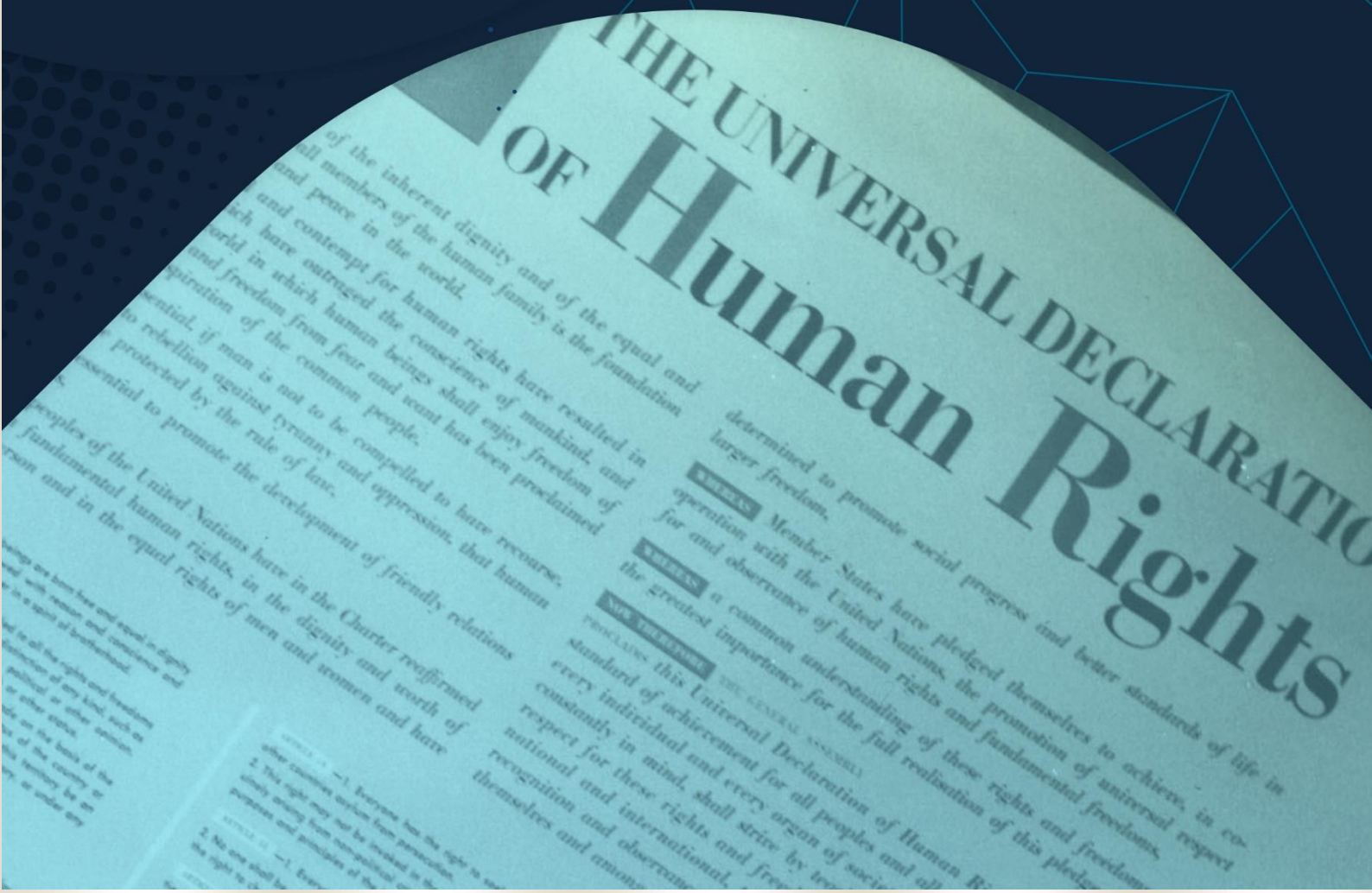


Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Progress & Challenges

Prepared by: Ali Muhammad & Marina Sabri

Edited by: Sherif Abdel Hamid

Reviewed by: Ayman Okeil





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Preamble

The “50 x 30 Human Rights for All” campaign, launched by **Maat for Peace, Development, and Human Rights** on December 10, 2022, and continued for a full year, provided an opportunity to delve deeper into the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. What struck me the most in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights preamble is the recognition of human dignity as the foundation for freedom, peace, and justice worldwide. However, it is disheartening to see that in certain parts of the world, particularly in conflict-ridden areas, dignity is not protected.

As we commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it serves as an invaluable occasion to reflect upon the principles outlined in this Declaration, which, despite their noble purpose, continue to be neglected in numerous places. The occupied Palestinian territories may serve as a glaring example of the absence of these rights, but this issue extends further to armed and terrorist groups in Yemen, Somalia, and the Syrian Arab Republic, who seize and control territories, perpetrating horrific violations against civilians, thereby eclipsing the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Contributing to the undermining of the Declaration is the alarming proliferation of double standards and cruelty. Western countries and the United States of America, evident in their shifting positions between the Russian-Ukrainian war and the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip, display double standards that erode the rights of certain groups while protecting others. It is crucial to remember that human rights are interconnected and indivisible.

