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**Protecting human rights**

Every year, December 10 is marked across the globe as International Human Rights Day, commemorating the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. This was the era when the international community was looking at the damage caused by the horrific World War II.

At that critical time, the biggest challenge before the UN was to restore the trust in peace; and so in this regard, 48 member states of the United Nations signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, 1948 in Paris.

The UDHR is no doubt a remarkable achievement in our modern history. Under the auspices of the United Nations, for the first time the human rights for every person in the world were defined in a very comprehensive way, regardless of race, colour, religion, gender, language, or any other difference.

Eleanor Roosevelt played an instrumental role as chairperson of the drafting committee of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. First lady of the United States of America from 1933 to 1945, she was appointed as a delegate to the United Nations General Assembly in 1946. Besides her, various other women diplomats and activists from other parts of the world, including the USSR, Poland, Denmark, Lebanon, also proactively contributed in shaping the document.

Available in more than 400 languages, the UDHR is considered the most translated such document in the world. Consisting of 30 articles, the declaration is known for its "universalist language", which equally addresses all humankind with no discrimination for or against any particular nation, culture, political system, or religion. According to 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.” Similarly, Article 3 proclaims that: “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.” Article 4 used to discourage slavery and the slave trade in all their forms.

Articles 18 and 19 urge the signatory member states to ensure that everyone must have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Further, the right to freedom of opinion and expression must include freedom to hold opinions without interference.

In my view, every article of the Universal Declaration is the voice of the heart of human rights activists around the world. The golden words of the Universal Declaration provide hope and courage to everyone who is engaged in serving humanity. We must understand that every person deserves to be respected with due dignity and honour. That is why every religion in the world also emphasizes respect for other human beings.

Human history is witness to this undeniable fact that peace and prosperity is directly linked with the protection of human rights. All those countries that ensured respect for human rights made amazing achievements in the national journey of progress and prosperity. On the other hand, the main reason for the collapse of many powerful and mighty states was the violation of human rights.

Pakistan is among those pioneer founding countries that signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. However, it is a matter of great concern that today our beloved country is being criticized by the international community for human rights violations. It is therefore our national, religious, moral and social responsibility to follow the peaceful vision of Quaid-e-Azam. We must keep struggling to transform Pakistan into a role model country where every human being, be it a man, a woman or a child, a minority or a majority, must have freedom to live happily within constitutional limits. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights should also be broadcast on Pakistani media with Urdu translation.

Today, it is also the responsibility of all member states of the United Nations, especially the superpower America, to play a leading role in protection of human rights across the globe.

The writer is a member of the National Assembly and patron-in-chief of the Pakistan Hindu Council.

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