

# How to commemorate the Human Rights Day

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Organizing a human rights day can involve a group of students, a single classroom or the entire school. Commemorating such international days is a good way of raising awareness and enriching educational content and methods. Organizing a human rights day can appeal to educators of all age groups. Students are confronted with human rights issues from a young age, though they might not be familiar with the concept of human rights protection framework. Commemorating the International Human Rights Day (December 10) is a good way to introduce them to the topic.

This document contains several suggestions of how the International Human Rights Day (or other relevant commemorative dates of different specific human rights) can be recognized through activities with students. Please note that organizing a human rights day cuts across the curriculum. Therefore, it is useful to involve subject teachers from different disciplines.

## **INVITE A GUEST SPEAKER WHO WILL ADDRESS THE CLASS/SCHOOL**

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Having an engaging guest speaker is a great way to complement your curriculum and to get students interested in human rights topics. The options for inviting guest speakers are numerous: you can invite someone from notable human rights organizations, for e.g. Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch, to talk to students about their organization's work and some of the current issues in the human rights protection domain. Other alternatives for guest speakers could be someone from your town who was involved in a human rights campaign (perhaps a parent of one of the students?). Another option is to involve someone from a specialized non-governmental organization or association that deals with refugees, human trafficking, freedom of press/speech, etc. Finally, you can also invite a speaker with a particular background (for e.g. a refugee/asylum seeker; Holocaust survivor; LGBT activist; person with disabilities; a member of a minority, etc.) to tell the class/school about their life experiences as a form of a contemporary witness testimony.

## **CONNECT WITH A LOCAL/NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION**

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Consider connecting with a well-known international human rights organization, for e.g. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, or with a regional one (for e.g. in former Yugoslavia countries, Youth Initiative for Human Rights), and organize a school chapter of such an organization. Alternatively, they could be asked to offer a specialized human rights education programme in your school for either several classes, or for an extracurricular group of students interested in the subject. Many non-governmental organizations focus on promoting active citizenship and human rights education, and they would be happy to receive an invitation to address your students. Some organizations also offer traveling educational content, such as exhibitions (for e.g. Anne Frank - History for Today traveling exhibition), classroom workshops based on discussions or debates (Free2choose - exploring human rights dilemmas), etc.

## **ORGANIZE A SCREENING OF A HUMAN RIGHTS DOCUMENTARY/MOVIE**

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It is a growing trend in most European countries to have human rights-inspired film festivals every once in a while. Your school could contact the organizers of such festivals and ask them to organize a screening of an age-appropriate human rights-themed documentary or film, for your entire school. Alternatively, you could yourself seek out an appropriate documentary or film that centers around a particular human rights topic, have your class watch it, and then hold a discussion/reflection about the film and its impression on the students. Finally, there are many human rights raising awareness / educational short film clips on YouTube, created by the UN and its related agencies (for e.g. short film about the Human Rights Day, created in 2016, detailing the United Nations' relationship with human rights protection efforts: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dYleie80B3M>).

## **ORGANIZE A HUMAN RIGHTS THEMED THEATRE PERFORMANCE**

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If there is a drama club in school, organize a performance of a human rights related play, which would be ideally followed by discussion or by homework on the related subject. You could base your school play on one or more of exercises developed by Augusto Boal in his Theater of the Oppressed methodology; you could base your school play on a well-known, relatable to youth human rights book or story, etc.

## **SET UP AN ARTISTIC EXHIBITION SURROUNDING DIFFERENT HUMAN RIGHTS THEMES**

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Additional artistic projects that could be done with a group of students in extracurricular project could be organizing a human rights-themed exhibition. The students could be tasked with designing and developing their own posters, or human-rights info-panels on various specific topics related to human rights. For e.g., assign each student group (classes or groups of participants who wish to participate in the activity) a human right they have to present in a picture (or a statue). Have an exhibition of these pictures signed with the appropriate human right. The activity requires the students to think about the essence of each right (to have an idea for the picture or figure out what their colleagues, the authors of the picture, had in mind). Also, the students become curious, what their colleagues' pictures look like. It can be very engaging.

## **COMMEMORATE ANOTHER THEME FROM THE HUMAN RIGHTS CALENDAR**

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A Human Rights Day does not need to take place every year on the December 10th - what you can consider is organizing a special human rights-inspired classroom activity or school commemoration, using any of the international days on the Human Rights Calendar - for the list of these specialized raising-awareness dates, see: [http://www.eycb.coe.int/Compass/en/chapter\\_2/calendar.html](http://www.eycb.coe.int/Compass/en/chapter_2/calendar.html) Council of Europe's Compass Manual for Human Rights, also on this web page, provides examples of activities you can do for each of these days. Examples of these specialized raising-awareness dates on the Human Rights Calendar are the International Women's Day (March 08); World Roma Day (April 08); World Refugee Day (June 20), etc.

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## **CONNECT WITH ANOTHER SCHOOL FROM YOUR COUNTRY/ABROAD**

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You can organize an awareness-raising or connection-building virtual activity between your class and students in another country, where you prepare to ask each other about the state of human rights in your countries (each group gets the same list of questions, and they prepare the answers before the group skype call between the two countries). The project need not focus on human rights but could instead be an element of global intercultural learning experience for your students. There are several initiatives of connecting classrooms worldwide, so it is best to research each one to find the best fit for your school/students/ (Check out, for e.g. <https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/about-programmes/connecting-classrooms>)

## **CREATE A SCAVENGER HUNT**

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Place QR codes (generated online for free, e.g. here: <https://www.qr-code-generator.com>) in multiple places around the school grounds. Each code should link to a different task (created by the teachers of the school and concerning human rights issues, preferably with a "local focus"; tasks can be interactive puzzles, riddles, newspaper article analysis, questions about movies, books etc. on human rights, something practical like taking a photo of a specific item in an exhibition in a city museum or conducting a short interview/survey - whatever comes to mind. You can also have a group of students prepare those tasks for the rest of the school community - have them actively involved in the tasks that can range from very easy like finding an answer to a specific question online, to making a short movie on a given subject - depending on the timeframe of the hunt. Each clue should contain a hint of where to find the next code. The hunt can last a day or a few months - it's a really flexible type of project. Once each task is completed by a participant, some kind of reward is given to him (if the activity lasts longer than a day - points may be collected to determine the winner) - again, depending on the schools reality and the game organizers' creativity. The idea of the human rights scavenger hunt requires creativity, but is easily adjustable to a school's conditions and needs.

## **ARRANGE A MEDIA BASED HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVITY**

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If your school has a newspaper, encourage students to write an article on a human rights related topic. You can also encourage your students to get in contact with a local broadcaster or newspaper and have them advocate for prevention of a specific current human rights violation or include a bigger focus in their program on human rights topics. Another way of involving students in media-based human rights activity is to have students joint, or even better organize their own social media campaign about different human rights topics. For the younger generations this is also an effective way for raising awareness about actual human rights issues through the application of new media (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, etc.).

## RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS IN YOUR COMMUNITIES

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Organize action research with students tasked with interviewing people in the community about a specific human rights topic and prepare a presentation for their classmates on the results of this action research in the community. Action research can be an indirect way of raising awareness about a certain topic, through interaction with a larger number of individuals one would not necessarily interact with otherwise.



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