

Part 4 - Declaration for the Freedom Of Humanity

Human Rights And Right Human Relations, Vienna 25th June 1993

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WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS DETERMINED...

To reaffirm faith in the fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small.

So states the preamble of the United Nations Charter. But if we are to help transform the condition of human life and consciousness, it is essential that more thought be given to the deeper spiritual significances of this aim.

The great keynote of freedom which signifies our modern era has been embodied in revolution, the rejection of orthodoxy and the urge for change, experiment and for direct experience, but above all in humanity's struggle for human rights. As we move from an age of authority to one of experience, people seek for others what they demand for themselves – the right to freedom of thought, speech and worship and the right to those conditions of life that will permit full expression to the dignity, equality and brotherhood of all humanity.

Thus, the great historical declarations from Magna Carta on, including the declarations of the American and French revolutions, the Declaration of the Rights of the Toiling and Exploited Peoples adopted in Russia in 1918, the Atlantic Charter, the Four Freedoms, culminating in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, are signposts in the recognition of the individual person's own essential humanity and concern for others.

The fact that these great statements of intent have taken such a hold on human consciousness demonstrates their essential spiritual potency and divine origins. They have given humanity purpose and direction and an ideal at which to aim. They are the equivalents along the line of government and the social structure of the great pronouncements of the world teachers and religious leaders, such as the last Sermon of the Buddha, the Sermon on the Mount, the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes and the Eight Means to Yoga, or Union with the Soul.

THE PRINCIPLE OF FREEDOM

It has been said that standing behind the Trinity of Light, Love and Will which represents the highest conception of divinity of which humanity is capable, there lies another greater principle. This is the principle of liberation, of which humanity's demand for freedom is a faint and most inadequate reflection, but nevertheless to which it is a clear and definite response. All life seeks liberation. Our modern struggle for human rights is a response to the direction of life itself and this is its essential meaning. However imperfect the expression and however crude the attempt, the search for "human rights in larger freedom" is, in the last analysis, one of the most profound spiritual impulses in all human history.

Yet human rights do not exist in a vacuum. They must find expression in a complex and worldwide network of human relationships. A declaration may establish the goal and act as a magnet for thought. The law may compel a certain observance and restrict, limit and punish the grosser forms of abuse. But no law or declaration can, on its own, change human thinking, eliminate blind prejudice and self-interest, or create that atmosphere of brotherhood and goodwill in which the full expression of human rights can be achieved. One can no more legislate the removal of prejudice and the denial of human equality than one can create abundance with a stroke of the pen. The observance of human rights depends on the establishing of right human relations. And right human relations are based on tolerance, understanding and goodwill; on a sense of responsibility for the welfare of all; and on a willingness to accept, indeed welcome, the immense diversity of humankind and to love the freedom which enables that diversity to flourish within the unity of the greater whole.

TRANSFORMING HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

If the expression of human rights depends on the establishing of right human relations, right human relations can only be established by the development of a more inclusive consciousness. St. Paul said, "*Be ye therefore transformed by the renewing of your mind.*" The transformation of human life on this "*planet of pain*" can only be achieved by the transformation of human consciousness.

Today, this transformation of humanity is under way. The outline of a planetary synthesis, based on a worldwide interdependence, has emerged. But critical, desperate problems face the human family. Human rights, though enshrined in many national constitutions, are far from being adequately established or observed. Attitudes of prejudice, greed, fear and suspicion poison relations between individuals, groups and nations.

In 1988, marking the fortieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the General Assembly unanimously launched a World Public Information Campaign for Human Rights. This campaign called for the creation of a universal culture of human rights that will permeate societies all over the world. The campaign has provided an opportunity for renewed and conscious effort to educate the public in right human relations and in society's collective duties and responsibilities to one another. Also, it has helped focus attention on those grave and worldwide problems which still stand in the way of a new world order based on right human relations and the rights of all humanity. A further landmark in the promotion of such a universal culture was reached when the General Assembly adopted a resolution to convene a World Conference on Human Rights, which took place in Vienna in 1993.

