

Human Rights Day

10 December 2012

“Inclusion and the right to participate in public life”

Every year, Human Rights Day, 10 December, is an opportunity to raise global awareness of human rights issues.

This year, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) focuses on *inclusion and the right to participate* in public life.

Fulfillment of the right to participate is fundamental to the functioning of a democracy and an effective human rights protection system. Inclusion of all those who have been traditionally locked out of the process is an essential precondition to the achievement of both.

The theme draws directly from Articles 19, 20 and 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which speak of the right to freedom of expression and opinion, the right to freedom of assembly and association and the right to take part in government, either directly or through freely chosen representatives.

This Human Rights Day, OHCHR aims to highlight that *participation in public life* can only achieve its full meaning and real significance when everybody is included in decision-making processes.



Prepared by International Presentation Association 2012



Leader: Creator and Sustainer, you have created all people, each one of us with dignity and worth, sacred in your sight.

All: **Help us this day and every day to hold that truth in our hearts and to honor it in all we do, treating every person as your unique creation.**

Leader: This day we remember and give thanks for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, its challenge and its guidelines.

All: **We pray that every new generation may learn its principles and engage with each other in ways that honor each individual's inherent dignity and worth.**

Leader: We also remember this day the adoption of the *Convention Against Torture* by the UN General Assembly.

All: We pray for the courage, as individuals and as nations, to do what is right even when we experience fear and uncertainty. We pray that, as nations, we will work to ensure that the abuses authorized and committed in our name never happen again. These abuses include the use of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. We grieve, knowing that inflicting injustice and cruelty on even one person scars and diminishes all of us. We pray for strength and steadfastness in the work of repairing the world. In all things may we honor the dignity of each person. Amen.

(Adapted from National Religious Campaign Against Torture www.nrcat.org)

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The 30 articles are read out in turn by people in the group.

Article 1

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

Article 2

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind.

Article 3

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude.

Article 5

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6

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

Article 7

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law.

Article 8

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted by the constitution or by law.

Article 9

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal.

Article 11

Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty.



Article 12

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon honor and reputation.

Article 13

Everyone has the right to freedom of movement.

Article 14

Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

Article 15

Everyone has the right to a nationality.

Article 16

Men and women have the right to marry and to found a family.

Article 17

Everyone has the right to own property.

Article 18

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

Article 19

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

Article 20

Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

Article 21

Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his/her country.

Article 22

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization of economic, social and cultural rights.

Article 23

Everyone has the right to work. Everyone has the right to form and join trade unions.

Article 24

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure.

Article 25

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being.

Article 26

Everyone has the right to education.

Article 27

Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community.

Article 28

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration can be fully realised.

Article 29

Everyone has duties to the community.

Article 30

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying any right to engage in any activity aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth.

A Reading from the Book of Proverbs (31: 8-9)

“Speak up for people who cannot speak for themselves. Protect the rights of all who are helpless. Speak for them and be a righteous judge. Protect the rights of the poor and needy.”

A Thanksgiving for Human Rights Day

Leader: We are human beings, whatever our beliefs, whatever our gender or our politics, whatever our faith or race or nation. We are human beings – this we have in common. Let us give thanks together.

Reader: We give thanks for all who, through the centuries, have striven for human freedom and human dignity.

All: **We give thanks.**

Reader: We give thanks for those who named and pioneered the rights of conscience and self-determination.

All: **We give thanks.**

Reader: For those who asserted the freedom of mind and intellect, who challenged ignorance and strove to bring education to everyone ...

All: **We give thanks.**

Reader: For those who championed universal healthcare, who opposed exploitation in the workplace ...

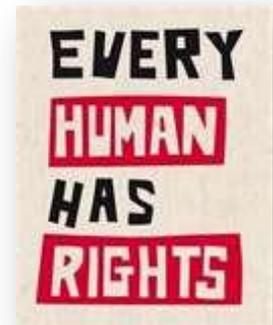
All: **We give thanks.**

Reader: For those who struggled, suffered and died to win us democracy, free speech and equality before the law ...

