

75 Years Of Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Why In News

- The **75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** was celebrated on **December 10, 2023**.
- The UDHR was the **first legal document** to establish that fundamental human rights should be universally protected. The UN General Assembly **adopted it in 1948**.



- The **UN General Assembly** approved the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at a meeting in Paris – laying one of the foundation stones of the international order that emerged following the horrors of World War II.
- The declaration was proclaimed as “a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations.” In practice, it hasn’t always turned out that way over the subsequent decades.



- As the document turns 75, U.N. **human rights chief Volker Türk** said this week that the world is at a “somber moment in history,” wracked by conflicts and crises. But he insisted that “human rights have not failed.”

What Is Universal Declaration

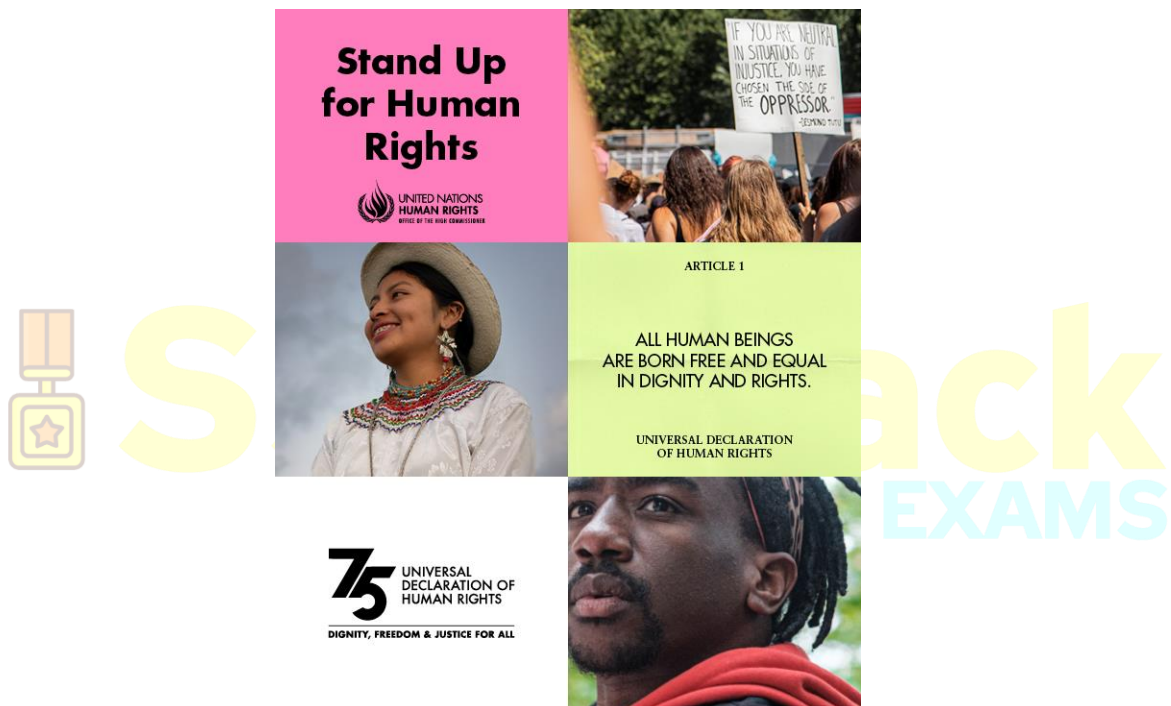
- A relatively compact document, the declaration consists of a preamble and 30 articles setting out fundamental rights and freedoms.
- **Article 1** states that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” And **Article 2** says that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms the declaration sets out, “without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.”



- **Other articles state that** “everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person,” and that no one “shall be held in slavery or servitude” or “subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”
- The declaration says that “**all are equal before the law**” and that everyone is entitled to “a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal.”
- And it says that “everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.”
- The declaration enshrines the **rights to freedom of religion**; to freedom of opinion and expression; and to freedom of peaceful assembly. And it says that everyone has the right to education.

How Was It Drawn Up

- The **declaration was born of the “never again”** sentiment among political leaders after two world wars and the Holocaust.
- On top of the **U.N. Charter**, the document that founded the United Nations in 1945, countries decided to draw up what the U.N. calls a **“road map” to guarantee the rights of every individual.**
- A formal drafting committee was chaired by **Eleanor Roosevelt** and consisted of members of the new Commission on Human Rights from eight countries, selected to reflect geographical distribution.



- Over **50 U.N. member countries** participated in the final drafting in 1948, and the U.N. General Assembly approved the result on **Dec. 10, 1948**, with eight countries abstaining but none voting against.
- Human rights group **Amnesty International** notes that the declaration was drawn up at a time when much of the world’s population lived under colonial rule but says that “its drafting ultimately could not be controlled by the powerful alone.
- ” It says that **smaller nations “outmaneuvered the large,”** ensuring that the final text promised human rights for all without distinction, and that female delegates ensured equal rights for men and women were affirmed.

○ *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a declaration adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948 at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris. The Declaration has been translated into at least **375 languages and dialects**, making it the most widely translated document in the world.*



What Did It Achieve

- The declaration **isn't a treaty and isn't legally binding** in itself, but the principles it sets out have been incorporated into many countries' laws and it is viewed as the basis for international human rights law.
- It is recognized as having inspired and paved the way for more than **70 human rights treaties** at global and regional levels, according to the U.N.

Goal of the Anti-Apartheid movement

- To end the racist practice and legal segregation of the Apartheid government.
- To free the black South Africans from the political and economic control of the white Afrikaner minority.



- "It inspired the **decolonization movement**, it inspired the anti-apartheid movement and it inspired freedom fighters all around the world, be it on gender

issues, be it on LGBTIQ+ issues, be it against racism,” U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Türk.

- “If we did not have it, we would be even in a more serious situation because then **you would have different standards**, and let’s also be very clear: It is the universal standard,” he said.
- He acknowledged that some have said it doesn’t apply to a specific religion, culture or region, but called that “absolute nonsense.”

What Is The Situation Now

- The 75th anniversary comes as **human rights are challenged** in the war between **Israel and Hamas**, **Russia’s war in Ukraine**, internal conflicts in Myanmar and Sudan and in a host of other places and situations.
- U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the universal declaration has been “too often misused and abused.”



- “It is **exploited for political gain** and it is ignored, often, by the very same people,” Guterres said in a speech in February to the U.N. Human Rights Council – itself frequently criticized because of some member countries’ own poor rights records. “Some governments chip away at it.
- Others use a wrecking ball.” Still, **Amnesty International** says the declaration “is living proof that a global vision for human rights is possible, is doable, can be realized.”
- Türk says despite the **many times the declaration has been ignored** or exploited, it is still relevant, and the **world should honour its successes** and learn from its failures.

- “Human rights are inherent to every human being. Leaders who ignore this truth imperil the people they are meant to serve,” he said.



Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status.

Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more.

The **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (UDHR) is a milestone document in the history of human rights. The Declaration was proclaimed by the **United Nations General Assembly** in Paris on 10 December 1948.

