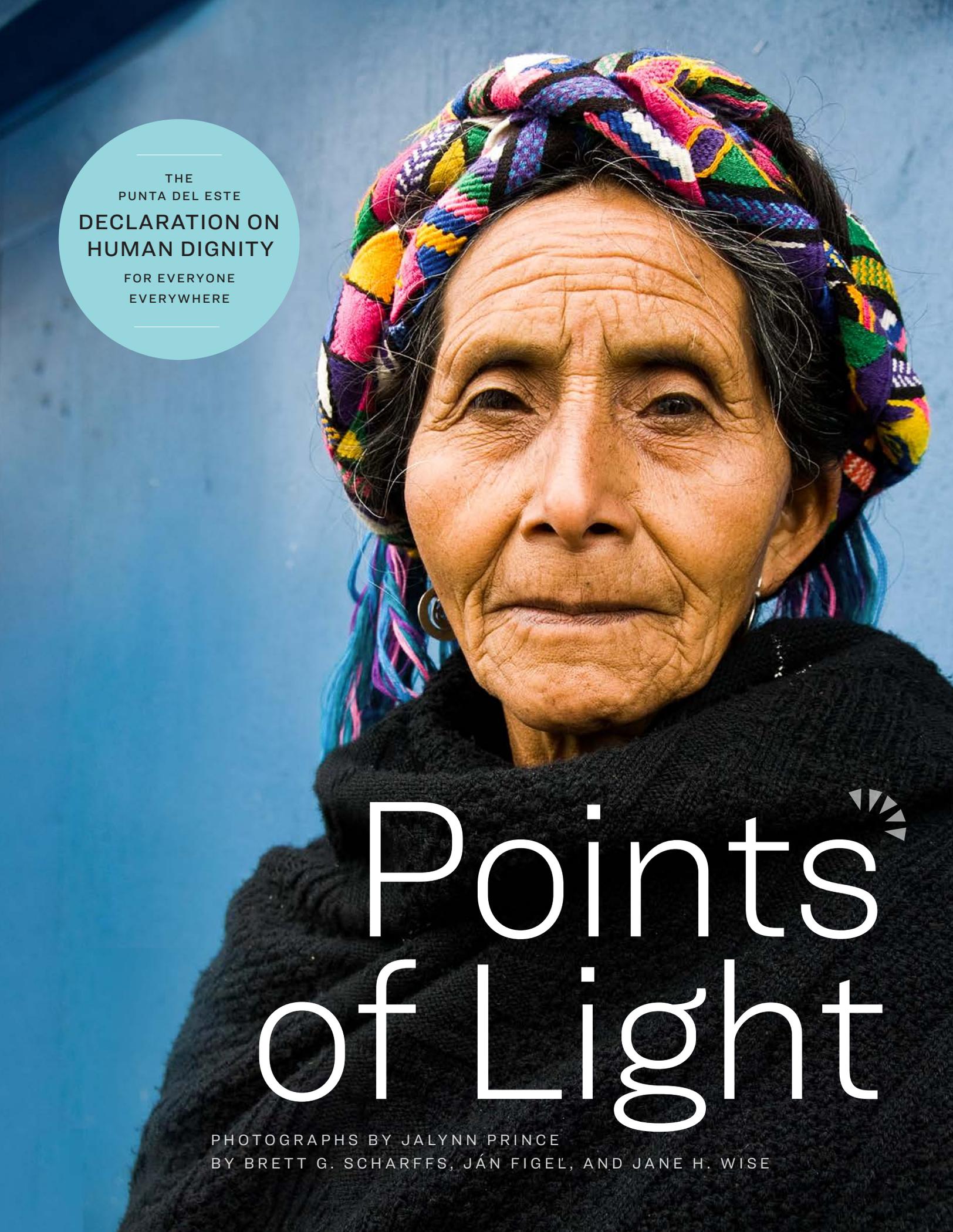


THE
PUNTA DEL ESTE
**DECLARATION ON
HUMAN DIGNITY**

FOR EVERYONE
EVERYWHERE



Points
of Light

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JALYNN PRINCE
BY BRETT G. SCHARFFS, JÁN FIGEL, AND JANE H. WISE

Points of Light

THE PUNTA DEL ESTE DECLARATION ON
HUMAN DIGNITY FOR EVERYONE EVERYWHERE

BY BRETT G. SCHARFFS, JÁN FIGEL, AND JANE H. WISE
FEATURING PHOTOGRAPHS BY JALYNN PRINCE

Points of Light



THE PUNTA DEL ESTE DECLARATION ON
HUMAN DIGNITY FOR EVERYONE EVERYWHERE

The International Center for Law and Religion Studies
Brigham Young University

Published in the United States of America
by the International Center for Law and Religion Studies
452 JRCB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602
www.iclrs.org

POINTS OF LIGHT

Copyright © 2021 by the International Center for Law and
Religion Studies

Photography by JaLynn Prince. Each of the individual photographs in this book
is reproduced by permission.

Designed by Adam M. Johnson at BYU Publications & Graphics.

Cover image: Weekend market vendor, Guatemala

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in
a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic,
mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior
permission of the publisher.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Scharffs, Brett G. | Figel, Ján. |
Wise, Jane H. | Prince, JaLynn Rasmussen, photographer. |
Brigham Young University. International Center for Law
and Religion Studies, publisher.

Title: Points of light : the Punta del Este Declaration on Human Dignity for
Everyone Everywhere / edited by Brett G Scharffs, Ján Figel' and Jane H. Wise ;
featuring photographs by JaLynn Prince.

Other titles: Punta del Este Declaration on Human Dignity
for Everyone Everywhere

Description: Provo, UT : International Center for Law
and Religion Studies, 2021. |

Summary: "Summaries of the 2018 Punta del Este Declaration with reflections
on human dignity by some of its signatories and illustrated with portraits of
people world-wide"— Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2021002211 | ISBN 9781736511107 (paperback)

Subjects: LCSH: Respect for persons—Law and legislation. | Punta del Este
Declaration on Human Dignity for Everyone Everywhere. | United Nations.
General Assembly. Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Classification: LCC K3249 .P65 2021 | DDC 341.4/8—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2021002211>

ISBN 978-1-7365111-0-7

► The ultimate value we should be
concerned to maximize is human
dignity—the dignity of all human
beings, equally, as children of the
creative, redeeming God.
—*Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks*

The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations
(London: Continuum, 2002), 195–96



Contents

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| ix | Foreword |
| xiii | Introduction |
| xiv | Using the Punta del Este Declaration: A Toolbox for Human Rights |
| THE PREAMBLE | |
| 3 | PREAMBLE History of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights |
| 11 | PREAMBLE Human Dignity Undergirds the UDHR |
| 19 | PREAMBLE The Foundation of Dignity |
| 27 | PREAMBLE Dignity as a Protected Value |
| 35 | PREAMBLE Belief and Hope |
| THE ARTICLES | |
| 45 | ARTICLE 1 Foundation, Objective, and Criterion |
| 55 | ARTICLE 2 Generating Agreement and Building Common Understanding |
| 65 | ARTICLE 3 Defining and Specifying Human Rights |
| 75 | ARTICLE 4 Duties and Responsibilities |
| 85 | ARTICLE 5 Education |
| 93 | ARTICLE 6 Seeking Common Ground |
| 103 | ARTICLE 7 Implementing and Realizing Human Rights in Legislation |
| 111 | ARTICLE 8 Reconciliation and Adjudication |
| 119 | ARTICLE 9 Potential Difficulties Involving Competing Human Rights Claims |
| 129 | ARTICLE 10 Most Egregious and Most Feasible |
| THE DECLARATIONS | |
| 141 | The Punta del Este Declaration on Human Dignity for Everyone Everywhere |
| 144 | Signatories to the Declaration on Human Dignity |
| 146 | The Universal Declaration of Human Rights |



Dancers backstage, The Nutcracker, National Ballet, Cuba

Foreword

HUMAN DIGNITY is an idea that is at once simple and clear but also rich and profound. Almost everyone has something interesting and insightful to say when you ask them what human dignity means to them. The phrase “a thousand points of light” has been used to describe stars in the sky, reflections in a river, and the importance of volunteers. I have come to view the perspectives on human dignity highlighted in this book as points of light not just illuminating our understanding of an important idea but also bringing light to a world that seems in darkness. —Brett G. Scharffs

The photographs in this book are the work of acclaimed photographer JaLynn Prince. The quotes on human dignity have been furnished by some of the signatories to the Punta del Este Declaration on Human Dignity for Everyone Everywhere—academics, government officials, and professionals who have worked tirelessly for the cause of human rights and human dignity throughout the world.

In this foreword, Brett G. Scharffs, director of the International Center for Law and Religion Studies and a BYU Law professor, Ján Figel, former special envoy for the promotion of the freedom of religion or belief outside the EU, and Jane H. Wise, associate director of the International Center for Law and Religion Studies and a BYU legal writing specialist, share their thoughts on the Punta del Este Declaration and the creation of this book as a pictorial essay amplifying the message of human dignity.

JANE H. WISE: In 1948 the drafters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) finalized the document. Representatives of a variety of legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world were working on it at a time when the horrors of World War II were fresh upon the world’s memory. They found in the core principle of human dignity a measuring stick for the *worth* of each human being. It was the lodestar for their three years of discussions and drafting.

BRETT G. SCHARFFS: Many of the UDHR drafters had personal memories of the global influenza pandemic of 1918–19 that killed as many as sixty million people worldwide, not to mention personal memories of World War I and the much more immediate and harrowing devastations of World War II. These were not starry-eyed idealists, but they were idealists nonetheless—with a sober and hard-earned understanding that it would take an articulation of ideals that were genuinely universal and deeply and normatively attractive (even true) to be the foundational principles of human rights. If there was one attitude that prevailed over

all others, it was the simple proclamation, prayer, and plea of “never again.”

JÁN FIGEL: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights created the road map for the development of human rights globally in the aftermath of World War II. We must stand up to our promise that *never again* will there be genocide. We must learn how to live—not only to exist—in diversity. The twenty-first century can be an era of hope, replacing the past century of divisions, manipulative propaganda, violence, and genocides.

JHW: Seventy years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted, the Punta del Este Declaration was drafted. It reaffirmed the UDHR and asserted that “dignity is an essential part of what it means to be human. Respect for human dignity for everyone everywhere helps us define and understand the meaning and scope of all human rights.” The long-term aim of the Punta del Este Declaration is to provide in-depth explanations for a set of dignity-based principles that can help anchor protection of dignity for everyone everywhere.

JF: Despite the achievements of the landmark UDHR document, we need a climate change in human rights. The Punta del Este Declaration appears as an active step to trigger this transformation. It is an invitation to the global community for an enriched conversation about human dignity for everyone everywhere. It is a commitment to tap the inspirational potential of human dignity and promote cultures of human dignity.

BGS: The goal and purpose of the Punta del Este Declaration is to reorient and restore to human rights discourse its fundamental, foundational principle: human dignity. Perhaps those words are the most important part of the declaration’s title. But

the idea that human dignity is for *everyone everywhere* is equally significant. The most important thing that a human rights perspective can afford us at a time like ours is a passionate insistence that every person matters—all people in all places.

JF: Equal dignity gives each of us a place within one human family, one humanity. A spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood is our duty and right: to be treated as brothers and sisters and to treat others as brothers and sisters. Dignity is the root and source of the inalienable and undeniable rights of each person.

BGS: I have come to believe that the most important human rights institution in the world is the family, the most important human rights teachers are mothers and fathers, and the most important place of learning about human rights is at home.

JHW: As Eleanor Roosevelt, chair of the committee that drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, put it: “Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home—so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works.”¹

BGS: Sometimes human rights seem too imperial, as if they are going to solve every problem. At other times they seem quite fragile and vulnerable, subject to a variety of types of criticism or even condemnation. Ironically, sometimes human rights seem like a stick wielded by the powerful to whack the weak. We live at a time when the very idea that there are universal human values is under assault in many quarters.

JHW: The idea of human dignity is a useful tool!

Human dignity is the Swiss Army knife of human rights.

It is the **foundation** of human rights, the **objective** of human rights, and a useful **criterion** for evaluating the performance of states in promoting and protecting human rights. It can help generate agreement, find common ground, and **build bridges**. Human dignity helps in **defining** human rights and in **specifying** what those rights require in particular situations. It is **useful** in legislative debates as well as in adjudicative deliberations. It is useful in **resolving conflicts** between competing human rights claims.

BGS: Human dignity is the Swiss Army knife of human rights. It is the foundation of human rights, the objective of human rights, and a useful criterion for evaluating the performance of states in promoting and protecting human rights. It can help generate agreement, find common ground, and build bridges. Human dignity helps in defining human rights and in specifying what those rights require in particular situations. It is useful in legislative debates as well as in adjudicative deliberations. It is useful in resolving conflicts between competing human rights claims.

JHW: Midway through, the Punta del Este preamble says: “Recognizing that the concept of human dignity emphasizes the uniqueness and irreplaceability of every human being; that it implies a right of each individual to find and define the meanings of his or her own life; that it presupposes respect for pluralism and difference; and that

it carries with it the responsibility to honor the dignity of everyone.”

JF: By issuing the Punta del Este Declaration, its signatories wish to respect and protect the human dignity of every human person. In order to make an even stronger and more active commitment, the Punta del Este Declaration subscribes to the principle of human dignity for everyone everywhere. It is time to move upward and forward together, to do more, and to do it better. Every community and country must move forward. Change comes from words to deeds to habits, which form character, impacting culture and destiny.

Note

1. Eleanor Roosevelt, speech delivered at the presentation of “In Your Hands: A Guide for Community Action for the Tenth Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” March 27, 1958, United Nations, New York.



Middle school class, Kenya

Introduction

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was drafted and adopted in the shadow of the mass atrocities and severe human rights violations perpetrated by Nazi fascism and Japanese imperialism during World War II. The specter of World War I was also a powerful reminder of the horrors of war. The creators of the UDHR were motivated by a powerful desire that “never again” would the world see the kind of human abuse and degradation brought on by the world wars—conflicts in which some ninety million people lost their lives.

The UDHR began the process of codifying human rights into terms that would eventually have the status of enforceable international law. The UDHR was a remarkable achievement, and the window of opportunity for accomplishing its goals was narrow, with the United Nations in its infancy and the deep freeze of the Cold War fast approaching. In retrospect, it is a wonder that agreement was achieved on such a sweeping and comprehensive statement of shared principles of human rights. Shortly after the UDHR’s adoption in 1948, the opportunity for change closed and remained shut for more than forty years.

Today, the human rights climate is still far from the aspirations of the drafters of the UDHR. Many individuals and groups continue to be denied their rights, to have their rights limited to the point that they

are not meaningful, or to have their dignity nullified altogether. Religious persecution and religious discrimination are ongoing. Some of the most affected groups continue to be women and girls; children; refugees; internally displaced persons; stateless persons; racial, ethnic, and religious minorities; indigenous persons; persons with disabilities; older persons; HIV positive persons; and members of LGBTQ communities.

Despite the passage of more than seventy years since the adoption of the UDHR, human rights and its underlying principles are not yet universally recognized and implemented around the world. It is crucial to remember, reaffirm, and recommit to the basic principle of human dignity to ensure that the aim behind the UDHR—the recognition, respect, and realization of human rights—is fulfilled.

In 2018, the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the time had come to explore and reassert the document’s central idea of human dignity by articulating a set of principles that explain the many practical ways that human dignity for everyone everywhere can help with the promotion, recognition, implementation, and realization of human rights for all people in all places. The Punta del Este Declaration on Human Dignity for Everyone Everywhere has become a vehicle for reaffirming these values to the world.

