

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY 2015 VIDEO STATEMENT OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

On Human Rights Day this year, we want the world to reflect on the meaning of freedom.

Freedom is the ideal that underpins what we now recognize as international human rights law, the norms and regulations that protect and guarantee our rights.

Human Rights Day 2015 marks the launch of a year-long campaign to celebrate the 50th anniversary of two of the oldest international human rights treaties - the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

These two documents, along with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, form the International Bill of Human Rights, which together set out the civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights which are the birth right of all human beings.

The freedoms set out in these documents are universal. They apply to everyone, everywhere. Traditional practices, cultural norms, cannot justify taking them away.

These freedoms encompass the fundamental – freedom from fear, freedom from want, freedom of speech and freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

The world has changed since the UN General Assembly adopted the Two Covenants in 1966. The Covenants, together with the other human rights treaties, have played an important role in securing better respect and recognition during the past five, at times turbulent, decades.

Of course many challenges remain. The drafters of the Covenants could have had little idea of issues such as digital privacy, counter-terrorism measures and climate change, but respect for freedom continues to be the foundation for peace, security and development for all.

Join us as we celebrate freedom – and help spread the message the world over that our rights, our freedoms are inalienable and inherent – now, and always.