

# 21<sup>st</sup> March Human Rights Day

Human Rights day is celebrated in South Africa on the 21<sup>st</sup> March every year. This day honours people who have lost their lives fighting for democracy. Human Rights Day educates people to be aware of their human rights and to ensure that abuses like apartheid, slavery and oppression never again occur.

In South Africa, Human Rights Day commemorates the Sharpeville Massacre in which 69 protestors were killed. A series of national protests against the pass laws in 1960 were planned. Black South Africans were asked to gather outside police stations around the country on March 21 and offer themselves up for arrest, for not carrying their pass books or dompas (dumb pass). The book was a way of controlling the movement of black South Africans. On March 21, 1960, in Sharpeville, thousands of people gathered to protest against carrying a pass book. Police tried to disperse the crowd. When the crowd refused to move the police opened fire on the crowd.

Sixty-nine people were killed, and more than 300 were wounded. The police claimed they shot at the crowd when the protestors started to throw stones, but evidence shows that most people were shot in the back.

Shortly after the Sharpeville massacre, the South African government banned the ANC and various other black parties, like the PAC.

## What are Human Rights?

Every human being that is born has certain rights that they are entitled to. These rights allow you to do, have and be what you want. Our human rights help us live peacefully with others as well as be protected from those that might want to harm or hurt you.

Human rights are defined as: international norms that help to protect all people everywhere from severe political, legal, and social abuses.

Many people, especially in the Western world, feel very strongly about human rights. An international organization called the **United Nations** (UN), has a large division dedicated to the protection of human rights.

There are thirty basic human rights and we should all be aware of these rights.

1. We are all **born free and equal**. We should be treated the same yet allowed to develop our own thoughts and ideas.
2. We may **not discriminate** against others. The human rights belong to everybody, no matter who they are.
3. We have the right to **life**. We should live freely and in safety.
4. We may not be made a **slave**.

5. Nobody has the right to **hurt** or **torture** us.
6. We have the right to **laws** that protect us.
7. We are **protected by the law** and constitution of the country.
8. We have the right to a **fair trial**.
9. Nobody may **detain** you unfairly. You cannot be put in prison for no reason.
10. The **courts** must be fair and public in their treatment of you.
11. You are **innocent until proven guilty**.
12. You have the right to privacy. Nobody can come into your home or look at or take your belongings.
13. We have the right to **move around freely** within our country.
14. You have the right to **seek asylum** if you feel threaten in your country.
15. You have a right to a **nationality**. We all have to right to belong to a country.
16. You have the right to marry and have a **family**. All men and women have the same rights.
17. You have to right to **own your own things**. Nobody may take your belongings without good reason.
18. You have **freedom of religion, belief and opinion**. You have the right to believe in what you want and to have your own religion.
19. You have the right to **freedom of speech**. You may say, think and make up your own minds.
20. You have the right to **meet other people**. Nobody may make you join a group of people or force friendships upon you.
21. You have the right to a **democratic** government. You can choose your leaders.
22. You have the right to **social security**. You have the right to housing, medical care, education and help in your old age.
23. You have the right to **work**. Every adult has the right to a job, a fair wage and the option to join a trade union.
24. You have the right to **play**. Everyone needs time to relax.
25. You have the right to **basic needs**. These include a place to sleep and food to eat.
26. You have the right to **education**. Every child should be given an education.
27. You have the right to belong and enjoy **culture and your own language**. We can enjoy our own way of life.
28. You have the right to a **free and fair world**.
29. You have the right to be **responsible** and care about others.
30. These rights belong to you and nobody should take them away.