



## A Summary of United Nations Agreements on Human Rights

---

### **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

The UDHR is the first international statement to use the term "human rights", and has been adopted by the Human Rights movement as a charter. It is short, and worth reading in its entirety -- a summary would be about as long as the document itself.

### **Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**

This covenant details the basic civil and political rights of individuals and nations.

Among the rights of nations are:

- the right to self determination
- the right to own, trade, and dispose of their property freely, and not be deprived of their means of subsistence

Among the rights of individuals are:

- the right to legal recourse when their rights have been violated, even if the violator was acting in an official capacity
- the right to life
- the right to liberty and freedom of movement
- the right to equality before the law
- the right to presumption of innocence til proven guilty
- the right to appeal a conviction
- the right to be recognized as a person before the law
- the right to privacy and protection of that privacy by law
- freedom of thought, conscience, and religion
- freedom of opinion and expression
- freedom of assembly and association

The covenant forbids torture and inhuman or degrading treatment, slavery or involuntary servitude, arbitrary arrest and detention, and debtor's prisons. It forbids propaganda advocating either war or hatred based on race, religion, national origin, or language.

It provides for the right of people to choose freely whom they will marry and to found a family, and requires that the duties and obligations of marriage and family be shared equally between partners. It guarantees the rights of children and prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, color, national origin, or language.

It also restricts the death penalty to the most serious of crimes, guarantees condemned people the right to appeal for commutation to a lesser penalty, and forbids the death penalty entirely for people under 18 years of age.

The covenant permits governments to temporarily suspend some of these rights in cases of civil emergency only, and lists those rights which cannot be suspended for any reason. It also establishes the UN Human Rights Commission.

After almost two decades of negotiations and rewriting, the text of the Universal Covenant on Civil and Political Rights was agreed upon in 1966. In 1976, after being ratified by the required 35 states, it became international law.

<http://www.hrweb.org/legal/udhr.html>