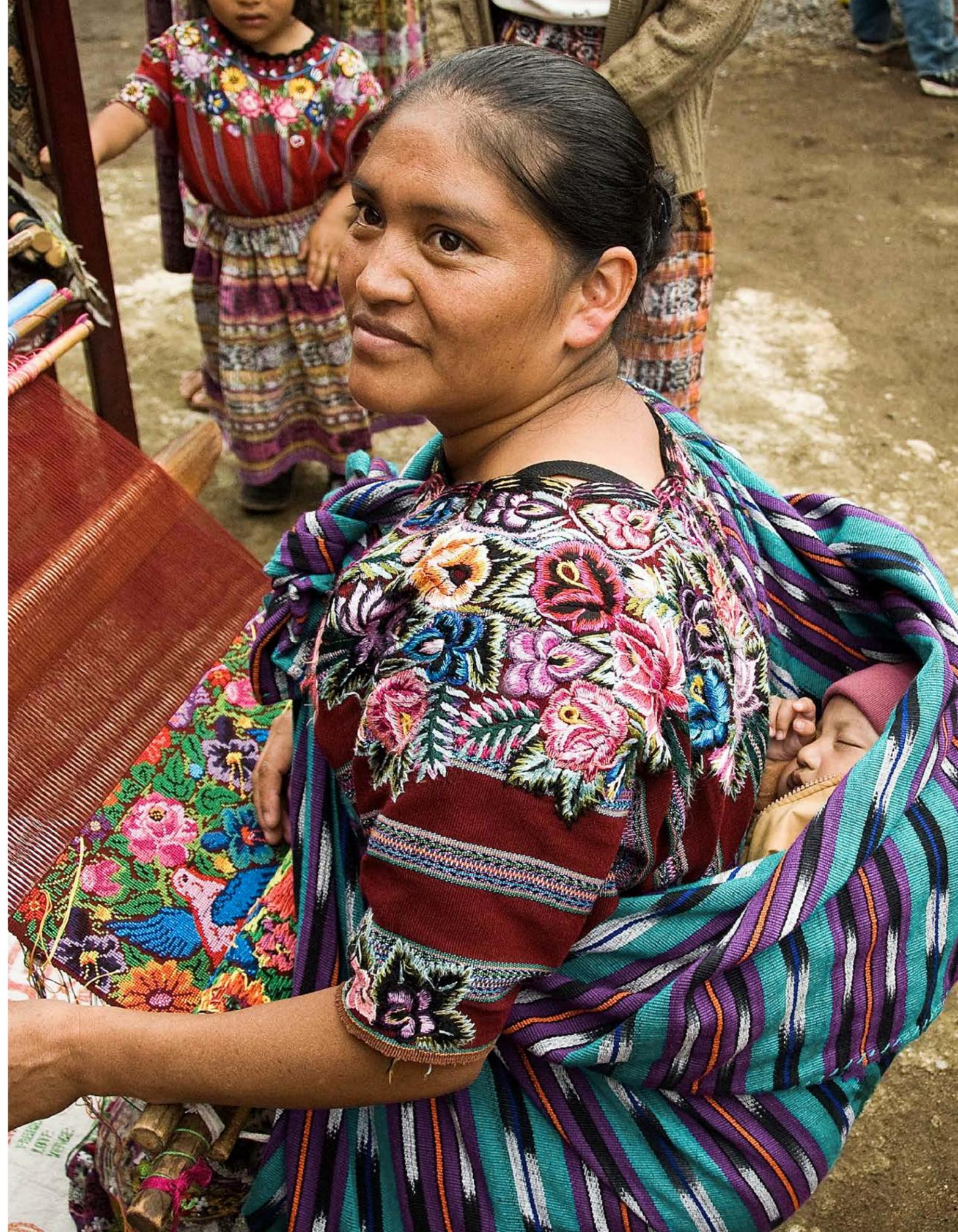
TOOLBOX

USING THE PUNTA DEL ESTE DECLARATION A Toolbox for Human Rights

The Punta del Este Declaration is a tool for understanding the many ways that human dignity for everyone everywhere can be used to strengthen human rights protections. It champions an approach toward reading, interpreting, and implementing human rights with an eye focused on preserving dignity. This focus aims to aid human rights in becoming universal, and it places human dignity at the forefront of any considerations involving human rights. Human dignity is key in assisting the projects of preserving and protecting human rights for all people.

Each of the Punta del Este Declaration’s ten articles identifies practical and useful dimensions of human dignity as important tools in the human rights toolbox. Find a list of applicable tools at the end of each article’s section.

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| <p><i>Making Human Dignity the Key</i></p>  <p>p. 52</p> | <p><i>Building Bridges</i></p>  <p>p. 62</p> | <p><i>Defining Human Rights</i></p>  <p>p. 72</p> | <p><i>Emphasizing Duties and Responsibilities</i></p>  <p>p. 82</p> | <p><i>Ensuring Equal Access to Education</i></p>  <p>p. 91</p> |
| <p><i>Seeking Harmony</i></p>  <p>p. 100</p> | <p><i>Developing Legislation</i></p>  <p>p. 109</p> | <p><i>Bringing into Fair Balance</i></p>  <p>p. 117</p> | <p><i>Fostering Constructive Dialogue</i></p>  <p>p. 126</p> | <p><i>Protecting the Vulnerable</i></p>  <p>p. 136</p> |





SECTION ONE

The Preamble

The preamble to the Punta del Este Declaration gives the motivations behind the document and the reasons for promulgating it.



PREAMBLE

History of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

WHEREAS seventy years ago in the aftermath of World War II, the nations and peoples of the world came together in solidarity and solemnity and without dissent adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations;

WHEREAS the Preamble of the UDHR declares that “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world”;

WHEREAS Article 1 of the UDHR proclaims that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood”;

WHEREAS the equal human dignity of everyone everywhere is the foundational principle of human rights and reminds us that every person is of value and is worthy of respect;

WHEREAS it is important to remember, reaffirm, and recommit ourselves to these basic principles.

The first five preamble clauses begin with the word *whereas*. These clauses state the general background reasons for issuing the Punta del Este Declaration and recall the significant event of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the important role that the concept of human dignity plays as the foundational principle of human rights. The Punta del Este Declaration is not designed to be an expansion, restatement, or reformulation of the UDHR; rather, it was

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was forged in the crucible of conflict and devastation. At its core is a desire to restore and forge a common commitment to the dignity of the person. The Punta del Este Declaration serves to remind us of the centrality of human dignity for all persons, the multiple facets of freedom and sources of meaning, and the need for universal solidarity.
—Jaclyn L. Neo

Associate Professor of Law, National University of Singapore Faculty of Law; Director, Centre for Asian Legal Studies

adopted in the spirit of commemorating the achievements of the UDHR and as a conscious striving to facilitate a global remembering of, reaffirmation of, and recommitment to the basic principles underlying human rights.

It was the recognition of the inherent dignity and the equal inalienable rights of all people that was the starting point for the enumeration of human rights in the UDHR. This idea that international human rights are universal was new. It challenged the old view that a sovereign state governed its relations with its citizens. In its *whereas* clauses, the Punta del Este Declaration quotes the UDHR to reconfirm the inherent and inalienable nature of human dignity, stating that the “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world.”

The inherent and inalienable nature of human dignity is essential to the idea of the universality of human dignity and human rights. When human rights questions arise, human dignity is always implicated. When trying to guarantee and protect human rights, it is crucial to consider the implication of any such attempts upon the human dignity of everyone everywhere.



Child in Yangon, Myanmar



- ▶ Searching for human dignity is the best way to stay human. The greatest mistake we can make is to think that we already know what human dignity is. This would prevent us from realizing that human dignity is a day-by-day learning process through which we discover what it means to be human in a given situation. Human dignity for everyone everywhere means giving all individuals and communities the chance to contribute to this search and to make its final outcome richer.

—*Silvio Ferrari*

Emeritus Professor of Canon Law, University of Milan, Italy; Founder and Honorary Life President, International Consortium for Law and Religion Studies

The Punta del Este Declaration is a testament to the fact that, even during this polarized time, leaders of different faiths and beliefs can find common ground. Our conveners' gracious and insightful leadership sparked a needed dialogue and produced a timely tribute to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But the Punta del Este Declaration is more than just a tribute—it is a call to action for all of us. By affirming the equal value and infinite worth of every human being, we can make progress in living together across our deepest differences.
—Melissa Rogers

Nonresident Senior Fellow in Governance Studies, the Brookings Institution, United States

- ▶ As an international norm, the dignity of the individual human being first appeared in the UN Charter (1945) and then the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Having no ancient roots in jurisprudence, dignity now both evokes and transcends the Kantian notion of the inherent worth of the individual human being. Rather than suggesting an itemized catalog of rules or standards, however, the modern concept of dignity serves as the ultimate touchstone reference for all human rights.

—T. Jeremy Gunn

Professor of Law and Political Science, International University of Rabat, Morocco

- ▶ All human beings, born free and equal, are endowed with inalienable rights of human dignity, regardless of gender, color, language, beliefs, property, or social status. Such human rights underpinning equality and dignity are universal with the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Such rights begin, in the words of Eleanor Roosevelt, “in small places, close to home—so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. . . . Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere.”¹

—Tassaduq H. Jilani

Former Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Pakistan

Note

1. Eleanor Roosevelt, speech delivered at the presentation of “In Your Hands: A Guide for Community Action for the Tenth Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” March 27, 1958, United Nations, New York.



PREAMBLE

Human Dignity Undergirds the UDHR

RECALLING that it was grave violations of human dignity during the wars of the twentieth century that preceded and precipitated the UDHR;

RECALLING the international consensus that domestic law alone had not been sufficient to safeguard against and avoid the human rights violations of the World Wars;

RECALLING that in spite of all of their differences, nations of the world concurred that the dignity of all people is the basic foundation of human rights and of freedom, justice, and peace in the world;

RECALLING that human dignity is the wellspring of and underpins all the rights and freedoms recognized in the UDHR as fundamental;

RECALLING that the UDHR has served as the inspiration for an array of international and regional covenants and other instruments, as well as numerous national constitutions, bills and charters of rights, and legislation protecting human rights.

The five *recalling* clauses of the Punta del Este Declaration focus on perspectives from the drafting and adoption of the UDHR in the aftermath of World War II. This included the violations of human rights that occurred during the wars of the first half of the twentieth century. Despite many political, economic, and ideological differences, human dignity was a concept that became a rallying point for the UDHR and, as stated in these clauses, the wellspring and an underpinning of the rights enumerated there. The UDHR, in

In the history of humankind, human dignity is one of the core values taught in the religions of the world. While human dignity has been upheld in different cultures, histories, and faiths, there are regrettable episodes of human domination, marginalization, and cruelty that compromised it to remain a forlorn ideal to the detriment of establishing a better world.
—*Fortune Sibanda*

Associate Professor in Religious Studies, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Great Zimbabwe University

turn, became the inspiration for numerous international and regional conventions as well as a wide array of national constitutions, bills and charters of rights, and legislation concerning human rights.

One of the lessons of the world wars was that domestic laws alone were not sufficient to safeguard against grave violations of human rights. This is as true now as it was decades ago. Though the UDHR outlines essential and universal standards of human rights, these standards must be implemented on a more intimate level in addition to an international level. Fortunately, the UDHR's principles have gained more presence and force in many national legal systems, which will help prevent situations in which domestic laws contrary to international human rights standards permit human rights violations.

The UDHR was never intended to be a legally binding instrument; it lacks enforcement powers. However, the UDHR is generally considered to constitute a part of international customary law and is therefore binding upon all states. Furthermore, parts of the UDHR have been “reintroduced” in numerous international legally binding treaties. The UDHR has served as the inspiration for and, to a remarkable extent, a blueprint for a variety of legally binding instruments of international and national law.



Elder monk in monastery, Myanmar



- ▶ These images of people of different cultures—images of affection, of honoring human diversity—remind us that declarations are not about our having a correct argument but are expressions of value and love. The inalienable dignity of each person and their spiritual and personal value cannot be erased, though we see betrayals in abundance. The people in these pictures urge us to never give up hope and mutual advocacy despite the magnitude of the task.

—*Andrew Teal*

Chaplain, Fellow, and Lecturer in Theology, Pembroke College,
University of Oxford, United Kingdom

Human dignity is the central notion that remains when all other norms, values, and considerations are abandoned. Human dignity means that every single person, as imperfect, peculiar, or even wicked as they may be, has a right that can never be alienated. Human dignity transcends categories and borders set by nations, races, religions, or other groups trying to circumvent or minimize the uniqueness of every individual. Without human dignity, there are no human rights.

—*Rik Torfs*

Chair, Faculty of Canon Law, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium

- ▶ Human dignity is at the core of what it means to be human. For me, it means the freedom to be who I am and believe what I believe without denying others the same rights. When human dignity is denied to people, those denied must be supported so that they can attain this core aspect of humanity. Those who deny others' human dignity, however, have sacrificed a key aspect of their own humanity.

—*Frank Ravitch*

Professor of Law and Walter H. Stowers Chair of Law and Religion, Michigan State University College of Law, United States

- ▶ The culture wars uprooted the vocabulary of human rights. Populist and illiberal political forces mock the premises of the pursuit of liberty and freedom of conscience. At times like this, the UDHR stands as a reminder of the reasons for protecting these premises, and the Punta del Este Declaration serves as a conversation starter in turbulent times.

—*Renáta Uitz*

Chair/Director, Comparative Constitutional Law Program, Department of Legal Studies, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary

The contemporary international society is experiencing an epoch-making process of transformation beyond its liberal and Western-centric matrix. Its normative structure, including the universal discourse of human rights, needs an urgent update to reflect the geopolitical and cultural realities of the twenty-first century. A new dialogue among the great religious and philosophical traditions of the world carries the only hope for a renewal of human rights. The concept of human dignity, at the heart of the great worldwide ethical traditions, is the place to start and can become the cornerstone and horizon for a more peaceful and just world order.

—*Fabio Petito*

Senior Lecturer in International Relations, University of Sussex, United Kingdom; Scientific Coordinator, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs-ISPI Initiative on Religions and International Relations, Italy



PREAMBLE

The Foundation of Dignity

RECOGNIZING that human dignity is not a static concept but accommodates respect for diversity and calls for a dynamic approach to its application in the diverse and ever-changing contexts of our pluralistic world;

RECOGNIZING that although the notion of dignity has been criticized by some as being too abstract, it actually has been and remains a powerful organizing force that points humanity towards its highest ideals and has proven itself as an influential heuristic in constitutional and human rights discourse;

RECOGNIZING that the concept of human dignity emphasizes the uniqueness and irreplaceability of every human being; that it implies a right of each individual to find and define the meanings of his or her own life; that it presupposes respect for pluralism and difference; and that it carries with it the responsibility to honor the dignity of everyone;

RECOGNIZING that severe violations and abuses of human dignity continue to this day, including through wars, armed conflicts, genocides, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the global crises concerning refugees, migrants, asylum seekers, and human trafficking, and that such depredations continue to threaten peace, justice, and the rights of all;

RECOGNIZING that human rights can easily be fragmented, eroded, or neglected and that constant vigilance is necessary for human rights to be implemented, realized, and carried forward in the world;

RECOGNIZING that human dignity for everyone everywhere and at every level is threatened when the needs, interests, and rights of one group or individual are placed ahead of those of other groups and individuals.

Girl cleaning pots on street, Jodhpur, India

The six *recognizing* clauses contain a series of observations about human dignity as a human rights concept that reinforces the uniqueness and worth of every human being and the importance of each person being able to pursue and create meaning in his or her own life. They also identify ways that human dignity can be abused, fragmented, eroded, and neglected and recognize the problems that arise when the dignity of some people is placed ahead of the dignity of others.

Human dignity for everyone everywhere recognizes and emphasizes that every life is irreplaceable. Human dignity in this sense is not an abstract concept but a declaration about the nature of every human being. Human dignity is not just a feature of the human race; it is a descriptor of every human life. Human dignity for everyone everywhere recognizes and respects the right of each human being to seek, find, and

Human dignity is directly derived from our position in the hierarchy of creation. As children of God, each of us has inalienable rights and dignity. Awareness of this simple fact helps us develop such higher manifestations of the human personality as compassion, loving-kindness, concern for social and racial justice, as well as concern for all of creation, including the ecosystem.
—Pavel Levushkan

Editor in Chief, Baznica.info; Latvian Institute for Intercultural Communication

define the meaning of his or her own life. Different people will identify different answers and paths to those important values. Recognizing and respecting the value and uniqueness of every human being allows pluralism to flourish.

Seventy years after the UDHR, the Punta del Este Declaration does not speak from a posture of satisfaction or complacency. Its signers are all too aware that violations of human dignity and fundamental human rights are common in the world in which we live today. Some violations are severe and may amount to mass atrocities such as genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. War, armed conflicts, and global crises create conditions in which severe violations of human dignity are likely.

Similarly, the ambition of the Punta del Este Declaration is not to provide a definitive definition of human dignity. Rather, it is to provide an invitation for discussions and analyses of human dignity from a variety of perspectives, including political, philosophical, and religious perspectives. Human dignity can serve as a source for finding areas of agreement about human rights, but it also can help describe and define our conceptions of human rights. The expectation is not that we will arrive at a complete agreement about the meaning and implications of human dignity but that we can achieve more agreement than might have previously seemed possible and that we can also gain a better understanding of our own and others' views. It is a concept that is more helpful for starting conversations than for winning arguments.



Child wearing thanakha, traditional markings, Myanmar



- ▶ In a world that adds layers of complexity to human relations, human dignity invites each of us to peel off the negative layers, including prejudice, cultural bias, and conflict, and embrace the resulting friendship and love that come from seeing each other as children of God. Human dignity invites us to become secure in that knowledge and act together to lift our brothers and sisters.

