

Women's Rights as Human Rights

Information Resource Center | Public Affairs Section | U.S. Embassy, Jakarta

Human Rights of Women

Human rights and fundamental freedoms should be birthrights, but across the globe some countries fail to accord human rights to women. Moreover, women are often victims of human rights abuses. Women's human rights are abused when they cannot participate in decisions that affect their lives and are denied political participation and fair representation, when they are prevented from going to school or receiving health care, when they face discrimination in employment, when they are denied equal rights to own land and property, when they suffer from violence within their homes and when they are subjected to harmful traditional practices such as genital mutilation and honor killings. Recognition of women's rights began in some countries as they evolved from feudal into more representative forms of government. In the United States, awareness of women's rights came with the ideals of the American Revolution. Strong and intelligent women such as Abigail Adams, wife of the second U.S. president, John Adams, demanded fair and equal treatment, and warned presciently, "If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation." She also advocated equal access to

education for girls, writing to her husband, who then represented the new American republic in Paris: "I regret the trifling narrow contracted education of the females of my own country." Women's suffrage movements began in the United States and Great Britain in the mid-19th century and in a few European countries in the early 20th century. Women's human rights only emerged as a global movement during the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985), when women from many different geographic, cultural, religious, racial and class backgrounds came together and organized to improve the status of women. It was during this decade that the United Nations sponsored several women's conferences — Mexico City in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980 and Nairobi in 1985 —

to evaluate the status of women and to formulate strategies for women's advancement.

An International Women's Bill of Rights

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW), a key international agreement on women's human rights, was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979. CEDAW is often described as an international bill of rights for women. Its preamble and 30 articles aim to eliminate gender discrimination and promote gender equality. The convention defines discrimination against women as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex" that impedes women's

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International Human Rights Day



The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted on 10 December

1948. The date has since served to mark Human Rights Day worldwide. Human Rights Day presents an opportunity, every year, to celebrate human rights, highlight a specific issue, and advocate for the full enjoy-

ment of all human rights by everyone everywhere. This year, the spotlight is on the rights of all people — women, youth, minorities, persons with disabilities, indigenous people, the poor and marginalized — to make their voices heard in public life and be included in political decision-making. More info: <http://goo.gl/oxTy4>

Information Package

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This information package is compiled by the IRC to mark the International Human Rights Day, December 10, 2012

U.S. Embassy Jakarta Mission Statement

Based on mutual respect and shared values, the U.S. Mission works with Indonesia to strengthen democracy, sustain the environment, promote prosperity, enhance understanding and ensure security for our people, our nations, and our region

Facts & Figures on Violence Against Women

Compiled by UN Women in 2011, *The Violence against Women Prevalence Data: Surveys by Country* presents data available for 86 countries on the prevalence of physical and sexual violence against women, forced sexual initiation and abuse during pregnancy, mainly drawn from leading international surveys. Violence against women and girls is a problem of pandemic proportions. Based on country data available, up to 70 percent of women experience physical or sexual violence from men in their lifetime — the majority by husbands, intimate partners or someone they know. Among women aged between 15 and 44, acts of violence cause more death and disability than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents and war combined. Perhaps the most pervasive

human rights violation that we know today, violence against women devastates lives, fractures communities, and stalls development.

Femicide

- In the United States, one-third of women murdered each year are killed by intimate partners.
- In India, 22 women were killed each day in dowry-related murders in 2007

Trafficking

Women and girls comprise 80 percent of the estimated 800,000 people trafficked annually, with the majority (79 percent) trafficked for sexual exploitation.

Sexual Violence against Women and Girls

- An estimated 150 million girls under 18 suffered some

form of sexual violence in 2002 alone.

- As many as 1 in 4 women experience physical and/or sexual violence during pregnancy which increases the likelihood of having a miscarriage, still birth and abortion

Rape as a Method of Warfare

Approximately 250,000 to 500,000 women and girls were raped in the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

Cost of Violence against Women

Domestic violence alone cost approximately USD 1.16 billion in Canada and USD 5.8 billion in the United States. In Australia, violence against women and children costs an estimated USD 11.38 billion per year.

