

**HUMAN RIGHTS DAY 2007**  
**Launch of a Year-Long Celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the UDHR**

**The Campaign**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) turns 60 on 10 December 2008. Today, on Human Rights Day 2007, the United Nations launches a year-long UN system-wide advocacy campaign to mark this important milestone. The campaign, an initiative of the United Nations Secretary-General, will be led by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and supported by UN agencies, departments and funds, and other international and local partners, to celebrate the Declaration and the promise that has made this document so enduring: “**Dignity and Justice for All of Us**”.

The year-long commemoration, culminating on Human Rights Day 2008, aims to continue to raise awareness of the Declaration and its relevance to people around the world. The campaign aims to engage the wide participation of individuals and institutions -- from global organizations to grassroots advocacy groups – to make the Declaration a reality for all. The Declaration opened the door to much progress but there is no room for complacency, as the almost daily litany of human rights violations around the world demonstrates.

**The logo**

The anniversary campaign is symbolized by the UDHR60 logo, which depicts a human shape standing with arms wide open. The yellow and red symbol represents liberation and equality. The yellow is a sign of peace and warmth. The symbol is set on a solid block which represents the foundation of human rights. The earthy red colour of the block reinforces human rights as a foundation stone and as humankind’s common heritage.

The UDHR60 logo – in full colour or as a single colour -- is available with text in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. It will be used during the anniversary period, from 10 December 2007 to 31 December 2008. It is under embargo until 10 December 2007.

The logo is available on the OHCHR website. Please contact us on [60anniversary@ohchr.org](mailto:60anniversary@ohchr.org) for guidelines on its usage.

**Theme**

The UDHR60 logo comes with words that encapsulate the promise of the Declaration: “***Dignity and Justice for all of us***”. It reinforces the vision of the UDHR as the first international recognition that fundamental rights and freedoms are inalienable and inherent to all human beings, that every one of us is born free and equal. The phrase also serves as a rallying call, for the promise of dignity and justice is far from realized for everyone. The UDHR is a living document that matters not only in times of conflict and in societies suffering repression, but also in addressing social injustice and achieving

human dignity in times of peace in established democracies. Non-discrimination, equality and fairness – key components of justice – form the foundation of the UDHR. And no matter where you live, how much money you have, what faith you practice or political views you hold, all the human rights in the Declaration apply to you, everywhere, always.

### **www.KnowYourRights2008.org**

The United Nations Regional Information Centre (UNRIC) in Brussels has created a new website, KnowYourRights2008.org, as a repository of ideas to commemorate the year of human rights. The highly interactive website enables people all over the world to upload and download multimedia files and share their projects and initiatives on the Universal Declaration. www.KnowYourRights2008.org will be launched on 10 December 2007.

### **The UDHR: the foremost statement of the rights and freedoms of all human beings**

The Declaration adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, consists of a preamble and 30 articles, setting out a broad range of fundamental human rights and freedoms to which all men and women, everywhere in the world, are entitled, without any distinction.

The Declaration was drafted by representatives of all regions and legal traditions. It has over time been accepted as a contract between governments and their peoples. Virtually all States have accepted it. The Declaration has also served as the foundation for an expanding system of human rights protection that today focuses also on vulnerable groups such as disabled persons, indigenous peoples and migrant workers.

### **Human Rights Day**

The UDHR was adopted on 10 December 1948. The date has since served to mark Human Rights Day worldwide. The High Commissioner for Human Rights, as the main UN rights official, and her Office play a major role in coordinating efforts for the yearly observance of Human Rights Day.

### ABOUT OHCHR

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is the global authority on human rights. It represents the world's commitment to universal ideals of human dignity and has been given a unique mandate to promote and protect all human rights. Headquartered in Geneva, the Office is also present in some 40 countries. Headed by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, a position established by the General Assembly in 1993 to spearhead the United Nations' human rights efforts, OHCHR offers leadership, works objectively, educates and takes action to empower individuals and assist States in upholding human rights. OHCHR, a part of the United Nations Secretariat. For more information please visit [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org)

## **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: A Living Document**

Many things can be said about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). It is the foundation of international human rights law, the first universal statement on the basic principles of inalienable human rights, and a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations. As the UDHR approaches its 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, it is timely to emphasize the living document's enduring relevance, its universality, and that it has everything to do with all of us. Today, the UDHR is more relevant than ever.

### **Universality**

It was the UDHR, almost 60 years ago, that first recognized what have become nowadays universal values: human rights are inherent to all and the concern of the whole of the international community. Drafted by representatives of all regions and legal traditions, the UDHR has stood the test of time and resisted attacks based on "relativism". The Declaration and its core values, including non-discrimination, equality, fairness and universality, apply to everyone, everywhere and always. The UDHR belongs to all of us.