—*S. David Colton*

Chair, International Advisory Council, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, United States

The depth of dignity is our dependence on it. Dignity—no matter our respective, and irreconcilable, beliefs—is the one thing we can all agree on. And, therefore, dignity is the one thing with which anything can begin again. Dignity is our humanity.
—Chris Seiple

President Emeritus, Institute for Global Engagement, United States

- ▶ Human dignity is something natural and inalienable. Each human being possesses this dignity, and it is the ultimate element that binds all human beings across the earth, regardless of their faith, private and public orientations, prosperity, and level of education.
—Sohail Wahedi

Assistant Professor of Law, Erasmus School of Law, Rotterdam, Netherlands

- ▶ Humankind became a higher being over other beings because of the light of knowledge. Therefore, human dignity can only be realized through the arts of knowing—“for a mind that knows is a mind that’s free.”¹
—Habibat Oladosu-Uthman

Lecturer, Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Wars, racism, and intolerance stand out as enemies of worldwide modern democracies, and, far too often, they infringe equal rights, inclusion, and dignity among humankind, undermining the idea of coexistence expressed and desired by the United Nations.
—Clelia Piperno

Professor of Comparative Constitutional Law, University of Teramo, Italy

Note

1. “The Fount,” anthem of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria.



PREAMBLE

Dignity as a Protected Value

EMPHASIZING that equal human dignity is a status with which all human beings are endowed, but also a value that must be learned, nurtured, and lived;

EMPHASIZING that violations of human dignity require appropriate redress;

EMPHASIZING that human dignity is now a time-tested principle that can help find common ground, reconcile competing conceptions of what justice demands, facilitate implementation of human rights, and guide adjudication in case of conflicts, and that can also help us respond to distortions, abuse, and hostility towards human rights.

The three *emphasizing* clauses identify features of human dignity that deserve special emphasis: Human dignity is a statement of fact, but its realization in the world requires it to be learned, nurtured, and lived. Violations of dignity require appropriate redress. And human dignity has become a time-tested principle that can help resolve conflicts involving human rights.

Where people can disagree in good faith about religious or political ideals, the boundaries of individual versus communal rights, or the shape of economic justice, the Declaration on Human Dignity for Everyone Everywhere represents a truly universal ideal and provides a common ground for governments, activists, and societies to stand on and stand for.

—Thomas David DuBois

Visiting Research Fellow, Fudan University Development Institute, Shanghai, China

The fact that human dignity is an inherent feature of human beings does not guarantee that its value or status will be recognized or understood by everyone. Respecting and valuing human dignity—our own and that of others—is something that must be nurtured and lived.

When we have a deep appreciation of the human dignity of all people, then we will understand that violations of human dignity require appropriate redress. What will count as “appropriate” will often be an issue of disagreement, but the idea of human dignity can help guide the pursuit of the answers to such questions.

One of the lessons from the struggle to draft and complete the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is that human dignity was a concept that helped people with very different backgrounds and values find common ground and reach an agreement about the content of the UDHR. It was a concept that helped reconcile competing conceptions of justice, and it has helped facilitate the implementation of human rights.



Matriarch, wearing traditional needlework, Guatemala



- ▶ Dignity is not a right; it is a reality from which rights are derived. Just as natural families have a shared genetic makeup, the human family carries a “shared imprint of value.” To respect the dignity of another is to recognize the “family resemblance.” However undignified our actions or degrading our circumstances, we are born with dignity, we live with dignity, and we die with dignity.

—Ann Power-Forde

Human Rights Jurist

Protecting human dignity is ultimately about reducing human suffering. Religious people suffer emotional distress, sometimes severe, when they surrender their conscience to the demands of the state. And they suffer physical, emotional, and economic harm when they refuse to violate their conscience and accept penalties instead. Humans experience suffering when they are forced to surrender basic rights.

—*Douglas Laycock*

Robert E. Scott Distinguished Professor of Law and Professor of Religious Studies, University of Virginia, United States

- ▶ Universal human rights are often threatened in the name of particular cultures, ideologies, religions, and beliefs. The Punta del Este Declaration reminds us that human dignity for everyone everywhere is not the foe but the ultimate friend of individuals and communities who are truly committed to live their cultures, ideologies, religions, and beliefs at their best.

—*Marco Ventura*

Professor of Law and Religion, University of Siena; Director, Centre for Religious Studies, Fondazione Bruno Kessler, Italy

- ▶ I grew up in apartheid South Africa, when all persons of color were denied their humanity and dignity. I still recall the painful humiliation of being chased away from public toilets, parks, and stores that were reserved for the use of Whites only. Together, with the majority of the population, we were denied basic rights such as education, clean water, sanitation, and housing because we were Black. The way to combat discrimination is to promote respect for dignity and human rights. My country, under Nelson Mandela's leadership, transformed itself from the yoke of apartheid to enlightened democracy. *Ubuntu*, the right to dignity, is now enshrined in the constitution, enabling us to redress economic and social inequalities and to work towards ending poverty, unemployment, and racial and gender discrimination.

—*Navanethem Pillay*

Former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; Former Judge, International Criminal Court; President, Nuremberg Principles Academy Council; President, World Coalition Against the Death Penalty



PREAMBLE

Belief and Hope

BELIEVING that human rights discourse might be less divisive than it often is and greater efforts might be made to find common ground;

BELIEVING that human rights must be read and realized together;

BELIEVING that the concept of human dignity can help us understand, protect, and implement human rights globally; and

HOPING that the present century will be more humane, just, and peaceful than the twentieth century;

We, the undersigned, do solemnly reaffirm: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights continues to be “a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping the Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, local, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance.”

The *believing* and *hoping* clauses express several beliefs about human dignity: that human dignity can help make human rights discourse less divisive, that human dignity can remind us that human rights must be read and realized together, and that human dignity can be helpful in our ongoing efforts to understand, protect, and implement human rights around the world.

From the very beginning, human rights discourse has often been divisive. Years ago there was a strong disagreement between liberal democracies in the West that wanted to emphasize important civil and political rights and communist countries in the East that wanted to emphasize social and economic rights. Eventually, this disagreement led to two different international covenants. But in the end,

Christian theologians were radical in emphasizing human dignity. They distinguished between two kinds of human dignity: one associated with human beings as having been created in God’s image and the other connected with God’s likeness. They believed that the former is given to everyone, while the latter can be achieved through the synergy between the divine and human agencies. In both cases, the dignity of human beings was regarded as the highest possible value.
—Cyril Hovorun

Assistant Professor of Theological Studies and Acting Director, Huffington Ecumenical Institute, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California, United States

both covenants received widespread global support, suggesting that the divisions were not as broad or as insurmountable as they had appeared to be. Even still, today human rights discourse is often quite contentious, with nations accusing each other of human rights violations, which usually results in counter-recriminations.

By focusing on the idea of human dignity for everyone everywhere, this pattern of accusation and counter-accusation can be mitigated. Efforts to navigate through disagreements and inevitable controversies about human rights can be facilitated if human dignity for everyone is kept in view. Over the years, human rights conflicts have often divided individuals, groups, communities, and whole nations. Focusing on the human dignity of everyone everywhere helps to neutralize such divisions and nurture the understanding of differences that should be respected.

Human rights are often thought of as individual rights held by individual people. This is a useful perspective, but experience has shown that human rights are most likely to be realized when they are realized together with other rights and when those rights are realized for other people as well. Human rights will not be realized if only some rights for some people are protected. The goal—the standard of achievement—is the realization of all human rights for all people in all places. This suggests that strategies for defining and protecting human rights should take into account complementary rights and the rights of everyone affected by those strategies.

The Punta del Este Declaration was created with the belief that human dignity is the lens through which human rights should



Woman celebrating new well, now free from carrying water nine miles daily, Kenya

be understood, protected, and implemented. A human dignity-oriented understanding of human rights will facilitate the protection and implementation of human rights and is the means for increasing the effective recognition and protection of human rights for everyone everywhere.

The three *believing* clauses conclude with a single statement of hope that the twenty-first century will be more humane, just, and peaceful than the twentieth century was. This hope is the underlying

motivation for the time and effort that was put into preparing, discussing, negotiating, drafting, and adopting the Punta del Este Declaration on Human Dignity for Everyone Everywhere. However, the Punta del Este Declaration was made with a clear realization that the promise of human rights is far from complete. The hope behind the Punta del Este Declaration is that it will be used as a guide throughout the process of improving the legacy of human rights for future generations.



- ▶ Human dignity is inherent in every human being. It is inalienable and inviolable. It does not depend on your or anyone's merits, abilities, wealth, or position in society. Human dignity stands for the fundamental equality of all human beings—of diverse genders and any shade of color. Everyone has the right that this human dignity is respected, and this right may not be violated. Always keep in mind: treat everybody well.

—*Gerhard Robbers*

Emeritus Professor, University of Trier, Germany; Former Minister of Justice and Consumer Protection of Rhineland-Palatinate

Human dignity is the foundation for mutual respect among humans that unites us as brothers and sisters, propelling us forward in search of peaceful coexistence and providing the means to obtain it. We have verified this in the painful fellowship produced by SARS-CoV-2: in the midst of tragedy, we have been able to appreciate examples of love and self-sacrifice that give us hope of being able to respond together, building a world in which the dignity of the individual is once more at the center.

—*Ana María Celis Brunet*

Associate Professor, Center for Law and Religion, Faculty of Law, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile; President, National Council of the Chilean Church for the Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Accompaniment of Victims

- ▶ Respect for human dignity is an essential principle of faith. Restrictions on religious freedom violate that dignity. These breaches not only impact individual conscience but have wide social, economic, and spiritual consequences for entire nations. We stand shoulder to shoulder with all those who advocate respect for all faiths, including their right to worship. We actively support greater inclusivity and tolerance globally and within our own societies.

—*Gary B. Sabin*

General Authority Seventy, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

- ▶ At the core of our humanity is the dignity that we bear. It is something so revelatory that it confronts us in all whom we encounter. It is transcendent and immanent. Its transcendence reveals the image and likeness of God, whose truth and goodness we both seek and desire. Its immanence reveals a profound goodness, at times obscured but never obliterated, in the person before us and in whom we recognize ourselves. Human rights must serve constantly to reaffirm a conviction in the inherent dignity of the person.

—*Andrew Bennett*

Program Director, Cardus Law; Former Ambassador for Religious Freedom and Head of the Office of Religious Freedom, Canada



SECTION TWO

The Articles

The Articles of the
Punta del Este Declaration

*Having begun with two birds, woman with
some of her flock, Kampala, Uganda*



ARTICLE ONE

1 Foundation, Objective, and Criterion

The inherent human dignity of all people and the importance of respecting, promoting, and protecting human dignity for everyone everywhere is the foundational principle and the key objective or goal of human rights, as well as an invaluable criterion for evaluating laws, policies, and government actions for how well they accord with human rights standards. Protecting, promoting, and guaranteeing respect for the human dignity of everyone is a fundamental obligation of states, governments, and other public bodies, whether local, regional, national, or international. Promoting human dignity is also a responsibility of all sectors of society, and of each of us as human beings. Doing so is the key to protecting the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family, and remains the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world.

Man on afternoon walk, Cuba

The forging of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was fraught with difficulty. Given the lofty aims of the UDHR and the sharp divides among both the drafters and the countries voting on it, its success was anything but guaranteed. Varying levels of economic development, religious and cultural differences, colonialism, and a host of other factors threatened to disrupt any consensus. Most important, Eastern and Western countries were quickly dividing over Marxist versus liberal politics, presaging the Cold War. There was a need for a basic, foundational value that could unite these diverse nations and could be widely embraced by peoples and countries with different political, religious, and moral

Dignity is a beautiful word—one that evokes powerful feelings of significance, worth, and virtue. When we hear it, we think of grace and greatness. And yet the real power of the idea of dignity is that it recognizes the inherent and inalienable worth of every human being, quite apart from our actual virtue, grace, or greatness. It is this understanding of dignity that has made it the foundation of all human rights.

—Katrina Lantos Swett

President, Lantos Foundation for Human Rights and Justice; Former Chair, United States Commission on International Religious Freedom

values. Human dignity emerged as an idea that could be accepted by all—an inclusive value that set the stage for agreement about human rights.

Human dignity not only united the people working on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but also explained the central objective of human rights: to protect the human dignity of every person. According to Eleanor Roosevelt, human dignity explains “why human beings have rights to begin with.”¹ Indeed, after the horrific scenes of World War II, a central goal of the UDHR was to emphasize the intrinsic value and dignity of each person and to ensure that such affronts to human dignity as had been witnessed throughout the world would never occur again. In this way, human dignity serves as a foundation for peace and justice, a commitment by the nations of the world to not repeat past mistakes.

Human dignity also serves as an essential standard for human rights. When human dignity is respected and realized everywhere, the goal of human rights will be achieved. A crucial question for evaluating human rights is whether dignity is being protected, promoted, and realized for all people. The Punta del Este Declaration recognizes that it is the duty of states and other public bodies and also individuals—working in their spheres of influence—to recognize and respect the human dignity of everyone everywhere. For human dignity to be adequately protected for everyone everywhere, all sectors of society must be engaged in its promotion.



Holi Festival, celebrating spring, Rajasthan, India



- ▶ Human dignity begins with ensuring everyone has access to the three basic human needs of food, shelter, and clothing. It also covers the right to freedom of expression, the right to safety, and the right to freedom from fear, whether in public or private. No wonder Nelson Mandela once said, “Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life.”²
—*Mmapula Diana Kebaneilwe*

Senior Lecturer, Department of Theology and Religious Studies,
University of Botswana

Found in religion, culture, and tradition, human dignity is a foundational framework for preserving and respecting all of human life. Human dignity is an essential foundation of all religion and faith-based theologies.

Chapter 17, verse 70, in the Holy Quran illustrates how God honored all children of Adam and ensured they had dignity above all of His creation. Universal sustainable peace can only become a reality when all of society strives to achieve human dignity for all individuals and communities regardless of any orientation.

—*Mohamed Elsanousi*

Executive Director, Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers

- ▶ The acknowledgment of human dignity is the foundation of all meaningful social interaction; it is the ultimate *raison d'être* for the state and the basis on and the starting point for even beginning to think about what is “common good.” Human rights are a way of articulating human dignity in a concrete, legally relevant, constitutional form. Human dignity also reminds us that human rights are not merely legal instruments but that they are informed by a deeper value.

—*Sophie van Bijsterveld*

Senator, Dutch Upper House of Parliament; Professor of Religion, Law, and Society, Radboud University, Nijmegen, Netherlands

- ▶ Human dignity refers to the high-value worth of the individual. In Kenya, it is a supreme constitutional value that guides constitutional interpretation, lawmaking, and policy formulation and execution. It is the motivating principle in the bill of rights, which guides the interpretation, application, and limitation of rights. In a world characterized by religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity, human dignity is important, as it can be invoked to reconcile conflicting values.

—*Faith Kabata*

Lecturer and Chair, Department of International Law, Kenyatta University School of Law, Kenya

Notes

1. Mary Ann Glendon, describing the views of Eleanor Roosevelt, in Glendon, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York: Random House, 2002), 146.
2. Nelson Mandela, speech delivered for the Make Poverty History Campaign, February 3, 2005, London, England, United Kingdom.



TOOLBOX

- Human dignity for everyone everywhere is the foundational principle of human rights.
- Human dignity reminds us of why it is important to respect, promote, and protect human rights.
- Human dignity for everyone is the key objective of human rights.
- Human dignity for everyone is an invaluable criterion for evaluating laws, policies, and government actions to assess how well they accord with human rights.
- Protecting human dignity is a fundamental obligation of governments at all levels, including states, governments, and other public bodies, whether local, regional, national, or international.
- Promoting human dignity is a responsibility of all sectors of society, including civil society, businesses, and religious groups.
- Promoting human dignity is a responsibility of all of us as human beings.
- Promoting and protecting human dignity is key to promoting the equal and inalienable rights of all human beings.
- As recognized in the preamble of the UDHR, human dignity remains the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world.





ARTICLE TWO

2 Generating Agreement and Building Common Understanding

The inherent dignity of every human being was the key idea that helped generate agreement and a common understanding at the time of the adoption of the UDHR about human rights of all people, in spite of diversity and deep differences, notwithstanding divergent political and legal systems. Human dignity for everyone everywhere is valuable as a point of departure for exploring and understanding the meaning of human rights, as a basis for finding common ground regarding human rights and consensus about their content and meaning. It provides an approach to building bridges between various normative justifications of human rights, including those with religious and secular theoretical groundings. Respecting human dignity for everyone everywhere facilitates discussions on different conceptions of shared values. Human dignity is a broad concept that nevertheless invites in-depth reflection within differing traditions and perspectives. Human dignity for all reminds us that human rights are universal, inalienable, indivisible, interdependent, and interrelated.

