

SUMMARY OF THE PREAMBLE

The member governments of the Council of Europe work towards peace and greater unity based on human rights and fundamental freedoms. With this Convention they decide to take the first steps to enforce many of the rights contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Article 1 - Obligation to respect human rights

States must ensure that everyone has the rights stated in this Convention.

Article 2 - Right to life

You have the right to life.

Article 3 - Prohibition of torture

No one ever has the right to hurt you or torture you. Even in detention your human dignity has to be respected.

Article 4 - Prohibition of slavery and forced labour

It is prohibited to treat you as a slave or to impose forced labour on you.

Article 5 - Right to liberty and security

You have the right to liberty. If you are arrested you have the right to know why. If you are arrested you have the right to stand trial soon, or to be released until the trial takes place.

Article 6 - Right to a fair trial

You have the right to a fair trial before an unbiased and independent judge. If you are accused of having committed a crime, you are innocent until proved guilty. You have the right to be assisted by a lawyer who has to be paid by the state if you are poor.

Article 7 - No punishment without law

You cannot be held guilty of a crime if there was no law against it when you did it.

Article 8 - Right to respect for private and family life

You have the right to respect for your private and family life, your home and correspondence.

Article 9 - Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

You have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. You have the right to practise your religion at home and in public and to change your religion if you want.

Article 10 - Freedom of expression

You have the right to responsibly say and write what you think and to give and receive information from others. This includes freedom of the press.

Article 11 - Freedom of assembly and association

You have the right to take part in peaceful meetings and to set up or join associations including trade unions.

Article 12 - Right to marry

You have the right to marry and to have a family.

Article 13 - Right to an effective remedy

If your rights are violated, you can complain about this officially to the courts or other public bodies.

Article 14 - Prohibition of discrimination

You have these rights regardless of your skin colour, sex, language, political or religious beliefs, or origins.

Article 15 - Derogation in time of emergency

In time of war or other public emergency, a government may do things which go against your rights, but only when strictly necessary. Even then, governments are not allowed, for example, to torture you or to kill you arbitrarily.

Article 16 - Restrictions on political activity of aliens

Governments may restrict the political activity of foreigners, even if this would be in conflict with Articles 10, 11 or 14.

Article 17 - Prohibition of abuse of rights

Nothing in this Convention can be used to damage the rights and freedoms in the Convention.

Article 18 - Limitation on use of restrictions of rights

Most of the rights in this Convention can be restricted by a general law which is applied to everyone. Such restrictions are only allowed if they are strictly necessary.

Articles 19 to 51

These articles explain how the European Court of Human Rights works.

Article 34 - Individual applications

If your rights contained in the Convention have been violated in one of the member states you should first appeal to all competent national authorities. If that does not work out for you, then you may appeal directly to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

Article 52 - Inquiries by the Secretary General

If the Secretary General of the Council of Europe requests it, a government must explain how its national law protects the rights of this Convention.
