

The United Nations: protecting rights

In this lesson you will be learning about how the United Nations (UN) protects and promotes our human rights. You will be looking at the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), two international documents that most countries have signed up to. You will be thinking about which human and children's rights are most important to you. You will also learn about children who have had their rights taken away and abused.

Learning objectives for today

- To explore how the UN works for human rights
- To examine the importance of children's rights

The main aims of the UN are

1. Secure international peace
2. Eliminate poverty
3. Protect human rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

ALL HUMAN BEINGS ARE BORN FREE AND EQUAL in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. **2 EVERYONE** is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, 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 be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty. **3 Everyone HAS THE RIGHT TO LIFE,** liberty and security of person. **4** No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms. **5** No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. **6** Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law. **7** All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. **8** All are entitled to equal **PROTECTION AGAINST ANY DISCRIMINATION** in violation of this declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination. **9** Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law. **10** No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile. **11** Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair **AND** public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations, of any criminal charge against him. **12** Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right **TO BE PRESUMED INNOCENT UNTIL PROVED GUILTY** according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence. **13** No one shall 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 when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed. **14** No one shall be to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks. **15** Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country. **16** Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution. 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. **17** Everyone has the right to a nationality. **18** No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality. **19** Men and women of full age, **WITHOUT ANY LIMITATION** of race, ethnicity, language 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. Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses. The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State. **20** Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others. **NO ONE SHALL BE ARBITRARILY DEPRIVED OF** his property. **21** Everyone has the right to **FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, CONSCIENCE AND RELIGION**; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance. **22** Everyone has 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. **23** Everyone has the right to freedom of **PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION**. No one may be compelled to belong to an association. **24** **EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO** take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives. Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country. 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. **25** 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. **26** Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work. Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests. **27** Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay. **28** 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. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection. **29** Everyone has the right to **EDUCATION**. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education 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. 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. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children. **30** Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits. Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author. **31** **EVERYONE IS ENTITLED TO A SOCIAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER IN WHICH HIS RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS CAN BE FULLY REALIZED.** **32** **EVERYONE HAS DUTIES TO THE COMMUNITY** in which alone the free and full development of his

What are human rights?

Human rights are the rights and freedoms that we all have. Our rights include: the right to life, to be free from torture and abuse, to go to school and to work. We have the right to shelter and to food, the right to practise a religion, and the right to think and say what we want as long as we don't hurt anyone.

Every person has every human right because we are all born equal and should be treated with equal dignity and respect. All these rights are included in the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) - the most famous human rights document in the world.

How does the UN protect our rights?

The UN works hard to make sure that states are protecting the human rights of their citizens. One way it does this is by getting countries to sign up to international human rights treaties.

By signing up to a treaty, a country pledges to make the rights contained in it part of its national law. This obliges the country's public bodies (e.g. schools, hospitals) to respect, protect and fulfil rights and enables people whose rights have been violated to seek help, if necessary via the courts.

What happens if a country doesn't respect the rights of its citizens?

The UN monitors the human rights records of all its member states through the UN Human Rights Council. It also has independent experts who work on specific issues and countries. The most serious crimes, such as war crimes, can be referred to the International Criminal Court.