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Human Rights

# Introduction

## Definition of Human Rights

Human rights are universally recognized moral principles or norms that establish standards of human behavior and are often protected by both national and international laws.[1] These rights are inhereted by nature meaning they belong to every human being, regardless of characteristics like nationality, ethnicity, religion, or socio-economic status. Human rights are described as right to life,liberty,freedom and education. They are regulated by several organizations all over the world to benefit humanity and lift up the basic living standards of human beings.

## Historical Evolution

The concept of human rights has evolved significantly throughout history, with roots tracing back to ancient civilizations. However, the modern conception of human rights began to take shape during the Enlightenment period and gained significant momentum in the aftermath of World War II. Key milestones in the historical evolution of human rights include:

**1.2.1 Code of Hammurabi (c. 1760 BCE)**: One of the earliest known legal codes, establishing principles of justice.[2]

1.2.2 **Magna Carta (1215)**: This English charter laid the groundwork for constitutional law.[2]

**1.2.3 US Declaration of Independence (1776)**: Proclaimed the inalienable rights of individuals.[3]

**1.2.4 French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789)**: Asserted the rights to liberty, equality, and fraternity.[4]

**1.2.5 United Nations Charter (1945)**: Established the UN with a commitment to promote human rights globally.[5]

**1.2.6 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)**: A landmark document articulating a comprehensive set of rights and freedoms for all individuals.[6]

## Types of Human Rights

Human rights can be categorized into several types, each addressing different aspects of human life and dignity:

1**.3.1 Civil and Political Rights**: These protect individuals' freedoms and ensure their ability to participate in the civil and political life of society without discrimination or repression. Examples include the right to life, freedom of expression, and protection against enslavement.[7]

1.3.2 **Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights**: These ensure individuals' welfare and participation in the economic, social, and cultural life of their community. They include the right to education, the right to work, and the right to participate in cultural life.[8]

1.3.3 **Collective Rights**: These are held by groups rather than individuals and include the right to development, the right to a healthy environment, and the right to self- determination.[9]

**1.3.4 Legal Rights**: These are enshrined in legal systems and include rights related to the legal process, such as the right to a fair trial and the right to legal representation.[10]

**1.3.5 Fundamental Rights**: These are basic rights considered essential for the dignity and freedom of individuals, such as the right to life and non-discrimination.[11]

**1.3.6 Women Rights:** Women's rights are the fundamental human rights that were enshrined by the United Nations for every human being on the planet nearly 70 years ago. These rights include the right to live free from violence, slavery, and discrimination; to be educated; to own property; to vote; and to earn a fair and equal wage. [12]

# Main Theme/Discussion

## Perspectives

There are 2 main perspectives:

### Universal Perspective: Universalism states that human rights are inherent to all individuals, regardless of cultural context. This perspective is embedded in the belief that basic rights apply to everyone, ignoring cultural, religious and national differences embodied by Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

### Cultural Relativism:

**Cultural Relativism** argues that human rights should be interpreted within the context of specific cultural norms and values. Cultural relativists challenge the notion that Western conceptions of human rights should be applied globally, arguing that such an approach can lead to conflicts and misunderstandings.[13]

## International Legal Instruments

**2.2.1** **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 1948**: This legal document sets the fundamental human rights to be universally protected and has resulted in signing several international treaties and national constitutions.[14]

**2.2.2 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1966**: This covenant commits its parties to respect civil and political rights, including the right to life, freedom of speech, religion, and voting.[15]

**2.2.3 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966**: The ICESCR focuses on ensuring the protection of economic, social, and cultural rights, such as the rights to education, work, health, and an adequate standard of living.[15]

## Significance of Human Rights in Global Politics

Human rights have a profound normative impact on international law and diplomacy. They serve as a moral compass, guiding state behavior and influencing international relations. The promotion of human rights is often seen as a measure of a state's legitimacy and commitment to global norms.[12]. For instance, the United States has historically used human rights as a tool in its foreign policy to build alliances and apply pressure on adversaries. Similarly, the European Union has incorporated human rights into its trade agreements and foreign aid policies, using them as leverage to promote democratic values and practices.[11]

## Role of Organizations and NGOs

International organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play an important role in promoting and protecting human rights globally. These entities work to uphold human rights standards, monitor violations, and advocate for policy changes.

## International Organizations

The United Nations (UN), through bodies like the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Human Rights Council, develops international human rights standards and monitors compliance. The UN Human Rights Council serves as a platform for dialogue and cooperation on human rights issues, helping to shape international norms and policies.

## NGOs

NGOs like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are instrumental in advocating for human rights and holding governments accountable. These organizations operate at multiple levels—local, national, and international—and employ diverse strategies to promote human rights, including direct assistance, information gathering, campaigning, and education. NGOs provide on-the-ground insights and data that international bodies use to inform their actions and policies.

## National/Regional Focus: Case Study on Pakistan

Pakistan's human rights landscape presents a complex and challenging picture, shaped by its political history, ongoing conflicts, and cultural dynamics. Key human rights issues in Pakistan include:

1. Enforced Disappearances.
2. Torture and Inhumane Treatment(Act 2022)
3. Religious Freedom
4. Freedom of Expression and Media
5. Gender-Based Violence

The Pakistani government has taken some steps to address these issues, such as forming committees to investigate enforced disappearances. However, these efforts are often criticized as insufficient and lacking in genuine commitment.

## Challenges and Criticisms

* + 1. **Enforcement Issues:** Enforcing human rights norms remains a significant challenge due to political interests, leading to selective enforcement and double standards in human rights practices. This inconsistency violate human rights, undermining the credibility and effectiveness of international human rights laws.[18]

**2.6.2 Global Crises and Human Rights(Covid 19):** Global crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, have exacerbated existing human rights issues.[17]

# Results/Recommendations/Way Forward

## Results

Human rights initiatives have significantly influenced international relations by promoting peace, security, and cooperation. They have shaped global norms, guided state behavior, and contributed to a stronger framework for protecting individual dignity and freedom.

## Recommendations

## strengthen international legal frameworks to address emerging challenges like digital rights and climate change.

1. Improve enforcement mechanisms through stricter policies and advanced techniques.
2. Enhance cooperation between states, international organizations, and NGOs for a unified human rights approach.
3. Promote education and awareness to foster a global culture of respect for human rights.

## Future Directions

## Address root causes of human rights violations, such as poverty, inequality, and conflict.

## Leverage technology advancements to improve human rights monitoring and reporting.

## Develop strategies to tackle emerging challenges related to climate change, AI, and other global trends.

# Conclusion

Human rights have become an integral part of international relations, serving as a benchmark for state behavior and a tool for promoting global justice and equality.

The case studies of the Israel-Palestine and Ukraine-Russia conflicts, as well as the detailed examination of human rights in Pakistan, highlight the complex interdependency between human rights principles and geopolitical realities. These examples describe the ongoing challenges in enforcing human rights norms, particularly in conflicting zones and regions where political interests often overshadow humanitarian concerns.

The role of international organizations and NGOs in promoting and protecting human rights remains crucial. Their efforts in monitoring and policy influence have been important for advancing the global human rights agenda. However, the effectiveness of these efforts continues to be affected by the issues such as inconsistent enforcement and political resistance.

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