Despite the current reality rife with conflicts, tensions, and dire human rights situations across various regions, I choose to view the glass as half full in all circumstances. Even in the face of challenges, the opportunity remains to leverage the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration as a robust tool to promote and realize economic and social rights, as well as the right to development.

In conclusion, as I witness the ongoing violations occurring worldwide, I refuse to lose hope for a better tomorrow. I firmly believe that today is better than yesterday, and I hold onto the hope that we will draw upon the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its rights as a compass for all, ensuring a brighter future for ourselves and future generations. Let us fulfill the promise embedded in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to leave no one behind in our pursuit of sustainable development.

Ayman Okeil

December 2023



Introduction

In the aftermath of World War II, concluded on September 2, 1945, with the Japanese Empire's surrender, several countries took the lead in initiating the adoption of a document aimed at preventing the violations that occurred during the war and addressing the consequences of the global economic recession. This recession impacted the Allied powers, namely the United States, the Soviet Union, and Britain, as well as the Axis Powers, namely Germany, Italy, and Japan. The development of this document also served to activate a fundamental pillar of the United Nations' work, which is the promotion of human rights. Consequently, representatives from 58 member states of the United Nations at the time convened to vote on the Declaration document. The majority, comprising 48 countries, including four Arab countries (Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon), approved the document, while eight countries abstained from voting. Two countries, Yemen and Honduras, were absent from the session. Notably, there was no opposition to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

On December 10, 1948, the United Nations General Assembly issued Resolution 217 A, officially adopting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This resolution symbolized a beacon of light emerging from the darkness that enshrouded the world during World War II and the subsequent economic depression, which affected millions of people globally. The adoption of the document on December 10, 1948, stands as a momentous event in human history. Human Rights Day, designated by the United Nations General Assembly on the same day, further emphasizes the significance of the Declaration. The document consists of a preamble and thirty articles, outlining the fundamental principles of the basic rights and freedoms that all individuals should enjoy universally, irrespective of gender, religion, race, national origin, or political beliefs. While countries may differ in their approach to the Declaration, with some viewing it as a non-legally binding Declaration and others considering it as a set of principles to be implemented and integrated into local and national legislation, opportunities for progress in implementing the principles contained within the Declaration exist. Notably, significant advancements have already been made in recent years due to the influence of this document.

Despite discrepancies in interpretation, Universal Declaration of Human Rights remains the most important document globally and holds the distinction of being the most translated document, available in over 500 languages. The seventy-fifth

anniversary of its adoption in December 2023 underscores the enduring importance of the Universal Declaration. Understanding the profound significance of this Declaration requires acknowledging the grim reality that existed before its adoption. Before its establishment, wars were accompanied by grave human rights violations, resulting in an estimated 50 to 80 million victims of World War II and countless displaced individuals living in refugee camps.

The seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights arrives in a year marked by the tragic loss of civilian lives in wars and armed conflicts. In the occupied Palestinian territories alone, over 19,000 civilians were killed, with women and children comprising 70% of the victims. Furthermore, the prevalence of double standards has reached unprecedented levels. Western countries, particularly the United States of America, have historically been criticized for applying inconsistent approaches to human rights. These challenges hinder the effective implementation of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides an ideal opportunity to assess its impact over the past 75 years and the progress made based on its principles. Simultaneously, this anniversary serves as a platform to identify the threats and challenges that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights faces and explore potential solutions to enhance its effectiveness. This report concludes the 50 x 30 Human Rights for All campaign, launched by Maat on December 10, 2022, and spanning until December 2023, the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The report is divided into four sections:

1. Progress Accompanying Adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
2. Challenges Facing Universal Declaration of Human Rights
3. Threats to Universal Declaration of Human Rights
4. Solutions to Enhance Universal Declaration of Human Rights



Methodology:

This report is based on Maat's perspective, which was shaped through its engagement with international human rights mechanisms. During the 50-week duration of the 50 x 30 Human Rights for All campaign, Maat thoroughly examined all the materials and texts encompassed within the Declaration document. Additionally, the report incorporates the viewpoints of various human rights experts who have critiqued the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Moreover, it draws on a questionnaire conducted by the Open Society Foundation, which gathered opinions from 36,000 individuals worldwide regarding the effectiveness of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



Section I: Progress Accompanying Adoption of Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Some human rights experts argue that the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has brought about significant advancements in promoting human rights. They emphasize that the glass should be seen as half full when evaluating the document's impact. The adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights sparked negotiations on numerous international human rights agreements. The momentum generated by the ratification of these agreements compelled countries to uphold ethical considerations and ensure the protection of human rights.¹ Many countries made commitments to improve their human rights records upon ratifying these agreements. Notably, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights gained consensus and universality,² with its principles serving as ideals for both states and individuals. Additionally, several human rights projects have been based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and states have pledged to promote human rights on the occasion of its 75th anniversary.

1. Adoption of International Human Rights Conventions

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, along with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, collectively form the International Bill of Human Rights.³ Furthermore, the Universal

¹ Progress and Possibility: Reflecting on 75 Years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, <https://www.csis.org/events/progress-and-possibility-reflecting-75-years-universal-declaration-human-rights>

² Ibid

³ Fact Sheet No.2 (Rev.1), The International Bill of Human Rights, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FactSheet2Rev.1en.pdf>

Declaration of Human Rights has inspired a range of other essential human rights conventions that establish fundamental principles for the promotion and protection of human rights. For example, it played a crucial role in the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination,⁴ the Convention against Torture, and the Convention for the Protection of Persons from Enforced Disappearance.⁵ Additionally, it served as the basis for conventions safeguarding the rights of specific groups, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers. The table below presents the agreements inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the number of states that have become parties to each agreement.

