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HISTORY OF THE DOCUMENT

During World War II, tens of millions of people died. In addition to those who lost their lives in the fighting, the Nazis killed millions in cold blood.

When the war ended in 1945, the victorious nations met to decide how to prevent such acts from happening again. They formed the United Nations to advance human rights and peace.

The United Nations created The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the first truly universal human rights document. Eleanor Roosevelt, the woman who led the committee that created this document, stated that the Declaration grants rights for all Mankind.

The United Nations also took other steps. One was to create international laws to protect human rights, a process that took almost twenty years. International laws are laws agreed upon by many countries, and so they apply not just in one country but in all the countries that agree to them.

The countries that belonged to the United Nations also brought these rights to the rest of the world. As a result, the basic laws of many nations today include the rights contained in the Declaration.

Today 192 countries are members of the United Nations.

PREAMBLE

1. 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,

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2. 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,

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3. 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,

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4. Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

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5. 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,

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6. 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,

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7. Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

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8. 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.