

The Declaration of Human Rights

The UN's Declaration of Human Rights was signed in 1948. It was drafted by a Canadian named John Humphrey, a law professor at McGill University. He later became the first director of the Division of Human Rights in the UN.

The document has 30 sections, but its message is contained in the introduction. Here it is in a simplified form:

- ▶ Human rights for all are the basis of freedom, justice, and peace.
- ▶ The denial of human rights has led to horrific events. A world where humans enjoy freedom of speech and belief, and freedom from fear, is the greatest goal.
- ▶ Human rights have to be protected by law.
- ▶ Friendly relations between nations must be promoted.
- ▶ The Charter of the UN emphasizes equal rights for men and women and promotes the idea of a better life with freedom for all.
- ▶ The members of the UN pledge to achieve respect for human rights and freedoms.
- ▶ To accomplish this pledge, there must be an understanding of what these rights and freedoms mean.



Figure 31-3 John Humphrey is shown in the late 1940s with his boss, Eleanor Roosevelt, who was then head of the UN's Human Rights Commission.



Figure 31-5
Nelson
Mandela

HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

Women's Rights World-wide, there are many examples of discrimination against women. In many places, women do not know their rights and are treated as virtual slaves. They tend to be given less education than men, do more work, and die younger. Figure 31-4 shows an Indian woman who sold one of her kidneys for badly needed cash.



Figure 31-4

Race Relations Racial injustice is also a common problem around the world. It was very much in evidence in South Africa when **apartheid** was still official government policy. Because he fought for equal rights for Blacks, Nelson Mandela was placed in prison for 27 years. With the help of many UN member nations, he was finally released in 1990 and became the president of his country.

Political Disappearances A political disappearance is the seizure and hiding away of a person by a government. Usually the person is someone who disagrees with the government's policies. Their disappearance is often the first step to their torture and execution. Age is no barrier to a person suffering this type of repression. Gnanaguru Aravinthan was only 13 years old when he was seized by the army in Sri Lanka in 1985. According to an Amnesty International newsletter, the boy was still missing in 1989, and as of 1997 there had been no further word on his whereabouts.



Figure 31-6
Gnanaguru Aravinthan