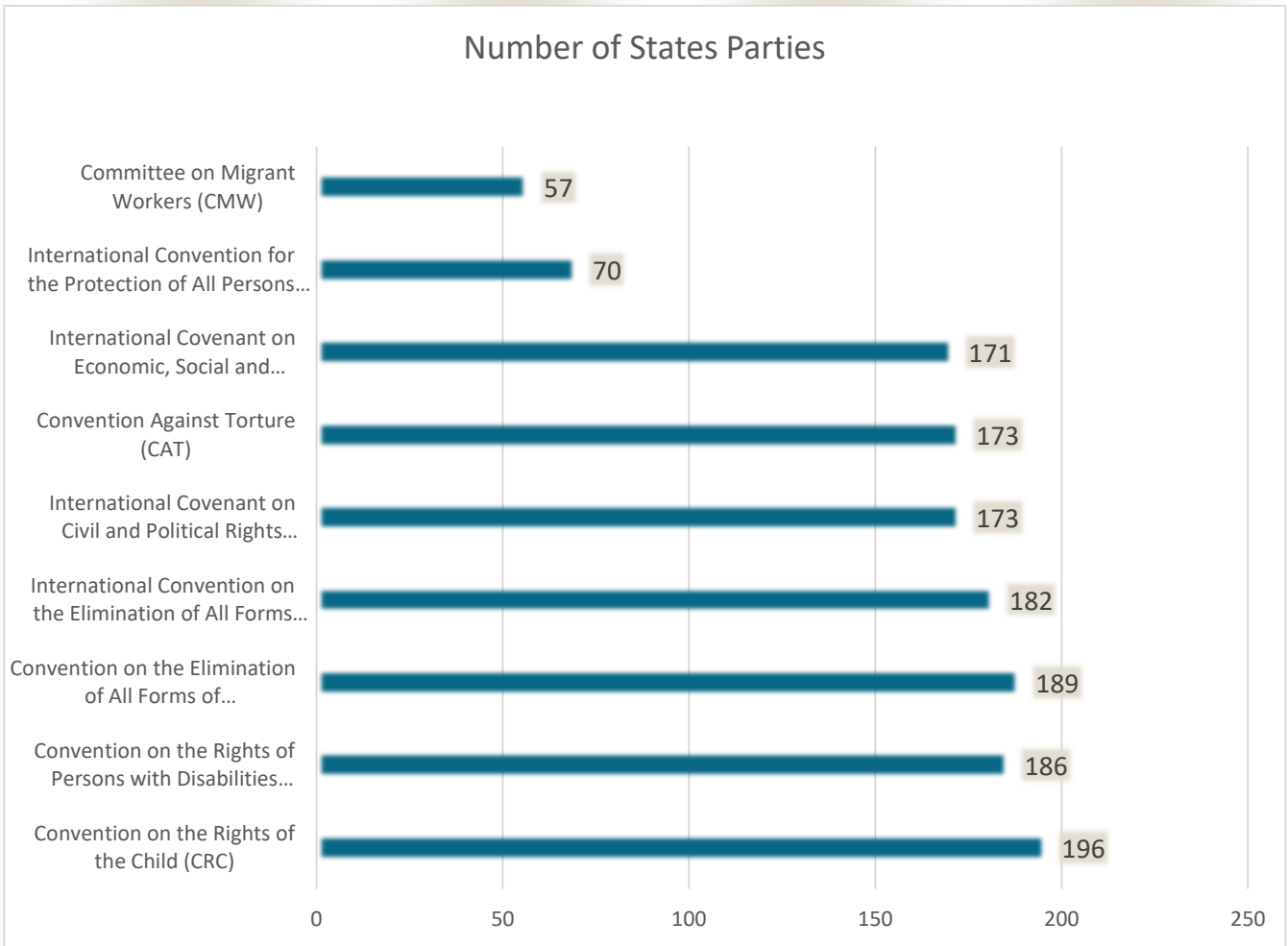
Table I: Number of states party to international human rights conventions

Convention/Treaty	# of States Parties
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	196
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)	186
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)	189
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)	182
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	173
Convention Against Torture (CAT)	173
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)	171
International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance	70
Committee on Migrant Workers (CMW)	57

⁴ International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-elimination-all-forms-racial>

⁵ International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-protection-all-persons-enforced>

Fig. I: States parties to international human rights conventions and treaties



The above figure clearly demonstrates the high rate of ratification of international human rights conventions by states. Consequently, experts argue that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights played a pivotal role in the development of subsequent human rights agreements, including those addressing racial discrimination, women's rights, and the rights of individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, the Declaration and the international human rights conventions that emerged from it have provided the foundation for various international conferences, leading to the formulation of crucial action plans. These plans have served as guiding principles for respecting and promoting human rights, covering topics such as women's issues, reproductive rights, housing, health, and development. Despite challenges in compliance faced by countries that have ratified these agreements, it is evident that the provisions of international human rights agreements have been incorporated as guarantees within the constitutional and legislative frameworks of these countries.