Sexual Harassment

- Between 40 and 50 percent of women in European Union countries experience unwanted sexual advances, physical contact or other forms of sexual harassment at their workplace.
- In the United States, 83 percent of girls aged 12 to 16 experienced some form of sexual harassment in public schools.

Source: <http://goo.gl/5FQke>
Related Links:

- Violence against women, <http://goo.gl/Q6zsW>
- Trafficking in Persons Report 2012, <http://goo.gl/MVslf>
- U.S. Department of State Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011, <http://goo.gl/p3fMP>

Human Rights of Women

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“human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.” As of 2009, 186 United Nations member states had ratified CEDAW. The Obama administration strongly supports this treaty and is committed to U.S. ratification. State parties to CEDAW agree to incorporate principles of gender equality into their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation; to adopt appropriate legislation and other measures that prohibit discrimination against women and establish legal protections of their rights on an equal basis with men. Women’s human rights apply to both the “public” and “private” spheres of women’s lives.

Women’s Rights as Human Rights

Since the 1980s, women around the world have come together in networks and coalitions to raise awareness about problems of discrimination, inequality and violence. They have used a human rights framework to fight for women’s rights in the family, social, economic and political arenas. An important outcome of the 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women was the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. These documents embody the international community’s commitment to advance and empower women and remove obstacles in the public and private spheres that have historically limited women’s full participation. The Platform for Action sets forth three strate-

gic objectives related to the human rights of women: to promote and protect women’s human rights through the full implementation of all human rights instruments (especially CEDAW), to ensure equality and nondiscrimination under the law and in practice, and to achieve legal literacy. Governments bear the main responsibility, but persons, organizations and enterprises are important in taking concrete actions to improve women’s lives. Then–U.S. first lady Hillary Clinton famously declared at the 1995 Beijing conference that “human rights are women’s rights,” adding, “Women must enjoy the right to participate fully in the social and political lives of their countries if we want freedom and democracy to thrive and endure.”

The principles and practices related to women’s human rights are continuously evolving. The large body of international covenants, agreements and commitments to women’s human rights developed over the past several decades provides women with an alternative vision and vocabulary to confront violations to their human rights.

Source: <http://goo.gl/GcYB0>
Related Links:

- Human Rights of Women <http://goo.gl/JNn3d>
- The Human Rights of Women: Advancing Human Rights by UNFPA <http://goo.gl/Ro6Kd>
- Women’s Rights by Human Rights Watch <http://goo.gl/Su0AT>
- Women’s Rights by Amnesty International USA <http://goo.gl/OkaUM>

Indonesia's National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan)

Indonesia's National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) is an independent national institution that promotes women's human rights in Indonesia. The Commission was established by Presidential Decree no. 181 of 1998, on 15 October 1998. In response to organizational development within Komnas Perempuan, Presidential Decree no. 65 and 66 were signed in

2005, superseding the former decree. Komnas Perempuan was established in response to the demands of civil society (especially women) for the state to take responsibility in handling cases of violence against women. These demands were subsequent to the mass rape and other forms of sexual attacks against Chinese women during May 1998 riots occurring in Jakarta and

several other large cities in Indonesia.

The aims of Komnas Perempuan are:

- To build a conducive environment for the elimination of all forms of violence against women and the fulfillment of women's rights in Indonesia,
- To increase efforts to prevent all forms of violence against women and to increase the protection of women's rights.

Find more info about the Commission at: <http://goo.gl/OMAEV>

— I declare to you that woman must not depend upon the protection of man, but must be taught to protect herself, and there I take my stand. —

Susan B. Anthony

Resources

Articles

Milestones in U.S. Women's History. U.S. Department of State, *IIPDigital*, March 9, 2012. The article provides list of outstanding people and events that moved women's rights forward. Read more: <http://goo.gl/yV1At>

Why Women Are a Foreign Policy Issue/Melanne Vermeer. U.S. Department of State, *IIPDigital*, April 23, 2012. The author, Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues describes the importance of women's participation in solving the global problems. Read more: <http://goo.gl/1Jom1>