When the UDHR was being drafted in 1947 and 1948, the drafters focused on human rights that could be seen as universal because of strong differences between delegates that had to be overcome in order to create a document that could be accepted by all. Delegates were divided among representatives of the Soviet Bloc, small or weak nations, and the major powers. Some wanted enforceable instruments, and some were supporters of a declaration of only principles.

Human dignity emerged as one of the key ideas that helped generate agreement, and, to a remarkable extent, it was the delegates from small countries, many still yearning for freedom from colonial powers, who were adamant that human rights receive priority. They were joined in their insistence by nongovernmental organizations, civil society groups, and religious groups. The UDHR was the work of people who had come through the fiery crucibles of the early-twentieth-century wars. They had seen the horrors of the

The human dignity drive appreciates multiple religions, multiple cultures, and multiple societies that are all-inclusive as well as grounded in open-mindedness, open communication, open political-playing, and economic fields in its quest to fight against all negative forces that are fighting the existence and continuation of the human race on earth.

—Simbarashe Munamati

Vice Principal, Murray Theological College, Zimbabwe

atrocities perpetrated by Nazi Germany and the country's effort to annihilate the Jewish race. They knew the consequences of Japanese imperialism.

The UDHR was aimed to become an instrument of change that would amplify all voices in the corridors of power and empower individuals by emphasizing the rights they could claim against their states. It placed duties upon states to protect individuals and introduced the idea that human beings, and not just states, are the subjects of international law. The drafters formulated a universal bill of rights according to the view that all human beings are "members of one and the same family of mankind, each one of them born with inherent human rights."¹

Human dignity proved to be a concept that was widely acceptable to representatives of a broad range of philosophical and ideological backgrounds. For example, human dignity can help start conversations about women's and children's rights, about nondiscrimination, and about the right way to treat prisoners or other people in state-supervised institutional settings, such as hospitals or facilities that care for the elderly or disabled. Human dignity is important for discussions on police misconduct and other possible abuses of authority by state officials. It is a concept that has clear implications for freedom of thought, conscience, and belief.

Sometimes religious and other ideological divides that separate us seem impassable. While we should not overestimate the ability of one idea to help us bridge these divides, human dignity for everyone everywhere can help us find ways of bridging differences.



Child in Guantánamo City, Cuba



- ▶ Dignity is understood as the duty of respect towards what is inherent in human nature; it represents an axiological reference. But respecting the ethical sense supposes knowing the metaphysical sense of what we are, because by only knowing what the human being is, we can treat him as he deserves.

—*Gabriel González Merlano*

Professor and Coordinator of the Humanities, Universidad Católica del Uruguay

Roman law distinguished between “dignity” (*dignitas*), one’s self-esteem, and “reputation” (*fama*), what others think of you. Human dignity has become the central focus of international human rights. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is based on “the inherent dignity . . . of all members of the human family,” and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights recognizes that civil and political rights derive from “the inherent dignity of the human person.”

—*Johan van der Vyver*

Former Professor of Law, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

- ▶ Unlike different perspectives on current values, the view of human dignity brings an understanding of true values. It is a value that has an external dimension—the conditions of our lives—as well as an internal dimension. It is everyone’s duty to make it possible for us to realize human dignity ourselves and thus give it. Dignity is the driving force of our thoughts and actions, a hidden premise of our hope for the future and of happiness, which is the meaning of our God-given life. It is a natural part of protecting human rights; it is also its basis.

—*Marek Šmid*

Rector, Trnava University; President, Slovak Rectors’ Conference, Slovakia

- ▶ As I witnessed the deliberations among the people gathered in Punta del Este for three days discussing human dignity, I was struck by the thought that there was no consensus regarding what is a “human” or what is “dignity.” However, everyone knew that the concept of human dignity is true. When I look, really look, into the eyes of another human being, I simply know beyond any doubt that it is a truth of existence that each person has an inherent dignity that we should recognize, cherish, and protect.

—*Scott E. Isaacson*

Senior Fellow and Regional Advisor for Latin America, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, United States

For me, human dignity means the spiritual potential of every human being. It is not dependent on any human culture, religion, politics, or law. The dignity of man is a quality of soul that reflects the spark of the divine spirit. An unforced and at the same time necessary respect and esteem for man and all people, for nature and for everything created, follows from the awakening of the spirit.

—*Olga Rosenkranzová*

Assistant Professor of Legal Theory, Department of Legal Theory and Legal History, Faculty of Law, Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic

Note

1. Johannes Morsink, *Inherent Human Rights: Philosophical Roots of the Universal Declaration* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 149.



TOOLBOX

- Human dignity was the key idea that helped generate agreement and common understanding at the time of the drafting and adoption of the UDHR.
- Human dignity was appealing to diverse and different groups.
- Human dignity was appealing across political and legal systems.
- Human dignity was an important point of departure for exploring and understanding the meaning of human rights.
- Human dignity helped establish common ground for human rights.
- Human dignity helped establish agreement about the content and meaning of human rights.
- Human dignity helped build bridges between religious and nonreligious theoretical groundings for human rights.
- Human dignity helps build bridges across various normative justifications of human rights.
- Human dignity is a concept with many conceptions of a shared value.
- Human dignity invites in-depth examinations of our traditions and perspectives.
- Human dignity reminds us that human rights are universal.
- Human dignity reminds us that human rights are inalienable.
- Human dignity reminds us that human rights are indivisible.
- Human dignity reminds us that human rights are interdependent.
- Human dignity reminds us that human rights are interrelated.





ARTICLE THREE

3 Defining and Specifying Human Rights

Dignity is an essential part of what it means to be human. Respect for human dignity for everyone everywhere helps us define and understand the meaning and scope of all human rights. Focusing concretely and in actual situations on human dignity and its implications for particular human rights claims can help identify the specific content of these rights as well as how we understand human dignity itself.

The drafters of the UDHR looked for principles upon which they could build the structure of human rights, and human dignity emerged as key: broad enough to be accepted by all and appealing enough to further the work, along with related principles such as “reason,” “conscience,” and the need to treat each other with “a spirit of brotherhood.”

Defining dignity aids in understanding human rights, and the ideas of status and worth inform the meaning of dignity in the human rights context. The idea of status should not be focused on office, class, or rank but on our shared status of being human beings. The idea of worth is important to understanding human dignity since all human beings have inherent value because they are human beings.

The Punta del Este Declaration does not reiterate the specific rights enumerated in the UDHR, nor does it explicitly address the proliferation of rights recognized in

The dignity of the human person—of every human being at all times and everywhere, regardless of any circumstance or accident—is more than a right: It is the foundation of all human rights. It is the very fact of being a human person that confers that eminent dignity of which no one can be deprived. Only the human being is endowed with intelligence and a free will that allow him to act with the moral conscience that resonates deep within him and inclines him to do good and avoid evil.
—Juan G. Navarro Floria

Professor of Law, Pontificia Universidad Católica Argentina

international human rights documents. Focusing on human dignity is an explicit effort to renew and refocus human rights, and doing so does help determine the content of rights, their meanings, and their permissible limitations. For example, human dignity for everyone everywhere lends understanding as to why it is important for governments to protect people in matters of conscience, including conscientious objection to military service as well as conscientious objection to participating in capital punishment.

In the years since the adoption of the UDHR, there has been a gradual expansion in the recognition of the scope of conscience that should be protected, extending beyond those who belong to particular religious groups to those who have their own religious or nonreligious conscientious basis for objecting to some form of government action. For example, in situations dealing with access to medical care, providers of such services should not be obligated to take any actions to which they have sincere conscience-based objections if the persons who would be affected have reasonably available alternative sources of services.

The point of this part of the Punta del Este Declaration is to emphasize that asking questions about the implications for the human dignity of particular rights claims can help in the assessment of those rights claims. This analysis, in turn, can help further specify the meaning and content of human dignity. It also recognizes that the implementation of human rights will differ from place to place, yet the focus on human dignity can serve as a unifying factor that will help to decrease the magnitude of these differences.



Boy leaving church after christening service, Uganda



- ▶ Human rights originate from human dignity. Human dignity is inherent and comes to each individual's reason and conscience, which is the core concept of Confucian philosophy. Confucian philosophy describes human dignity, not only laying emphasis on understanding others, tolerance and compromise between each other, and showing sympathy to others but also claiming the conscience of human beings, social harmony, moral educational functions, social order, and creativity. Confucius said, "Do not do to others what you wouldn't like yourself." According to Mencius, the people were the most important element; the institutions were the next; the sovereign the least important.

—*Pinghua Sun*

Professor, China University of Political Science and Law, Beijing, China

Human rights are entitlements that in our world help safeguard—to the extent they are observed—all human beings everywhere against certain grave threats and perils. They are valid norms, in international as well as in much domestic law, and also in enlightened morality.

—*Tore Lindholm*

Emeritus Professor, Norwegian Centre for Human Rights, University of Oslo, Norway

For me, human dignity is the foundational and driving force behind the contemporary human rights movement. The notion serves as the commonest of common denominators, the most universal of human being-oriented public goods, and obviously quite a high denominator at that. That is to say, from the strongest “believer” in human rights—fundamental rights as innate, as inalienable, as a given, as instilled into us at birth—to the staunchest instrumentalist—human rights as useful tools to promote human interests—all are bound to embrace that what is ultimately at stake is human dignity and that this is worth fighting for.
—*Jeroen Temperman*

Professor of Public International Law, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Netherlands

- ▶ We find that rights and freedom are stated formally in the law. They have a role to protect people from the intrusion and interference of the state and market but not to enforce the true vocation of the human person who desires true love, friendship, and communion. So human dignity ties the visible with the invisible, the good and the true, personhood with humanity, being simultaneously the core of democracy and the heart of spirituality.

—*Cătălin Valentin Raiu*

Lecturer in Political Science, University of Bucharest, Romania; Member, Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief at ODIHR/OSCE

- ▶ Human dignity is a natural manifestation of human rights. It is based upon the recognition and acceptance of all human beings at the fundamental level, without qualifications of any kind. It is a universal and inherent right of every human being the moment they are born and must be upheld and protected by all. In Islam, the concept of human dignity is foundational to its teachings and is affirmed in a variety of contexts, such as the basic unity in the creation of mankind and its equality in the eyes of God. Dignity in Islam is extended to the entire human race and is universal.

—*Mohamed Azam Mohamed Adil*

Deputy CEO, International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

The profession of human dignity constitutes the center of the entire human rights project. Human rights are not just a set of legal entitlements; they enjoy the elevated status of “inalienable rights.” However, the inalienability of those rights rests on their aspiration to institutionalize due respect for everyone’s human dignity, a claim we cannot ignore without thereby betraying our own humanity. Thus, respect for human dignity stands above all other values, norms, or principles.

—*Heiner Bielefeldt*

Professor of Human Rights and Human Rights Policy, University of Erlangen, Germany; Former UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion or Belief



TOOLBOX

- Dignity is an essential part of what it means to be human.
- Respect for human dignity for everyone everywhere helps us define and understand the meaning and scope of human rights.
- Focusing concretely and in actual situations on human dignity and its implications for particular human rights claims can help identify the specific content of these rights.
- Focusing on specific human rights helps us understand dignity better.





ARTICLE FOUR

4 Duties and Responsibilities

Human dignity for everyone everywhere emphasizes the concept in the UDHR that rights include accompanying obligations and responsibilities, not just of states but also of all human beings with respect to the rights of others. Dignity is a status shared by every human being, and the emphasis on everyone and everywhere makes it clear that rights are characterized by reciprocity and involve corresponding duties. Everyone should be concerned not only with his or her own dignity and rights but with the dignity and rights of every human being. Nonetheless, human dignity is not diminished on the ground that persons are not fulfilling their responsibilities to the state and others.

Tribal elder at Boy King's coronation, Tooro Kingdom, Uganda

In a sense, the deepest motivations for the UDHR were based upon a sense of duty—a duty recognized by the survivors of war that its horrors and atrocities not be repeated. The driving force and motivation of the drafters of the UDHR were their shared feelings of duty to future generations to ensure that the project became successful and would help to prevent abuses perpetrated during war.

Human rights also implicate duties in ways that are more complex than is sometimes understood. Rights and duties are not simply reciprocal, with one right triggering a correlative duty, but rather they exist in complex webs or networks of relationships. Rights always implicate duties—of the state, of others, and of ourselves.

While some fundamental rights might remain aspirational, they should still be prioritized. Consider rights as basic as the right to clean drinking water or basic

sanitation. These are important interests that rise to the level of being fundamental human rights, but there are parts of the world in which poverty and government capacity make it difficult for these rights to be fully implemented. This does not mean that clean water is not a human right, nor does it mean that a government does not have a duty to provide clean water, but the practical implementation of that right will vary according to local circumstances. The point is that this right and others like it are so fundamental and important that they should be a matter of priority for both government and nongovernment entities. Governments cannot avoid the duty of providing clean water and basic sanitation by claiming there is no such human right or by using limited capacity or resources as an excuse.

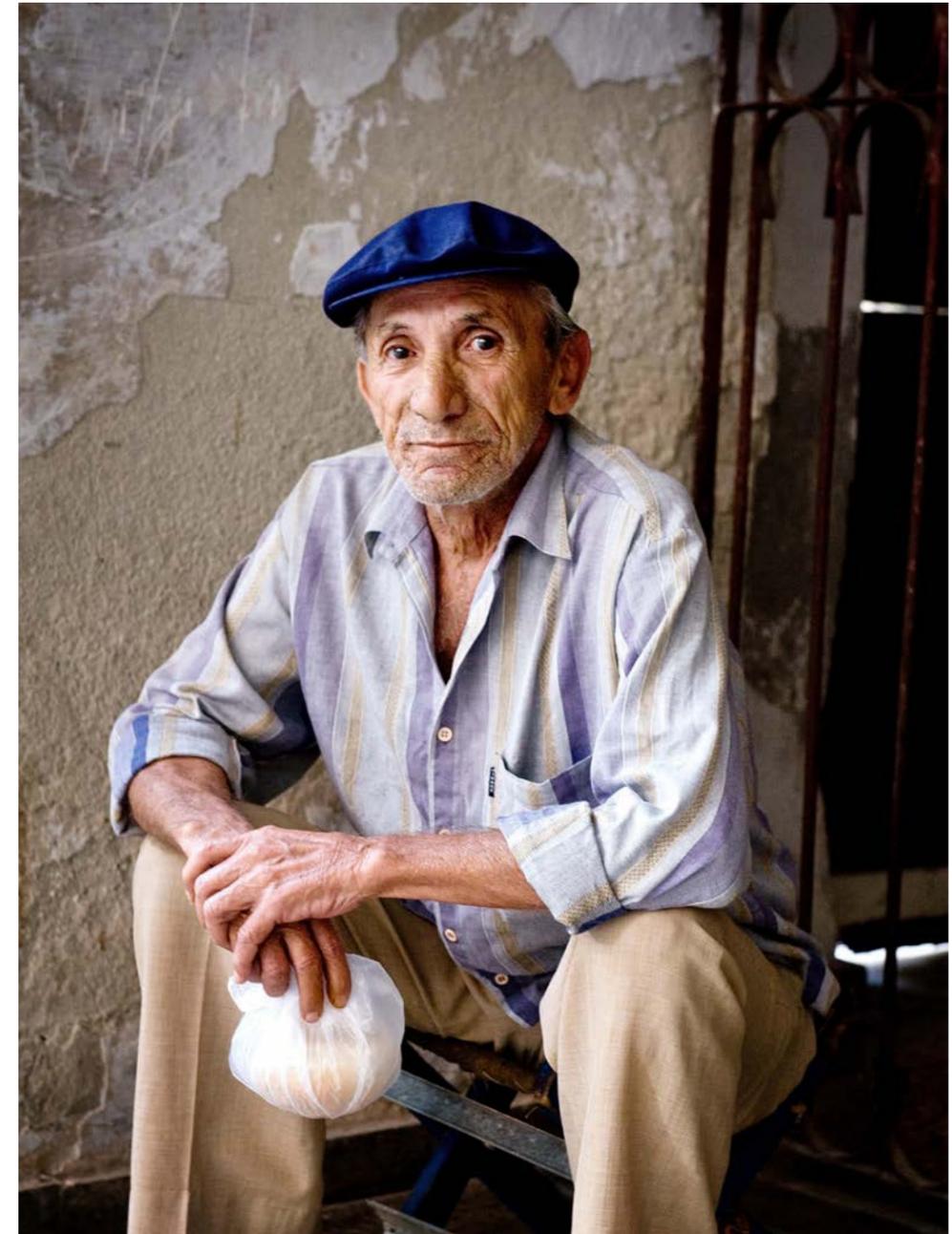
The emphasis on human *dignity* is itself a corrective to an overreliance on human *rights*. The emphasis on *everyone* and *everywhere* reminds us that human rights are not just for me but for others as well. If we care about the human dignity of all people in all places, it is conceptually impossible for us to think exclusively in terms of rights, because we will think about *our* obligations to others that are triggered by this very commitment. If we assert a belief in human dignity for everyone everywhere, we announce our duty to treat everyone everywhere with human dignity.