However, despite the praise for these agreements, some experts argue that the measures taken by states to address human rights violations remain largely selective and voluntary, even with the committees established by international agreements providing greater means to hold states accountable. While the Universal Declaration of Human Rights enjoys widespread support, the ratification of associated treaties is far from universal, particularly regarding the Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and the Convention for the Protection of Persons from Enforced Disappearance. Furthermore, only 33 out of 197 states participating in the human rights treaty system fully comply with their treaty obligations. As of the end of 2018, various treaty bodies had received a total of 585 overdue reports.⁶ Additionally, some countries have significant delays in submitting reports to treaty committees, with some reports being overdue for more than five years. For instance, 21 countries have not yet submitted their initial reports to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,⁷ despite a high-level event held by the Commission and the High Commissioner for Human Rights in commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration. However, several countries committed themselves to submitting their reports to the treaty bodies during this event.⁸

2. Universality of Rights in Declaration

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights laid the foundation for a consensus among United Nations member states to respect the rights it encompasses. Although 48 countries initially agreed to the Declaration upon its adoption, during the Second World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, 190 countries expressed their commitment to upholding universal human rights. Presently, there are 193 countries worldwide committed to the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. States' commitment to the Declaration and the subsequent agreements derived from it contributes to the reinforcement of fundamental rights. For instance, when states ratify the International Covenants and the Convention against Torture, they are obligated to amend their domestic laws in accordance with the provisions outlined in these agreements. This ensures the implementation of the rights enshrined in the Declaration,

⁶ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights at Seventy: Progress and Challenges, <https://www.ethicsandinternationalaffairs.org/journal/the-universal-declaration-of-human-rights-at-seventy-progress-and-challenges>

⁷ Report of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on its twenty-eighth session (6–24 March 2023), <http://tinyurl.com/5n7dn85b>

⁸ What were the main human rights commitments pledged at the 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? <http://tinyurl.com/3c49t3ua>



regardless of any disagreements about the extent to which these rights are guaranteed and respected. The table below illustrates the evolution of commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Table II: Evolution of Commitment to Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Evolution of Commitment to Declaration	# of States	Venue
Year - 1948	48	General Assembly
Year - 1993	190	World Conference on Human Rights
Year - 2006	193	World Conference on Human Rights

The achievement of consensus through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is not only evidenced by the substantial number of countries that expressed their commitment to the document, but also by the diverse representation of people from different cultures who participated in its drafting. The two-year event involved representatives from various countries, including Australia, Canada, Chile, China, Egypt, France, Lebanon, the Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom.⁹

3. Human Rights Projects Based on Declaration

Numerous projects aimed at promoting human rights have been developed by organizations such as Maat, drawing inspiration from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These projects have used the Declaration as a foundational document, raising awareness about the rights it encompasses among specific target groups. One example is the Women, Business and Law Project of the World Bank, which is built upon the principle of equality enshrined in Article II of the Universal Declaration. This project seeks to highlight and advance gender equality in business and legal contexts, aligning with the principles outlined in the Declaration.

In Canada, Defining Moments Canada launched the "Realizing the Pledge" project, focusing on examining the rights articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was drafted by Canadian John Humphreys and adopted by the United

⁹ THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IS TURNING 75: HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW, <https://unfoundation.org/blog/post/the-universal-declaration-of-human-rights-is-turning-75-heres-what-you-need-to-know/>



Nations in 1948. This project explores instances where Canada has engaged in international or domestic affairs and assesses the country's commitment to implementing the Declaration's articles. By utilizing the materials of the Universal Declaration, "Realizing the Pledge" aims to shed light on Canada's role in promoting human rights.

Maat also reviewed the Justseeds Foundation project, which offers a technical interpretation of the articles and principles of the Universal Declaration. This initiative raises awareness about the Declaration's content and significance. Additionally, a group of artists launched the "UDHRquilt" project, using handicrafts as a means to document the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This creative endeavor serves to raise awareness about the challenges facing the Declaration and the violations it confronts.¹⁰

4. Decisions Guided by Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Maat has observed that the Human Rights Council has made a wide range of decisions that draw guidance from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These decisions hold significant importance as they contribute to the advancement of human rights. For instance, some decisions involve providing technical and artistic assistance to countries affected by armed conflicts, such as Yemen and Somalia. While these efforts may be limited, they aim to enhance the capacities of governmental institutions in those regions. Additionally, the decisions encompass support for investigative committees, including those investigating allegations of human rights violations in Yemen.¹¹ The table below presents the number of decisions adopted by the Human Rights Council during nine sessions held annually.

Table III: Resolutions Adopted by Human Rights Council

Number of Decisions Approved	Year
109	2023
97	2022
80	2021

¹⁰ What is the #UDHR Quilt Project? <https://quilts.moadoph.gov.au/>

¹¹ Human Rights council, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/sessions>



5. Commitments to Promote Human Rights

Maat has recognized the progress that can be achieved in relation to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights through the commitments made by states to promote the rights outlined in the Declaration. During the seventy-fifth anniversary celebration of the Declaration on December 12, 2023, several member states pledged to take additional measures and allocate funding to advance human rights. The President of the Human Rights Council and Head of the Treaties Division stated, during a pledging panel discussion, that the implementation of these commitments would significantly strengthen human rights, not only within individual countries but globally. Five countries specifically pledged financial contributions to support the work of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the implementation of human rights on the ground. This includes deploying human rights experts to countries facing urgent human rights situations.

