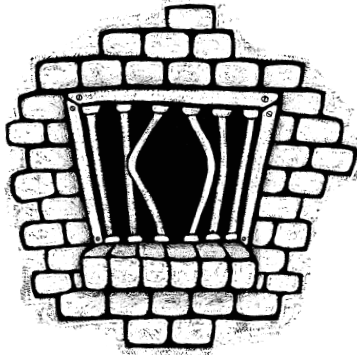


DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS



In a representative democracy, citizens entrust the decisions about how they are governed to elected representatives. What happens if the elected representatives govern the State in a way that the citizens do not like?

To maintain the continuity of the rights of the individual, many countries have included basic human rights in their system of government. Some, like the United States, place these rights in their Federal Constitution. This means that governments cannot easily alter these rights.

In the Australian system of government, rights are contained in court judgements, Federal, State and local government laws, regulations and in the Federal and State Constitutions. Australian governments have also agreed to make laws in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

The UDHR is a list of rights, declared by the United Nations in 1948. The list includes:

- All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.
- Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.
- No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
- All are equal before the law.
- No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.
- Everyone charged with an offence against the law has the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty.
- Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
- Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression.
- Everyone has the right to vote. The will of the people shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections, which will be by universal and equal suffrage.
- Everyone has the right to education.



1. Are there any rights that you would add to the list or any that you think are unnecessary? Justify your answer.
2. Examine the following suggested rules/laws and think about how they may reduce any of the listed rights:
 - a. People who cannot find employment within six months of leaving school/university must work for the government for no pay.
 - b. People under 18 are not permitted in public places after sunset.
 - c. Anyone protesting against the government will be arrested.
 - d. Only Christians can work in the tourism industry.
 - e. If you commit a drug offence, you will lose your Australian citizenship.
 - f. You must let police or government officials into your home whenever they require it.
 - g. People charged with firearm offences will be imprisoned until their trial.
 - h. Legal aid, which supports people who cannot afford to hire a barrister, will no longer be available.
 - i. If you drink then drive, you will have to wear a distinguishing sign around your neck for six months.
 - j. No more than three teenagers can meet together in any one place in the Melbourne city centre.



1. The rights listed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) are frequently referred to in newspapers and other current reports – usually because they are not being upheld.

As a class, brainstorm examples of these issues, e.g. aboriginal rights, rights of women.

Select one of the rights that interests you (and preferably one that you are aware of from various reports) to complete a research task that explains:

- why the right has become an issue;
- when the situation/event occurred;
- where this took place;
- who was involved; and
- whether the situation is ongoing.

What action could or is being taken to resolve the issue/situation?

Your final summary should outline the ongoing implications of the issue and how this affects the right in question.

Present your findings in the form of an informative poster with an oral report to the class.

2. The United Nations website is at <http://www.un.org>.
 - Go to home page and click on Welcome. Then click on the Cyber School Bus link.
 - Next, click on Human Rights, then on Interactive Declaration.
 - As a class, read the preamble and answer the questions together.
 - Break up the listed rights amongst the class so that all of the rights are covered.
 - Each group then must write up the right/s that they have been allocated on a piece of poster paper so that they can be displayed around the classroom.
 - Each group must then explain the main elements of their right/s to the rest of the class and give an example of how these rights are protected or upheld by government in Australia.
 - Add these examples to the posters and keep adding as you move through the unit of work.

The UN website is an excellent resource for this unit of work. It contains a wealth of information on all elements of the UN and has some excellent resource material on human rights.