

A HISTORY OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Key human rights milestones throughout history

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



Bibliothèque nationale de France

THE CYRUS CYLINDER – c539-530BC

Cyrus II, King of Persia, began his reign by decreeing reforms on this clay cylinder. Most notably, he declared that exiled slaves could return to their homelands and implies that there will be religious freedom throughout the Persian Empire



Image:
*Front of the
Cyrus Cylinder*
Creative Commons - Prioryman



THE MAGNA CARTA - 1215

This Great Charter provided a new framework for the relationship between the King and his subjects. It established for the first time that everybody, including the king, was subject to the law. Most famously, it gave all 'free men' the right to justice and a fair trial.

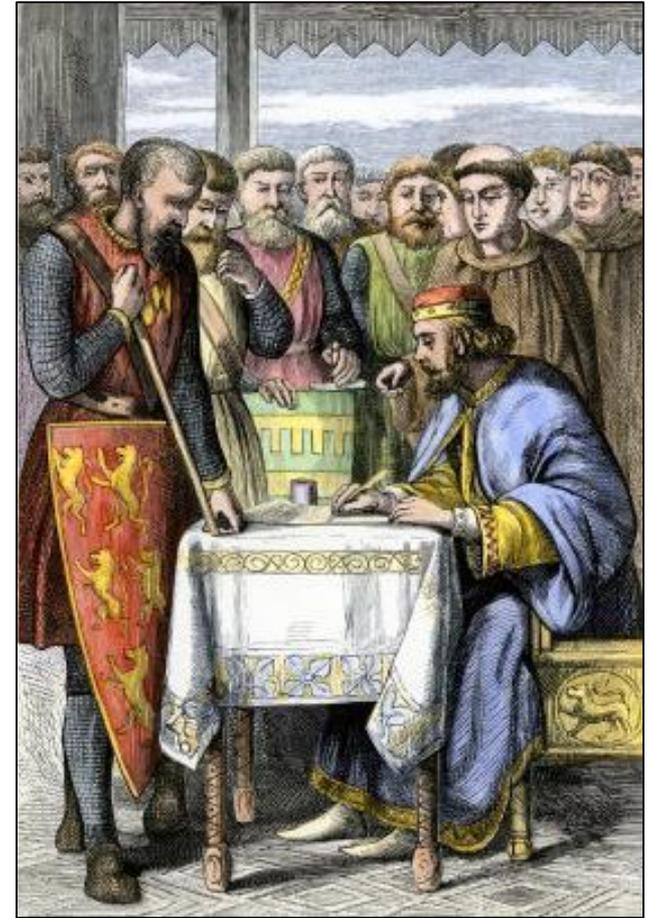


Image: King John of England signing Magna Carta on June 15, 1215, at Runnymede



THE PETITION OF RIGHT - 1628



This petition was sent by the English Parliament to King Charles I. It included the demands that the King could not tax the people without the Parliament's consent nor imprison people without cause.

Image: *Portrait of King Charles I in his robes of state*

(copy of original by Anthony van Dyck)



THE BILL OF RIGHTS - 1689

This English document set out political and civil rights, including the freedom to elect Members of Parliament, the protection of free speech in Parliament and that the king or queen could not interfere with the law.

Image: *The English Bill of Rights 1689.*

National Archives of the United Kingdom



THE DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN AND OF THE CITIZEN - 1789



This French Declaration set out the universal and inalienable rights of men/citizens (not women unfortunately!) It stated that all are born equal and free, all can participate in civil and political life, can think and speak freely, be presumed innocent until proven guilty and that all have the right to own private property.

Image: *The Rights of Man and of the Citizen*



THE U.S. BILL OF RIGHTS – 1789

This is made up of the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution. These include the freedoms of speech, press and assembly, the right to a fair trial and freedom from unreasonable search and seizure.