Furthermore, a significant number of member states, approximately 10%, pledged to prioritize the rights of children and youth and involve them in decision-making processes. The pledges also highlighted the importance of addressing the rights of persons with disabilities. Many countries committed to ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, establishing national institutions for persons with disabilities, and ensuring access to public services, such as education. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities received more than 7% of the total commitments made. Additionally, some countries pledged to develop national human rights strategies. For instance, the State of Bahrain pledged to the High Commissioner for Human Rights to launch a national human rights strategy by February 2024.¹²

Notable commitments were also made by various United Nations programs to promote specific rights. For example, the United Nations Development Program pledged

¹² Pledge submitted by Bahrain to the Human Rights 75 Secretariat December 2023, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/udhr/publishingimages/75udhr/Bahrain_AR.pdf

to advance the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment in 100 countries by 2023.¹³ The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime committed to providing technical assistance to 70 countries over the next five years, until 2028, with a focus on strengthening the right to health and an adequate standard of living, as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Table IV: Country Pledges during Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Celebration

Geographical Group	Pledges Made in Context of 75th Anniversary	Specific Commitments Made
Asia and the Pacific	Ensuring the rights of children and youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing legislative measures to promote children's rights • Combating forced recruitment • Initiatives to protect children online
African Group	Establishing and strengthening national human rights plans and institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activating national human rights institutions • Strengthening national human rights institutions in accordance with the Paris Principles
Latin America and the Caribbean	Establishing national human rights mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing capacity of national human rights institutions • Organizing an international symposium on national human rights mechanisms
Western Europe	Collaborating with the High Commissioner for Human Rights Strengthening the work of human rights defenders Prioritizing freedom of religion and belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing financial contributions to the High Commissioner for Human Rights • Building international alliances to support freedom of religion and belief • Funding human rights defenders
Eastern Europe	Strengthening international order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating in restoration of the rules-based international order

These pledges, even if only partially implemented, contribute to the promotion of human rights, particularly economic and social rights, as well as the rights of vulnerable groups. This, in turn, aids in the realization of the rights outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

¹³ UNDP pledges to strengthen commitment to human rights and sustainable development, <https://www.undp.org/press-releases/undp-pledges-strengthen-commitment-human-rights-and-sustainable-development>



Section II: Challenges Facing Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights presents an opportunity to identify the challenges that have hindered and continue to hinder its implementation. During the preparation of the report by Maat, several challenges affecting the effective implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were identified.

1. Institutional Challenge and Lack of Implementation Mechanism

One of the primary challenges raised by human rights experts regarding the effectiveness of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is its lack of a clear implementation mechanism.¹⁴ While the Declaration, like other UN Declarations, sets aspirational goals, it does not provide a comprehensive framework for ensuring the realization of the rights it contains.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights does not establish mechanisms to monitor progress or provide support for the implementation of its rights. Although the Declaration enjoys broad support, it is important to recognize that individuals who are entitled to the rights outlined in the Declaration reside within sovereign states.

¹⁴ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights at Seventy: Progress and Challenges, <https://www.ethicsandinternationalaffairs.org/journal/the-universal-declaration-of-human-rights-at-seventy-progress-and-challenges>

Therefore, it is ultimately the responsibility of states to promote and protect human rights. Some experts argue that monitoring bodies established under agreements based on the Declaration fulfill the role of monitoring implementation. However, others propose the need for international institutional mechanisms, such as the General Assembly, the Security Council, and the Economic and Social Council, to ensure efficient and effective implementation. Without such mechanisms in place, the impact of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will remain limited.¹⁵

2. Selectivity and Fragmentation of Rights Contained in the Universal Declaration

The preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights emphasizes the interconnection, indivisibility, and complementarity of human rights. However, certain Western countries, including the United States of America, still prioritize civil and political rights over economic and social rights. It is worth noting that although the United States claims to uphold human rights globally, it has not ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. Despite receiving 63 recommendations from member states in the third round of the Universal Periodic Review urging them to join international treaties, the United States has indicated that it may not be able to implement all the recommendations optimally.

In a related context, if we consider the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we observe that it is the most widely accepted international instrument, with 196 countries becoming parties to the convention. This means that all countries have ratified this instrument, except for the United States of America,¹⁶ which is also one of the few countries that have not joined the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.¹⁷ Alongside the absence of a robust accountability mechanism, another significant obstacle lies in the selective citation of human rights principles. However, this flaw does not lie in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

¹⁵ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights at Seventy: Progress and Challenges, <https://www.ethicsandinternationalaffairs.org/journal/the-universal-declaration-of-human-rights-at-seventy-progress-and-challenges>

¹⁶ Report of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, 85th Session (14 September-1 October 2020), 86th Session (18 January-5 February 2021), 87th Session (17 May-4 June 2021), 88th Session (6-24 September 2021), 89th Session, 17 January-11 February 2022), PAGE 1, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G22/355/02/PDF/G2235502.pdf?OpenElement>

¹⁷ UDHR at 75: American Fantasy or Fallacy? <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2023/12/14/udhr-at-75-american-fantasy-or-fallacy/>

itself, but rather in states that tend to emphasize certain areas of human rights in which they hold power, while disregarding other areas in which they fall short.

