

Human Rights and why they matter

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What are human rights?

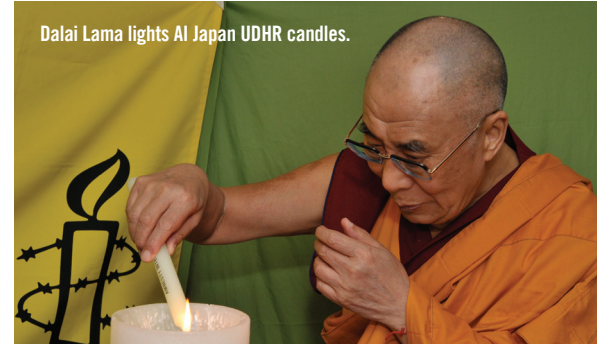
Human rights are all the things that human beings are entitled to and all the things they need to lead safe, healthy and happy lives. Human rights belong to everyone in the world, no matter where they live, what colour their skin is, what their beliefs are or whether they are male or female. Human rights belong to everyone because all people are born equal. Human rights matter because they make sure that everybody is treated fairly, with dignity and respect. These rights are yours because you are human.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The United Nations is an international organisation made up of 192 nations. It works to bring all nations of the world together to make sure that there is peace in the world and that human rights are respected. On 10th December 1948, the United Nations proclaimed the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (UDHR). This is a list of 30 human rights which belong to all of us. All human beings are born equal, which means that every person in the world is entitled to each one of the rights outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child

Children are entitled to all the human rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. There is also a special list of rights that belong to children. This is called the **Convention on the Rights of the Child**. Governments around the world, including the Irish government, have signed this list of children's rights. This means that they have extra responsibility to make sure that children are looked after.



Dalai Lama lights AI Japan UDHR candles.

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**Can you name any human rights?
Here are a few to get you started.**

- The right to life and to live in freedom and safety
- The right to go to school and learn
- The right to our beliefs and to have a religion
- The right to work and have a job



AI Switzerland Libya solidarity action.

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**Can you name any children's rights?
Here are a few to get you started.**

- The right to have ideas and say what you think
- The right to know about your rights and responsibilities
- The right to be protected from danger
- The right to enough food and clean water

For more information and resources visit www.amnesty.ie

Teachers' Notes and Activity Ideas

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Amnesty International: Who are they and what do they do?



Amnesty International's symbol is a burning candle surrounded by barbed wire. The barbed wire represents imprisonment and the candle represents hope.

In 1961 a British lawyer called Peter Benenson read about two Portuguese students who were put in jail for making a 'toast to freedom'. He was horrified that people should be imprisoned so unjustly and wrote

a newspaper article calling for the release of all people imprisoned because of their beliefs. More than a thousand individuals contacted him because they too wanted to do something about these injustices. They started the organisation that is now Amnesty International. Today, Amnesty International is a global movement of over 3.2 million supporters, members and activists in more than 150 countries and territories who campaign for the rights of every person in the world to be respected and upheld.



Child with candle at Amnesty International event

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Introduce the idea of human rights promoters

- At circle time, hold a globe in the air and explain that this globe is the beautiful planet that we all live on.
- Pass the globe around the circle and ask the children to look at it and to take turns to say one thing they would like to do to keep the world safe for the future.
- When the children have given their ideas, explain that they are now going to learn about groups and people who work together to make the world a better place; people who work to promote human rights.

Learn about Amnesty International

- Introduce the work of Amnesty International, (see Teachers' Notes above).
- Explain that individuals and groups of people working together to defend and promote human rights can make a real difference. Use the story of Johan Teterissa from Indonesia as an example.
- Use the discussion questions provided (or write your own) to prompt the children to talk about the importance of protecting human rights.

Identify human rights issues in your local community

- Ask the children if there are some rights that are not being adequately promoted in their local area e.g. children's right to play or their right to meet together to express their views. Discuss what can be done to ensure these rights are upheld.
- If you know someone from the community who works on human rights issues, consider inviting them in to speak to the class.

Take action for human rights

- In groups, ask the pupils to brainstorm ways in which they could help people to enjoy their rights e.g. they can include others in their games to protect the right to play, they can recycle to protect the right to a healthy environment.
- After each group shares their ideas, facilitate the class as a whole to make a list of actions they can take to protect human rights.
- Order this list starting from the easiest and quickest actions to the most difficult and time consuming tasks, so that it forms a countdown, which the class can work on together to achieve their human rights goals.