The United Nations: protecting rights

In this lesson you will be learning about how the United Nations (UN) protects and promotes our human rights. You will be looking at the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), two international documents that most countries have signed up to. You will be thinking about which human and children's rights are most important to you. You will also learn about children who have had their rights taken away and abused.

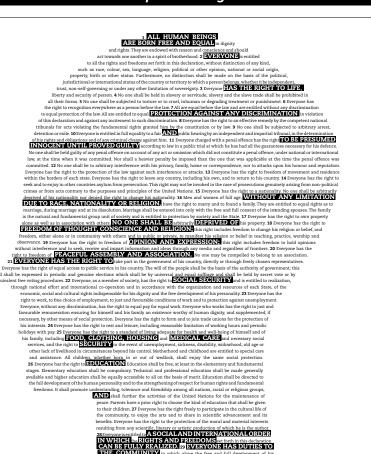
Learning objectives for today

- To explore how the UN works for human rights
- To examine the importance of children's rights

The main aims of the UN are

- 1. Secure international peace
- 2. Eliminate poverty
- 3. Protect human rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights



What are human rights?

Human rights are the rights and freedoms that we all have. Our rights include: the right to life, to be free from torture and abuse, to go to school and to work. We have the right to shelter and to food, the right to practise a religion, and the right to think and say what we want as long as we don't hurt anyone.

Every person has every human right because we are all born equal and should be treated with equal dignity and respect. All these rights are included in the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) – the most famous human rights document in the world.

How does the UN protect our rights?

The UN works hard to make sure that states are protecting the human rights of their citizens. One way it does this is by getting countries to sign up to international human rights treaties.

By signing up to a treaty, a country pledges to make the rights contained in it part of its national law. This obliges the country's public bodies (e.g. schools, hospitals) to respect, protect and fulfil rights and enables people whose rights have been violated to seek help, if necessary via the courts.

What happens if a country doesn't respect the rights of its citizens?

The UN monitors the human rights records of all its member states through the UN Human Rights Council. It also has independent experts who work on specific issues and countries. The most serious crimes, such as war crimes, can be referred to the International Criminal Court.