Perhaps the most disturbing trend and gravest problem facing humanity at this moment is the growth of extremism. Our worldwide problems of race relations, poverty, ecological imbalance, war and disarmament and our failure as yet on a world scale to provide even a minimum education for the vast mass of the world's children, have combined to create massive frustration. The downtrodden and dispossessed, fired by the vision of freedom and human rights, can wait no more. Those who would change the current state of affairs and work for right human relations are likewise frustrated both by the enormity of the world's problems and the all too widespread inertia of those men and women of goodwill

who could help so much but who choose to remain silent -- immersed in petty problems and personal affairs.

Much of this extremism is understandable. It is a last resort reaction to the perpetuation of intolerable conditions. It can also stir the lethargic to constructive action and there is evidence that the extremity of human crisis is doing just this. But it is also a tragically double-edged weapon, feeding hatred and violence, deepening old cleavages, creating new ones and destroying the already tenuous fabric of relationships that have been built across areas of conflict.

Extremism today could get out of hand and, totally disrupting society, destroy not only the present evils it seeks to obliterate but the new society which its exponents seek to create. The issues are finely balanced. The men and women of goodwill are urged to take immediate and effective right action.

THE NEED FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

The human race is therefore faced with a number of decisive issues:

First: the question of freedom and human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights embodies many of the principles on which the new age must be built and which must be anchored in human consciousness before it can manifest.

Second: the need for right human relations, which can only be established through the generation and worldwide distribution of the energy of goodwill.

Third: the need to tackle those world problems that stand in the way of human progress. Unless humanity understands the true nature of these problems they will never be solved and this understanding calls for a continuing educational campaign.

These are tasks in which all can share. And while no one can tell another how he or she should serve, it is essential to point out that the need today is for dedicated servers in every field of human activity who will cooperate with the Divine Plan as it seeks to work out in world affairs.

UNITED NATIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

"When it is desired to set forth a series of goals towards which governments and peoples of the world should strive, the United Nations or its agencies may adopt a declaration or a recommendation. When it is possible to lay down a set of standards precise enough to be embodied in law, an international convention may be adopted. Conventions are binding only on those States which have become parties thereto."

Currently over 60 United Nations human rights declarations and conventions have been negotiated. The following is a small selection:

THE DECLARATIONS

1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights

1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child

- 1963 Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination
- 1967 Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
- 1974 Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition
- 1984 Declaration on the Right of Peoples to Peace
- 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development
- 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women
- 1999 Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace
- 2000 United Nations Millennium Declaration
- 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS

THE CONVENTIONS (DATES INDICATE WHEN THESE CAME INTO FORCE)

- 1951 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. 133 States are now parties.
- 1957 Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery. 119 States are now parties.
- 1969 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. 169 States are now parties.
- 1976 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. 149 States are now parties.
- 1976 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. 152 States are now parties.
- 1981 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. 177 States are now parties.
- 1987 Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. 136 States are now parties.
- 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. 192 States are now parties.
- 2003 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. 26 States are now parties.

A CALL TO ACTION

“Our age which has often been so cruel, can now pride itself on having witnessed the birth of a universal human rights movement. In all walks of life brave individuals are standing up for their brothers who have been reduced to silence by oppression or poverty. Their struggle has transcended all frontiers and their weapon is knowledge... Defending human rights today means above all bringing the most secret crimes to light. It means trying to find out and daring to speak with complete objectivity, something which requires courage and occasionally, even heroism.

"The United Nations is cognizant that, for human rights to be more fully recognized and respected, the awareness and support of all are required." (Javier Perez de Cuellar)

Men and women of goodwill who wish to participate in action to strengthen and implement basic human rights and freedoms are encouraged to get in touch with their local or national United Nations Association, or one of the many United Nations Information Centres and with appropriate governmental agencies and private organisations, to find out about action in their local areas with which they can cooperate.

WORLD GOODWILL

This leaflet is issued by World Goodwill, an organised movement founded in 1932 to help establish right human relations and to help solve humanity's problems through the constructive power of goodwill. World Goodwill's activities are essentially educational and include.

- Cooperation with the world service action of individuals, groups and organisations.
- Holding of Seminars and Symposia for the purpose of "strengthening the hands of the new group of world servers".
- Support or the work of the United Nations and its specialised agencies as the main hope for humanity's future.
- A worldwide educational programme carried out by pamphlets, study papers, the World Goodwill Newsletter, Commentaries and Occasional Papers featuring the constructive work of men and women of goodwill.