

Primary Sources: Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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Former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt holds the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, this copy written in Spanish, in November 1949. President Harry Truman had appointed Roosevelt as a representative to the young United Nations organization. She chaired the U.N. Human Rights Commission that wrote the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Editor's Note: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a declaration adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948, in Paris, France. It was written shortly after World War II. The atrocities committed by Nazi Germany during the Holocaust shocked the world. It pushed countries to develop a set of standards and protections on how to treat their fellow humans. The Universal Declaration is a statement, not a treaty. It is not law. However, it has influenced laws passed in countries all around the world. One is the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

It declares that human rights are given to all people, no matter who they are or where they live. The Universal Declaration includes the right to life, liberty, free speech, religion, privacy, health and education.

Preamble

Fundamental rights of all members of the human family are the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

Hatred of human rights has resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind. These events have brought us to a world in which all human beings now want to enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want.

Human rights should be protected by the rule of law so man is not forced to rebel against oppression and tyranny.

It is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations.

The peoples of the United Nations have in their Charter stated their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of each person and in the equal rights of men and women. The peoples of the U.N. are determined to promote social progress and better standards of life.

Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in cooperation with the United Nations, universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Now therefore, the General Assembly proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations. Every individual and every part of society should follow this Declaration. It shall teach respect for these rights and freedoms throughout the world. The peoples of Member States and among the peoples of territories they control will recognize and observe these universal human rights.

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 of any race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property or birth shall have the rights and freedoms in this Declaration. Furthermore, persons belonging to any country or territory with different kinds of governments shall have these rights and freedoms.

Article 3

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and safety.

Article 4

No one shall be held in slavery. Slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited.

Article 5

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

Article 6

Everyone is protected equally by the laws.

Article 7

All shall have equal protection in a court of law and cannot be discriminated against for any reason.

Article 8

Everyone whose rights have been violated and taken away can have them restored to them by the courts in their country.

Article 9

No one shall be arrested, held or exiled for no reason.

Article 10

Everyone has rights to a fair and public hearing in front of judges in a court of law for any criminal charge against him.

Article 11

(1) Everyone charged with a crime shall have a lawyer for his defense and be innocent until proved guilty in a public trial.

(2) The penalty for breaking a national or international law shall be the same penalty that was in place when the law was broken. Penalties cannot be unfairly changed.

Article 12

Everyone has the right to privacy. No one can just go into a person's house. No one can open someone's mail or spy on someone. The government can only invade a person's privacy if it has a very good reason. The right to privacy protects a person's reputation, too.

Article 13

(1) Everyone has the right to move around freely in their country.

(2) Everyone has the right to leave and return to his or any country.

Article 14

(1) Everyone has the right to seek safety in another country if his own country goes against the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

(2) This right to seek safety is not for acts that are simple crimes. The right to asylum is only for political crimes.

Article 15

(1) Everyone has the right to be a citizen of a country.

(2) No one shall be stopped from leaving his country to become a citizen of another country.

Article 16

- (1) Men and women of all races, nationalities or religion have the right to marry and have a family. They have equal rights to marry and divorce.
- (2) Both people in a marriage must freely agree to marry.
- (3) A family is an important group that is to be protected by governments.

Article 17

- (1) Everyone has the right to own property alone or with others.
- (2) No one can have their property taken from them without a very good reason.

Article 18

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes the freedom to switch religions or change a belief or way of thinking.

Article 19

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. This right includes freedom to share information and ideas through any media — newspapers, books, etc. — and to any place.

Article 20

- (1) Everyone has the right to assemble, to meet peacefully with anyone or any group.
- (2) No one may be forced to join a group.

Article 21

- (1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country.
- (2) Everyone has the right to apply for government jobs.
- (3) The will of the people shall direct the government. Men and women will vote by secret ballot or by other free and equal voting procedures.

Article 22

We all have the right to a home, to have enough money to live on and medical help if we are ill. Everyone has social and cultural rights, like to enjoy music, arts, sports, which help people to develop their skills and personality.

Article 23

- (1) Everyone has the right to work in a safe workplace wherever he chooses. He shall also have protection against unemployment.
- (2) Everyone has the right to equal pay for equal work.

(3) Everyone who works has the right to payments that are fair, help support his family and offer other protections if needed.

(4) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his job and a safe workplace.

Article 24

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, limits on the number of hours of work and holidays with pay during the year.

Article 25

(1) Everyone has the right to a life with good health for himself and his family. This includes food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services. There should also be support in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or events beyond his control.

(2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care. All children, whether born to one or two parents, shall have the same protection.

Article 26

(1) Everyone has the right to education. There must be free elementary education for all. Professional work education shall also be made available. A college education shall be offered equally based on merit.

(2) Education should strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It should promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, races and religions. This should support the United Nations peace efforts.

(3) Parents have rights to choose the kind of education given to their children.

Article 27

(1) Everyone has the right to enjoy the arts and to benefit from scientific advancement.

(2) Everyone has the right to the protection of any scientific, literary or artistic work he has created. (copyright law).

Article 28

Everyone is free to live in a peaceful country, with order, so they can enjoy the human rights listed in this Declaration.

Article 29

We have a duty to other people and we should protect their rights and freedoms. Everyone owes something to their community because it protects their human rights. People must protect other people's rights. This is the way a democracy works.

Article 30

This Declaration shall protect human rights.