TU-BCPS Model United Nations 2022 Debate Scenario
"Human Rights"

Human rights are rights that everyone possesses, simply because we are human beings. The United Nations affirms that people are born with rights; they are not granted rights by states, governments, or institutions. Further, the UN upholds the commonly-accepted principles that human rights are universal, meaning that everyone possesses them, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, race, sex, religion, language, or other status; and human rights are inalienable, meaning that they cannot be removed from the individual, except in certain situations and according to due process. Human rights range from the most fundamental - such as the right to life- to those that make life possible and worth living - such as the rights to food, education, work, health, and liberty (OHCHR 2021). According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), human rights should be protected by the rule of law (UDHR 1948).

World leaders since WWII have proclaimed that the highest aspiration of governments and their people should be a world in which all human beings enjoy full human rights. Protecting the rights of all members of the human family is essential to the UN's foundation of freedom, justice, and global peace. The promotion and protection of human rights is a key purpose and guiding principle of the United Nations. In fact, this priority is so important that the term "human rights" is mentioned seven times in the UN Charter. In 1948, the UN General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to avoid repeating the atrocities of WWII. The UDHR complements the UN Charter with a road map to guarantee the rights of every individual everywhere and outlines the fundamental, inalienable rights inherent to every person (UN, Protect Human Rights, 2021). All of the 193 UN Member States have signed the UDHR.

Recognizing the need to establish enforcement mechanisms for the UDHR, in 1976, the UN General Assembly adopted two treaties: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The ICCPR outlines "first generation rights," such as the right to life, speech, religion, and voting. The ICESCR outlines "second generation rights," such as food, education, health, and shelter. The three documents together (UDHR + ICCPR + ICESCR) are commonly referred to as the International Bill of Human Rights. Moreover, the UDHR serves as the foundation of international human rights law. Its 30 articles provide the principles and building blocks of the Core International Human Rights Instruments that have been developed over the past seven decades (UN, Protect Human Rights, 2021).

Despite a general commitment by national governments and international organizations to protect human rights, widespread violations continue to plague humanity. Since WWII, genocide, human trafficking, military coups, insurgencies, terrorist attacks, child soldiers, record numbers of forced displacement, challenges to equality, discrimination, disinformation, climate change, poverty, attacks on religious beliefs, and a host of other issues continue to threaten

people of all ages in every region of the world. An analysis of world leaders' remarks at the 2021 UN General Assembly reveals the current threats to human rights that countries presently prioritize (Halverson 2021):

- The Covid-19 pandemic:
  - Issues of vaccine equity: Developing states are struggling to inoculate their populations with one dose while wealthy states are in the process of administering booster shots. Those with the financial and social resources to utilize vaccines and quality healthcare, even within developed countries, face drastically different health and economic outcomes than people without access to these resources.
  - The pandemic has exacerbated existing problems and even reversed progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
  - The pandemic has impacted global, regional, and national economies, creating new inequalities and exacerbating existing ones.
- Climate change:
  - The lowest contributors to climate change are often most affected – by rising sea levels, natural disasters, and other negative consequences.
- Political polarization, populism, and authoritarianism challenge democratic institutions across the world that protect and advocate for human rights.
- Disinformation threatens the right to a free and fair election, the right to health, and the right to non-discrimination, among others.
- Extremism threatens life, health, freedom of movement, and a host of other human rights.
- Ongoing women's rights and gender equality issues threaten the rights to health, education, fair treatment, among others.
- Lack of accountability and justice within governments causes violations of economic, social and cultural rights and lead to opaque and non-participatory public decision-making processes, corruption, and the inaction of some states to combat insecurity or terrorism that violate human rights.
- Natural disasters trigger human rights challenges, including unequal access to assistance, discrimination in aid provision, unsafe resettlement, property restitution, and displacement.

Given that these examples represent only a few of the many challenges associated with the protection of human rights, please read the text of the UDHR and consider the following:

1. Which articles of the UDHR relate to corruption and organized crime? What is the connection between human rights violations, corruption, and organized crime? What is the relationship between human rights violations and finance from illicit sources? How does corruption intensify existing human rights violations? What policies can be instituted that will reduce corruption and also lower human rights violations?