The formulation “human dignity for everyone everywhere” reminds us that rights involve reciprocity and corresponding duties. Human dignity is a shared and unifying value. This is partly a result of recognizing that others have the same status and worth as human beings that we have and partly by understanding the logical and normative connections between rights and duties.

The Punta del Este Declaration and the Abu Dhabi Document on Human Brotherhood for World Peace and Common Coexistence are guiding signs to achieve a better world—the renewed and active awareness of being worthy people united by the embrace of brotherhood. It is neither more nor less than what Beethoven brought to music in 1824 as one of the highest genius expressions of the human being.

—Norberto Padilla

President, Latin American Consortium for Religious Liberty, Argentina
Norberto Padilla, one of the coauthors and signatories of the Punta del Este Declaration, died in June 2020. Just before his death, he spoke of the importance of human dignity.



Resident of Havana, Cuba



- ▶ The COVID-19 global pandemic and the economic emergency unleashed painfully remind us that human dignity is so critical during times of crisis. However one defines or characterizes dignity, a key element is that of a person's intrinsic value and worth, with the individual and society recognizing and giving effect to that value. Whether we will emerge stronger after the pandemic intimately depends on the regard given to the preciousness of life as a facet of human dignity. We are all in this together.

—*Eugene Tan Kheng Boon*

Associate Professor of Law, Singapore Management University

Common moral opinions concerning human dignity focus on personal responsibilities and what should be decided and pursued by the individual. There are things in life that no one else should decide and determine for us. Disrespect for human dignity shows itself when someone decides these personal and important matters for us without any respect for personal wishes and also tries to intervene in the process to fulfill these personal projects. The individual may find it very difficult, or almost impossible, to master their circumstances without the help or support of others. Social responsibility enters the scene and helps to “supplement” the sphere of individual responsibility, enhancing one's opportunities to live a dignified life.

—*Hans Ingvor Filip Roth*

Professor of Human Rights, Stockholm University Institute for Turkish Studies, Sweden

Human dignity forms the bedrock foundation for all human rights. That is especially and profoundly true for equality and religious liberty, the most significant fundamental freedoms of twenty-first-century life. If we fail to remember the dignity of the human person, we cannot understand the protection of these fundamental freedoms in the lives of individuals nor that their exercise comes with awesome responsibilities. As humanity confronts global challenges that continue to reshape each of our lives—a pandemic, climate change, poverty, and hunger, to name only the four most pressing—the dignity of the human person informs our response, reminding us always of our rights and of our responsibilities.

—Paul Babie

Director, Law and Religion Project, Research Unit for the Study of Society, Ethics, and Law, Adelaide, Australia

▶ Perhaps more than any other concept, human dignity can help us understand how to regard ourselves. Perhaps more importantly, it can remind us how to regard each other. It provides a promise that can bridge divides—ideological, cultural, and religious. It is almost unique in its generative energy and in its upward lift. It is fertile soil for rights and responsibilities. I can learn something from almost anyone by asking what dignity means to them. Human dignity for everyone everywhere, perhaps more than any other concept, is a tool that can help us solve the myriad challenges and even crises we face as a global civilization.

—Brett G. Scharffs

Director, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, United States

▶ The gift and fragility of being human is manifest in every encounter. The gift is to be treasured by respecting it as such; the fragility gives cause for mutual care. Human dignity recognizes the value and responsibility consequent upon the gift and the fragility.

—Jessica Giles

SFHEA, Law Lecturer, and Director of the Project on Interdisciplinary Law and Religion Studies, Open University, United Kingdom

I grew up in a rural and impoverished area of South Africa where I had an intimate knowledge and experience of living side by side with animals and the environment. As such, my perspective of human dignity is inseparable from the dignity of created things, the environment, and animals because of the common space we shared. For me, human dignity is derived from being human, which means an affirmation of what all humans are endowed with from creation as having been made in the image and likeness of God. In a word, human dignity is a gift worthy of support, embrace, and respect.

—Luka David Mosoma

Chairperson, Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious, and Linguistic Communities (CRL Rights Commission); Former Vice Chancellor, University of South Africa



TOOLBOX

- Human dignity for everyone everywhere emphasizes that rights include accompanying duties, obligations, and responsibilities.
- Human dignity reminds us that duties and responsibilities regarding human rights accrue not only to states but to all human beings.
- Dignity is a status shared by every human being.
- The emphasis on everyone and everywhere makes it clear that rights involve corresponding duties.
- Human dignity reminds us that all of us should be concerned with not only our dignity and rights but also the dignity and rights of every person.
- Human dignity is not diminished when people fail to fulfill their responsibilities to the state and others.
- Our dignity may be especially important when we violate the law or fail to fulfill our responsibilities to the state and others.





ARTICLE FIVE

5 Education

Recognition of human dignity is a vital basis for teaching and education. Human rights education is of importance to promoting respect for the equal dignity of everyone. Such education is essential for sustaining dignity and human rights into the future. Equal access to education is a crucial aspect of respecting human dignity.

Article five recognizes the important connections between human dignity and education. Education is vital to the future of human dignity for all, and human dignity implies that there should be equal access to education. Caring about human dignity means caring about education, because education is essential for human flourishing. If respect for human dignity shapes what education looks like, education will naturally emphasize the value of human dignity.

The right to education is more than having access to education; it is the right to receive an education that aims at ensuring the full development of personality, which will have positive consequences for the development of human capacities. Education that is committed to human dignity and human rights will contribute to the goal of ensuring the full development of each child's personality. Further, such an approach to education is necessary to prevent education from being captured by those with agendas contrary to the spirit of the UDHR.

The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and

“What is man that you are mindful of him, or the son of man that you care for him?” This quotation from Psalm 8 in the Bible best captures what human dignity means to me. Caring about human life begins with the recognition that its existence is a marvel and a mystery. Defending human dignity means protecting this journey.

—Andrea Pin

Associate Professor in Comparative Law, University of Padua, Italy

Training, the World Programme for Human Rights Education, and other education-related initiatives contribute to the growing consensus on the crucial role of human rights education. Human rights education helps students understand that they belong to a global society. “Human rights education locates moral authority not in the legitimacy of any particular state, but in the inherent dignity and potential of each person as a physical, sensitive, thoughtful and spiritual being.”¹

The drafters of the UDHR recognized that the most important feature of creating a human rights culture and ensuring the implementation and stability of human rights would be through teaching and education. The introductory proclamation of the UDHR calls for “every organ of society,” through constant mindfulness and vigilance, to “strive by teaching and education to promote respect” for human rights at all levels, beginning with local efforts and progressing through national and international measures.

Teaching human rights and human dignity and their importance is the only way to ensure that both are not only adequately implemented but also preserved in the future. As time goes by, the atrocities that led to the drafting and adoption of the UDHR will be forgotten, and the importance of protecting human rights and human dignity for everyone everywhere could easily diminish. Teaching human rights and human dignity and teaching about the dark history that led the world to muster the political will to draft and adopt the UDHR will help ensure that human rights and human dignity are strengthened and preserved to benefit and protect generations to come.



Mother and child, Fort Portal, Uganda



- ▶ Children are not born with much dignity—either for the mother or the child. They are delivered through pain and anguish, come forth into the world covered in human fluids, and must first be washed before being presented to relatives. Their first sounds are those of distress. Yet in every newborn we recognize an inherent dignity, because God has created them as unique and precious individuals. By respecting their dignity, in all their helplessness, we honor the inherent worth of all humanity. Babies act as a mirror to us to realize that for all our faults, we too have inherent and incomparable worth.

—Patrick Parkinson

Dean of Law, TC Beirne School of Law, University of Queensland, Australia

▶ When I ask my students what human dignity is, no one really knows what to answer, but all of them feel what it is. I have realized that this is very similar to honesty, which is also hard to describe, but we all know what it encompasses. Law is the same thing: Is it just a system of norms, or relations of power, or governance, or rules and sanctions? It is all of that and much more. Law, honesty, and dignity mean so much more than we can express, but we all feel a fullness and a deep-rounded meaning of all of them.

—*Vanja-Ivan Savić*

Associate Professor, Department for Legal Theory, University of Zagreb Faculty of Law, Croatia

During three decades of working with local communities to resolve disputes over religion and values in public schools, one lesson stands out: finding common ground is best achieved when people begin the dialogue by reaffirming a shared recognition of the inviolable dignity of every human being. With that grounding, rights are understood to be universal and responsibility to protect those rights is seen as mutual. The Punta del Este Declaration invites the global community to reenvision our life together, to renew our understanding of what it means to be human across even our deepest differences. Can we overcome division and seek a common vision of the common good? We must.

—*Charles Haynes*

Vice President, Freedom Forum Institute / Religious Freedom Center;
Senior Scholar, First Amendment Center, United States

Note

1. Felisa Tibbitts, “On Human Dignity: The Need for Human Rights Education,” *Social Education* 60, no. 7 (November/December 1996): 431.

TOOLBOX

- Human dignity is an important foundational principle of education and teaching.
- Human dignity is important as a foundational principle for human rights education.
- Human rights education is important for promoting respect for the equal dignity of everyone.
- Human rights education is important for sustaining dignity and human rights into the future.
- Equal access to education is a crucial aspect of respecting human dignity.



ARTICLE SIX

6 Seeking Common Ground

Focusing on human dignity for everyone everywhere encourages people to search for ways to find common ground regarding competing claims and to move beyond exclusively legal mechanisms for harmonizing, implementing, and mutually vindicating human rights and finding solutions to conflicts.

Human dignity is a unifying value. Therefore, an approach to human rights that is oriented around human dignity will help find common ground in solving conflicts between competing rights claims and in finding solutions that are beneficial for everyone involved—rather than pronouncing winning and losing parties. Human dignity for all is unlikely to generate winner-take-all solutions to human rights conflicts. Hence, it is unlikely to appeal to those who view human rights conflicts as contests to be won at any cost or who see a preferred right as so important that they believe it should be pursued without regard for other rights or interests. Human dignity for everyone everywhere is, at its very core, an outlook that will seek common ground.

Sometimes human rights claims come into conflict, such as when a religious freedom claim to abstain from an activity clashes with a nondiscrimination right or equality law. Familiar examples include

Human dignity is as essential to our lives as air and water. Nature gives us air and water. Human dignity arises only from our kind cooperation. According to an old Japanese saying, “If you plant peach or chestnut tree seedlings, it will take three years to produce fruit. If you plant persimmon trees, it will take eight years to produce fruit.” It will take time, but we will continue to make efforts to realize a peaceful world through the dialogues of various cultures.

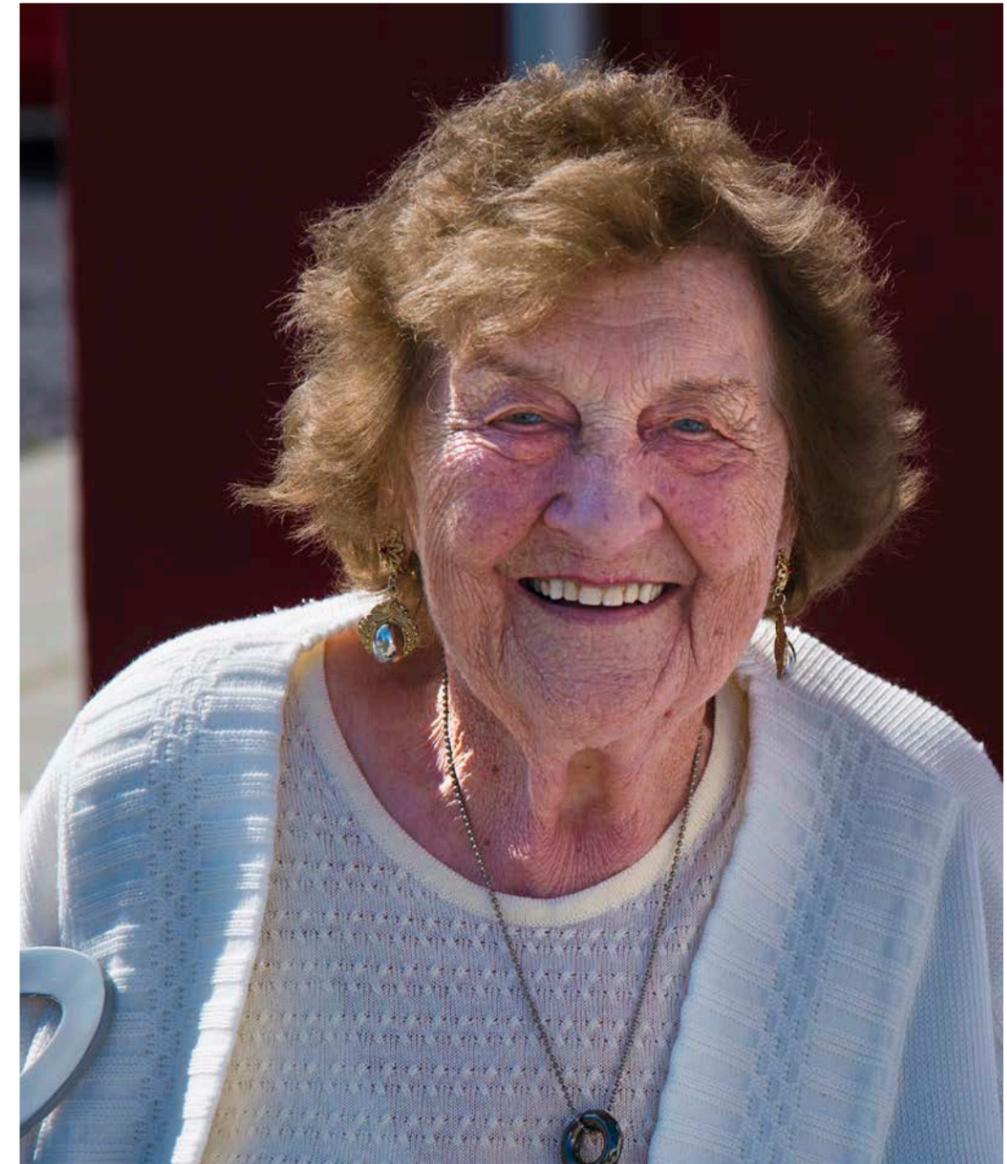
—*Ryosho Shoji*

Director, International Relations, All Japan Young Buddhist Association; Deputy Secretary General, World Fellowship of Buddhists

wedding service providers, such as cake artists, florists, and photographers who as a matter of conscience do not wish to participate in a same-sex wedding. If there is a legal provision prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation, the right to conscientious objection may be viewed as conflicting with the prohibition on discrimination. Sometimes the clash is smaller than it appears to be: the objection may not be to serving someone because of their sexual orientation; rather it may be based on not wanting to communicate a message that the person does not want to be associated with.

Because we live at a time when nondiscrimination norms have such powerful political and moral valence, it is easy to forget that not every differentiation is discrimination and not every instance of discrimination is insidious. It is crucial to recognize the many overlapping pluralisms of the societies in which we live and to ensure that the human dignity of everyone—including those on both sides of a human rights conflict—is adequately recognized and protected. Focusing on human dignity for everyone everywhere encourages us to seek ways to harmonize, implement, and mutually vindicate human rights by finding practical solutions to conflicts that may arise.

When the dignity of only some classes of people is valued, it is more likely that those whose conscience compels them to object will be unnecessarily coerced into bending to majoritarian values. The goal should be to harmonize and mutually vindicate the human dignity of everyone involved. Ultimately, it is crucial to find a solution that will allow the rights of both parties to be realized without enforcing the rights of one party in a way that suppresses the rights of the other.



Woman from Reykjavik, Iceland



- ▶ Human dignity is essential to our perception of how we view our world family. All are brothers and sisters worthy of full honor, mutual respect, forgiveness, and our love. Each human is “the best of creation” with high intellect, so without recognizing the dignity in humanity, there cannot be an honest discourse on human rights. Innocent people continue to be killed, raped, and dishonored because we fail to see “others” as part of “our group.” Let’s change this and vocally stand together. Let’s love others as we love our own family, because that is exactly what all humans are: one family.

—*Amineh Ahmed Hoti*

Executive Director, Centre for Dialogue and Action, Islamabad, Pakistan

The drafters of the UDHR found in the idea of dignity the *worth* of each human being, a core for their three years of discussions and drafting. The Punta del Este Declaration, reaffirming the UDHR, was premised upon the conviction that “dignity is an essential part of what it means to be human. Respect for human dignity for everyone everywhere helps us define and understand the meaning and scope of all human rights.”