This trend was particularly evident during the Cold War, when the United States and Western powers criticized Eastern countries for deficiencies in civil and political rights. However, a recent opinion poll conducted by the Open Society Foundation, which involved 36,000 individuals worldwide, revealed that 41% of respondents consider economic and social rights to be the most important category of rights, surpassing the 25% who emphasized civil and political rights.¹⁸ Therefore, human rights experts stress the necessity of recognizing the interconnected and indivisible nature of the rights outlined in the Declaration, which must be developed holistically. Prioritizing certain rights while excluding others undermines progress in all rights equally.

3. Lack of Application and Widespread Violations

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is intended to apply to all individuals worldwide, irrespective of any considerations. However, the reality of human rights today reveals that the Declaration is neglected in some member states. For example, widespread violations of the rights of the Baloch and Kurds in Iran obstruct the implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, particularly in regard to the right to life, through extrajudicial killings and arbitrary executions.¹⁹ In Yemen, the Houthi group, characterized as engaging in terrorist practices under Security Council Resolution No. 2624, continues to commit grave human rights violations.²⁰ For instance, on December 5, a Houthi court in Sanaa issued a death sentence against women's rights defender Fatima Al-Aruli after a judicial process that lacked minimum standards for a fair trial. Furthermore, the Houthi group detains a number of activists belonging to the Baha'i minority in Yemen. In some European countries, such as the United Kingdom, France, and Sweden, there has been an increase in double standards and hate speech, resulting in serious violations of the rights of minorities, Arabs, and immigrants. Such practices present clear challenges to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and hinder its implementation. Violations of the rights enshrined in the Declaration, particularly in the context of armed conflicts, have further exacerbated the global refugee crisis. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, more than 35 million people have become refugees, and more than 62 million individuals were displaced in 2022. These statistics are subject to increase in 2023.²¹

¹⁸ TRENGTHENING THE HUMAN RIGHTS SYSTEM, Page 11, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/barometer-context-strengthening-human-rights-system-december-2023>

¹⁹ A RISE IN EXECUTIONS OF KURDS AND BALOCH BY IRAN, <https://nlka.net/eng/a-rise-in-executions-of-kurds-and-baloch-by-iran/>

²⁰ مجلس الأمن يتبنى قراراً يخضع جماعة الحوثيين ككيان لحظر السلاح، <https://news.un.org/ar/story/2022/02/1095132>

²¹ عدد النازحين في العالم يصل لمستوى قياسي مرعب، <http://tinyurl.com/mprrt86u>



Section III: Threats to Universal Declaration of Human Rights

This section of the report addresses the threats that pose a risk to the integrity of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and undermine the rights it encompasses. These threats often arise in the context of wars, armed conflicts, or extremist ideologies that advocate for the selective enjoyment of human rights, depriving certain individuals of their rights. An example of this is the rise of far-right movements in European countries.

1. Armed Conflicts Worldwide

One of the foremost challenges and threats confronting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the proliferation of armed conflicts. These conflicts result in an increasing number of civilian casualties, as civilians bear the brunt of the violence. Furthermore, they give rise to arbitrary practices that directly contradict the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These practices include the suppression of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, the breakdown of social protection systems, and the alarming escalation of sexual violence against women and girls. Over the past three years, a staggering 99 armed conflicts, both international and non-international, have erupted (see distribution of conflicts over the three years). In fact, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in his recent peace plan, acknowledged that the number of deaths resulting from armed conflicts in 2022 reached the highest level in two decades. Consequently, these conflicts erode the enjoyment of the rights outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, diminishing its significance and reducing it to mere ink on paper.



Table V: Number of conflicts in the last three years

Number of Conflicts	Conflict
33	2022
32	2021
34	2020

2. Challenge of Debt

The issue of debt represents a fundamental obstacle to the implementation of certain articles within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, particularly those pertaining to economic and social rights. It is estimated that 3.3 billion people reside in countries that allocate a larger portion of their budget to servicing debt interest than to investments in education or healthcare. Consequently, these countries face significant difficulties in advancing these crucial rights, which are fundamental components of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Additionally, these nations struggle to fulfill the right to social security outlined in the Declaration, as they are compelled to curtail spending on social protection due to the burden of debt payments.

A closer examination reveals that escalating external debt and the accompanying burden of interest payments lead to a reduction in education expenditure, particularly in developing countries. Research conducted by the World Bank indicates that a 1% increase in external debt results in a 1.4% decrease in education spending per school-age child. In low- and middle-income countries, a 5% increase in external debt could lead to a staggering \$12.8 billion reduction in education spending, jeopardizing the education of future generations and undermining the achievement of Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals. Data from Save the Children International supports this, revealing that out of 70 low- and middle-income countries, 21 allocate more funds to external debt than to education. Furthermore, projections indicate that by 2024, debt interest services could consume 10% of the annual budget of low- and middle-income countries, severely limiting expenditure on social rights such as the right to education. Consequently, the implementation of these rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights becomes significantly impeded.

