

THE NOBEL PRIZE

Speaker's manuscript – The fight for human rights

1. What are human rights?

The thirty articles about our freedoms and rights are basically about

- being treated fairly and not discriminated against because of things like gender, sexual orientation, age, disability or ethnic identity
- having the ability to influence our lives and the society we live in
- having the ability to express ourselves and having access to information and opinions and the ability to spread them



Human rights limit the power governments have over individuals and also list the obligations that governments have toward individuals.

2. When did the idea of human rights first come up?

- The idea that we are born free has its roots far back in history. At the time of the French Revolution of 1789, France passed the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen. The revolution was a political rebellion that put an end to the power of the monarchy and the privileges of the nobility. It proclaimed instead the human rights of **liberty, equality and fraternity**.



3. Why was the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights created?

- During the Second World War, 60 million people lost their lives.
- After the war, many countries began cooperating through the United Nations, or UN. People didn't want any of the horrible and cruel things that happened during the war to ever happen again, and they realised that there were no international rules for what rights people have.



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4. Who created the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

- The work on human rights began in 1946, when the United Nations Commission on Human Rights was founded. A commission is a group of knowledgeable people.
- Those who worked to try to put everyone's human rights into writing were Eleanor Roosevelt, a diplomat from the United States; Charles Malik, a diplomat and philosopher from Lebanon; René Cassin, a lawyer from France; John Peters Humphrey, a lawyer from Canada; and Peng Chun Chang, a diplomat and lawyer from China.



5. When were the universal human rights passed?

- On 10 December 1948, the United Nations General Assembly voted on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Of the 56 member states, 48 voted for, none voted against and 8 chose not to vote.
- The UN encouraged all of its member states to spread the text of the declaration around the world, regardless of the political differences between one country and another, and to make sure it was known, read and understood, especially in schools.
- The UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights has been translated into more than 500 different languages, making it (according to *The Guinness Book of Records*) the most translated document in the world.



6. How does the UN defend human rights?

- Today there are 193 member states in the United Nations, and almost every country in the world has accepted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a contract between its government and its people.
- Many countries have incorporated these rights into their own laws, but many others have not. In order to strengthen the protection of human rights, therefore, the UN establishes conventions, which are a form of agreement. When a convention is signed, it becomes legally binding, so countries that sign a convention are required to follow it and report to the UN on how they are fulfilling its demands. An example is the international convention of 1965 that called for putting an end to all forms of racial discrimination.
- The UN was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2001 for its efforts to create a better-organised and more peaceful world.



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7. Question for students

- Can you name any of the universal human rights?
- Think about it on your own or together with your neighbour for a minute or two.



8. What rights are covered in Articles 1–5?

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is made up of 30 articles – a list of 30 freedoms and rights.
- The first article begins with the words, ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.’
- Articles 1–5 also state that all of us have the right to live without being tortured, abused or enslaved.



9. What rights are covered in Articles 6–11?

- The **rule of law** means that there is legal protection for citizens against abuse – that the country has laws that protect people from, for example, being charged with a crime or put on trial without sufficient evidence.
- Articles 6–11 say that laws must be applied equally to all people, and that the court system must be fair.



10. What rights are covered in Articles 12–18?

- **Self-determination** means that people can be themselves without being oppressed for who they are.
- Articles 12–18 say, for example, that no one may say mean and false things about someone else. If anyone is being mistreated in their country, for example because they think differently or have a different religion, then they have the right to flee to another country.
- Self-determination also means that people can get married to anyone they want, and that no one can be forced to marry someone they don't want to.



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11. What rights are covered in Articles 19–21?

- The word *democracy* means “power of the people” and is a political system in which the citizens choose who will govern them.
- Article 19 says that all of us have the right to think whatever we want about politics and religion, for example, and the right to express our opinions. We have the right to seek out, receive and spread information and ideas using any kind of media and regardless of borders.
- Article 20 says that everyone has the right to form a group or association and to hold peaceful meetings whenever they want. This freedom of assembly is as important to a working democracy as freedom of expression. We must be able to come together with others to discuss issues and promote our opinions.
- Article 21 says that everyone has the right to vote for whomever they want and that everyone’s vote is worth as much as anyone else’s. Countries have to hold elections frequently so that people can vote to choose who will control their country.



12. What rights are covered in Articles 22–25?

- Articles 22–25 say that everyone deserves to have enough money to live on – enough for food, clothing, home and health care. People must be given help by society if they don’t have enough money or they don’t have a place to live.



13. What rights are covered in Articles 26–27?

- Article 26 says that everyone has the right to go to school and that it should be free.
- Article 27 says that everyone has the right to enjoy culture, like reading books or going to the movies.



