

## What Are Human Rights?

*Human rights are the rights a person has simply because he or she is a human being.*

Human rights are held by all persons equally, universally and forever.

Human rights are **inalienable**: you cannot lose these rights any more than you can cease being a human being.

Human rights are **indivisible**: you cannot be denied a right because it is "less important" or "non-essential."

Human rights are **interdependent**: all human rights are part of a complementary framework. For example, your ability to participate in your government is directly affected by your right to express yourself, **to get an education**, and even to obtain the necessities of life.

Another definition for human rights is those basic standards without which people cannot live in dignity, freedom, equality or justice. To violate someone's human rights is to treat that person as though she or he were not a human being. To advocate for human rights is to demand that the human dignity of all people be respected.

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Pages/Introduction.aspx> (Official UN UDHR site)

## What is the Right to Education?

Education is a basic human right. Every individual, regardless of race, gender, nationality, ethnicity, religious or political preference, age or disability, is entitled to a free and compulsory elementary education. Education provides children with the knowledge and skills necessary to develop critical thinking and confidence in community participation.

As well as being a right in itself, the right to education is also an enabling right. It creates the voice through which all other rights can be claimed and protected.

The right to education has been universally recognized since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and has since been enshrined in many international treaties and national constitutions.

[http://www.unicef.org/education/index\\_access.html](http://www.unicef.org/education/index_access.html)

<http://www.right-to-education.org/>



Photo by Patricia Williams

## The Right to Education in International Declarations and Treaties:

### The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR 1948)

**Article 26** – Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary grades. Elementary education shall be compulsory ... Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms...

### The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC 1990, but not yet ratified by U.S.)

**Article 28** – States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall: Make primary education compulsory and available free to all ... make higher education accessible to all. Give children dignity in discipline. Encourage international cooperation to eliminate illiteracy and access to scientific and technical knowledge.

**Article 29** – States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential; ... and the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;

## What are barriers to the right to education? *(partial list)*

- Discrimination based on gender or gender identity
- Poverty
- Discrimination because of race, religion, caste, nationality, ethnicity
- Schools are often used as battlegrounds
- Impact of HIV/AIDS
- School Fees
- Children in Detention
- Child Labor
- Starvation
- Disability Discrimination

*What barriers can you add to this list?*

