

# [History of human rights and evolution history essay](https://assignbuster.com/history-of-human-rights-and-evolution-history-essay/)

1. The fundamental norms of governing the concept of Human rights is that of the respect for human personality and its absolute worth, regardless of colour, race, sex, religion or other considerations. These rights are essentially for adequate development of the human happiness and progress. Human rights may therefore be said to be those fundamental rights to which every man or woman inhabiting any part of the world should be deemed entitled merely by virtue of having been born a human being.

2.[1]Greek Civilization. The Greeks were the first civilization who clearly articulated & developed thoughts of “ Human Rights”. In fifth-century Plato looked beyond the law of city & state and advocated a more permanent and impeachable source of justice. The Greeks provided the intellectual & practical hints for the western world’s formulation & evolution of human rights. Even the democratic form of government advocated by Anthenian democracy in 440 BC would be considered comparable to democracy practiced today. The classical politics (polis) never included women, slaves, foreigners, or those who could not prove that their parents had been citizens of Greece.

3.[2]Roman Civilization. Romans introduced a belief in universal rights for all. Romans added their contribution in terms of law & politics to the Greek philosophy they contributed in terms of professional justice, extensive written codes of law, standards for assessing law & tradition. Romans introduced a belief in equal rights for women, & elevated freed slaves to high positions of authority. Domestic slaves in Roman society who could save sufficient funds or those who had favors of their masters could enjoy freedom in the society. Some slaves even rose to the ranks of ministers in Emperor Clauidus, empire.

4.[3]English Rights & Magna Carta. With the fall of Roman Empire, Judeo-Christian teachings of humankind was creation of God & therefore every person has a divine linkage to the creator & god’s creation should be treated with dignity had a great influence on many institution in Europe. Europe challenged the “ divine rights of kings”. Magna Carta, a strategy of English barons to protect their finances & traditional liberties enjoyed by them ultimately benefited the common man & women.

5. 4The Enlightenment. Natural Rights philosophy advocated by English philosophers in 15th & 16th provided fodder for French Revolution & highlighted protection against tax, right to property and religious rights to human beings. Enlightenment began in Paris in 18th century linked state economics, liberty & politics. Unlike origins of natural right philosophy which affected few lives across Europe, Enlightenment had significant impact. Denis Diderot wrote mammoth Encyclopedia, “ The Philosophes” which highlighted the knowledge in sciences, arts, religious fundamentalism, torture & slavery, constitutionalism, sovereignty and individual liberty to the middle classes and other nations in Europe & Russia. The encyclopedia in doing so altered the perception and attitudes towards individual rights.

6. Human Rights Revolutions. In the 17th century two revolutions brought out the concept of human rights to a new dimension.

(a) In 1776 most of the British colonies in North America proclaimed independence from the British Empire in a text which still dominates feeling of the nation — the U. S. Declaration of Independence and formed guide to the concept of human rights campaigns in future. US declaration of Independence Highlighted ” We hold these truth to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by the creator with unalienable Rights, that among these are life, liberty, and Pursuit of Happiness”[4].

(b) In 1789 the French overthrew monarchy and established the first French Republic. Revolution gave the “ Declaration of the Rights of Man”. The term natural rights eventually fell into unpopularity, but the perception of universal rights took root. Philosophers such as Thomas Paine, John Stuart Mill, and Henry David Thoreau stretched out the concept. Thoreau was the first philosopher known to use the term, “ human rights”, and does so in his discourse, ‘ Civil Disobedience’. This work has been extremely significant on individuals as different as Leo Tolstoy, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King. Gandhi and King, in particular, based their ideas on non-violent resistance to unprincipled governmental actions by non-violent protests.