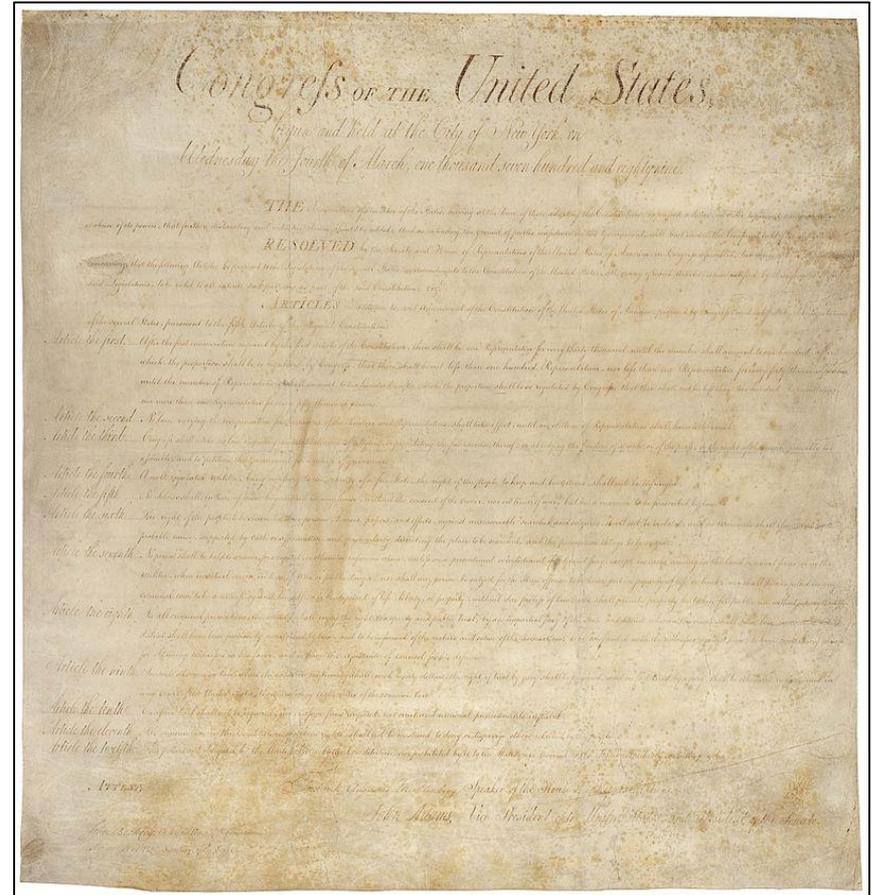


Image: Bill of Rights 1789

National Archives and Records Administration



THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS – 1864-1977



Image: *German Red Cross nurses during WWI in 1915 attending to wounded soldiers*

Unknown photographer. German Red Cross

These treaties focused on alleviating the effects of war on soldiers and civilians. The conventions state the neutral status of the sick and wounded, allow the provision of protection and relief for the wounded and establish the humane treatment of prisoners of war.



WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE - 1893



After years of effort by suffrage campaigners led by Kate Sheppard, women won the right to vote in September 1893. New Zealand became the first independent country where women could vote in parliamentary elections.

Image: *Kate Sheppard*

Photo from 1905, photographer unknown



THE UNITED NATIONS - 1945

The United Nations was established following the devastation of lives and property in World Wars One and Two.

“We the peoples of the United Nations are determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind.”



