



Stand up for human rights and celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration for Human Rights

Beirut, 10 December 2018 –

Today, we mark the 70th anniversary of an extraordinary document, the Universal Declaration for Human Rights.

Recognized worldwide, the Universal Declaration is a text of fundamental principles and common universal values that was born 70 years ago out of a desire to prevent actions that “outraged the conscience of mankind”. Based on the principle, ‘we are all born free and equal in rights and dignity,’ the Universal Declaration sets out the most basic characteristics of human rights, which are fundamental, indivisible, universal and inalienable.

The Universal Declaration responded to human beings’ needs and aspirations, to the inherent dignity of all people and to their inalienable rights to which they are all, without exception, entitled. The Universal Declaration was also the foundation of freedom, development, justice and peace.

The Universal Declaration, originally designed and drafted by people with different legal and cultural backgrounds, has become an aspirational document that paved the way for the literature of all international human rights instruments since 1948. Lebanon was part of that landmark achievement, not only by being one of the initial signatories to the document but by contributing to the drafting process. “*Human rights must define the nature and essence of human beings. They must not be accidental. They certainly must not be changing with time and place*”, said then Ambassador Charles Habib Malek of Lebanon, one of the drafters of the Universal Declaration, when presenting the draft resolution of the proposed text to the General Assembly in 1948.

Since then, the Universal Declaration has been enshrined in the preamble of the Lebanese Constitution rendering its principles constitutionally compulsory with supremacy over the national legislation. Today, Lebanon and all United Nations Member States have ratified at least one of the nine core international human rights treaties, and 80 percent have ratified four or more, giving concrete expression to the universality of the Universal Declaration and international human rights.

On this occasion, the Acting UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Pernille Dahler Kardel said, “Lebanon has taken important steps to consolidate the respect of human rights as enshrined by the Universal Declaration. But more could be done in terms of legislation and enforcement to ensure that Lebanon maintains its leadership position when it comes to the human rights agenda

and because long-term peace, security and development can only be achieved if coupled with solid steps to promote the respect of human rights.”

Regional Representative of the United Nations Human Rights Office in the Middle East and North Africa region Roueida El-Hage stated that “We are all entitled, regardless of our race, sex, religion, nationality, property or birth, to the realization of each and every right set forth in the Universal Declaration. The starting point for realising all these rights is to understand what they are. It is essential that we continue the work for the full implementation of human rights in a way that improves the lives of men, women and children everywhere.”

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was a turning point in the history of mankind. But many violations of civil, political, economic, social or cultural rights continue to take place around the world. Commitment to the values that the Universal Declaration enshrines has become more essential than ever.

Background Note

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris three years after the end of World War II. It was the product of 18 months’ work by a drafting committee, with members and advisers from all across the world, and – in the words of one of its principal architects, René Cassin – “at the end of one hundred sessions of elevated, often impassioned discussion, was adopted in the form of 30 articles on 10 December 1948.”

To see a series of 30 short articles on each of the 30 Articles of the Universal Declaration:
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23871&LangID=E>

More details about the events and campaigns linked to the 70th anniversary can be viewed at <http://www.standup4humanrights.org/>

For more information on the UDHR itself, please visit <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>