—Donlu Thayer

Senior Fellow, International Center for Law and Religion Studies

- ▶ We are *all equal* in dignity and we are *all different* in identity. This is the principle of creativity. True respect for human dignity is the meeting point for religious and secular humanists. Human dignity invites major religious and philosophical traditions to cooperate on its deepest understanding and promotion.

—Ján Figel’

Former Special Envoy for the Promotion of the Freedom of Religion or Belief Outside the European Union

- ▶ Human dignity ought to be the primal organizing principle of human social life. It speaks to the primal and intrinsic value and worth of the human being. Although it inheres in the individual first, when individuals come together in a social group, their individual human dignity aggregates to confer dignity on the group. Human dignity offers that incontrovertible basis for demanding and honoring mutual respect for the value of all human beings from one another. Its strength is in that mutuality.

—Ayodele Atsenuwa

Professor, Department of Public Law, University of Lagos, Nigeria

Human dignity is the foundation of the sacredness of the human being. Every human being is worthy because he embodies a life that is sacred. For me, one of the truths that matters is that of human life. Human dignity is therefore the base and the foundation of all rights, of all human beings or of human rights. Indeed, if human rights are fundamental and inalienable rights for every human being, it is precisely because of human dignity.

—Célestine Gnonzion

Professor, Faculty of Information, Communication, and Arts, Félix Houphouët-Boigny University, Côte d’Ivoire



TOOLBOX

- Today, focusing on human dignity for everyone everywhere encourages us to search for ways to harmonize and find common ground regarding human rights.
- Focusing on human dignity for everyone everywhere can help us navigate competing human rights complaints.
- Focusing on human dignity for everyone everywhere helps us move beyond exclusively legal mechanisms for addressing human rights claims.
- Focusing on human dignity for everyone everywhere can help us find solutions to conflicts, including conflicts involving human rights.





ARTICLE SEVEN

7 Implementing and Realizing Human Rights in Legislation

Recognition of human dignity for everyone everywhere is a foundational principle of law and is central to developing and protecting human rights in law and policy. The richness of the concept of dignity resists exhaustive definition, but it encourages the pursuit of optimum mutual vindication where conflicting rights and values are involved. It is critical for moving beyond thinking exclusively in terms of balancing and tradeoffs of rights and interests.

Human rights can be difficult to implement in international law. The focus on dignity helps us decide what a right means by reminding us what the stakes and implications of a law on human dignity would mean. Following the atrocities of World War II, recognizing human dignity for everyone everywhere became a solemn promise of “never again” and a commitment to eliminate inequalities and promote “a common sense of belonging on equal footing.”¹

I have always believed that human dignity must inform the way we shape our political priorities, that no life is so futile or worthless that it does not command the right to be defended with determination and vigor. Regardless of gestational age or political status, color or creed, orientation or gender, class or origin, all men and women at every stage of their lives deserve the protection of those who hold political office, make laws, and determine events. When we look through the lens of human dignity, everything is given a better perspective, with a more nuanced understanding of dignity providing opportunities which competing rights claims do not always enable or facilitate.
—David Alton

Lord Alton of Liverpool, Life Peer, Crossbench
Member of the House of Lords, United Kingdom

Human dignity is featured in constitutions around the world to ensure human rights are protected. The Constitution of Germany guarantees the inviolability of dignity in response to the Nazi atrocities in World War II, with the hope that dignity might be an interpretive principle, a foundational right that informs all other aspects of law, and a standard to inform the state’s approach to human rights. The Constitution of South Africa recognizes the principle of human dignity as forming part of its “cornerstone of democracy.” And the Constitution of Poland declares that “the inherent and inalienable dignity of the person shall constitute a source of freedoms and rights of persons and citizens.”

Dignity should not be reduced to a simple measure to be balanced and traded off, although this does not mean that we categorically exclude balancing analyses. Rather, such analyses should favor dignity because its importance cannot be exceeded by that of any other value. Sometimes determining whether the law has been violated involves applying a rule rather than balancing rights or interests.

The fact that dignity is vague does not undermine its efficacy. Rather, its vagueness is aspirational, allowing it to be responsive to contemporary challenges and not a legal norm to be mechanically applied. While it may not generate absolute certainty, it lifts our perspective and directs us to value human beings. It fosters a community based on mutual toleration, respect, and solidarity.



Sisters on a stoop, Havana, Cuba



- ▶ Human dignity is one of the fundamental elements in every nation that shares constitutionalism as a policy the state should have. Thus every person has a right to behave as a human, be treated as a human, and think as a human. Sadly, that right is in danger now in places, even in some developed areas. No law or regulation is enough to wipe out that harm. Taking just a moment to be nice to each person will make the world a bit different, and we will see something new when we keep this moment every day.

—*Eiichiro Takahata*

Professor of Law, Nihon University College of Law, Tokyo, Japan



- ▶ The promotion and defense of human dignity for everyone everywhere, for every human being, since the instant of his or her existence until the moment of his or her dignified death; for every human being without distinction of race, religion, individual identity, ideology, cosmos-vision, or other categories; for every human being, wherever he or she is, has been the focus and main concern of my service to society in whatever fields I have worked and in my present position. Taking the Punta del Este lighthouse as a reference, we might say that just as the lighthouse guides navigators in open sea towards a safe port, the core concept of human dignity enlightens the understanding and implementation of human rights for everyone everywhere.

—*Carmen Asiaín Pereira*

Alternate Senator, Parliament of Uruguay; Professor of Law and Religion, University of Montevideo, Uruguay

Note

1. Booklet from the Office of the Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide, United Nations, New York, July 2020, 5.

TOOLBOX

- Human dignity is a foundational principle of law.
- Human dignity is central to developing and protecting human rights in legislation and policymaking.
- Human dignity resists precise definition, but it encourages the pursuit of mutually vindicating rights and values.
- Human dignity helps us move beyond thinking exclusively in terms of balancing and trade-offs when rights and interests are concerned.



ARTICLE EIGHT

8 Reconciliation and Adjudication

Recognition of human dignity for everyone everywhere is an important constitutional and legal principle for reconciling and adjudicating competing human rights claims, as well as claims between human rights and other important national and societal interests. Mutual vindication of rights may be possible in adjudication and may be further facilitated if all involved focus on respecting the human dignity of everyone. When mutual vindication of rights is not possible, dignity for all can help us to delineate the scope of rights, to set the boundaries of permissible restrictions on the exercise of rights and freedoms, and to seek to bring into fair balance competing rights claims. Respect for dignity plays an important role not only in formal adjudication but also in mediation or other forms of alternative dispute resolution.

Focusing on the rights and freedom of everyone encourages us to differentiate between dignity claims that lie at the core of a human right and claims that are less central. Human dignity is a strategy that moves beyond balancing toward an idea of mutual vindication of competing rights claims and other important interests. The ideal of mutual vindication of rights inspires us to seek strategies rather than victories over the other.

For example, in 2015 the Utah Compromise was enacted, consisting of two landmark LGBTQ nondiscrimination

As a human rights litigator, I am constantly searching for a new language and a more persuasive vocabulary to secure successful outcomes in real cases. The deployment of human dignity is a game changer, enabling judges to resolve disputes justly and fairly. Most concepts of universal application tend to gravitate to the lowest common denominator. But the promotion of human dignity for everyone everywhere is a leveling feature which, unusually, levels upward. It seeks to maximize the self-worth of all persons affected in complex and finely balanced disputes. It is the most valuable addition to the judicial toolbox since the framing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

—Mark Hill QC

Professor, Centre for Law and Religion, Cardiff University, Wales, United Kingdom

bills, balancing LGBTQ rights and religious freedoms by carving out exceptions and providing alternatives. Religious organizations were exempted from the first bill, which protected LGBTQ individuals from discrimination in employment and housing. The second bill permitted faith groups to solemnize and host weddings consistent with their faith without threat of civil suit or government penalty. These bills vindicated the rights and interests of both parties.

When mutual vindication is not possible, dignity helps delineate the scope of rights and set boundaries. For example, it is possible to prohibit and punish harmful discrimination while at the same time respecting other established individual and institutional rights, including the rights of freedom of expression, thought, conscience, and religion.

In several countries, there are ongoing conflicts about the ability of religiously affiliated adoption services to continue to operate even if they do not facilitate adoptions for same-sex couples. The principle of human dignity focuses on the broader dignitary interests at stake, such as those of the children who are awaiting placement. Compromise is necessary for seeking fairness for all, especially in pluralistic societies. Confrontations regarding competing rights claims sometimes have a spirit of “all or nothing.” Instead, a spirit of compromise and accommodation will likely result in reciprocal compromises and accommodations and will help promote equal dignity and rights for all.



Dancing angel, National Ballet, Cuba



- ▶ The deepest truth about human dignity is the belief that human beings are sacred, more important than holy sites or sacred places. Humans are temples of the divine, holy habitations worthy of respect. Though not an empirical property, human dignity is the foundation and the justification for all human rights. The root cause of human rights violations—the suffering, the dehumanization, the exploitation of the vulnerable and the defenseless, the greed that causes deprivation of basic subsistence to the poor, the use and abuse of women and children, the desacralization of human bodies reduced to objects of pleasure and disposables—is the disregard of human dignity, the dismissal of the truth of the infinite value and worth of every human person, in essence, the dignity of every person.

—*Ganoune Diop*

Secretary General, International Religious Liberty Association

Human dignity is the crossroads where everyone would want to be found. The reflection of a loving Creator for some and the treasure trove of responsibility for all, human dignity is the true name of identity: It is the place of self-recognition and, at the same time, of the encounter with otherness, one's own and that of others. It is the Tau imprinted on the head of each human being, a sign of greatness but also of a common—welcoming—modesty. It is the pillar of every legal system, secular or religious, that is truly human; the essential balancing element that cannot itself be balanced; the canon by which, here below in human history at least, individual and collective actions are measured.

—Alessandro Ferrari

Associate Professor, Department of Law, Economy, and Cultures,
University of Insubria, Italy

- ▶ Human dignity is an exclusive attribute that exists in the form of knowledge among human beings. Its presence makes human beings human, and its absence removes them from the human family completely. It is the only home that accommodates peace and stability in every society. In other words, peace and stability in societies depend solely on human dignity's existence among humans. It is the only source of respect among humans and between them and other creatures.

—Ahmed Salisu Garba

Professor, Faculty of Law, Bauchi State University, Nigeria

TOOLBOX

- Human dignity for all is an important principle of constitutional law and other foundational legal provisions.
- Human dignity is an important principle for adjudicating human rights claims.
- Human dignity is important in adjudicating claims involving more than one person's human rights.
- Human dignity is helpful in adjudicating claims between human rights and other national and societal interests.
- Although adjudication often does not do a good job of mutually vindicating rights and interests, this is more likely to happen if courts focus on respecting the human dignity of everyone involved in a conflict.
- When mutual vindication of rights is not possible, dignity for all can help judges set the boundaries for acceptable limitations on the exercise of rights and freedoms.
- Human dignity can help bring into fair balance competing rights claims.
- Respect for human dignity is important not only in formal adjudication of rights but also in alternative dispute mechanisms such as mediation, restorative justice, and alternative dispute resolution.



ARTICLE NINE

9 Potential Difficulties Involving Competing Human Rights Claims

Respecting the human dignity of everyone everywhere supports effective human rights advocacy. Recognizing the universal and reciprocal character of human dignity is a corrective to positions claiming rights for some but not for others. It helps to diffuse the hostility that is often associated with human rights controversies and to foster constructive dialogue. It also helps mitigate the distortion, avoidance, and selective recognition of human dignity.

Human dignity for everyone everywhere broadens our perspective and encourages us to look beyond anyone's rights or interests. Sometimes human rights advocates get caught up in their advocacy for a particular right or for rights for a particular group. Human dignity is the antidote to such shortsightedness and facilitates thinking of rights questions beyond just one right or group of people.

Such claims on dignitary harms can be problematic when the suffering person or

Human dignity is a central tenet in the Islamic faith, in which I firmly believe, and is at the heart of the Indonesian tradition, to which I was born. Since time immemorial, humanity has searched relentlessly for a common denominator that could unite people of all genders, races, cultures, faiths, and nationalities. As alluded to in the Punta del Este Declaration, human dignity is indeed a demonstrably proven and reliable principle which not only supports justice and fundamental and human rights but can also serve to adjudicate when egregious acts, violations, and conflicts occur in society.

—Dicky Sofjan

Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies, Graduate School, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

community gets to define offense on their terms. For example, there have been important controversies about speech and religion. Some people will offend by speaking critically of religion, while others may offend by speaking of their religious beliefs. Both types of offenses are generally protected speech under widely accepted principles of the human right to freedom of expression and speech. Efforts to limit speech that is "intolerant" will almost always protect the politically powerful from offensive speech and leave out reciprocal protections for those who are not politically powerful. Demanding limits on intolerant speech will often be intolerant itself. The supposed or actual intolerance of a group or individual should not be used as a basis for limiting the human rights of the intolerant. Human dignity for everyone everywhere is a powerful tool for understanding and evaluating these claims. It reminds us that despite our differences, what we share is more important than what divides us.

Human dignity avoids the distortion and dismissal of human rights by authoritarian governments. China has cited national security and combating extremism as reasons to oppress Uyghur Muslims. Russia has likewise restricted the human rights of Jehovah's Witnesses. Declaring human dignity and human rights for everyone everywhere is a repudiation of these efforts to marginalize or minimize human rights—a reminder to help prevent such abuse.



Playful pals, hill country, Guatemala



- ▶ Human dignity is the gift woven into who we are, grounding our individual identities and inviolable worth; human dignity is the shared foundation for human community, establishing the necessity and possibility of flourishing societies and cultures; and human dignity entails the ethical demand that we take responsibility for protecting and cultivating the dignity of others and ourselves through the adoption and embrace of human rights. In fact, it is so consequential that Christian traditions resort to a most extreme affirmation in their attempts to make sense of it, namely, that human beings are created in the image of God.

—*Paul Martens*

Associate Professor of Ethics, Department of Religion, and Director of Interdisciplinary Programs, College of Arts and Sciences, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, United States

Dignity is inherent in the human person (something given or complete), and it should be promoted and protected (something lacking development). It is the foundation of human rights (source of inspiration and interpretative guidance) as well as the scope of protection of certain rights (guarantees of respect for dignity). It concerns the intrinsic value of every human being (sacredness of human life), although it refers to the position or status that all human beings should equally occupy (equal and high consideration for all people).

—Rodrigo Vitorino Souza Alves

Director, Brazilian Center of Studies in Law and Religion, Brazil

- ▶ It is difficult to write about dignity when the values that govern life in society are deteriorating. Selfish behavior increasingly demeans human dignity. Freedom has been used as an absolute value at times without reference to the human dignity that undergirds it and which it pretends to defend. When the setting is one of uncertainty, human dignity must be the light that banishes willful obscurantism, overthrows authoritarianism, and rescues the downtrodden from overbearing institutions by magnifying life, solidarity, and fraternal community coexistence.

—Prigol Odacyr

Chair, Curitiba Chapter of the BYU J. Reuben Clark Law Society; Managing Partner, Prigol Advogados Associados, Curitiba, Brazil

- ▶ Amidst celebrating their socioethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity, African communities continuously encourage and emphasize human dignity as a pivotal perennial pillar. Its centrality—as a knowable attribute—in African philosophy and practice reflects its resilience and relevance, and its innate value powerfully influences Africans’ attitudes and actions in life. And despite occasional rancorous ruptures (such as civil wars and ethno-racial discrimination) that occur continentally, Africans’ steadfast support for human dignity implies the intrinsic respect for everyone’s and everything’s rights.

—Muhammed Haron

Professor, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Botswana



TOOLBOX

- Dignity is an essential part of what it means to be human.
- Respect for human dignity for everyone everywhere helps us define and understand the meaning and scope of human rights.
- Human dignity can be especially helpful in facilitating effective and responsible human rights advocacy.
- Respecting the human dignity of all people involved in a human rights conflict can facilitate effective human rights advocacy.
- Recognizing the universal and reciprocal character of human dignity is a corrective to positions claiming rights for some but not for others.
- Human dignity for everyone everywhere is an important corrective to the excesses of identity politics.
- Focusing on the human dignity of all can reduce hostilities that often accompany human rights controversies and help foster constructive dialogue.
- Focusing on the human dignity of all can help mitigate the distortion of human rights that can take place when the dignity or rights of only some people or groups are taken into account.
- Focusing on the human dignity of all can help address situations in which governments or officials want to avoid their responsibilities with regard to human rights.
- The human dignity of all can help address the problem of selective recognition of human dignity.