## The Evolution of The Modern Human Rights Concept

7. For the preceding part of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century though, human rights activism remained principally tied to political and religious groups and thinking. Revolutionaries pointed at the mayhem of governments as testimony that their ideology was essential to bring about change and ending the government’s abuse. Many people, aghast with the measures of governments in control, first got involved with revolutionary groups because of this. The governments then resorted at bombings, strike-related brutality, and increase in violent crime and social disarray as reasons why a stern approach toward opposition was necessary. None of the group operating for the rights had any credibility.[5]

8. Nonetheless many civil rights and human rights activities managed to influence solicitous social changes at this stage. Labor unions brought about laws yielding workers the right to strike, establishing bare minimum work environment, regulating child labor, establishing a forty hour work week in the United States and many European countries, etc. The women’s rights movement succeeded in gaining for a lot of women the right to vote and participate in political process. National liberation engagements in many countries succeeded in throwing out colonial powers and gain independence. One of the most influential was Mahatma Gandhi’s principle of ahimsa to free India from British rule this movement got motivation and gave a new thought line to many countries across globe. Movements by long-suppressed racial and religious minorities succeeded in many parts of the world, among them the U. S. Civil Rights movement.

9. The horror of WW-I demanded changes that would protect existence and sanctity of human life. Six thousand people were killed each day for four years eight and half million soldiers died in WW-I. Sixty five million were soldiers out of which thirty seven million were casualties including seven million who were permanently physically disabled. Another 12. 6 million died in war related crimes and causes. Austria and Hungry suffered a 90% causality rate and Russia suffered 76%. Europe became continent of widows and spinsters. National budgets were exhausted in mitigation of suffering of soldiers and population suffered[6]. In the face of this Covenant of League of Nations was designed in 1919 US President Wilson propagated “ Fourteen Points” to enhance security, peace, individual and group rights and mutual cooperation between states. The league of Nation propagated security guaranties as well as effort to mitigate outbreak of diseases, prohibit exploitation of women and children, improve working condition for labors, apposite treatment, education and self governance of colonial people through the mandates of the convention. The League of Nations largely became impotent by late 1930 and was replaced by UN in 1946 after the end of WW-II.

9. Dreadful crimes against humanity in WW-II gave a new dimension to the human rights being continuing for last three thousand years human rights got refined, forged and got tested in crucible of human want, war and unending desire for wealth over last few centuries. Over last few centuries human rights blossomed into rights not even dreamt of in seventeenth & eighteenth century. Atrocities of Axis States (Germany, Italy and Japan) in World War-II altered the fundamental global belief; all states across the globe were unwilling to allow the outsiders to criticize the treatment and handling of rebels, prisoners, the destitute, women and children as a internal matter. These matters were governed by history, religion and tradition. Violations of human rights and atrocities over human race in the WW bridged the gap between states and the concept of human right got a global view[7].

10. A group of lawyers, journalists, writers, and others, offended and aggravated by the sentence of two Portugese college students to twenty years in prison for having raised their glasses in a toast to “ freedom” in a bar, created Appeal For Amnesty in 1961. The appeal was announced on May 28 in the London Observer’s Sunday Supplement. The appeal told the stories of six “ prisoners of conscience” from diverse countries and of unlike political and religious backgrounds, all jailed for serenely expressing their political or religious viewpoint, and called on governments all over to free such prisoners. It set forth a straightforward plan of action, calling for strictly unprejudiced, non-partisan appeals to be made on behalf of these prisoners and any who, like them, had been imprisoned for peacefully articulated beliefs. The response to this call was bigger than anyone had expected. The one-year appeal grew, was extended further than the year, and Amnesty International and the modern human rights movement were born.

11. The combinations of these concerns and others carnage on human race over the years led to creation of other human rights groups. Among them were groups which afterward amalgamated to form Human Rights Watch, the initial of them being Helsinki Watch in 1978. Regional human rights overseer groups often operated under extremely difficult environment, especially those in the Soviet Block. Helsinki Watch, which later merged with other groups to form Human Rights Watch, started as a few Russian activists who formed to keep an eye on the Soviet Union’s fulfillment with the human rights provisions in the Helsinki accords. Many of its members were arrested soon after it was formed and had little chance to be vigorous.

12. Even though there were differences in philosophy, focus, and strategy between the groups, for the most part they remained on communication terms, and a number of human rights activists affiliated to more than one. Acknowledgment for the human rights movement, and Amnesty International in particular, grew during the 1970s. Amnesty gained permanent observer standing as an Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) at the United Nations. Its reports became mandatory reading in legislatures, state departments and foreign ministries around the world. Its press releases received respectful attention, even when its recommendations were ignored by the governments involved. In 1977 it was awarded the Nobel Peace prize for its work[8].