More than ever, in a world threatened by racial, economic and religious divides, we must defend and proclaim the universal principles --first enshrined in the UDHR-- of justice, fairness and equality that people across all boundaries hold so deeply.

### **Enduring Relevance**

Human rights are not only a common inheritance of universal values that transcend cultures and traditions, but are quintessentially local values and nationally-owned commitments grounded in international treaties and national constitutions and laws.

The Declaration represents a contract between governments and their peoples, who have a right to demand that this document be respected. Not all governments have become parties to all human rights treaties. All countries, however, have accepted the UDHR. The Declaration continues to affirm the inherent human dignity and worth of every person in the world, without distinction of any kind.

### **Ongoing struggle**

The UDHR protects all of us, and it also enshrines the gamut of human rights. The drafters of the UDHR saw a future of freedom from fear, but also of freedom from want. They put all human rights on an equal footing and confirmed human rights are essential to a life of dignity.

The UDHR drafters' vision has inspired many human rights defenders who have struggled over the last six decades to make that vision a reality. The contemporary international human rights edifice that originates in the UDHR is to be celebrated. But it has yet to benefit all of humanity equally.

The struggle is far from over. As the Declaration's custodians and beneficiaries, all of us must reclaim the UDHR, make it our own. While we are entitled to our human rights, we should also respect the human rights of others and

help make universal human rights a reality for all of us. In our efforts lies the power of the UHDR: it is a living document that will continue to inspire generations to come.

## **Dignity and Justice for All of Us**

*“Dignity and Justice for all of us”* reinforces the vision of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as a commitment to universal dignity and justice. It is not a luxury or a wish-list. The UDHR and its core values, inherent human dignity, non-discrimination, equality, fairness and universality, apply to everyone, everywhere and always. The Declaration is universal, enduring and vibrant, and thus, a living document that concerns us all.

### **Commitment**

The drafting process of the UDHR involved representatives from all regions and drew inspiration from values, belief systems and political traditions from different cultures and societies across the globe. Initially adopted by countries worldwide as “a common standard of achievement for all peoples and nations”, the Declaration has over time been widely accepted as the fundamental norms of human rights that all should respect. Today, all countries have accepted the UDHR and reaffirmed their commitment to fundamental rights enshrined therein time and again.

Over the years, this commitment has been translated into law through which human rights are defined and guaranteed. Indeed, the UDHR has inspired numerous international human rights treaties and declarations, regional conventions, as well as national Constitutions. This rich body of human rights law represents a contract between governments and their peoples.

### **Dignity**

The UDHR demands meeting basic human needs and recognizes the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights, whether they are civil and political rights, such as the right to life, and freedom of expression; or economic, social and cultural rights, such as the rights to work, social security and education. The improvement of one right contributes to the advancement of the others. Likewise, the deprivation of one right adversely affects the others. The entitlement to and fulfilment of all human rights are essential to a life of dignity.

The Declaration’s enduring relevance is more compelling still when we listen to the voices of people at the grassroots level. When the World Bank conducted its “Voices of the Poor” surveys in the late 1990s, interviewing over 80,000 people in villages and local communities on their values, needs and strongest aspirations, the results read like the list of everyday rights in the UDHR.

[Photo on poverty]

### **Justice**

The UDHR declares in its preamble that “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.” It was the first, and remains the foremost, statement of the rights and freedoms of all of us as human beings, without distinction of any kind.

The core principles of human rights first set out in the UDHR, such as universality, interdependence and indivisibility, equality and non-discrimination are crucial in achieving justice. Non-discrimination, for example, has become one of the cross-

cutting principles in human rights law. The principle is present in all the major human rights treaties and provides the central theme of some of them such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The UDHR has stimulated and inspired a rich body of international treaties that seeks to strengthen and protect human rights.

### **All of Us**

The UDHR belongs to all of us. No matter where you live, how much money you have, what faith you practise or political views you hold, all the human rights in the UDHR apply to you and have everything to do with you. It was the UDHR, almost 60 years ago, which first established what have become universal values: that human rights are inherent to all and the concern of the whole of the international community. Human Rights are everyone's business.

The impressive international human rights edifice the UDHR has made possible is to be celebrated. But it has yet to benefit all of humanity equally. All of us, as rights-owners, must reclaim the UDHR, make it our own. While Governments bear the primary duty to promote and protect all human rights, non-state actors, other duty bearers and all of us also play an important role in making the universal enjoyment of human rights a reality. It is through concerted efforts of the United Nations system, its international and local partners, national ownership, and the participation of people from different corners of the world that we can truly envisage "dignity and justice for all of us".

