

The **NO-NONSENSE GUIDE** to **HUMAN RIGHTS**

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The No-Nonsense Guide to Human Rights
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A powerful idea

What are our rights?

- freedom from discrimination on the basis of birth, race, sex, religion, etc.
- right to life, liberty and security of person
- freedom from slavery
- freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
- right to personhood and equality before the law
- right to effective remedy for rights violations
- freedom from arbitrary arrest, detention or exile
- right to a fair and public trial
- right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty
- freedom from prosecution for something that wasn't a crime when you did it, and from a heavier sentence than the penalty applicable at the time
- right to privacy
- freedom of movement and residence
- right to leave any country and to return to your country
- right to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution
- right to a nationality
- right to marry and found a family; to protection of the family; to equality in marriage and divorce; freedom from forced marriage
- right to own property and not be arbitrarily deprived of it
- freedom of thought, conscience and religion
- freedom of opinion and expression; right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any medium and regardless of frontiers
- freedom of peaceful assembly and association

the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR). That the United Nations (UN) could in 1945 pledge in its Charter to 'reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights,' points to ancient traditions of rights (by other names). Most religious texts proclaim altruistic, universal norms of behavior, reflected in the secular human rights credo: 'All human beings... should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood (sic).'²³ The absence of a single 'great narrative' of human rights is a strength, allowing us all to participate, from diverse religions, cultures and philosophical traditions.

Two main stories can be told about the genesis of human rights. Neither alone is sufficient but in

- right to take part in government, directly or through freely chosen representatives; to periodic, genuine and secret elections by universal and equal suffrage; to equal access to public service employment
- right to social security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age, etc.
- right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and remuneration, equal pay for equal work
- right to form and join trade unions
- right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and paid holidays
- right to food, clothing, housing and medical care
- right to special care and assistance for mothers and children
- right to education, including free and compulsory primary education and equal access to higher education
- right to human rights education and peace education
- right to participate in the cultural life of the community, enjoy the arts and share in scientific advancement and its benefits
- right to intellectual property
- right to an international order in which all human rights can be fully realized
- everyone has duties to the community

from the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, binding on every country in the world

Note that there are additional, widely recognized human rights found elsewhere, such as those of women and children.

combination they approach a satisfactory account. The first is one of cultural or religious consensus: there 'is a moral core, even 'rights-like' concepts, in all cultures and religions. This version requires, however, a selective, optimistic reading of all cultures and religions, and can appear somewhat uncritical and static in its understanding of culture. Given that cultures and religions are dynamic, interactive and heterogeneous, the real question is whether human rights can be inserted into, and support, existing moral narratives and processes of change.

The second story is what we call an 'historical evolution' account. It has the promise of progress and