

# Rights

*By Barrington H. Brennen, July 22, 2014*

It's sad and seems so unreal that the human race over the millenniums has inflicted unkindness, violence, and injustices upon itself. It is like a dog eating his own foot off preventing it from walking. Millions of men, women and children have suffered. Historically, the ones who have suffered the most, and dealt a blow of injustice and pain are the children and women. It was just a few hundreds of years ago that children were considered no more than "talented toys." At age eleven they were forced to work in factories and dark dungeons, mining coal and working on farms. Today, in many countries around the world, children are still being raped, beaten, used and abused. Thus, governments have passed laws to protect the right of children to be safe. It has been about fifty years since the women in The Bahamas were allowed to vote. It has been about fifty years that black people were truly free. Also, when slaves were free soon after black man was legally allowed to vote in the United States of America (in some states), but women, white and black, had to still struggle for equality. It was not until almost six decades later in the USA (1921) that white and black women were given permission to vote. In The Bahamas it was not until ten decades later.

Because of the ill treatment of humans, many treaties or conventions have been developed to bring equality, justice and fairness. These conventions, having been created by the United Nations, are to be agreed upon by each member state. It is a shame that we humans had to develop treaties to remind us what should be so basic and humane – fair treatment, freedom from violence, equal voice, power, vote, access and opportunity. Here are a few conventions that have come about simply because of humans being unable to act like humans:

- The Conventions of Human Rights
- The Convention of the Rights of the Children
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- United Nations Convention against Corruption,
- Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Below I will share with you excerpts from a few of the conventions or declarations. Notice how basic, yet important, they are. First, I must share the Declaration of Rights of the Afghan Woman given in 2000. Declaration of Rights for the Afghan Woman in Douchanbé, Tadjikistan, June 28, 2000. Note how so basic they are and how we take such rights for granted.

**The fundamental right of Afghan women**, as for all human beings, is life with dignity, which includes the following rights:

- 1- The right to equality between men and women and the right to the elimination of all forms of discrimination and segregation, based on gender, race or religion.
- 2- The right to personal safety and to freedom from torture or inhumane or degrading treatment.
- 3- The right to physical and mental health for women and their children.
- 4- The right to equal protection under the law.
- 5- The right to institutional education in all the intellectual and physical disciplines.

- 6- The right to just and favorable conditions of work.
- 7- The right to move about freely and independently.
- 8- The right to freedom of thought, speech, assembly and political participation.
- 9- The right to wear or not to wear the veil or the chadri.
- 10- The right to participate in cultural activities including theatre, music and sports.

### **Here are a few excerpts from the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the child**

Article 6: Life, survival and development. The right of the child to life and the state's obligation to ensure the child's survival and development.

Article 9: Non-separation from parents. The right of the child to retain contact with his parents in cases of separation. If separation is the result of detention, imprisonment or death the State shall provide the information to the child or parents about the whereabouts of the missing family member.

Article 11: Illicit transfer and non-return of children. The State shall combat child kidnapping by a partner or third party.

Article 18: Parental responsibility. Both parents have common responsibilities for the upbringing of the child and assistance shall be given to them in the performance of the parental responsibilities.

Article 19: Abuse and neglect (while in family or care). States have the obligation to protect children from all forms of abuse. Social programmes and support services shall be made available.

Article 23: Disabled children. The right to benefit from special care and education for a fuller life in society.

Article 24: Health care. Access to preventive and curative health care services as well as the gradual abolition of traditional practices harmful to the child.

Article 28: Education. The right to free primary education, the availability of vocational educating, and the need for measures to reduce the drop-out rates.

Article 34: Sexual exploitation. Protection of the child from sexual exploitation including prostitution and the use of children in pornographic materials.

### **Here are just a few excerpts from the International Convention on Human Rights**

Article 1. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2. Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 3. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4. No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

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

Article 13. (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state. (2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

These conventions really cause one to think. Shouldn't these be so natural for all humans to follow? Unfortunately it has not been the case. What part are you going to play to bring equality, justice,

fairness, and the illumination of all forms of violence? What are your personal codes for conduct and relating to others?

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