

In 1945, following World War II, the major nations of the world replaced the League of Nations with the United Nations with the objective of stopping wars between countries and to provide a platform for dialogue.

On 10 December 1948 the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For the first time, the Universal Declaration set out the fundamental rights and freedoms to be shared by all human beings.

There are a number of videos on the [Amnesty](#) website which give young people the fundamentals of the Universal Declaration in an easily digested format. In our section

on the **United Nations** you will find the full text of the Declaration.

Whilst the United Nations was adopting the Universal Declaration, Europe had

established a Congress in 1947, under the chairmanship of Winston Churchill to consider

a European Charter of Human Rights. Serious discussions began when the Council of

Europe was established in May 1949. The debates over the Convention for the

Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedom (as it became), were long and

heated but the final document was signed in Rome in November 1950.

In outline the Convention secures in particular:

- **the right to life,**
- **the right to a fair hearing,**
- **the right to respect for private and family life,**
- **freedom of expression,**
- **freedom of thought, conscience and religion and,**
- **the protection of property.**

The Convention prohibits in particular:

- **torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment,**

- **slavery and forced labour,**
 - **death penalty,**
 - **arbitrary and unlawful detention, and**
- discrimination in the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set out in the Convention.

In our section on **Europe** you will find the full text of the Convention and the various institutions established in Europe to protect the citizen and enforce the rights of the Convention. Individual countries have taken the principles enshrined in both the United Nations Declaration and the European Convention and established national laws which elaborate upon or extend those rights. In our final section on **Individual countries** we consider some examples of how this has been done, including a special focus on the position in Romania.