2. Which articles of the UDHR relate to children's rights? How do human rights violations hinder the educational development of children? What can be done to protect the human rights of children in developing states? How can the UN address the socioeconomic factors that cause human rights violations of children? How are human rights connected to child recruitment as soldiers in terrorist organizations, insurgencies, and other armed conflicts? What measures can be taken to address these factors?

3. Which articles of the UDHR relate to economic and social development? How do human rights violations hinder the economic and social developments of a country? What can the UN do to address these issues? How do human rights violations affect current development programs of the UN and the ability of past and future programs to address economic and social inequality? What measures could be taken to address these effects?

4. Which articles of the UDHR relate to the environment? How are human rights violations driven by environmental issues? How are human rights connected to the environment? What kinds of solutions exist to combat the human rights violations related to impoverished, overpopulated, or polluted areas? What impact might sustainable development initiatives have on protecting human rights?

5. Which articles of the UDHR relate to health? How do health issues exacerbate human rights violations? How do human rights violations worsen health issues? How do human rights violations and discriminations impact healthcare systems worldwide which already lack the resources and funding to adequately respond to healthcare needs? What can be done to assist populations who lack access to adequate healthcare? How does the Covid-19 pandemic intensify existing healthcare-related human rights issues? What can the UN do to address human rights healthcare issues related to the pandemic?

6. Why are human rights an issue of international concern? What are the articles of the UDHR trying to protect? Why are these rights important? What current human rights issues deserve the attention of the international community? Why? How can the international community effectively address these issues? What should be the UN's role in protecting human rights, and why? What are the consequences of failing to protect the rights of everyone? What should happen when human rights are violated? What mechanisms exist in the international community to bring perpetrators of human rights violations to justice, and what hindrances or hurdles do those seeking to protect human rights face? How effective are these mechanisms, and how can they be improved?

7. Which articles of the UDHR relate to protecting disadvantaged populations? How can the international community better protect the human rights of disadvantaged populations? What, if any, actions should the international community take against states that continue to perpetrate human rights violations against social and economic groups? How can the UN hold accountable

those states that refuse to keep their international human rights agreements? What about states that ignore human rights violations within their borders?

8. Which articles of the UDHR relate to refugees and forced displacement? How do human rights violations cause forcible displacement? What are the existing human rights violations that force marginalized groups to leave their places of origin? What role should developed states play in the relocation of and assistance to refugees? Should developed states bear more refugees than developing states? How do displacement crises worsen existing human rights violations?

9. Which articles of the UDHR relate to sustainable communities? How are human rights linked to sustainable communities? How can developing states create sustainable communities with their limited resources? Should developed states assist developing states in establishing sustainable communities and energy practices? Should all states be required to rely on renewable energy sources?

10. Which articles of the UDHR relate to security issues? What security challenges are connected to human rights? How do human rights violations trigger violence? Do current security protocols provide an appropriate response to non-state actors that recruit impoverished and marginalized peoples for terrorism and violence? Why or why not? What measures might be more effective? How would these measures improve the protection of human rights?

11. Which articles of the UDHR relate to science and technology? What is the relationship between human rights and access to technology? Do science and technology developments lead to more or less human rights violations? How can the international community harness science and technology to protect individuals human rights?

12. Which articles of the UDHR relate to trade and development? How are human rights linked to trade and development between and within countries? How can the UN protect human rights using trade and development? What trade and development policies promote the protection of human rights? How does (or not) promoting trade between developed and developing countries impact issues of human rights?

References

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United Nations. (2021). "Protect Human Rights." https://www.un.org/en/our-work/protect-human-rights.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). (1948). https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights.

Links to Related Resources

- United Nations Charter
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and its 30 Articles
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
- International Bill of Human Rights
- The Core International Human Rights Instruments
- YouTube Playlist about Human Rights
  - What are universal human rights? (4:47)
  - The 30 Articles of Human Rights (2:31)
  - Three Dimensions of Human Rights (5:57)