

I'm not a bot



One earns their human rights; everyone is entitled to them. In 1948, the United Nations drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which was the first global agreement on the meaning of human rights. Subsequent treaties, national constitutions and other policies continue to define human rights and how they should be applied to and for future generations. In this article, we'll provide 10 examples of human rights with real-world stories describing how they can be violated or protected. #1. The right to life. The right to life (which is enshrined in places like Article 3 of the UDHR and Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights) guarantees all persons the right to life, liberty and security. This right means no one - including individuals and the government - can kill you without consequence. The State must protect human rights, so governments must do everything possible to safeguard human life. A human rights story: Mother seeks justice after Russia kills her family in 2000, during the Second Chechen War, the Russian military promised rebel soldiers safe passage from a city. However, a day before the evacuation, the Russian Army mined the area. Fighters sought shelter in the village of Katyr-Yurt where villagers were not told they were coming or how to escape safely. An aviation bomb dropped from a plane, killing a local man and his three daughters. His mother sought justice, and in Isayeva v Russia, the European Court of Human Rights found a violation of the right to life. Even though the violence occurred during wartime, the Russian military did not try to protect civilians or perform a thorough investigation afterward, making their actions a violation of human rights. #2. The right to freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment. In Article 5 of the UDHR and in the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which was adopted in 1984, "Torture" is defined as both physical or mental severe pain or suffering inflicted for reasons like trying to get a confession or punishing someone for an action. A human rights story: Survivors of Abu Ghraib torture win in court After the United States invaded Iraq in 2003, the military took over Abu Ghraib, a maximum security prison. That same year, pictures of American soldiers torturing prisoners began to emerge. Investigations revealed rampant physical, sexual and psychological torture. In 2024, a federal court found that a private contractor had worked with the US military to create the conditions for the prison's "hard site," where the worst torture occurred. The case's three torture survivors were awarded \$42 million. Appeals are still possible, but for now, this decision is a victory for the right to freedom from torture. #3. The right to equal treatment before the law. The right to equal treatment before the law (Article 7 of the UDHR, Protocol No. 12 of the European Convention on Human Rights, 14th Amendment of the US Constitution) means that the legal system must treat everyone fairly and equally. Different treatment, like racial discrimination or gender discrimination, violates a person's rights. A human rights story: The US Supreme Court finds the death penalty discriminatory In 1967, William Furman killed a homeowner during a botched robbery in Savannah, Georgia. Despite suffering from psychosis and other impairments, Furman stood trial, where he testified that the shooting was an accident. A jury of 11 white people and one Black person sentenced him to death anyway. Furman's lawyer took the case to the Supreme Court. In 1972, the Court ruled that because the death penalty led to discriminatory results (Furman was Black, as were most people who received death sentences), it violated the 14th Amendment. Furman's death sentence was overturned, as were the death sentences of 589 others. Sadly, the death penalty was reissued just a few years later, making it an ongoing human rights issue in the United States. #4. The right to freedom of movement. The right to freedom of movement includes the right to live within a country's borders, the right to move freely within a country, but they also have the right to return. Documents like the UDHR, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and various treaties recognize that everyone has the right to go home if they choose to. This protects people's right to go back to their countries after a violent conflict, a natural disaster or other crisis that forced them to leave. A human rights story: Exiled Palestinians keep the keys to their family homes When the state of Israel was established in 1948, military forces displaced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians during what's known as the Nakba, which means "catastrophe" in Arabic. As a video from Al Jazeera describes, exiled Palestinians have been holding onto house keys, some for homes left in 1948. In many cases, the homes have been destroyed; the keys are symbolic of the intent to return to their homeland. The UN has repeatedly affirmed that Palestinian refugees have the right to return and receive compensation, but Israel continues to displace and oppress Palestinians. #6. The right to asylum. The right to asylum protects a person's right to seek protection in another country if they're facing persecution or are very likely to face persecution. Most people seeking asylum are oppressed based on factors like gender, race, nationality, sexuality or political opinion. Article 14 of the UDHR and the 1951 UN Refugee Convention are just two documents enshrining this right. A human rights story: A community rallies for a family seeking asylum In 2018, Australia rejected the asylum claim of the Nadesalingam family, who had lived in the country for years. The government's policy was (and still is, at the time of writing in 2025) to not allow asylum seekers to arrive by boat, like the Nadesalingam family. The couple and their daughters were detained for 1,500 days, but their community led a campaign to keep them in the country. Finally, due to public pressure, Australia gave them permanent visas. Many human rights organizations believe Australia's strict rules on asylum fail to protect the rights of asylum-seekers like the Nadesalingams. #7. The right to marry. The right to marry is in Article 16 of the UDHR, the European Convention on Human Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and there are some restrictions. For example, you can't marry someone against their will. Most States also restrict marriage between close relatives. Marriage restrictions have historically oppressed LGBTQ+ couples, but significant progress has been made. A human rights story: Greece legalizes gay marriage As a deeply conservative country, Greece has been slow to adopt many of Europe's policies on equality and human rights. In 2024, the government finally passed a law allowing gay couples to marry and adopt children. Three weeks after the law's passage, a novelist and his partner became the first same-sex couple to marry in Athens' city hall. Greece is the first country in south-eastern Europe and the first Christian Orthodox-majority country to achieve marriage equality. #8. The right to freedom of thought. Freedom of thought, which also includes the freedom of opinion and expression, ensures a person's right to hold and express thoughts and opinions without interference, punishment or coercion. This right doesn't protect all types of speech or actions, like direct threats, incitement of violence or fraud. What should or shouldn't count as protected speech or freedom of expression is frequently debated. Article 18 and 19 of the UDHR protect freedom of thought and opinion, as does Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights and the First Amendment of the United States Bill of Rights. A human rights story: American students win the right to protest against war Before Christmas break in 1965, 13-year-old Mary Beth Tinker and a group of friends walked into their Iowa high school wearing black armbands to protest the Vietnam War. The students were suspended when they refused to remove the bands. Instead of accepting the punishment, Mary Beth and the other students