3. Occupation as Obstacle to Implementing Declaration Document

When the Declaration was adopted, the participation of countries was limited due to ongoing colonization in various parts of the world, particularly in Africa and Asia. Over time, most of these countries gained their independence, except for the occupied Palestinian territories, where Israeli occupation forces remained. This occupation has resulted in the denial of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Since 1948, thousands of Palestinians, including women, children, and the elderly, have lost their lives. As an illustration, between October 7, 2023, and December 17, 2023, approximately 19,000 civilians, 70% of whom were women and children, were killed by the occupation forces in the Gaza Strip. In addition, more than 250 civilians were killed in the West Bank, despite posing no threat to the occupying forces. These actions flagrantly violate the right to life, a fundamental principle of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Furthermore, since October 7, 2023, Israel has detained over 3,200 Palestinians in the West Bank alone, including women and children, some of whom have been imprisoned without specific charges. This contradicts the right to protection from arbitrary detention, which is also safeguarded by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Despite claiming to be the first democracy in the Middle East, the Israeli occupation forces have taken the lives of 90 journalists in just three months in the Gaza Strip, an alarming statistic.

4. Rise of Far-Right Movements in Europe

The increasing influence of far-right movements in Europe poses a threat to several rights outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These parties prioritize their interests over the rights of others, espousing a nationalist ideology that marginalizes different societies, including migrant communities, refugees, and minorities. This hampers the ability to fully realize the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for these groups.

Section IV: Proposed Solutions to Advance Universal Declaration of Human Rights

This section of the report focuses on the available solutions to promote and advance human rights, recognizing the opportunity to make the Universal Declaration of Human Rights an effective tool. Several solutions can contribute to this goal, including increasing funding for the human rights pillar, incorporating the texts of the Declaration into educational curricula, and enhancing the field presence of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

1. Increasing Funding for Human Rights Pillar

The UN human rights system, despite being one of the three pillars of the UN, suffers from significant underfunding. The anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights presents an opportunity for both states and private donors to allocate more resources to human rights. This should not only be directed towards the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights but also towards all human rights bodies within the United Nations. Currently, more than 93 percent of the regular budget is allocated to the other two pillars: peace, security, and development. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights receives only around 4 percent of the United Nations' regular budget, with the majority of the Office's budget relying on voluntary contributions. However, the issue with voluntary contributions from countries, particularly European countries, is that they often come with conditions that may influence the direction of the Commission's work.

The table below illustrates the allocation of resources to the three pillars of the United Nations in the 2023 regular budget, highlighting a significant disparity in funding between the first two pillars and the human rights pillar.

Table VI: Allocation of Resources to UN Three Pillars of 2023 Regular Budget

Pillar	Amount Allocated
Peace and Security	3 (billion)
Development	590 (million)
Human Rights	134.5 (million)

Table VII: Distribution of human rights funding in the United Nations budget for 2022

Entity/Subject	Amount Allocated
High Commission	4.3%
Refugee Protection	1.29%
Palestinian Refugees	1.35
Humanitarian Assistance	59%

The limited funding dedicated to human rights within the United Nations budget results in inadequate attention given to human rights situations. It also renders institutions such as the Human Rights Council and the High Commissioner vulnerable to the conditions imposed by countries making voluntary contributions, as these conditions may impact their work. It is crucial to address these funding gaps and strive for the universal implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

2. Human Rights Education

Education plays a vital role in equipping individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills for their lives. When children are exposed to human rights curricula in classrooms, they are more likely to support human rights and possess a greater understanding of them. Human rights education fosters positive attitudes and commitment to human rights while reducing prejudices and improving social attitudes towards marginalized groups. Maat has identified disparities in the inclusion of human rights education in schools and pre-university curricula across different continents.

Table VIII: Inclusion of Universal Declaration in Educational Curricula by Countries and Continents

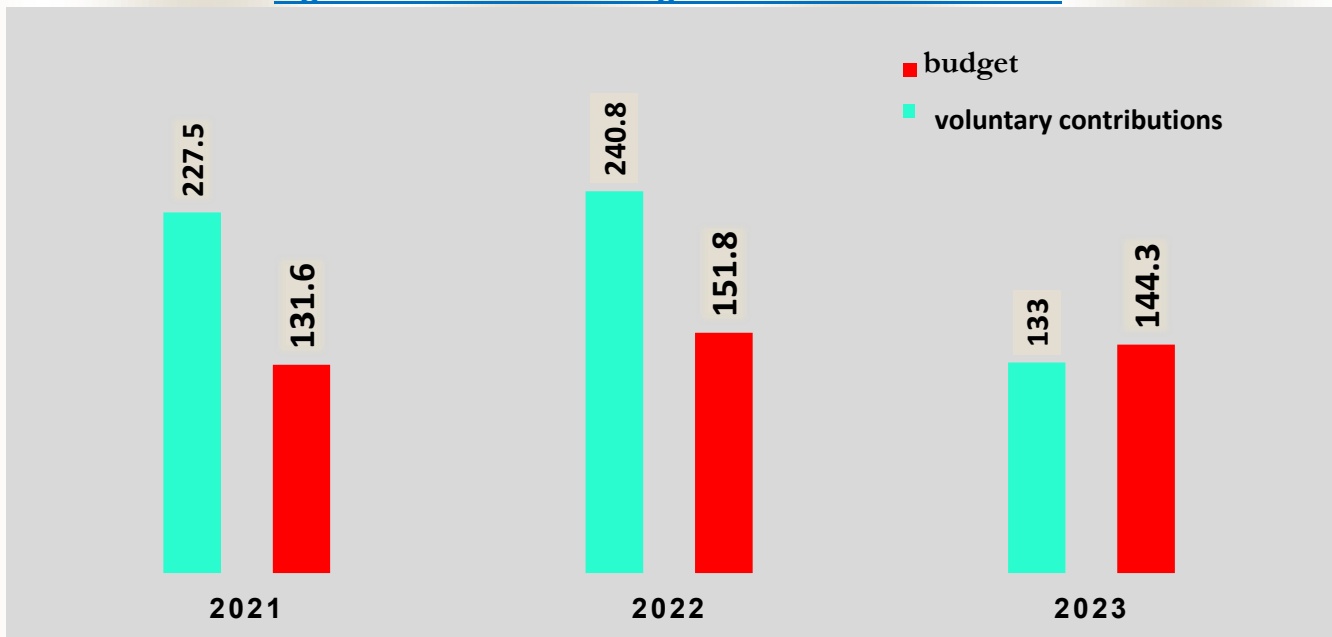
Continent	No of Countries	States including Declaration in Curricula
Europe	51	39
Africa	54	12
Asia	49	21
South America	12	7
North America	23	12
Australia	1	1