All: **We give thanks.**

Reader: For those who fought against slavery, tyranny and oppressions of every kind ...

All: **We give thanks.**



Reader: We give thanks for those who penned the testaments of liberty: their speeches and their sermons, their books and declarations, which set forth the equal rights of all human beings. And we give thanks for those who claimed those rights.

All: **We give thanks.**

Reader: In particular, we give thanks today for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Composed in the aftermath of war, informed by the experience of monstrous inhumanity, its words encompass the hopes of humankind.

All: **We give thanks.**

Reader: But we cannot leave it there. As we celebrate those rights, let us also accept our responsibilities; our responsibility to enshrine them in our hearts and make them real in our lives, our responsibility to respect them in all our dealings with others, our responsibility as citizens to see that our own countries abide by them, our responsibility to establish them in the many places where they are ignored, violated or suppressed, our responsibility to live truly as members of the human family.

All: **As we give thanks, so we accept these responsibilities. Let it be so.**

(Composed by Cliff Reed for the Declaration's fiftieth anniversary)

Intercessions

Leader: We pray for those who are oppressed and who are denied the right to be engaged in the decision-making processes of their countries. Enable us to stand with those whose rights have been denied.

All: **Help us to respect the dignity of each person and to promote the economic and social rights as well as political and legal rights that are meant for every person, everywhere on Earth.**



Leader: We pray for those who are struggling and fearing for their lives caught between the violent conflicts in many parts of the world. Enable us to stand for those without a voice.

All: **Help us to respect the dignity of each person and to promote the economic and social rights as well as political and legal rights that are meant for every person, everywhere on Earth.**



Leader: We pray for the women and children who have been harassed, trafficked, raped and treated as second-class citizens. Enable us to stand for those people who live on the margins of society.

All: **Help us to respect the dignity of each person and to promote the economic and social rights as well as political and legal rights that are meant for every person, everywhere on Earth.**

Leader: We pray for those who flee persecution who leave everything behind because those in power see them as 'different'. Enable us to stand with those without hope.

All: **Help us to respect the dignity of each person and to promote the economic and social rights as well as political and legal rights that are meant for every person, everywhere on Earth.**

Leader: We pray for the millions people in the world who are malnourished, lacking an adequate amount of healthy food; the families around the world who are now facing famine and starvation; the three-quarters of the world's poor who live in rural areas in developing countries and whose small-scale farming efforts are failing because of unjust trade rules that favor the world's richest countries. Enable us to recognise the right of all human beings to food.

All: **Help us to respect the dignity of each person and to promote the economic and social rights as well as political and legal rights that are meant for every person, everywhere on Earth.**

Leader: We pray for those people in poor countries that cannot provide even the most basic health care to any of their citizens, because of the conditions of their debt repayment, decided on by the World Bank and IMF. Enable us to stand with those who do not have adequate health care.

All: **Help us to respect the dignity of each person and to promote the economic and social rights as well as political and legal rights that are meant for every person, everywhere on Earth.**

Leader: We pray for people suffering in areas of war and strife who are living in the open as the winter begins and no shelters are available, with the 32% of the world's population who now live in urban slums without sanitation, without clean water, in shacks and makeshift dwellings. Enable us to stand with those who lack adequate shelter and housing.

All: **Help us to respect the dignity of each person and to promote the economic and social rights as well as political and legal rights that are meant for every person, everywhere on Earth.**

Closing Prayer

God of Justice and Compassion,
break down the walls that separate us and forgive the sins that divide us.
Free us from greed and prejudice.
Give us the power to change our lives and the lives of those whose human rights are denied.
Come into our hearts and fill them with compassion for those who are living in poverty and oppression.
Give us wisdom and enlighten us that we may know how to bring justice in this world.
Give us courage that we may speak the truth and speak up for those whose human rights are abused.
Amen.

