

Our Statement of Civil Rights and Responsibilities

Senior Roundtable

The origins of the concept of human rights are usually agreed to be found in the Greco-Roman natural-law doctrines which held that a universal force pervades all creation, and that human conduct should therefore be judged according to the law of nature. It was during the period from the Renaissance until the 17th Century that the beliefs and practices of society changed to allow human rights recognition as a general social need. The writings of St. Thomas Aquinas and Hugo Grotius, as well as the Magna Carta, all reflected the view that human beings are endowed with certain eternal and inalienable rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was first completed by the United Nations Commission in 1948. The declaration contained general definitions not only of political rights, but also of several economic, social and cultural rights.

The document that follows is a reworking of the Universal Declaration - that we have been developing, and subsequently revised in November, 2005.

Our Statement of Civil Rights and Responsibilities

Article 1

All people are entitled to equal dignity and rights. They are born with the capacity for reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of fellowship. People have an obligation to assist those less advantaged than themselves.

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Article 2

People are entitled to the rights and freedoms in this Statement, without distinction of any kind, such as race, gender, genetic characteristics, colour, age, language, culture, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

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Article 3

To justify these rights people must accept the civil and criminal laws of the country where they live or are travelling. To enjoy these rights and the protection under these rights they must not attack, endanger or interfere with the security, well-being or reputation of their fellow citizens, other countries, or the environment in which they live.

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Article 4

In exercising their rights and freedoms, people shall be subject only to those limitations determined by law to secure due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the needs of public order and the general welfare of their society.

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Article 5

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. No one shall be held in slavery or servitude. No child shall be arbitrarily removed from their parents without due legal process.

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Article 6

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

6.1 People are equal before the law and are entitled without discrimination to protection of the law. They are entitled to protection against any discrimination in violation of this Statement and against any incitement to such discrimination.

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6.2 They have the right to an effective remedy by independent courts and independent judiciary for acts violating the fundamental rights granted them under this Statement.

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6.3 They shall not be subjected to arbitrary arrest, arbitrary detention, arbitrary deportation or exile.

6.4 People are all entitled to a fair and public hearing by an independent judicial process, in the determination of their rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against them, without undue delay.

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6.5 If charged with a penal offence they have the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which they have all the guarantees necessary for their defence.

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Article 7

People shall not be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

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Article 8

People shall not be subjected to arbitrary interference with their privacy, family, home or communications, or to arbitrary attacks upon their honour and reputation. They have the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

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Article 9

- 9.1 People have the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each nation.
- 9.2 People have the right to leave any country, including their own, and to return to their country.
- 9.3 People have the right to seek asylum from persecution in other countries.
- 9.4 These rights under Article 9 may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to a country's laws.

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Article 10

- 10.1 At birth, people have the right to a nationality.
- 10.2 They shall not be arbitrarily deprived of their nationality nor the right to change it.

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Article 11

- 11.1 Adult men and women, regardless of race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to have a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.
- 11.2 Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
Note: The determination of the age of adulthood shall be a matter to the nation to determine through due process.

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Article 12

- 12.1 People have the right to own legal property alone as well as in association with others.
- 12.2 They shall not be arbitrarily deprived of their property. If they are legally deprived of their property, it must be with just recompense.

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Article 13

People have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change their religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest their religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

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Article 14

People have the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 15		5
15.1	People have the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.	
15.2	No one may be compelled to belong to an association.	
Article 16		10
16.1	Adults have the right to take part in their government, either directly or through freely chosen representatives.	
16.2	The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of the government; expressed in periodic and genuine democratic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.	15
Article 17		20
	People should have those economic, social and cultural rights which are necessary for their dignity and the free development of their personality.	
Article 18		25
	People have the right to free choice of employment, to just remuneration and conditions of work and to equal pay for equal work.	
Article 19		30
	People have the right to adequate social security	
Article 20		35
20.1	All people have the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and secondary stages, and shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.	
20.2	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.	
Article 21		40
	Nothing in this Statement should be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms described.	