

Humanists

Support



*the
United
Nations*

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The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948 by the United Nations, is in its entirety a Humanist document, which could easily have been inspired by our very own *Humanist Manifesto*. The ideals expressed were definitely created in the spirit of the Humanist philosophy, beginning with Article 1 that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, and that they are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. Articles 2 to 5 go on to delineate entitlement without regard to race, color, sex, language, religion, political opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status. It further cites the right to life, liberty and security of person, and to not be subjected to slavery, torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.

Religious belief is mentioned only in reference to freedom of conscience and expression. Nowhere in the document is there mention of a supernatural source for the wisdom it contains. It cites in the preamble that disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of humankind. It then declares the need for a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want, with this proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people.

Humanist Manifesto I, which was written in 1933, expresses these very ideas, asserting that humans alone are responsible for the realization of the world of their dreams. They have within themselves the power for its achievement and the initiative to set intelligence and will to the task. Later, in 1972, *Humanist Manifesto II* went on to fully develop these principles by adding statements on the following topics: Ethics, The Individual, Democratic Society, World Community, and Humanity As a Whole.

The Twentieth Century was perhaps the most barbarous in history, with flagrant disregard for human rights, as genocide and ethnic hatreds raged.

The twenty-first century may become the turning point for dedication to Humanist principles. Much progress has been made in public awareness and expectations. The United Nations, long overzealous in its respect for the sovereignty of nations, has tended to overlook its dual mandate to respect the best interests of we, the peoples of earth, as set forth in its charter. When its peace-keeping forces abandon those who are about to be annihilated, during a

sudden flare up of aggression, we are shocked. The reason cited for their withdrawal is that there is no peace to keep. Recognition of the need for the development of an intervention force with a new humanitarian mandate is a hotly debated issue to be hammered out in the UN, balancing it against the strong interests of national sovereignty.

Recognition of those Humanistic principles which consider the well-being of the peoples of earth is actually gaining momentum. The developing nations advocate poverty eradication, debt relief, sustainable development, the promotion of global information technology, and the wish to release the stranglehold of the most powerful UN nations by allowing more nations to participate in the Security Council. All but a few nations are voting to ban landmines and nuclear tests, to support disarmament, the newly formed International Criminal Court, and crucial human rights and environmental treaties.

Some Non-Governmental Organizations, or NGOs, were strong advocates for world peace and the many Humanistic causes long before the formation of the UN, having promoted the League of Nations and women's right to vote, for instance. Humanist organizations are represented at the UN as NGOs. The first, in 1946, was the National Service Conference of the American Ethical Union. Others represented at the UN are the International Humanist and Ethical Union, the American Humanist Association, Unitarian Universalists, and the American Friends Service Committee. They are working together with other NGOs in support of human values, especially the promotion of human rights, of equality, the rights of women and children, the elimination of racial discrimination, environmental and labor issues, and most fervently, disarmament.

In June 2000 the American Humanist Association and the National Service Conference of the AEU were sponsors of a presentation by ambassadors from five of the developing nations who had met with others of the Group of 77 at a South Summit meeting in Havana, Cuba. G77 is a name from 1964 still used by the now 134 self-designated developing nations. They actually represent the majority of the peoples of earth. Solidarity in their positions and in their voting will help to give them a stronger voice.

Voting to promote the best interests of the people, rather than the traditional posturing of nations for power, gives hope that this century will indeed become the Humanist century.

Support the UN!

Humanism is a philosophy for the here and now. We have evolved on Earth and made a terrible mess of things. There's nobody "up there" who's going to save us. We human beings must take responsibility. Perhaps we can learn to behave ethically and to treat Earth and its inhabitants with respect. Humanists work passionately for peace on Earth. We have nowhere else to go!

More information is available on these Web sites:

- ***Universal Declaration of Human Rights***
www.un.org/Overview/rights.html
- ***Humanist Manifesto I, II, and III***
www.americanhumanist.org/humanism/
- ***The Philosophy of Humanism***
www.corliss-lamont.org/philos8.htm
- ***Human Values Network***
www.humanvalues.net
- ***The Humanist Magazine***
www.thehumanist.org

For more information about Humanism, the *Humanist* magazine, the American Humanist Association, and how to locate other Humanists in your area, please contact:

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