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IS THE U.S.  
READY FOR  
HUMAN RIGHTS?

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With the horrors of World War II fresh in their minds, the members of the newly formed United Nations came together to agree on the rights that belong to all members of the human family. These are rights we have without regard to nationality, race, gender, or religion. They are not the gift of any government; they cannot rightly be taken away by any ruler. It took two years for the first United Nations Commission on Human Rights, chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt, to produce the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was adopted in 1948, and stands as the first comprehensive, internationally approved statement of rights. Here is an abbreviated form of the document Mrs. Roosevelt hoped would become “the international Magna Carta.”

[ Plus a few facts—for better or worse—to help show how the United States is doing. ]

## The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

**1. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.**

[ The U.S. was founded with a declaration “that all men are created equal.” ]

**2. We are entitled to all the rights and freedoms in this Declaration.**

[ Congress has ratified half of the items set forth in this document. ]

**3. We have the right to life, liberty and security of person.**

[ The Declaration of Independence says certain rights are unalienable, “that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” ]

**4. No one shall be held in slavery or servitude.**

[ The 13th Amendment makes slavery and involuntary servitude illegal in the U.S. except as punishment for crime. ]

**5. No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment.**

[ In 2008, President G. W. Bush vetoed a bill that would have banned waterboarding and other “harsh interrogation” by the CIA. ]

**6. We have the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.**

[ In 2003, about 680 suspected terrorists from 42 countries were held at Guantanamo, without access to courts. ]

**7. We are equal before the law.**

[ Blacks and Hispanics constitute 62% of all state and federal prisoners. ]

**8. We have the right to a remedy by national tribunals for acts violating our rights.**

[ The Alien Tort Claims Act allows foreign victims of rights abuses to sue perpetrators who are present in the U.S. ]

**9. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.**

[ Of the 250 prisoners still held at Guantanamo, only 18 are facing war crimes charges. ]

**10. We are entitled to a fair and public hearing by an impartial tribunal.**

[ People detained under the Military Commissions Act have no right to challenge their detention in court. ]

**11. Everyone charged with a crime is presumed innocent until proved guilty.**

[ The prosecution bears the burden of proving guilt in U.S. criminal trials. ]

**12. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honor and reputation.**

[ The National Security Agency has been collecting the phone records of millions of Americans, using data provided by telephone companies. ]

**13. We have the right to freedom of movement.**

[ The TSA's secret “no fly” list prevents thousands of Americans from boarding airplanes. ]

**14. We have the right to seek in other countries asylum from persecution.**

[ Asylum-seekers in the U.S. are often detained indefinitely and confined with criminal prisoners. ]

**15. We have the right to a nationality.**

[ Children born in the United States are entitled to U.S. citizenship. ]

**16. Men and women have the right to marry and to found a family.**

[ The last laws prohibiting interracial marriage were declared unconstitutional in 1967. ]

**17. We have the right to own property.**

[ The 5th Amendment states that private property cannot be taken for public use without just compensation. ]

**18. We have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.**

[ The First Amendment guarantees freedom of religion. Article VI prohibits any religious test for holding public office. ]

**19. We have the right to freedom of opinion and expression.**

[ The Supreme Court says freedom of expression is “the matrix, the indispensable condition of nearly every other form of freedom.” ]

**20. We have the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.**

[ In 2006 the Pentagon gathered information on anti-war protesters using sources from Homeland Security, local police and FBI. ]

**21. We have the right to take part in the government of our country.**

[ The Voting Rights Act of 1965 stands for the principle that everyone's vote is equal, and that neither race nor language should shut any of us out. ]

**22. We have the right to social security and are entitled to realization of economic, social and cultural rights.**

[ In 2007 the U.S. Social Security system paid out \$588.7 billion in benefits. ]

**23. We have the right to work and to form and to join trade unions.**

[ The National Labor Relations Board recently reclassified 8 million people as managers, preventing them from joining unions. ]

**24. We have the right to rest and leisure.**

[ The U.S. is the only Western industrialized nation that does not legally require vacation time. ]

**25. We have the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being.**

[ In 2007, 37.3 million people lived below the poverty line, including 13.3 million children. ]

**26. We have the right to education.**

[ Federal law prohibits discrimination in education on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age. ]

**27. We have the right to participate in the cultural life of the community.**

[ The U.S. has 9,198 public libraries, 155,947 public Internet terminals and 17,500 museums. ]

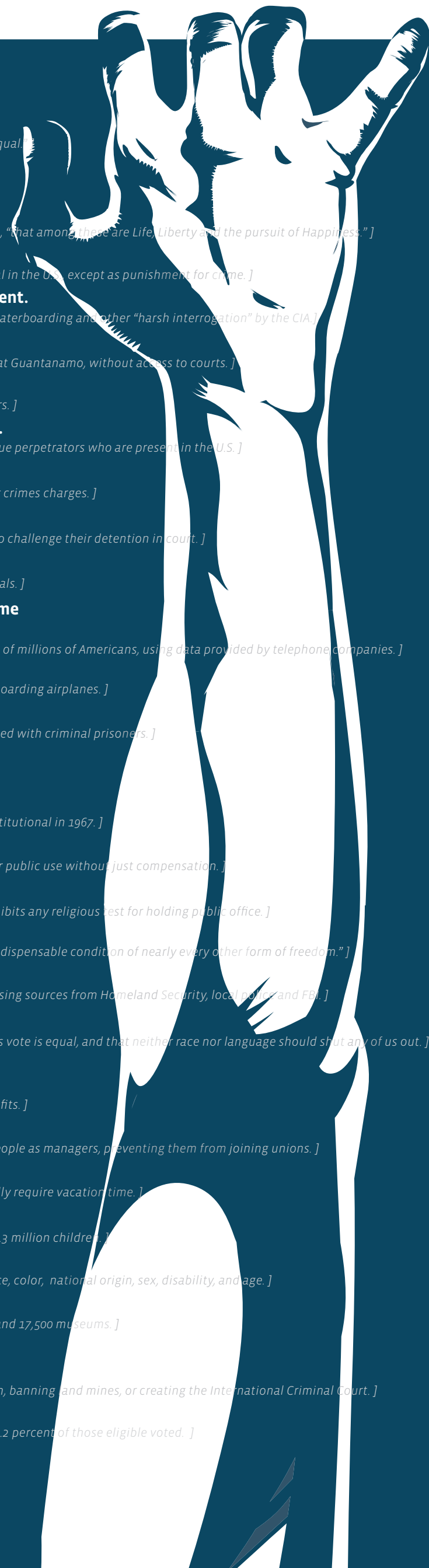
**28. We are entitled to a social and international order in which these rights and freedoms can be fully realized.**

[ The U.S. has not ratified treaties on the rights of children and women, banning land mines, or creating the International Criminal Court. ]

**29. We have duties to the community.**

[ Over 3.6 million new voters registered to vote in the 2008 election; 61.2 percent of those eligible voted. ]

**30. Nothing in this Declaration may take away any of the rights set forth.**



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