sued. The four-year court battle went to the Supreme Court, which ruled that the students had a right to wear the bands. The opinion includes the famous line, "[Students] do not shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate." #9. The right to education. Everyone deserves an education, which includes free and universal primary school, available and accessible secondary education, and technical and vocational training opportunities. In other words, "education" doesn't only include classroom learning. The right to education is enshrined in places like Article 26 of the UDHR and Article 14 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. A human rights story: Education activist Malala survives an assassination attempt Malala Yousafzai loved learning, but in 2008, the 11-year-old had to leave her school not knowing if she could ever return. The Taliban had taken over her home in Pakistan, and one of the first things they did was ban girls from school. Malala refused to stay silent and began blogging anonymously for the BBC. When her identity was discovered, she kept advocating for education. In 2012, she survived an assassination attempt. While she had to leave Pakistan, Malala continues to fight for the right to education, especially for girls. #10. The right to political participation. Article 21 of the UDHR states that everyone has the right to participate in the government of their country, either directly or through elected representatives. Political participation includes protesting, voting, running for office, volunteering for campaigns, and joining and forming political parties. Governments that restrict public participation through legislation or coercion violate this right. A human rights story: India threatens the voting rights of minorities and women India is the world's largest democracy, but for years, the government has increasingly embraced authoritarianism. According to the V-Dem Institute, India is now an "electoral autocracy," which means it has autocratic traits despite still holding elections. One autocratic tactic involves disenfranchising voters. Missing Voters, a smartphone app that tracks disenfranchised voters, found that in 2019, more than half of the 120 million "missing voters" belonged to marginalized groups like Muslims, lower-caste Dalits and women. Despite knowing of the issues in its electronic voting system, India has not ensured the voting rights and political participation of its people. The human rights they are a series of claims that apply to all people by their sole condition of individual. For instance: right to life and security, right to presumption of innocence. In general, when speaking of Human Rights, reference is being made to the rights established by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, after the end of the Second World War and the holocaust organized and executed by the Nazis. The rights are entitled to certain rights by their own condition, and not from the explicitness in certain legislation. Characteristics of human rights: The latter highlights the main foundation of the naturalistic doctrine of law, and therefore speaks of the very essence of human rights; the intention is, therefore, to delimit some central issues that must be above any local legislation (be it provincial, national, etc.) and, therefore, they are no longer subject to the political will of those who govern a certain region or country. The aspects contemplated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights seem to conceive of men as 'citizens of the world', regardless of the region in which they were lucky enough to be born. There are several countries that, despite having signed the declaration, have local laws that conflict with what is stipulated in the declaration; thus a regulations collision in which, in general, local legislation is privileged. That the death penalty still exists in some states within countries is proof of this. Evolution of human rights Despite their natural condition and pre-existing to their legal determination, human rights have not been static or immovable. On the contrary, three generations of human rights can be recognized that correspond to the three currents of extension of rights that spread in society between the 18th and 20th centuries: First generation. They obey the elementary rights of individuality, inspired mainly by the ideals of the French Revolution. These later extended to the independence processes of the countries (the right to life, liberty, private property). Second generation. They are linked to the generalization of equality in the economic and social order. The benefits that were spreading to the lower-income sectors appear then. Third generation. They are the most recent and have to do with coexistence in harmony in modern society. They are guarantees whose fulfillment is not always easy to verify, such as the right to peace or to live in an environment free of pollution. Examples of human rights: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights includes 30 rights. The following are some of the most important: 1. Right to Life, Liberty and Security: Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security. 2. Right to Freedom of Expression: Everyone has the right to freedom of expression and opinion. 3. Right to Fair Trial: Everyone has the right to a fair trial and to be presumed innocent until proven guilty. 4. Right to Non-Discrimination: Everyone is entitled to the same rights and freedoms without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, 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 is independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty. 5. Right to Security of Person: Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person. 6. Right to Freedom from Slavery: No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms. 7. Right to Freedom from Inhuman Treatment: No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. 8. Right to Legal Recognition: Everyone has the right to be recognized as a person before the law. 9. Right to Equality Before the Law: All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. 10. Right to Fair Trial: Everyone has the right to a fair trial and to be presumed innocent until proven guilty. 11. Right to Privacy: No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honor and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks. 12. Right to Freedom of Movement: (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. 13. Right to Asylum: (1) Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy asylum from persecution in other countries. (2) This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. 14. Right to Nationality: (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. 15. Right to Marriage: (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. 16. Right to Own Property: (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. 17. Right to Adequate Living Standard: (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) The State undertakes to provide for this obligation by adopting appropriate legislation and administrative measures. 18. Right to Peaceful Assembly and Association: (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. (2) No one may be compelled to belong to an association. 19. Right to Participate in Government: (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. 20. Right to Social Security: 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. 21. Right to Desirable Employment: (1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable 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 favorable 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. 22. Right to Rest and Leisure: Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay. 23. Right to Adequate Living Standard: (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) The State undertakes to provide for this obligation by adopting appropriate legislation and administrative measures. 24. Right to Education: (1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary 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. 25. Right to Particip

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