soul shall be emancipated from the ignominy of slavery or servitude, be it in any guise.

Article 5: Unequivocally decree that the despicable practice of inflicting torment or subjecting souls to the heartrending clutches of barbaric, cruel, inhumane, or debasing treatment or punishment shall find no solace in the annals of humankind's collective conscience.

Article 6: Let the clarion call resonate far and wide, that every single being, within every corner of our vast planet, has an absolute right to be acknowledged unequivocally and irrevocably as a sentient entity, endowed with personhood, before the eyes and tribunals of the world.

## **5. Relevance and Impact**

Seventy-five years after its adoption, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights remains a significant and relevant document. Though not legally binding, it has acted as a foundation and inspiration for countless international human rights treaties and domestic legal frameworks. It emphasizes the universality, indivisibility, and interdependence of human rights, making it applicable to all individuals, regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, or any other characteristic. The UDHR has shaped the course of human rights advocacy and serves as a guiding force for organizations like Amnesty International and others committed to promoting and protecting human rights.

In conclusion, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights was a historic milestone in the global recognition and protection of fundamental human rights. Its provisions continue to serve as a moral and ethical compass for the international community, inspiring efforts to promote respect for human rights and dignity worldwide. As the world progresses, the principles enshrined in the UDHR remain as relevant today as they were at the time of its adoption in 1948. The continued efforts to uphold these rights are vital in ensuring a just, equal, and peaceful world for all.



## **6. 70 Years of Impact: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights - A Global Commitment to Humanity**

On December 10, 1948, the United Nations General Assembly in Paris achieved a historic milestone in the field of human rights by adopting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). As the most translated document in the world, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights represents a universal commitment to uphold fundamental human rights and has played an important role in shaping the work of the United Nations. In this popular science article, we will delve into the historical background behind the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, its implementation plan, its scope, and the people it seeks to protect. Insights shared by United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Andrew Gilmour, along with historical information from reliable sources, will help us understand the lasting impact of this influential document.

## **7. Historical context: World War II and its aftermath**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was developed in direct response to the devastating events of World War II. The war remains the deadliest conflict in history, exposing the horrors of war and genocide and leaving a lasting impact on the international community. In addition, the global economic depression of the 1930s caused great hardship to people all over the world.

In the wake of these catastrophic events, states have increasingly recognized the need for a framework to prevent future atrocities and protect human rights generally. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was the result of this collective need, and its impetus encompassed

the entire spectrum of human rights, including civil and political rights, as well as economic, social and cultural rights.

## **8. The role of the United States in the formulation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

The United States played a key role in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with Eleanor Roosevelt at the forefront of its drafting. As chair of the Commission on Human Rights from 1946 to 1951, Eleanor Roosevelt was a driving force in the process. She demonstrated extraordinary multilateralism, transcending national interests and advocating for shared values that apply to all of humanity.

This task is not without challenges, as different countries hold different views on human rights. The Soviet Union and other Soviet-influenced countries balked at so-called "negative" rights, which required states not to violate civil and political rights. At the same time, developing countries worry about the financial burden of providing "positive" economic, social and cultural rights.

However, Eleanor Roosevelt managed to resolve these differences and work to build consensus. Her efforts helped bring disparate interests together to agree on common standards, making the United States an important contributor to the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

## **9. Scope and Implementation Plan of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a landmark document in the history of human rights. Drafted by representatives from different legal and cultural backgrounds around the world, the Declaration sets out fundamental human rights that are universally protected. It covers a wide range of rights considered essential to the well-being and dignity of all individuals, without distinction of any kind.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights covers civil and political rights such as the rights to life, liberty and security of the person (Article 3), the right to recognition as a person before the law (Article 6) and the right to a fair and public hearing Hearing by an independent tribunal (article 10). In addition, it deals with economic, social and cultural rights, including the rights to education, health and an adequate standard of living (particularly those not covered by Article 25).

As a non-legally binding document, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has no legal force, but it is the moral and ethical basis for the protection of human rights. It is widely regarded as an inspirational set of more than seventy human rights treaties that are now implemented globally and regionally. The principles set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guide the work of the United Nations across all three pillars: peace and security, development and human rights.

## **10. People affected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights seeks to protect the rights of all individuals, regardless of nationality, race, sex, language, religion or other characteristics. Its central tenet is that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights (Article 1). The Declaration expressly prohibits any form of discrimination (Article 2) and ensures the right of all persons to equal protection before the law (Article 7).

By addressing civil and political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights seeks to uphold the well-being and dignity of every human being on Earth. It provides a framework to protect vulnerable groups, prevent human rights violations, and foster a world where justice and freedom are upheld for all.

## **11. Conclusion**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, celebrating its 70th anniversary, stands as a testament to the collective commitment of nations to protect and uphold the inherent dignity and rights of every individual. Born out of the aftermath of World War II, the UDHR remains a relevant and influential document in shaping the work of the United Nations and promoting a more just and equitable world. With its comprehensive scope, moral force, and dedication to human rights for all, the UDHR continues to inspire and guide efforts to build a better future for humanity.

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