Image: *Flag of the United Nations*



THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS - 1948

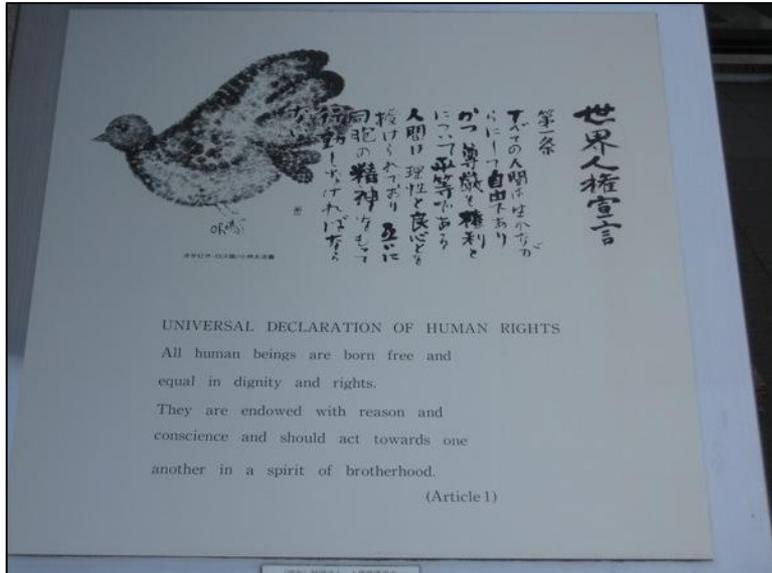


Image: *Plaque of the UDHR in front of the Joukyou Gimin Memorial Museum, Japan*

Owner - HappyBD58. Licenced under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is part of the International Bill of Human Rights. The thirty articles cover the rights of the individual such as the freedom from slavery; political and civil rights such as the freedoms of speech and association; and economic, social and cultural rights such as the right to education and adequate housing.

In 1948 New Zealand lobbied to ensure “freedom from want” was alongside rights such as freedom of speech and freedom from torture.



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL - 1961

In 1961, British lawyer Peter Benenson was outraged when two Portuguese students were jailed just for raising a toast to freedom. He wrote an article and launched a campaign that provoked an incredible response across the world.

Benenson's call to action sparked the idea that people everywhere can unite in solidarity for justice and freedom. Amnesty International was founded and is now the world's largest human rights organisation.

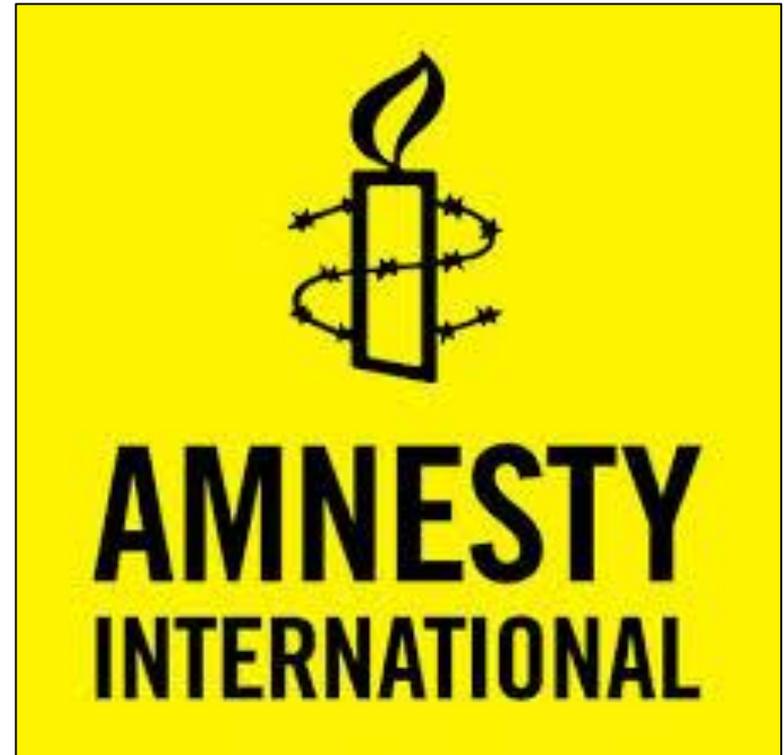


Image: *Amnesty International logo*



THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS – 1976



Image: *Torture Reconstruction.*
Amnesty International.

This covenant is also part of the International Bill of Rights. It covers civil and political rights such as the right to life and liberty, political participation and non-discrimination.

New Zealand has many these rights written into its Bill of Rights.



THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS - 1966

This covenant is part of the International Bill of Rights, along with its equivalent on civil and political rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

It covers economic, social and cultural rights such as the right to work for fair wages, holiday and leisure time, the protection of the family and the right to adequate food, housing and clothing.

New Zealand ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) in 1978.



Image: *Roma children at school*

Amnesty International