## **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: The Foundation of International Human Rights Law**

The UDHR is generally agreed to be the foundation of international human rights law. Adopted almost 60 years ago, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) has inspired a rich body of legally binding international human rights treaties and human rights development worldwide. It continues to be an inspiration to us all whether in addressing injustices, in times of conflicts, in societies suffering repression, and in our efforts towards achieving universal enjoyment of human rights.

It represents the universal recognition that basic rights and fundamental freedoms are inherent to all human beings, inalienable and equally applicable to everyone, and that every one of us is born free and equal in dignity and rights. Whatever our nationality, place of residence, gender, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status, the international community on December 10 1948 made a commitment to upholding dignity and justice for all of us.

### **Foundation for Our Common Future**

Over the years, the commitment has been translated into law, whether in the forms of treaties, customary international law, general principles, regional agreements and domestic law, through which human rights are expressed and guaranteed. Indeed, the UDHR has inspired more than 80 international human rights treaties and declarations, a great number of regional human rights conventions, domestic human rights bills, and constitutional provisions, which together constitute a comprehensive legally binding system for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Building on the achievements of the UDHR, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights entered into force in 1976. The two Covenants have developed most of the rights already enshrined in the UDHR, making them effectively binding on States that have ratified them. They set forth everyday rights such as the right to life, equality before the law, freedom of expression, the rights to work, social security and education. Together with the UDHR, the Covenants comprise the International Bill of Human Rights.

Over time, international human rights treaties have become more focused and specialized regarding both the issue addressed and the social groups identified as requiring protection. The body of international human rights law continues to grow, evolve, and further elaborate the fundamental rights and freedoms contained in the International Bill of Human Rights, addressing concerns such as racial discrimination, torture, enforced disappearances, disabilities, and the rights of women, children, migrants, minorities, and indigenous peoples,.

### **Universal Values**

The core principles of human rights first set out in the UDHR, such as universality, interdependence and indivisibility, equality and non-discrimination, and that human rights simultaneously entail both rights and obligations from duty bearers and rights owners, have been reiterated in numerous international human rights conventions, declarations, and resolutions. Today, all United Nations member States

have ratified at least one of the nine core international human rights treaties, and 80 percent have ratified four or more, giving concrete expression to the universality of the UDHR and international human rights.

### **How Does International Law Protect Human Rights?**

International human rights law lays down obligations which States are bound to respect. By becoming parties to international treaties, States assume obligations and duties under international law to respect, to protect and to fulfil human rights. The obligation to respect means that States must refrain from interfering with or curtailing the enjoyment of human rights. The obligation to protect requires States to protect individuals and groups against human rights abuses. The obligation to fulfil means that States must take positive action to facilitate the enjoyment of basic human rights.

Through ratification of international human rights treaties, Governments undertake to put into place domestic measures and legislation compatible with their treaty obligations and duties. The domestic legal system, therefore, provides the principal legal protection of human rights guaranteed under international law. Where domestic legal proceedings fail to address human rights abuses, mechanisms and procedures for individual and group complaints are available at the regional and international levels to help ensure that international human rights standards are indeed respected, implemented, and enforced at the local level.



## **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: the First Global Statement of the Inherent Dignity and Equality of All**

Throughout history, conflict, in the form of wars or as popular uprisings, has often come in reaction to inhumane treatment and injustice. The English Bill of Rights in 1689, drafted after the English Civil Wars, sprang from the people's aspiration for democracy. Exactly a century later, the French Revolution gave rise to the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen and its proclamation of equality for all. But the Cyrus Cylinder, issued in 539 B.C. by Cyrus the Great of the Achaemenid Persian Empire (ancient Iran) after his conquest of Babylon, is said by many to be the first human rights document, and the Pact of the Virtuous (*Hifl-al-fudul*), concluded by Arab tribes around 590 AD, is considered one of the first human rights alliances.

After the Second World War and the creation of the United Nations, the international community vowed never again to allow atrocities like those of that conflict. World leaders decided to complement the UN Charter with a road map to guarantee the rights of every individual everywhere, always.

The document they considered, and which would later become the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, was taken up at the first session of the General Assembly in 1946. The Assembly reviewed this draft Declaration on Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms and transmitted it to the Economic and Social Council "for reference to the Commission on Human Rights for consideration . . . in its preparation of an international bill of rights." The Commission, at its first session early in 1947, authorized its members to formulate what it termed "a preliminary draft International Bill of Human Rights". Later the work was taken over by a formal drafting committee, consisting of members of the Commission from eight States, selected with due regard for geographical distribution.