ARTICLE TEN

10 Most Egregious and Most Feasible

Human dignity for everyone everywhere reminds us to work toward the elimination of the most egregious abuses of the human rights of individuals and groups, including genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and other atrocities. It also reminds us to protect those human beings most at-risk of human rights violations. At the same time, it encourages efforts to respond to problems that may be amenable to practical and feasible solutions.

Mass atrocities such as genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes begin with the denial of the human dignity of those deemed less worthy or undeserving of protection or rights. Massive violations of human rights start with violations of human

Why is human dignity important and why must it be protected? Because there is no other more powerful way to prevent human rights violations and mass atrocities like genocide. Crimes like genocide thrive on the ideology that some life is unworthy of protection, is unworthy of living, and can be annihilated. Without such a denial of human dignity, in their different manifestations, genocide, the crime of crimes, would not be possible. If we are serious about putting an end to mass atrocities, putting an end to crimes like genocide, we need to recognize the importance of protecting human dignity for everyone everywhere. No action plans on prevention will work if we disregard the very first step towards prevention—ensuring human dignity for all.

—Ewelina Ochab

Author of *Never Again: Legal Responses to a Broken Promise in the Middle East*

dignity. The effects of such mass atrocities are apparent in our history. The Nazi regime in World War II introduced the Tiergarten 4 program that sought to destroy lives that the party deemed were unworthy to live. As a result, 200,000 to 250,000 mentally and physically disabled people were killed in addition to groups such as Jews, homosexuals, Serbian prisoners, Romani, and Poles.

Today, atrocities still occur, such as the genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Darfur, Syria, Iraq, and Myanmar. However, states often shy away from responding to their duty to prevent such atrocities, citing diplomatic considerations and not wishing to interfere with other states' sovereignty. Focusing on human dignity encourages us to look beyond those considerations and protect endangered communities.

Focusing on human dignity for everyone everywhere calls for early responses to human rights violations before they turn into mass atrocities. It encourages us to be watchful for saving opportunities. It reminds us to look out for people and communities who are more susceptible to becoming victims of human rights violations, such as children, pregnant women, the elderly, the malnourished, prisoners, the sick, the disabled, migrants, refugees, and others who are displaced or returning. We can reaffirm the dignity of those at risk of human rights violations by protecting them from violations.



A couple, Cambodia



- ▶ Human dignity is a double-edged sword. When used as a figure of speech, a rhetorical tool to support and strengthen every legal claim, human dignity can be turned into a weapon against others and contribute to inflaming cultural wars in society. However, when human dignity is understood as eternal, inalienable, and of equal value to each person, as it is memorialized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it becomes a solid framework for advancing and applying human rights and other important societal ends as mutually reinforcing objectives.

—*Dmytro Vovk*

Director, Center for Rule of Law and Religion Studies, Yaroslav the Wise National Law University, Ukraine

The most important point of the Declaration on Human Dignity for me is the one which demands us to focus on the most egregious human rights abuses and those individuals and groups who are most likely to suffer human rights violations. Based on my experience in Russia as a religious scholar, the individuals who belong to new religious movements are among those who risk the most. Recently the Jehovah's Witnesses were banned in this country, and Scientologists are also on the way, not to mention some other groups. Unfortunately, this point of the declaration is not true only for Russia.

—*Boris Falikov*

Associate Professor, Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow, Russia

The protection of human dignity lies at the center of Christian theology. Human dignity does not relate to color, gender, ethnicity, or any other distinguishing marker, not even good or evil. It is for all. Every human being has dignity worth respecting and protecting. From the standpoint of faith, all human beings are born in the image and likeness of God and are equal before God. It is not for humans to take it away from others, not even when they violate the very concept of human dignity by what they choose to be and to do to others. No treatment, even of the perpetrator, may violate human dignity. Rather, we must strive to make people live up to what this divine gift implies. We must protect dignity, we must avoid everything that strips people of dignity in the eyes of others, and we need to treat ourselves and our neighbors with respect, love, kindness, compassion, and forgiveness.

—*Elizabeta Kitanović*

Executive Secretary for Human Rights, Conference of European Churches

- ▶ The belief in the inherent dignity of human beings, without distinction, is an axiom that the Judeo-Christian tradition brought to politics, law, economics, work, religion, science, technology, culture, and entertainment. That is the essence of the parable of the good Samaritan. But it is entirely relevant outside that tradition. We are invited to say, like the ancient poet Terence, “I am human, and nothing human is alien to me.”¹ When we ignore human dignity, we get inequality, injustice, oppression, famine, disease, violence, suffering, and death.

—*Jónatas Machado*

Professor, Faculty of Law, Universidade de Coimbra, Portugal

- ▶ Human rights discourse on human dignity must take a holistic approach to understand what human dignity means to women, people with disabilities, children, and the diverse population of people living in rural areas to help redress the narratives that have reduced the meaning of dignity to these groups and help reshape their lives.

—*Abiola Akiyode-Afolabi*

Faculty of Law, Centre for Human Rights, University of Lagos School of Law, Nigeria

Human rights have a future only if based on the universal recognition of human dignity, which is a notion to be explored and discovered, not to be construed. Human dignity must be universally recognized by all human beings, including those who engage in extremely inhuman behavior. This is the reason why we must ask ourselves about the foundations of human dignity and, even though we know our answers will diverge profoundly, discuss it openly and honestly, helping the cause of the recognition of human dignity all over the world.

—*Javier Martínez-Torrón*

Director, Department of Law and Religion, Complutense University Madrid School of Law, Spain

Note

1. Terence (Publius Terentius Afer), *Heauton Timorumenos*, act I, scene I (163 BC).



TOOLBOX

- Human dignity for everyone everywhere reminds us to work toward the elimination of the most egregious abuses of the human rights of individuals and groups, including genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and other atrocities.
- The human dignity of all reminds us to protect those human beings who are most weak and vulnerable or otherwise at risk of human rights violations.
- Human dignity encourages efforts to respond to problems that might be especially amenable to improvement.



Two friends in leprosy colony, Jodhpur, India

SECTION THREE

The Declarations

The Punta del Este Declaration on
Human Dignity and the Universal
Declaration of Human Rights

Fisherman seeking morning catch, central Myanmar



The Punta del Este Declaration on Human Dignity for Everyone Everywhere

PREAMBLE

WHEREAS seventy years ago in the aftermath of World War II, the nations and peoples of the world came together in solidarity and solemnity and without dissent adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations;

WHEREAS the Preamble of the UDHR declares that “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world”;

WHEREAS Article 1 of the UDHR proclaims that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood”;

WHEREAS the equal human dignity of everyone everywhere is the foundational principle of human rights and reminds us that every person is of value and is worthy of respect;

WHEREAS it is important to remember, reaffirm, and recommit ourselves to these basic principles;

RECALLING that it was grave violations of human dignity during the wars of the twentieth century that preceded and precipitated the UDHR;

RECALLING the international consensus that domestic law alone had not been sufficient to safeguard against and avoid the human rights violations of the World Wars;

RECALLING that in spite of all of their differences, nations of the world concurred that the dignity of all people is the basic foundation of human rights and of freedom, justice, and peace in the world;

RECALLING that human dignity is the wellspring of and underpins all the rights and freedoms recognized in the UDHR as fundamental;

RECALLING that the UDHR has served as the inspiration for an array of international and regional covenants and other instruments, as well as numerous national constitutions, bills and charters of rights, and legislation protecting human rights;

RECOGNIZING that human dignity is not a static concept but accommodates respect for diversity and calls for a dynamic approach to its application in the diverse and ever-changing contexts of our pluralistic world;

RECOGNIZING that although the notion of dignity has been criticized by some as being too abstract, it actually has been and remains a powerful organizing force that points humanity towards its highest ideals and has proven itself as an influential heuristic in constitutional and human rights discourse;

RECOGNIZING that the concept of human dignity emphasizes the uniqueness and irreplaceability of every human being; that it implies a right of each individual to find and define the meanings of his or her own life; that it presupposes respect for pluralism and difference; and that it carries with it the responsibility to honor the dignity of everyone;

RECOGNIZING that severe violations and abuses of human dignity continue to this day, including through wars, armed conflicts, genocides, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the global crises concerning refugees, migrants, asylum seekers, and human trafficking, and that such depredations continue to threaten peace, justice, and the rights of all;

RECOGNIZING that human rights can easily be fragmented, eroded, or neglected and that constant vigilance is necessary for human rights to be implemented, realized, and carried forward in the world;

RECOGNIZING that human dignity for everyone everywhere and at every level is threatened when the needs, interests, and rights of one group or individual are placed ahead of those of other groups and individuals;

EMPHASIZING that equal human dignity is a status with which all human beings are endowed, but also a value that must be learned, nurtured, and lived;

EMPHASIZING that violations of human dignity require appropriate redress;

EMPHASIZING that human dignity is now a time-tested principle that can help find common ground, reconcile competing conceptions of what justice demands, facilitate implementation of human rights, and guide adjudication in case of conflicts, and that can also help us respond to distortions, abuse, and hostility towards human rights;

BELIEVING that human rights discourse might be less divisive than it often is and greater efforts might be made to find common ground;

BELIEVING that human rights must be read and realized together;

BELIEVING that the concept of human dignity can help us understand, protect, and implement human rights globally; and

HOPING that the present century will be more humane, just, and peaceful than the twentieth century;

The
Universal
Declaration
of
Human
Rights
1948



Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt of the United States (top) holding a Universal Declaration of Human Rights poster in Spanish.
November 1, 1949
United Nations
Lake Success, New York

Mrs. Shrimati Lakshmi Menon of India (left) and Dr. Charles Malik of Lebanon (right) address the General Assembly prior to the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
December 9–10, 1948
Paris, France



Children of United Nations staff members look at the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. All nations in the world have been invited to set aside 10 December of every year as Human Rights Day and, through programs in schools and community centers, to pay homage to the principles of freedom and of the dignity of men.
December 1, 1950
United Nations
Lake Success, New York

Photography by UN Photo/MB

We, the undersigned, do solemnly issue the following Declaration on Human Dignity for Everyone Everywhere:

ARTICLE 1

Foundation, Objective, and Criterion

The inherent human dignity of all people and the importance of respecting, promoting, and protecting human dignity for everyone everywhere is the foundational principle and the key objective or goal of human rights, as well as an invaluable criterion for evaluating laws, policies, and government actions for how well they accord with human rights standards. Protecting, promoting, and guaranteeing respect for the human dignity of everyone is a fundamental obligation of states, governments, and other public bodies, whether local, regional, national, or international. Promoting human dignity is also a responsibility of all sectors of society, and of each of us as human beings. Doing so is the key to protecting the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family, and remains the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world.

ARTICLE 2

Generating Agreement and Building Common Understanding

The inherent dignity of every human being was the key idea that helped generate agreement and a common understanding at the time of the adoption of the UDHR about human rights of all people, in spite of diversity and deep differences, notwithstanding divergent political and legal systems. Human dignity for everyone everywhere is valuable

as a point of departure for exploring and understanding the meaning of human rights, as a basis for finding common ground regarding human rights and consensus about their content and meaning. It provides an approach to building bridges between various normative justifications of human rights, including those with religious and secular theoretical groundings. Respecting human dignity for everyone everywhere facilitates discussions on different conceptions of shared values. Human dignity is a broad concept that nevertheless invites in-depth reflection within differing traditions and perspectives. Human dignity for all reminds us that human rights are universal, inalienable, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated.

ARTICLE 3

Defining and Specifying Human Rights

Dignity is an essential part of what it means to be human. Respect for human dignity for everyone everywhere helps us define and understand the meaning and scope of all human rights. Focusing concretely and in actual situations on human dignity and its implications for particular human rights claims can help identify the specific content of these rights as well as how we understand human dignity itself.

ARTICLE 4

Duties and Responsibilities

Human dignity for everyone everywhere emphasizes the concept in the UDHR that

rights include accompanying obligations and responsibilities, not just of states but also of all human beings with respect to the rights of others. Dignity is a status shared by every human being, and the emphasis on everyone and everywhere makes it clear that rights are characterized by reciprocity and involve corresponding duties. Everyone should be concerned not only with his or her own dignity and rights but with the dignity and rights of every human being. Nonetheless, human dignity is not diminished on the ground that persons are not fulfilling their responsibilities to the state and others.

ARTICLE 5

Education

Recognition of human dignity is a vital basis for teaching and education. Human rights education is of importance to promoting respect for the equal dignity of everyone. Such education is essential for sustaining dignity and human rights into the future. Equal access to education is a crucial aspect of respecting human dignity.

ARTICLE 6

Seeking Common Ground

Focusing on human dignity for everyone everywhere encourages people to search for ways to find common ground regarding competing claims and to move beyond exclusively legal mechanisms for harmonizing, implementing, and mutually vindicating human rights and finding solutions to conflicts.

ARTICLE 7

Implementing and Realizing Human Rights in Legislation

Recognition of human dignity for everyone everywhere is a foundational principle of law and is central to developing and protecting human rights in law and policy. The richness of the concept of dignity resists exhaustive definition, but it encourages the pursuit of optimum mutual vindication where conflicting rights and values are involved. It is critical for moving beyond thinking exclusively in terms of balancing and tradeoffs of rights and interests.

ARTICLE 8

Reconciliation and Adjudication

Recognition of human dignity for everyone everywhere is an important constitutional and legal principle for reconciling and adjudicating competing human rights claims, as well as claims between human rights and other important national and societal interests. Mutual vindication of rights may be possible in adjudication and may be further facilitated if all involved focus on respecting the human dignity of everyone. When mutual vindication of rights is not possible, dignity for all can help us to delineate the scope of rights, to set the boundaries of permissible restrictions on the exercise of rights and freedoms, and to seek to bring into fair balance competing rights claims. Respect for dignity plays an important role not only in formal adjudication but

also in mediation or other forms of alternative dispute resolution.

ARTICLE 9

Potential Difficulties Involving Competing Human Rights Claims

Respecting the human dignity of everyone everywhere supports effective human rights advocacy. Recognizing the universal and reciprocal character of human dignity is a corrective to positions claiming rights for some but not for others. It helps to defuse the hostility that is often associated with human rights controversies and to foster constructive dialogue. It also helps mitigate the distortion, avoidance, and selective recognition of human dignity.

ARTICLE 10

Most Egregious and Most Feasible

Human dignity for everyone everywhere reminds us to work toward the elimination of the most egregious abuses of the human rights of individuals and groups, including genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and other atrocities. It also reminds us to protect those human beings most at-risk of human rights violations. At the same time, it encourages efforts to respond to problems that may be amenable to practical and feasible solutions.

We, the undersigned, do solemnly reaffirm:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights continues to be “a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping the Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, local, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance.”