Women's Rights in the United States/ Jane Morse U.S. Department of State, *IIPDigital*, February 26, 2007. The article describes the significant steps that have been taken to improve education, health, family life, economic opportunities and political empowerment for American women. Read more: <http://goo.gl/OoDfz>

eBook



Women in the World Today. Bureau of International Information Program, Department of State,

September 10, 2012. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has written the introduction to this publication, which examines women's issues around the world. The U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues Melanne Vermeer provides an overview. Read more: <http://goo.gl/5gLFc>

eJournal USA

Celebrating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Bureau of International Information Program, Department of State, November 17, 2008. This issue of eJournal USA celebrates the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration by explaining how this powerful statement of humanity's common inheritance came to be, how it draws upon an intellectual heritage that

transcends political boundaries, and how — with room always for improvement — it has bettered the lives of individuals in every corner of the globe.

Read more: <http://goo.gl/Wkeqi>

Books

Encyclopedia of Human Rights/David P Forsythe. New York, Oxford University Press, 2009.

This five-volume encyclopedia offers comprehensive coverage of all aspects of human rights theory, practice, law, and history.

Equal : Women Reshape American Law / Fred Stebeigh. New York : W.W. Norton, c2009

This book shows how the law has influences the lives of women, and how women have shaped the law of the land.

Women's Rights : People and Perspectives / Crista DeLuzio, editor. Santa Barbara, Calif. : ABC-CLIO, c2010.

The 19th amendment secured for women in the right to vote

in 1920 — a triumph nearly 80 years in the making. A half-century later in the 1970s the fight for women's rights was one of the first topics explored by the emerging field of women's history. This book shows just how complex and multifaceted our understanding of that fight has become.

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Profiles of the UDHR Drafter - Eleanor Roosevelt



Eleanor Roosevelt had many roles in her lifetime, but she considered her time on the

U.N. Commission on Human Rights her most important work.

A native New Yorker, Roosevelt was born in 1884 into a prominent family that valued community service. Both her parents died before she was 10, and she was raised by relatives. She married her distant cousin, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a rising political star, in 1905. They had six children together. In 1920, Franklin was stricken with polio, an affliction that would relegate him to a wheelchair and, it seemed for a time, end his political career. Eleanor was torn between pursuing

her love of volunteering and helping her husband maintain his political viability. Then, in 1932 — at the height of the Great Depression — Franklin Roosevelt was elected to the presidency of the United States. With her husband's death in April 1945, she moved out of the White House but continued her activism. Later in 1945, the new president, Harry S. Truman, calling Eleanor the "First Lady of the World," appointed her to the U.S. delegation to the United Nations.

Roosevelt served as the chairwoman of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, which was charged with submitting proposals, recommendations and reports regarding declarations on civil liberties, the status of women, freedom of information, the prevention of discrimination and the protection of minorities. First and foremost on the commission agenda, however, was formulating an international bill of rights.

People around the world began flooding the commission, and especially Roosevelt, with letters detailing human rights abuses and asking for help. It made the commission's charge all the more pressing. Roosevelt kept the group on a tight schedule, sometimes working late into the night. The delegates understood that she worked hard, and expected the same of others. In December 1947, the Commission on Human Rights put the finishing touches on its draft of a declaration on human rights. But getting the draft through the United Nations Third Committee (which handled social, humanitarian and cultural affairs) was difficult.

In December 1948, with just one week to go until the U.N. General Assembly ended its annual session, the delegates still vehemently debated and amended the draft. Finally, on December 9, Eleanor Roosevelt addressed the General Assembly, saying that "we stand here today at the

threshold of a great event both in the life of the United Nations and in the life of mankind." And with just four minutes left before midnight on December 10, General Assembly President Herb Evatt of Australia called for a vote. Forty-eight nations voted affirmatively, none against, and eight abstained (two countries were not present and neither voted nor abstained). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights had been adopted. Eleanor Roosevelt received a standing ovation from the General Assembly.

Eleanor Roosevelt left the United Nations in 1951, but she continued writing and giving lectures and remained active in Democratic Party politics until her death in 1962.

Source: <http://goo.gl/xZMeV>

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