

Media Update

8 December 2017

United Nations

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

10 December 2017

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights turns 70

Let's stand up for equality, justice and human dignity

Human Rights Day is observed every year on 10 December – the day the United Nations General Assembly adopted, in 1948, the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#). This year, Human Rights Day kicks off a year-long campaign to mark the upcoming [70th anniversary](#) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a milestone document that proclaimed the inalienable rights which everyone is inherently entitled to as a human being -- regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. It is the most translated document in the world, available in more than [500 languages](#). Drafted by representatives of diverse legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world, the Declaration sets out universal values and a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations. It establishes the equal dignity and worth of every person. Thanks to the Declaration, and States' commitments to its principles, the dignity of millions has been uplifted and the foundation for a more just world has been laid. While its promise is yet to be fully realized, the very fact that it has stood the test of time is testament to the enduring universality of its perennial values of equality, justice and human dignity.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights empowers us all. The principles enshrined in the Declaration are as relevant today as they were in 1948. We need to stand up for our own rights and those of others. We can take action in our own daily lives, to uphold the rights that protect us all and thereby promote the kinship of all human beings.



#StandUp4HumanRights

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights empowers us all.
 - Human rights are relevant to all of us, every day.
 - Our shared humanity is rooted in these universal values.
 - Equality, justice and freedom prevent violence and sustain peace.
 - Whenever and wherever humanity's values are abandoned, we all are at greater risk.
 - We need to stand up for our rights and those of others.
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Message of the Secretary-General

António Guterres calls for translating the words of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into action

There is no embargo on this message.

This year's commemoration of Human Rights Day marks the beginning of a year-long celebration of seven decades since the adoption of one of the world's most profound and far-reaching international agreements. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights establishes the equality and dignity of every human being and stipulates that every government has a core duty to enable all people to enjoy all their inalienable rights and freedoms.

All of us have a right to speak freely and participate in decisions that affect our lives. We all have a right to live free from all forms of discrimination. We have a right to education, health care, economic opportunities and a decent standard of living. We have rights to privacy and justice. These rights are relevant to all of us, every day. They are the foundation of peaceful societies and sustainable development.

Since the proclamation of the Universal Declaration in 1948, human rights have been one of the three pillars of the United Nations, along with peace and development. While human rights abuses did not end when the Universal Declaration was adopted, the Declaration has helped countless people to gain greater freedom and security. It has helped to prevent violations, obtain justice for wrongs, and strengthen national and international human rights laws and safeguards.



Despite these advances, the fundamental principles of the Universal Declaration are being tested in all regions. We see rising hostility towards human rights and those who defend them by people who want to profit from exploitation and division. We see hatred, intolerance, atrocities and other crimes. These actions imperil us all.

On this Human Rights Day, I want to acknowledge the brave human rights defenders and advocates, including UN staff, who work every day, sometimes in grave peril, to uphold human rights around the world. I urge people and leaders everywhere to stand up for all human rights – civil, political, economic, social and cultural -- and for the values that underpin our hopes for a fairer, safer and better world for all.

Download video message here:

https://s3.amazonaws.com/downloads2.unmultimedia.org/public/video/ondemand/2051574_MSG%20UNSG%20HUMAN%20RIGHTS%20DAY%2004%20DEC%2017.mp4

Message of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein

Human Rights Day falls on 10 December every year, the day when, back in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – the world's most widely translated and possibly most influential document – was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly, itself just three years old at the time. Thanks to the Universal Declaration, the daily life of millions has been improved, untold human suffering has been prevented and the foundations for a more just world have been laid. While its promise is yet to be fulfilled, the very fact that it has stood the test of time is testament to the enduring universality of its perennial values of equality, justice and human dignity. Next year – on 10 December 2018 – we will celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and this year's Human Rights Day on Sunday marks the beginning of [a year-long 70th anniversary commemoration](#).

It will also, I hope, be a year of intense and profound reflection on the continuing and vital importance of each and every one of the 30 articles contained in this extraordinary document.



The Universal Declaration was drawn up by a world wounded by war, the remedy prescribed by States to inoculate their populations against their own worst instincts and omissions. It was drawn up by representatives, and endorsed by leaders, of countries from all continents, who were – to quote from the Declaration’s preamble – fully, recently, sorely, aware that ‘disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind.’

It was drawn up with the memory and knowledge of the Holocaust, and the attitudes and accumulation of policies and practices that made it possible, seared on the conscience of those who failed to prevent it.

It was drawn up to cover not only civil and political rights, but also social, economic and cultural rights, in the full understanding that you cannot have development without human rights and you cannot have a full enjoyment of human rights without development – and peace and security depend on both. Today, as World War II and the Holocaust grow distant, that awareness appears to be evaporating at an alarming rate, and the enormous progress that has been achieved through progressive enactment of human rights principles, as laid out in the Universal Declaration, is being increasingly forgotten or wilfully ignored.

The universality of rights is being contested across much of the world. It is under broad assault from terrorists, authoritarian leaders and populists who seem only too willing to sacrifice, in varying degrees, the rights of others, for the sake of power. Their combined influence has grown at the expense of liberal democratic order, peace and justice.

We see mounting cruelties and crimes being perpetrated in conflicts across the world; an antagonistic nationalism on the rise, with surging levels of racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination taking root, even in countries which had grown complacent in the belief these were problems of the past, rather than ones that could all too easily re-emerge and reassert themselves.

We see measures to end discrimination and promote greater justice – some of the fruits of the Universal Declaration and the immense body of law and practice it has spawned – starting to be being dismantled by those who seek profit from hatred and exploitation. We see a backlash against many human

rights advances, including on the rights of women and those of many minorities, in the Americas, Asia, Africa and Europe.

We see political leaders who openly deny the fundamental truth of article 1 of the Universal Declaration which states that ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.’ Political leaders who defy their forbears’ promise ‘to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance.’

The Universal Declaration is a commitment, by all States, that they will protect and promote human rights. It is essential that we continue to hold those States to account. But human rights are too important to be left to States alone – too precious to all of us, and to our children.

As we enter the 70th anniversary year of the Universal Declaration, it is right that we should honour its achievements and pay tribute to its inspired architects. At the same time, we should be under no illusions: the legacy of the Universal Declaration is facing threats on many fronts. If we let our commitment to uphold human rights drift – if we turn aside when they are abused – they will slowly shrivel and die. If that happens, the cost in human life and misery will be immense, and the whole of humanity will pay a heavy price.

Ultimately it is up to us, to ‘we the people,’ for whom this Declaration was written. It is up to me; to you; to everyone in every city, province and country where there is still space to express thoughts, participate in decisions, raise one's voice. We need to act to promote peace, fight back against discrimination, and to uphold justice.

We must organize and mobilise in defence of human decency, in defence of a better common future. We must not stand by, bewildered, as the post-World War II system of values unravels around us. We must take a robust and determined stand: by resolutely supporting the human rights of others, we also stand up for our own rights and those of generations to come.

Download **video message** on Human Rights Day 2017 by the High Commissioner for Human Rights :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3DnYLLfAB8>

