

70
YEARSUNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF
HUMAN RIGHTS
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Antonio Guterres UN Secretary General

MESSAGE ON HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

For 70 years, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has been a global beacon – shining a light for dignity, equality and well-being ... and bringing hope to dark places.

The rights proclaimed in the Declaration apply to everyone -- no matter our race, belief, location or other distinction of any kind.

Human rights are universal and eternal.

They are also indivisible. One cannot pick and choose among civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

Today we also honour the human rights defenders risking

their lives to protect people in the face of rising hatred, racism, intolerance and repression.

Indeed, human rights are under siege around the world.

Universal values are being eroded. The rule of law is being undermined.

Now more than ever, our shared duty is clear:

Let us stand up for human rights -- for everyone, everywhere.

Thank you.

Rosa Malango,
UN Resident Coordinator

Today, 10 December 2018 marks 70 years since the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and what a journey it has been.

It is seven decades since the international community agreed on this ground-breaking document which has since then been a global beacon – shining a light for dignity, equality and well-being. It recognizes inherent dignity and equal rights for all people, everywhere regardless of race, color, religion, sex, language, political opinion, origin or other status.

As Ugandans, we have an opportunity on this momentous day to highlight what the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) means for people in their everyday lives. To renew our resolve to realise the human rights and fundamental freedoms for everyone; to highlight the current efforts by the Government of Uganda and other stakeholders to create awareness of the fundamental human rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; for duty bearers to recount their contribution in the area of human rights and to provide accountability to the population as well as ensuring the critical need for human rights to be respected, protected and fulfilled, with special attention to the vulnerable and marginalised groups in our society.

The UN Secretary-General calls upon us to honour the human rights defenders who are risking their lives to protect people in the face of rising hatred, racism, intolerance and repression. In his message, he

highlights that these are times when human rights are under siege around the world; Universal values are being eroded. The rule of law is being undermined.

Now more than ever, our shared duty is clear:

Let us stand up for human rights -- for everyone, everywhere.

Tukwatre wamu okulwanira eddembe lyobuntu

Uganda's Human Rights journey

The 2030 agenda and its 17 sustainable development goals, adopted under Ugandan Presidency of the United Nations General Assembly reaffirms "the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as other international instruments relating to human rights and international law" Agenda 2030 emphasizes the "responsibilities of all States, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations, to respect, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability or other status." Uganda also has a vibrant civil society whose work contributes greatly to strengthening human rights in the country through advocacy at all levels. An illustrative case of such contribution, is their collective contributions as stakeholders in the 2016 country's second cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). This is a unique process which involves a review of Uganda by the UN Human Rights Council through progressive cycles.

At regional and international level, Uganda has ratified several key treaties that are relevant to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of human rights. At the regional level, Uganda has ratified the Protocol on the Establishment of an African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights on 6 June 2001 and could also consider making the declaration under article 34(6) of the said Protocol, which gives the possibility to individuals and NGOs to access the Court.

At national level, the domestication of numerous international and regional instruments has been done by the Executive and Parliament. Human rights protection and promotion is enshrined in the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda under Chapter 4. In line with the provisions of the Constitution, the country has also established key oversight bodies, including the Uganda Human Rights Commission, the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Inspectorate of Government, the Electoral Commission, Parliament,

and Uganda Law Reform Commission. Going forward ensuring the effective functioning of these institutions is important for the effective implementation of a rights based development vision.

In the current development context, in which Uganda aims to evolve from a peasant to a modern prosperous country as outlined in Vision 2040 and attain inclusive sustainable development through the SDGs – there is still more that needs to be done. Ratification, domestication and implementation of key human rights instruments presents an opportunity to solve some of the diverse and pressing challenges of human rights protection in the country today.

There are still a number of important instruments that have not been signed or ratified, which have a bearing on the protection and promotion of human rights of Ugandans. Some of these include;

Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (OP CEDAW) which is critical due to the grave injustices and inequalities caused by gender imbalances, and efforts to eradicate Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV).

Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The Hague Convention on the Protection of children and Co-operation in respect of Inter-Country Adoption which aims at safeguarding inter-country adoptions through preventing the abduction, sale of, or trafficking in children.

It is important to acknowledge that Uganda recognises and is committed to working towards attaining the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 16 on Peace and Justice and Strong Institutions which is crucial because without peace, stability, human rights and effective governance, based on the rule of law - we cannot hope for sustainable development. It is equally important to apply a Human Rights Based Approach across all Goals. Only in doing so can we make good on the promise and vision of the 2030 Agenda of "leaving no one behind". Successful implementation of these and other goals will require all Ugandans to have the space to contribute constructively to creating the Uganda we want and Africa we need.

The principles enshrined in the Declaration are as pertinent today as they were in 1948. We need to keep the momentum of the two very important campaigns including the global "Stand-Up 4 Rights" campaign launched on 10 December 2016 and the UDHR70 campaign launched on 10 December 2017 which have emphasised the need to stand up for our own rights and those of others.

Fast-tracking the passing of key Bills such as Legal Aid Bill and the Human Rights Enforcement Act 2015 will be key if we are to effectively stand up for our rights and the rights of our fellow Ugandans.

United Nations in Uganda and Human Rights

Anchoring on Leaving No One Behind; Human Rights, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, Sustainability and Resilience and Accountability are core principles of United Nations support in Uganda. With the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR) in Uganda taking the lead, agencies such as the UN Development Programme (UNDP), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), UN Children's Education Fund (UNICEF), UN Population Fund (UNFPA), UN WOMEN, UNAIDS, UN Human Settlement Programme (UN HABITAT), the Office of UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Food Programme (WFP) and World Health Organization (WHO) are working tirelessly to deliver on Human Rights across the country.

It is against this background that the UN under its current UN Development Assistance Framework for Uganda (2016-2020) undertook to support the ratification, and domestication of key international treaties on human rights, as well as timely and quality reporting on progress. Further assistance has been provided in the form of technical support for Human Rights Institutions, awareness raising and support for enacting and implementing human rights compliant laws. All the above interventions are intended to support Uganda attain her national Vision 2040 as well as Agenda 2030 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union Vision 2063.

The United Nations remains a committed partner in supporting Uganda's pursuit of a human rights-based development vision. We stand with everyone in Uganda.

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