

# *Human rights in USA*



# Human Rights

- ***The protection of fundamental human rights was a foundation stone in the establishment of the United States over 200 years ago. Since then, a central goal of U.S. foreign policy has been the promotion of respect for human rights, as embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The United States understands that the existence of human rights helps secure the peace, deter aggression, promote the rule of law, combat crime and corruption, strengthen democracies, and prevent humanitarian crises.***

# *The U.S. Constitution and the UDHR*

- **In the United States, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights provide broad human rights protections. Many of the rights contained in the Constitution are equivalent to rights found in the UDHR, especially those related to political and civil liberties. In addition, the U.S. Supreme Court has identified fundamental rights not explicitly stated in the Constitution, such as the presumption of innocence in a criminal trial and freedom of movement. U.S. courts provide a remedy for people whose constitutional rights have been violated. The U.S. Congress also passes laws that protect constitutional rights and provide remedies for victims of human rights violations when court cases may be too costly or difficult. The most important of these domestic laws are those that prohibit discrimination, including discrimination based on race, gender, religion, or disability.**

- UDHR
- RELATED U.S. CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT
- Article 2 14th Amendment (non-discrimination)
- Article 3 14th Amendment (life, liberty, security)
- Article 4 13th Amendment (slavery)
- Article 5 8th Amendment (cruel and unusual punishment)
- Article 6 14th Amendment (equal protection)
- Article 7 14th Amendment (equal protection)
- Article 9 5th Amendment (arbitrary arrest)
- Article 10 6th Amendment (fair trial)
- Article 12 4th Amendment (privacy)
- Article 17 5th Amendment (property)
- Article 18 1st Amendment (religion)
- Article 19 1st Amendment (speech)
- Article 20 1st Amendment (association)
- Article 21 15th, 19th, 23rd, 24th, and 26th Amendments (vote)



# ***TIMELINE: Human Rights and the U.S.***

- ***1776. The Declaration of Independence states that “all men are created equal ... [and] are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights.”***
- ***1791. The Bill of Rights guarantees civil and political rights to individual citizens, including: freedom of speech, religion, and association; the right to a fair trial; and the prohibition of cruel and unusual punishment.***
- ***1945. The United Nations is established. One of its purposes is “promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all.” The United States is instrumental in helping create the United Nations.***
- ***1948. The American Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) are adopted. The United States leads the efforts to draft both documents.***
- ***1992. The United States ratifies the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. While signed, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights remains unratified.***
- ***2002. The U.S. begins using a detention camp at Guantanamo Bay to hold terrorism suspects in custody without a trial.***

# The long road to rights

Key dates in the evolution of the UK's unwritten constitution



**1215**  
**Magna Carta**  
Signed by King John. Limited the power of the sovereign

**1689**  
**Bill of Rights**  
Statement of citizens' rights including the right to bear arms for defence

**1832**  
**Reform Act**  
Increased the franchise, redistributed seats and tackled electoral corruption

**1918**  
**Representation of the People Act**  
Extended the franchise greatly, leading to universal suffrage in 1928

**1973**  
**EEC membership**  
Became the EU in 1993, subjecting UK laws to EU directives

YEAR

1200

1600

1700

1800

1900

2000

**1611**  
**Case of Proclamations**  
Added further limits on Royal prerogative, stopping rule by decree

**1701**  
**Act of Settlement**  
Settled the succession to the throne

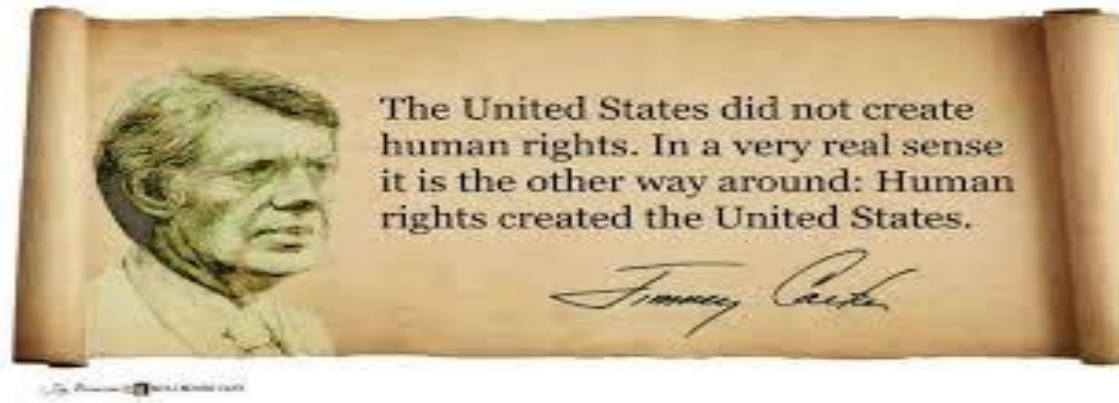
**1911**  
**Parliament Act**  
Gave Parliament power to pass Acts without approval of the Lords

**1949**  
**Parliament Act**  
Reduced time Lords could delay bills

**1998**  
**Human Rights Act**  
Made the European Convention on Human Rights enforceable in UK courts

# The United States and Modern Human Rights: A Brief History

- The United States has a mixed record on human rights. Despite early leadership on human rights during the 20th century, the United States, unlike many other nations around the world, has not ratified most of the major human rights treaties. U.S. foreign policy does not always respect human rights and the government also fails to protect key human rights domestically, especially economic and social rights.



# *THE U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS* *RECORD*

Most Americans have heard of human rights abuses occurring in other countries around the world, but many do not realize that human rights are being violated in the U.S. as well. This link provides some examples of the failure of the U.S. to comply with international human rights obligations.