3. Increasing Field Presence of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

The field presence of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is categorized into two main types: stand-alone presence and collaborative arrangements. The stand-alone presence includes country offices, as well as independent and regional offices that directly report to the OHCHR. The collaborative arrangements involve human rights components within peace or political missions, reporting to the mission head and the High Commissioner, and human rights advisors within UN country teams, reporting to the UN Resident Coordinator and the High Commissioner. The decision on the type of presence in a particular location is influenced by factors such as the human rights situation in the country, security considerations, the presence of other international actors, available resources, administrative arrangements, and the scope of activities that can be undertaken. When the Commission was established in 1993, there were only two offices, but now there are 94 offices worldwide. However, this number only covers 43% of UN member states, highlighting the need to expand the presence of human rights offices globally, considering the limited resources available to the OHCHR. This expansion would further promote countries' commitment to the principles outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which serve as the foundation for the OHCHR's fieldwork.

Currently, less than 4% of the UN budget is allocated to the High Commissioner for Human Rights. This persistent lack of funding for the human rights pillar of the United Nations results in a heavy reliance on voluntary contributions. While these contributions are crucial for the Commission to carry out its mandate, they can also exert pressure from donor countries to safeguard their interests. The disparity between the required resources and the available funding is evident in the Commission's budget for 2023, which amounted to approximately \$277 million, including \$133 million from voluntary contributions as of April 2023. This means that voluntary contributions account for over 48% of the total budget.

Fig. II: Commission's Budget in the Last Three Years



The above figure illustrates that the Commission's budget exceeded \$391 million in 2022, with \$240.8 million coming from voluntary contributions, representing 61.5% of the total budget. In 2021, the budget reached \$359.3 million, including \$213.3 million from voluntary contributions, which accounted for 59.3% of the total budget. It is evident that in the past three years, the regular budget has not surpassed the amount contributed voluntarily by member states. Insufficient resources lead to an increased reliance on voluntary contributions, which can impose additional pressure on the Commission's work.

For instance, voluntary contributions can introduce specific challenges to UN Special Procedures, which are among the mechanisms receiving the most extrabudgetary funding. Between 2015 and 2019, 40% of the Special Procedures budget was derived from additional extrabudgetary sources, primarily from a small number of countries, non-governmental organizations, and private institutions. Notably, some Special Procedures experts acknowledged receiving direct financial payments, outside the UN system, totaling approximately \$11 million from institutions like the Ford Foundation and the Open Society Foundations. It should be emphasized that the Code of Conduct for Special Procedures Mandate Holders, adopted by the Human Rights Council in 2007, prohibits experts from accepting any gifts or remuneration from governmental or non-governmental sources in exchange for their mandate-related activities. However, despite this prohibition, some mandate holders continue to accept direct funding from governments and non-governmental organizations for their activities within their specific mandates. In a related context, opponents of increasing the Commission's financial resources argue that the issue lies not in the amount of resources, but rather in how the available resources are allocated and utilized.

Outcomes & Recommendations

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights remains a profoundly significant document, enjoying widespread acceptance and consensus among all member states of the United Nations. The advancements made in promoting human rights across different regions of the world are intrinsically linked to the rights enshrined in this Declaration. Human rights experts debate that a world without the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the treaty bodies it established, and the international human rights mechanisms would be no better than a world devoid of this document and the international agreements upon which it is built. Based on this fundamental principle, Maat for Peace, Development, and Human Rights offers the following recommendations upon concluding the 50×30 Human Rights for All campaign:

- Doubling financial resources to support projects aimed at implementing the rights outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- Strengthening monitoring and reporting systems to exert greater pressure on states and enhance the practical impact of the Declaration.
- Increasing funding for the human rights pillar of the United Nations budget and reducing reliance on voluntary contributions, often come with conditions imposed by states on international human rights institutions.
- Adopting a global plan for human rights education and urging UN member states to incorporate this plan into school curricula, primary education, and pre-university education.
- Launching more awareness campaigns focused on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to raise awareness of its significance.
- Expanding the field presence of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to cover approximately 80% of all UN member states by 2023, while ensuring additional resources are provided to sustain the work of the Office's offices.
- Addressing the prevalence of double standards exhibited by European countries in their approach to the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.