

Introduction to Human Rights

Introduction to Human Rights

Key concepts, historical development, core principles, and contemporary issues

1. What Are Human Rights?

Aspect	Description
Definition	Fundamental freedoms and protections entitled to every person simply because they are human.
Universality	Apply to all people, everywhere, regardless of nationality, gender, ethnicity, religion, or any other status.
Inalienability	Cannot be taken away, except in specific, lawful circumstances (e.g., lawful detention).
Indivisibility	All rights are interdependent; the violation of one often affects others.
Equality & Non-discrimination	Every individual has the same rights; the state must treat all equally.

2. Historical Milestones

Year	Event	Significance
1215	<i>Magna Carta</i> (England)	Early limitation of sovereign power; introduced the idea of legal rights.
1776	<i>U.S. Declaration of Independence</i>	“All men are created equal” – a philosophical foundation for rights.
1789	<i>French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen</i>	First modern articulation of universal civil? political rights.
1945	<i>United Nations Charter</i>	Established the UN's commitment to promoting human rights.
1948	<i>Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)</i>	First global, comprehensive statement of rights.
1966	<i>International Covenants (ICCPR & ICESCR)</i>	Legally binding treaties that gave the UDHR “teeth.”

Introduction to Human Rights

Year	Event	Significance
1993	<i>Vienna Declaration & Programme of Action</i>	Re-affirmed universality and introduced the concept of “human rights education.”
2000s?	Emerging norms (e.g., rights of	Expansion of the rights framework to new
2020s	LGBTQ+ persons, digital privacy)	social realities.

3. Core International Instruments

Instrument	Year	Main Focus	Legal Status
Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)	1948	Civil, political, economic, social, cultural rights	Non-binding declaration, but highly authoritative.
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	1966	Freedom of expression, fair trial, voting, etc.	Binding treaty; monitored by the UN Human Rights Committee.
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)	1966	Right to work, health, education, adequate standard of living.	Binding treaty; monitored by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)	1979	Gender equality	Binding for ratifying states.
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	1989	Rights of children	Binding; monitored by the Committee on the Rights of the Child.
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)	2006	Inclusion of persons with disabilities	Binding.
Regional Instruments (e.g., European Convention on Human Rights, American Convention on Human Rights)	Various	Tailored to regional contexts	Binding within respective regions.

Introduction to Human Rights

4. The Three Generations of Rights

Generation	Types of Rights	Examples
------------	-----------------	----------

First Generation	**Civil & Political	
------------------	---------------------	--