14. What rights are covered in Articles 28–30?

- Articles 28–30 say that everyone has a right to live in a society and a world where they can have the freedoms and rights listed in the UN declaration, and that everyone must do their part to help the society they live in be free.



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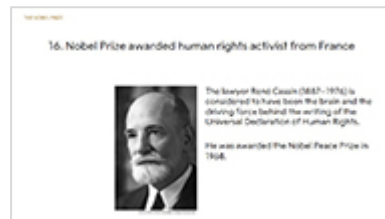
15. How much of the world has human rights today?

- Freedom House is an organisation that works to increase freedom and democracy all over the world. Here they have given countries different scores based on how many freedoms and rights their citizens have.
- The countries with the highest scores are green, and those with the lowest scores are purple.
- The yellow-coloured countries score in the middle, and often lose points because of corruption and inadequate laws to protect people.
- There is more than one way to have a democratic society – democracy can vary over time and from one country to another. For democracy to work, there must be respect for human rights. The reverse is also true: people cannot be guaranteed their human rights unless their society runs on fair, democratic rules.



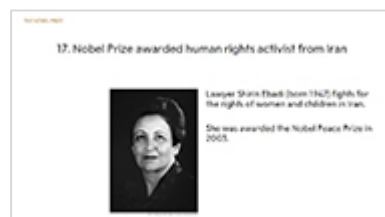
16. Nobel Prize awarded human rights activist from France

- Many of the Nobel Laureates who have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize have fought for human rights and made a difference. Next we'll get to know a few of them.
- As a soldier during the First World War, the young French lawyer René Cassin was seriously injured. The experience made a lifelong impact on him. During the years between the First and Second World Wars, Cassin represented France in the League of Nations (which preceded the United Nations) and worked for demilitarisation and reconciliation between nations that had been enemies. But then Hitler came to power in Germany and put an end to that work.
- After the Second World War, Cassin became the brain and the driving force behind the UN commission responsible for the writing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- In 1968, René Cassin was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his work on human rights.



17. Nobel Prize awarded human rights activist from Iran

- Iran is a theocratic country – it is governed by religious leaders. It has a democratically elected president and a parliament, but since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, in practice the power is held by conservative religious leaders known as mullahs.
- There are no political parties, and freedom of expression and human rights are not respected – executions and inhumane punishment are everyday occurrences and there is a widespread feeling of insecurity.



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- Shirin Ebadi was Iran's first woman judge, but after the Islamic Revolution she was kicked out of her profession for being a woman. She then went into business for herself and began defending people who were being persecuted by the authorities. In 2000 she was put in prison for criticising the conditions in her country. She has been imprisoned several times.
- Ebadi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003 for her contributions to democracy and human rights in Iran. She has focused in particular on fighting for the rights of women and children.

18. Nobel Prize awarded human rights activist from Iraq

- Nadia Murad grew up in northern Iraq and belongs to the Yazidi ethnic group.
- In 2014, the Islamic State conducted a series of attacks against Yazidi villages in northern Iraq, and hundreds were killed in Murad's own village, including her mother and several of her brothers. They took the younger women as slaves. For three months, Murad was tortured and repeatedly raped before she finally succeeded in escaping.
- Today she is a human rights activist who works to increase awareness about human trafficking and sexual violence against women and girls and tries to get world leaders to do more to stop them.
- In 2018 she and Dr Denis Mukwege of the Democratic Republic of Congo were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize 'for their efforts to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict.'



19. Nobel Prize awarded human rights activist from the United States

- Even after slavery was ended in the United States in 1865, African Americans continued to be victimised by violence and oppression. Martin Luther King Jr. grew up in the American South, where blacks and whites were supposed to remain separated in public places such as parks, buses and schools. Anyone who didn't obey these segregation laws could be arrested.
- King became well-known when he led a campaign against bus segregation in Montgomery, Alabama. The thirteen-month-long boycott of the city's bus system was a success, and racial discrimination on public transportation came to an end.
- In 1963, 250,000 demonstrators marched to the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, where King gave his famous 'I Have a Dream' speech, in which he envisions that his four children 'will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin, but by the content of their character.' The next year, legislation was passed forbidding racial discrimination in the United States.



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- King was a proponent of non-violent demonstration – that activists should never use violence even if they are provoked or themselves treated with violence.
- Martin Luther King Jr. was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 for his non-violent fight against racism.
- He was murdered in 1968.

20.

Next you'll get a chance to learn about some other Nobel Prize winning human rights activists from different parts of the world.

