



Call for Papers on topics related to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

[Berlin Forum on Global Politics](#),
[Institute for Global Dialogue](#), &
[RECLAIM! Universal Human Rights Initiative](#)

1. What is the publication about?

On 10th December 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (UDHR), which became a landmark document for the international human rights movement of the 20th century and remains its legal bedrock today.

Two early documents that inspired the UDHR were the [US Declaration of Independence](#) (1776) and the [French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen](#) (1789). Equally important was a January 1941 speech given by then US president Franklin D. Roosevelt: the ["Four Freedoms" State of the Union](#) address, where Roosevelt set forth his vision for a post-WWII world based on human rights, an idea that became part of the stated war aims of the Allies. The UDHR was drafted in the early post-war years so as to adequately define the rights of individuals stated in United Nations Charter, which until then were only referred to in rather abstract terms.

The UDHR addressed the need to ensure that individuals and communities throughout the world would never again be without legal recourse against the deprivations, fears, and crimes against humanity that resulted from the Great Depression as well as from the rise of the totalitarian regimes that marked the first half of the 20th century. Decades later, the moral obligations inscribed within the UDHR would inspire similar documents, which would spell out the specifics of international legal obligations: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976), the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (also 1976), and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993).

The UDHR also provided the universal terms for the discourse and actions of groundbreaking social movements: those that advocate for civil rights and decolonization, for gender, racial, and economic equality, for peace and political dissidence and denuclearization, and (more recently) for cultural, environmental, and digital safeguards. However, since the

UDHR does not have enforcement mechanisms, its effectiveness depends on the actions of international organizations and national governments.

Nonetheless, its relevance has never been greater. The former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, noted during the 25th anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action that nowadays' resurgence of ethnic nationalism, populism, and certain identity politics reject the notion of universal human dignity, treat human rights as "a pariah" rather than "a priority", and scar their societies with hatred and deepening divisions.

Rampant worldwide are reported war crimes, record numbers of refugees and displaced people among failures to provide asylum, indifference for ensuring economic and social security, discourses and actions driven by racism and xenophobia, sexism and homophobia, and violations of the right to freedom of expression and to freedom of religion. Even though many civil societies are contesting the surge of authoritarian populism, there is no doubt that human rights and democratic politics throughout the world are in decline.

The question, then, is how can we ensure the reaffirmation and commitment of countries to the social, cultural, economic, and political rights enshrined in the UDHR, in other words, to the universal notion of human dignity?

The human rights movement today must address not only social and cultural problems but also economic and political inequality, threats to democratic exchanges, participation, and politics. In effect, it must mobilize along even broader lines than in the past in order to reaffirm and strengthen humanity's commitment to a united future. Never have the challenges been greater, never have the needs been more pressing.

2. What are we aiming for?

We call for short articles from individuals, groups, organizations, and institutions that are interested both in the trials and prospects of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The aim is share ideas that will make this document more effective in the world today than it has been as a protector of human dignity and security.

Our aim is to collect high-quality articles for a multi-author, multi-source publication, which will be revised and edited by experienced academics, and will be published as a free-to-the public .pdf formatted document – licensed as a CC-BY (Attribution only) Creative Commons. The goal of the publication is to expand awareness about the UDHR in general and understanding about contemporary human rights issues in particular.

More specifically, our aim is to inform a multiplicity of stakeholders about the UDHR and how its reaffirmation can address and effectively contribute to resolving the challenges of our times. For that reason, we are interested in short, informative, and jargon-free articles, which will be clear to a wide audience.

We call for articles that consider the Declaration in general as well as its Articles in

particular, its (re)affirmation, and its contemporary efficacy in relation to topics as critical and diverse as:

- ... renewed considerations on the universality of human rights
- ... whether the UDHR needs to be revised or not, and if so, what the revision implies
- ... the nature of the failures of the international community, its institutions, and international law to safeguard human rights
- ... the actual weakening of human rights by UN member states from within the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)
- ... the general failure to safeguard the economic human rights and basic services highlighted by the UDHR
- ... the importance of sustainable development, poverty eradication, and inequality reduction for human rights
- ... the massive waves of population displacements and the large-scale refusal of states and institutions to protect refugees and asylum seekers
- ... the impact of new populisms and emboldened identity politics in weakening human rights
- ... the contributions as well as limitations of human rights activism at the regional, transnational, and global level
- ... the increasing use of summary execution, arbitrary detention, and torture by both nation states and non-state movements in fundamental violation of the UDHR
- ... how the crippling of internet freedoms by governments through mass surveillance, censorship, and information warfare weakens human rights
- ... the high level of disregard of physical, social, and psychological disabilities as a major human rights issue
- ... how climate change and environmental sustainability relate to human rights
- ... how global capitalism often works as a force against human rights
- ... the employment of xenophobia, racism, and sexism by governments and demagogues to diminish human rights
- ... whether the UDHR should explicitly address the rights of the LGBT+ community
- ... the impact of governmental and corporate lack of transparency and accountability on human rights
- ... the problem of governmental impunity for war crimes and military occupations, and whether international law can be strengthened to prevent this
- ... the responsibilities of corporations, especially those that are global, in contributing to uphold human rights
- ... the impact of emerging technologies on human rights

Deadlines

24th June 2019: Submission of abstracts (max. 200 words)

[include full name, affiliation (if applicable) and email address]

1st July 2019: Notification to authors of accepted abstracts

30th September 2019: Submission of complete articles (max. 2,000 words)

[early guidelines: Arial, 12 points font size, single-spaced, quotations in Harvard-style]

November 2019: Expected release to the general public

3. Who are we?

The Berlin Forum on Global Politics e.V. is a public interest nonprofit organization, founded by international scholars, which promotes academic, expert, and public understanding of contemporary global politics and international relations.

The Institute for Global Dialogue is an independent foreign policy think tank dedicated to analyzing and discussing the role of Africa and South Africa in the evolving international political and economic environment.

The RECLAIM! Universal Human Rights Initiative is a global campaign to create awareness about the UDHR and generate public and political pressure on governments throughout the world to reaffirm and abide by the Declaration and its Articles.

For submissions, further inquiries, and/or additional information, please contact us:

Philani Mthembu: Executive Director at the Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD), Co-founder of the Berlin Forum on Global Politics e.V. (BFoGP)

Email: philani@igd.org.za | Twitter: [@M_Philani](https://twitter.com/M_Philani)

Miguel Ángel Verde Garrido: Co-founder and Co-director of the Berlin Forum on Global Politics e.V. (BFoGP)

Email: verde.m@gmail.com | Twitter: [@M_Verde](https://twitter.com/M_Verde)

Adam S. Wilkins: Chairman and Advisory Board Member at the RECLAIM! Universal Human Rights Initiative adam.stanley.wilkins@gmail.com □

Email: adam.stanley.wilkins@gmail.com □