Signatories to the Declaration on Human Dignity

ORIGINAL SIGNATORIES

David Alton (United Kingdom), Lord Alton of Liverpool

Rodrigo Vitorino Souza Alves (Brazil), Director, Brazilian Center of Studies in Law and Religion

Kristina Arriaga (United States), Vice Chair, United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)

Carmen Asiaín Pereira (Uruguay), Alternate Senator, Parliament of Uruguay; Professor of Law and Religion, University of Montevideo

Paul Babie (Australia), Director, Law and Religion Project, Research Unit for the Study of Society, Ethics, and Law, Adelaide

Andrew Bennett (Canada), Program Director, Cardus Law; Former Ambassador for Religious Freedom and Head of the Office of Religious Freedom

Thomas C. Berg (United States), James L. Oberstar Professor of Law and Public Policy, University of St. Thomas School of Law

Heiner Bielefeldt (Germany), Professor of Human Rights and Human Rights Policy, University of Erlangen; Former UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion or Belief

Sophie van Bijsterveld (Netherlands), Senator, Dutch Upper House of Parliament; Professor of Religion, Law, and Society, Radboud University

Ana María Celis Brunet (Chile), Associate Professor, Center for Law and Religion, Faculty of Law, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile; President, National Council of the Chilean Church for the Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Accompaniment of Victims

S. David Colton (United States), Chair, International Advisory Council, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Brigham Young University

Simona Cruciani (United States), Political Affairs Officer, United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect

Fadi Daou (Lebanon), Chair and CEO, Adyan Foundation, Beirut

Ganoune Diop (Senegal), Secretary General, International Religious Liberty Association

Gary B. Doxey (United States), Associate Director, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Brigham Young University

Thomas David DuBois (China), Visiting Research Fellow, Fudan University Development Institute, Shanghai

W. Cole Durham, Jr. (United States), Founding Director, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Brigham Young University

Boris Falikov (Russia), Associate Professor, Russian State University for the Humanities

Alessandro Ferrari (Italy), Associate Professor, Department of Law, Economy, and Cultures, University of Insubria

Silvio Ferrari (Italy), Emeritus Professor of Canon Law, University of Milan; Founder and Honorary Life President, International Consortium for Law and Religion Studies

Ján Figel (Slovakia), Special Envoy for the Promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief Outside the European Union

Gabriel González Merlano (Uruguay), Professor and Coordinator of the Humanities, Universidad Católica del Uruguay

T. Jeremy Gunn (Morocco), Professor of Law and Political Science, International University of Rabat

Muhammed Haron (Botswana), Professor, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Botswana

Charles Haynes (United States), Vice President, Freedom Forum Institute / Religious Freedom Center; Senior Scholar, First Amendment Center

Mark Hill QC (United Kingdom), Professor, Centre for Law and Religion, Cardiff University

Amineh Ahmed Hoti (Pakistan / United Kingdom), Executive Director, Centre for Dialogue and Action

Scott E. Isaacson (United States), Senior Fellow and Regional Advisor for Latin America, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Brigham Young University

Merilin Kiviorg (Estonia), Senior Research Fellow in Public International Law and Human Rights, University of Tartu Faculty of Law

Douglas Laycock (United States), Robert E. Scott Distinguished Professor of Law and Professor of Religious Studies, University of Virginia

Tore Lindholm (Norway), Emeritus Professor, Norwegian Centre for Human Rights, University of Oslo

Nikos Maghioros (Greece), Assistant Professor of Canon and Ecclesiastical Law, Faculty of Theology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Tahir Mahmood (India), Distinguished Jurist Chair and Professor of Eminence, Faculty of Law, Amity University

Kishan Manocha (Poland), Senior Adviser on Freedom of Religion or Belief, OSCE/ODIHR

Javier Martínez-Torrón (Spain), Director, Department of Law and Religion, Complutense University Madrid School of Law

Nicholas Miller (United States), Director, International Religious Liberty Institute, Andrews University

Dato’ Dr. Mohd Asri Zainul Abidin (Malaysia), Associate Professor, Universiti Sains Malaysia

Juan G. Navarro Floria (Argentina), Professor of Law, Pontificia Universidad Católica Argentina

Jaclyn L. Neo (Singapore), Associate Professor of Law, National University of Singapore Faculty of Law; Director, Centre for Asian Legal Studies

Ewelina Ochab (United Kingdom), Author of *Never Again: Legal Responses to a Broken Promise in the Middle East*

Norberto Padilla (Argentina) (deceased), President, Latin American Consortium for Religious Liberty

Patrick Parkinson (Australia), Dean of Law, TC Beirne School of Law, University of Queensland

Fabio Petito (United Kingdom / Italy), Senior Lecturer in International Relations, University of Sussex; Scientific Coordinator, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs–ISPI Initiative on Religions and International Relations

Peter Petkoff (United Kingdom), Director, Religion, Law and International Relations Programme, Regent’s Park College, Oxford; Law Lecturer, Brunel Law School

Andrea Pin (Italy), Associate Professor in Comparative Law, University of Padua

Clelia Piperno (Italy), Professor of Comparative Constitutional Law, University of Teramo

Ann Power-Forde (Ireland), Human Rights Jurist

Frank Ravitch (United States), Professor of Law and Walter H. Stowers Chair of Law and Religion, Michigan State University College of Law

Gerhard Robbers (Germany), Emeritus Professor, University of Trier; Former Minister of Justice and Consumer Protection of Rhineland-Palatinate

Neville Rochow SC (Australia), Barrister / Board Member, University of Adelaide Research Unit for Society, Law and Religion

Melissa Rogers (United States), Nonresident Senior Fellow in Governance Studies, Brookings Institution

Hans Ingvar Filip Roth (Sweden), Professor of Human Rights, Stockholm University Institute for Turkish Studies (SUITS)

Vanja-Ivan Savić (Croatia), Associate Professor, Department for Legal Theory, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Law

Brett G. Scharffs (United States), Director, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Brigham Young University

Chris Seiple (United States), President Emeritus, Institute for Global Engagement

Ahmed Shaheed (Maldives), United Nations Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion or Belief

Marek Šmid (Slovakia), Rector, Trnava University; President, Slovak Rectors’ Conference

Dicky Sofjan (Indonesia), Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies, Graduate School, Universitas Gadjah Mada

Pinghua Sun (China), Professor, China University of Political Science and Law

Katrina Lantos Swett (United States), President, Lantos Foundation for Human Rights & Justice; Former Chair, United States Commission on International Religious Freedom

Nayla Tabbara (Lebanon), Director, Institute of Citizenship and Diversity Management, Adyan Foundation, Beirut

Eiichiro Takahata (Japan), Professor of Law, Nihon University College of Law, Tokyo

Jeroen Temperman (Netherlands), Professor of Public International Law, Erasmus University Rotterdam

Rik Torfs (Belgium), Chair, Faculty of Canon Law, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

Renáta Uitz (Hungary), Chair/Director, Comparative Constitutional Law Program, Department of Legal Studies, Central European University

Marco Ventura (Italy), Professor of Law and Religion, University of Siena; Director, Centre for Religious Studies, Fondazione Bruno Kessler

Juan Martín Vives (Argentina), Director, Center for Studies on Law and Religion, Universidad Adventista del Plata

Dmytro Vovk (Ukraine), Director, Center for Rule of Law and Religion Studies, Yaroslav the Wise National Law University

Robin Fretwell Wilson (United States), Director, Program in Family Law and Policy, University of Illinois

ADDITIONAL SIGNATORIES

Ashagrie G. Abdi (United States and Ethiopia), Attorney, specialized in International Human Rights and International Criminal Law

Esther Korantemaa Abuyeh (Ghana), Legal Coordinator, Africa West Area, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Barbara F. Ackah-Yensu (Ghana), Judge of the Court of Appeal

Mohamed Azam Mohamed Adil (Malaysia), Deputy CEO, International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS)

Adams Olufemi Akewula (Nigeria), Lecturer, Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan

Abiola Akiyode-Afolabi (Nigeria), Faculty of Law, Centre for Human Rights, University of Lagos School of Law

Adelaide Anno-Kumi (Ghana), Chief Director, Ministry of the Interior

Ivan Arjona-Pelado (Spain), President of the European Office of the Church of Scientology for Public Affairs and Human Rights

Ayodele Atsunuwa (Nigeria), Professor, Department of Public Law, University of Lagos

Muhammad Jamshed Awan (Pakistan), Advocate, Life Member, Islamabad Bar Association

Cristian Badillo (Mexico), Fundación en Promoción de la Familia y la Libertad

Nicholas Barla, SVD (India), Secretary, Office for Tribal Affairs, Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI)

Sebonego Dellah Barungwi (Botswana), Member, Spiritual Assembly of the Baha’is of Botswana; Deputy Manager, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development

Sidney K. Berman (Botswana), Lecturer, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, Faculty of Humanities, University of Botswana

Roberto Blancarte (Mexico), Research Professor, Center for Sociological Studies, El Colegio de Mexico

Elias Kifon Bongmba (United States and Cameroon), Harry and Hazel Chair in Christian Theology, Professor of Religion, Rice University

Nersido Borg (Dominican Republic), Superintendent, Council of the Assemblies of God; President, Christian Dialogue and Representation Board

Shernaz Cama (India), Director, UNESCO Parzor Foundation

Jayeel Cornelio (Philippines), Atento de Manila University

Musa W. Dube (Botswana), Professor, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Botswana

Pierre Dumas (Haiti), Bishop of Anse-à-Veau et Miragoâne, Roman Catholic Church; Vice President, Episcopal Conference of Haiti

Anton Edmunds (Saint Lucia), Ambassador of St. Lucia to the United States

Mohamed Elsanousi (Finland), Executive Director, Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers

Fatima Essop (South Africa), Advocate, High Court of South Africa; Lecturer, Private Law Department, University of Cape Town

Shad Sallem Farqui (Malaysia), Tunku Abdul Rahman Chair, University of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur

Ahmed Salisu Garba (Nigeria), Professor, Faculty of Law, Bauchi State University

Jessica Giles (United Kingdom), SFHEA, Law Lecturer, and Director of the Project on Interdisciplinary Law and Religion Studies, Open University

Célestine Gnonzion (Côte d’Ivoire), Professor, Faculty of Information, Communication, and Arts, Félix Houphouët-Boigny University

Yasser Latif Hamdani (Pakistan), Named Partner, Hamdani & Malik Barristers, Advocates and Legal Consultants; Former Visiting Fellow, Harvard Law School; Member, Honorable Society of Lincoln’s Inn, United Kingdom

Ross Holder (Ireland), Trinity College Dublin

Cyril Hovorun (United States), Assistant Professor of Theological Studies, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles; Acting Director, Huffington Ecumenical Institute

Akinola Ibadapo-Obe (Nigeria), Professor and Former Dean, Faculty of Law, Department of Public Law, University of Lagos

Arif A. Jamal (Singapore), University of Singapore Faculty of Law

Tassaduq H. Jillani (Pakistan), Former Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Pakistan

Faith Kabata (Kenya), Lecturer and Chair, Department of International Law, Kenyatta University School of Law

Mmapula Diana Kebaneilwe (Botswana), Senior Lecturer, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Botswana

Malebogo Kgaleman (Botswana), Senior Lecturer, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Botswana

Hanna Kildani (Israel), Latin Patriarchal Vicar for Israel

Herman Kiriama (Kenya), Associate Professor, Research and Extension, Kisii University

Elizabeta Kitanović (Serbia), Executive Secretary for Human Rights, Conference of European Churches

Vijayesh Lal (India), General Secretary, Evangelical Fellowship of India

Annette Lantos Tillemann-Dick (United States), M.A.R., Harvard Divinity School; Co-chair, Advisory Committee of the Lantos Foundation for Human Rights and Justice

Pavel Levushkan (Latvia), Editor in Chief, Baznica.info; Latvian Institute for Intercultural Communication

Jónatas Machado (Portugal), Professor, Faculty of Law, Universidade de Coimbra

Tshimangadzo Edward Mafadza (South Africa), Chief Executive Officer, Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious, and Linguistic Communities (CRL Rights Commission)

Olakunle Williams Makinde (Nigeria), Deputy Director, National Commissions for Museums and Monuments

Paul Martens (United States), Associate Professor of Ethics, Department of Religion, and Director of Interdisciplinary Programs, College of Arts and Sciences, Baylor University

David Moore (United States), Associate Director, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Brigham Young University

Luka David Mosoma (South Africa), Chairperson, Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious, and Linguistic Communities (CRL Rights Commission); Former Vice Chancellor, University of South Africa

Marlino Mubai (Mozambique), Lecturer and Chair, History Department, Eduardo Mondlane University

Simbarashe Munamati (Zimbabwe), Vice Principal, Murray Theological College

Saibu Mutaru (Ghana), PhD Candidate, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Stellenbosch University, South Africa

Stephan Nawa (Botswana), Philosophy Lecturer, University of Botswana

Rodah Nthapelolang (Botswana), Lecturer, Department of French, University of Botswana

Prigol Odacyr (Brazil), Chair, Curitiba Chapter of the BYU J. Reuben Clark Law Society; Managing Partner, Prigol Advogados Associados

Joel Okindoh (Kenya), Assistant to the President, Seventh-day Adventist Church East-Central Africa Region; Secretary General, All Africa Religious Liberty Conference (AARLC)

Philip Kwadwo Okyere (Ghana), PhD Candidate, Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana

Afis Ayinde Oladosu (Nigeria), Professor of Middle Eastern, North African, and Cultural Studies, Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan

Habib Oladosu-Uthman (Nigeria), Lecturer, Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan

Adesina Olukani (Nigeria), Senior Fellow, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Brigham Young University

Hannah Idowu Olusoga-Tinubi (Nigeria), Lecturer, Department of Social Justice, College of Social and Management Sciences, Afe Babalola University Ado-Ekiti

Aldrin Peñamora (Philippines), Executive Director, Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Commission of the Philippines

Navanethem Pillay (South Africa), Former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; Former Judge, International Criminal Court; President, Nuremberg Principles Academy Council; President, World Coalition Against the Death Penalty

Mary-Anne Platjties-Van Huffel (South Africa) (deceased), Senior Lecturer in Ecclesiology, University of Stellenbosch; Africa President, World Council of Churches

Jonathan Prendas Rodriguez (Costa Rica), Member, National Assembly of the Republic of Costa Rica

Kofi Quashigah (Ghana), Dean of the School of Law, University of Ghana

Cătălin Valentin Raiu (Romania), Lecturer in Political Science, University of Bucharest; Member, Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief at ODIHR/OSCE

Mujibur Rehman (India), Faculty, Jamia Millia Central University, New Delhi

Benedict Rogers (United Kingdom), Cofounder and Deputy Chair, Conservative Party Human Rights Commission

Olga Rosenkranzová (Czech Republic), Assistant Professor of Legal Theory, Department of Legal Theory and Legal History, Faculty of Law, Palacký University Olomouc

Gary B. Sabin (United States), General Authority Seventy, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Ricardo Sale Jr. (Brazil), Judge, Tribunal of Justice, São Paulo State

Lee-Shae Logan Scharnick-Udemans (South Africa), Senior Researcher, Desmond Tutu Centre for Religion and Social Justice, Department of Religion and Theology, University of Cape Town

Motlotlegi Sebakanyana (Botswana)

Senzokuhle Doreen Setume (Botswana), Lecturer of Religious Studies, Molepolole College of Education, University of Botswana

Ryosho Shoji (Japan), Director, International Relations, All Japan Young Buddhist Association; Deputy Secretary General, World Fellowship of Buddhists

Fortune Sibanda (Zimbabwe), Associate Professor in Religious Studies, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Great Zimbabwe University

Rita Somfai (Hungary), Operation Director, Wonderduck Agency

Tanto Richard Talla (Cameroon), Associate Professor, Faculty of Arts, Department of History, University of Bamenda

Eugene Tan Kheng Boon (Singapore), Associate Professor of Law, Singapore Management University

Andrew Teal (United Kingdom), Chaplain, Fellow, and Lecturer in Theology, Pembroke College, University of Oxford

Archbishop Theodosios (Atallah Hanna) (Israel), Archbishop of Savastia of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem

Sohail Wahedi (Netherlands), Assistant Professor of Law, Erasmus School of Law



THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF Human Rights

WHEREAS recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

WHEREAS disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

WHEREAS it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

WHEREAS it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations among nations,

WHEREAS the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have

determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

WHEREAS Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

WHEREAS a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realisation of this pledge,

NOW THEREFORE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PROCLAIMS this Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

ARTICLE 1 — All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

ARTICLE 2 — 1. Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, 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.
2. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether this territory be an independent, Trust or Non-Self-Governing territory, or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

ARTICLE 3 — Everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person.

ARTICLE 4 — No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

ARTICLE 5 — No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

ARTICLE 6 — Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

ARTICLE 7 — All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

ARTICLE 8 — Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

ARTICLE 9 — No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

ARTICLE 10 — Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

ARTICLE 11 — 1. Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence.
2. No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

ARTICLE 12 — No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

ARTICLE 13 — 1. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.
2. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

ARTICLE 14 — 1. Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.
2. This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

ARTICLE 15 — 1. Everyone has the right to a nationality.

2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

ARTICLE 16 — 1. Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

2. Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

3. The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

ARTICLE 17 — 1. Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.

2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

ARTICLE 18 — Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

ARTICLE 19 — Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

ARTICLE 20 — 1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

2. No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

ARTICLE 21 — 1. Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.

2. Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.

3. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

ARTICLE 22 — Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realisation, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organisation and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

ARTICLE 23 — 1. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

2. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

3. Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration

insuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.

4. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

ARTICLE 24 — Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

ARTICLE 25 — 1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.
2. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

ARTICLE 26 — 1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

ARTICLE 27 — 1. Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

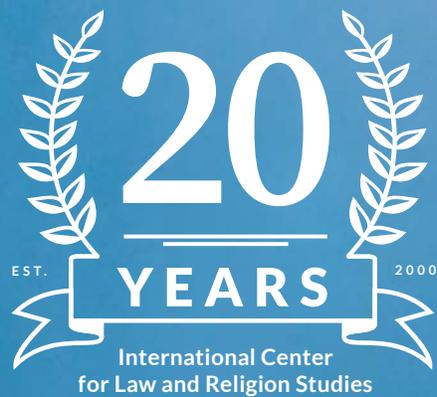
ARTICLE 28 — Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

ARTICLE 29 — 1. Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.

2. In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

3. These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

ARTICLE 30 — Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.



452 JRCB, PROVO, UT 84602, USA

PHONE: +1 801-422-6842 | FAX: +1 801-422-0399
EMAIL: INFO@ICLRS.ORG | WEB: WWW.ICLRS.ORG
TWITTER: [@ICLRSORG](https://twitter.com/ICLRSORG) | FACEBOOK.COM/ICLRS.ORG

Support the Center by emailing GETINVOLVED@ICLRS.ORG or by calling 801-422-6842.