

Principles of Democracy



Human Rights

All human beings are born with inalienable rights. These human rights empower people to pursue lives of dignity — thus, no government can bestow them but all governments should protect them. Freedom, built on a foundation of justice, tolerance, dignity, and respect — regardless of ethnicity, religion, political association, or social standing — allows people to pursue these fundamental rights. Whereas dictatorships deny human rights, free societies continually strive to attain them.

Human rights are interdependent and indivisible; they encompass myriad facets of human existence including social, political, and economic issues. Among the most commonly accepted are:

- ☞ All people should have the right to form their own opinions and express them individually or in peaceful assemblies. Free societies create a “marketplace of ideas” where people exchange their views on any number of issues.
- ☞ All people should have the right to participate in government. Governments should create laws that protect human rights while justice systems enforce those laws equally among the population.
- ☞ Freedom from arbitrary arrest, detention, and torture — whether one is an opponent of the ruling political party, an ethnic minority, or even a common criminal — is a basic human right. A professional police force respects all citizens as it enforces the laws of the nation.

- ☞ In ethnically diverse nations, religious and ethnic minorities should be free to use their language and maintain their traditions without fear of recrimination from the majority population. Governments should recognize the rights of minorities while respecting the will of the majority.
- ☞ All people should have the opportunity to work, earn a living, and support their families.
- ☞ Children deserve special protection. They should receive at least an elementary education, proper nutrition, and healthcare.
- ☞ To maintain human rights, citizens in any free society need to be vigilant. Citizen responsibility — through a variety of participatory activities — ensures that government remains accountable to the people. The family of free nations is committed to work toward protection of human rights. They formalize their commitment through a number of international treaties and covenants on human rights.