### **The People behind the vision: the UDHR Drafting Committee**

The Commission on Human Rights was made up of 18 members from various political, cultural and religious backgrounds. Eleanor Roosevelt, widow of American President Franklin D. Roosevelt, chaired the UDHR drafting committee. With her were René Cassin of France, who composed the first draft of the Declaration, the Committee Rapporteur Charles Malik of Lebanon, Vice-Chairman Peng Chung Chang of China, and John Humphrey of Canada, Director of the UN's Human Rights Division, who prepared the Declaration's blueprint. But Mrs. Roosevelt was recognized as the driving force for the Declaration's adoption.

The Commission met for the first time in 1947. In her memoirs, Eleanor Roosevelt recalls: "*Dr. Chang was a pluralist and held forth in charming fashion on the proposition that there is more than one kind of ultimate reality. The Declaration, he said, should reflect more than simply Western ideas and Dr. Humphrey would have to be eclectic in his approach. His remark, though addressed to Dr. Humphrey, was really directed at Dr. Malik, from whom it drew a prompt retort as he expounded at some length the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. Dr. Humphrey joined enthusiastically in the discussion, and I remember that at one point Dr. Chang suggested that the Secretariat might well spend a few months studying the fundamentals of Confucianism!*"

The final draft by Cassin was handed to the Commission on Human Rights, which was being held in Geneva. The draft declaration sent out to all UN member States for comments became known as the Geneva draft.

The first draft of the Declaration was proposed in September 1948 with over 50 Member States participating in the final drafting. By its resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948, the General Assembly, meeting in Paris, adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with eight nations abstaining from the vote but none dissenting. Hernán Santa Cruz of Chile, member of the drafting sub-Committee, wrote: *“I perceived clearly that I was participating in a truly significant historic event in which a consensus had been reached as to the supreme value of the human person, a value that did not originate in the decision of a worldly power, but rather in the fact of existing—which gave rise to the inalienable right to live free from want and oppression and to fully develop one’s personality. In the Great Hall...there was an atmosphere of genuine solidarity and brotherhood among men and women from all latitudes, the like of which I have not seen again in any international setting.”*

The entire text of the UDHR was composed in less than two years. At a time when the world was divided into Eastern and Western blocks, finding a common ground on what should make the essence of the document proved to be a colossal task.

## **Useful Tools and Contacts**

### **Useful tools**

- UDHR 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary logo: the logo is available on [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org). Please contact us on [60anniversary@ohchr.org](mailto:60anniversary@ohchr.org) for guidelines on its usage.

- OHCHR webpage on general UDHR information:  
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Pages/UDHRIndex.aspx>

- The **UDHR** has been translated into more than 300 different languages, including official translations into the six United Nations languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

<http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/>

-A **plain language version of the UDHR** in French was developed by a Research Group of the University of Geneva, and then translated into English.

<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/ABCannexesen.pdf>

- The United Nations **Cyberschoolbus** is the online education component of the Global Teaching and Learning Project, whose mission is to promote education about international issues and the United Nations. The Global Teaching and Learning Project produces high quality teaching materials and activities designed for educational use (at primary, intermediate and secondary school levels) and for teachers' training. The Cyberschoolbus includes an Interactive Declaration, where each UDHR article is introduced with a plain language version, an exploration of key issues, definitions, and suggestions for activities and discussions.

<http://www0.un.org/cyberschoolbus/humanrights/index.asp>

- A **photo gallery** on the creation of UDHR is available on the following link [LINK TO BE ADDED]

### **Useful contacts**

#### **OHCHR ADDRESS**

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Palais Wilson  
52 rue des Pâquis  
CH-1201 Geneva, Switzerland

#### **POSTAL ADDRESS**

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Palais des Nations

**DRAFT**

CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

**GENERAL INQUIRIES**

Telephone: +41 22 917 90 00

E-mail: [InfoDesk@ohchr.org](mailto:InfoDesk@ohchr.org)

Website: [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org)

**MEDIA INQUIRIES/INTERVIEW REQUESTS**

[Press-Info@ohchr.org](mailto:Press-Info@ohchr.org)

+41 22 917 9602

+41 22 917 9383

**NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS INQUIRIES**

**National Institutions Unit**

[niu@ohchr.org](mailto:niu@ohchr.org)

+41 22 928 9663

**NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS INQUIRIES**

NGO Liaison Officer

[civilsocietyunit@ohchr.org](mailto:civilsocietyunit@ohchr.org)

+41 22 917 9656

**DONOR AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS SECTION**

Charles Radcliffe

Chief, Donor and External Relations Section

[cradcliffe@ohchr.org](mailto:cradcliffe@ohchr.org)

+41 22 917 94 38