

1000 Word Essay on Human Rights

The promotion and protection of human rights has been a major preoccupation for the United Nations since 1945, when the Organization's founding nations resolved that the horrors of The Second World War should never be allowed to recur. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by the General Assembly declared that respect for human rights and human dignity "is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world". Subsequently in 1950, all States and interested organizations were invited by the General Assembly, through its Resolution 423(V), to observe 10 December as Human Rights Day.

The Day marks the anniversary of the Assembly's adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. When the General Assembly adopted the Declaration, with 48 states in favor and eight abstentions, it was proclaimed as a "common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations", towards which individuals and societies should "strive by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance". Although the Declaration with its broad range of political, civil, social, cultural and economic rights is not a binding document, it inspired more than 60 human rights instruments which together constitute an international standard of human rights.

Over the years, a whole network of human rights instruments and mechanisms has been developed to ensure the primacy of human rights and to confront human rights violations wherever they occur. Today the

general consent of all United Nations Member States on the basic Human Rights laid down in the Declaration makes it even stronger and emphasizes the relevance of Human Rights in the daily lives of people everywhere.

Human Rights Day is a high point in calendar of UN headquarters in New York City, United States, and is normally marked by both high-level political conferences and meetings and by cultural events and exhibitions dealing with human rights issues. In addition, it is traditionally on 10 December that the five-yearly United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights and Nobel Peace Prize are awarded. Many governmental and non-governmental organizations active in the human rights field also schedule special events to commemorate the day, as do many civil and social-cause organizations.

The 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights occurred on 10 December 2008, and the UN Secretary-General launched a year-long campaign leading up to this anniversary. Organizations around the globe used the year to focus on helping people everywhere learn about their rights. The translation of UDHR into more than 360 languages, which is a world record, has helped in this task.

There have been few important observances of Human Rights Day in the past. In 1979, Shih Ming-teh organized a human rights campaign in Kaoshiung, Taiwan. This led to the Kaoshiung Incident characterized by three rounds of arrests and mock trials of political opponents of the ruling Kuomintang party and their subsequent imprisonment. In 2004,

International PEN announced the launch of a new campaign to secure the release from prison of “cyber-dissidents” in PR China, Maldives and Vietnam. The same year, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the UN’s Special Representative for Human Rights Defenders and the African Union’s Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights issued a joint communiqué in which they commended the European Union for its adoption of a set of guidelines for protecting human rights defenders and urged the world’s other regions to take similar steps in that direction. Also, the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) endorsed the Human Rights Day as an official day of Humanist celebration.

The 2006 Human Rights Day focus on Poverty and Human Rights. In 2008, several people were detained in China after around 300 people signed an online petition titled Charter 08 for the government to improve human rights in the country. In Beijing, a small protest was broken up that took place outside the foreign ministry. In Australia, the Day was celebrated with the rights campaign which asked young people to contribute a message about human rights by phone or on a website for display in Australian State capital cities.

In Paris, France, Amnesty International organized a large event to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the UDHR. Celebrations also took place in Phnom Penh and around Cambodia, including a march by 5000 people, and a further 1000 people releasing balloons, organized by NGOs. In Russia and India too, other celebrations and events took place.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) represents the world’s commitment to universal ideals of the

human dignity. It has a unique mandate from the international community to promote and protect all human rights. The OHCHR is headed by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, who is the principal human rights official of the United Nations.

The OHCHR is a part of the United Nations Secretariat with its headquarters in Geneva. It works objectively, educates and takes action to empower individuals and assist States in upholding human rights. The priorities of the OHCHR are set out in two key strategic documents: the OHCHR Plan of Action and its Strategic Management Plan 2010- 2011. These priorities include greater country engagement, working closely with its partners at the country and local levels, in order to ensure that international human rights standards are implemented on the ground; a stronger leadership role for the High Commissioner; and closer partnerships with civil society and United Nations agencies.

The OHCHR also supports the work of the United Nations human rights mechanisms, such as the Human Rights Council and the core treaty bodies set up for monitoring State Parties' compliance with international human rights treaties, promote the right to development, coordinate United Nations human rights education and public information activities, and strengthens human rights across the United Nations system. Its work is to ensure the enforcement of universally recognized human rights norms, including through promoting both the universal ratification and implementation of the major human rights treaties and respect for the rule of law.