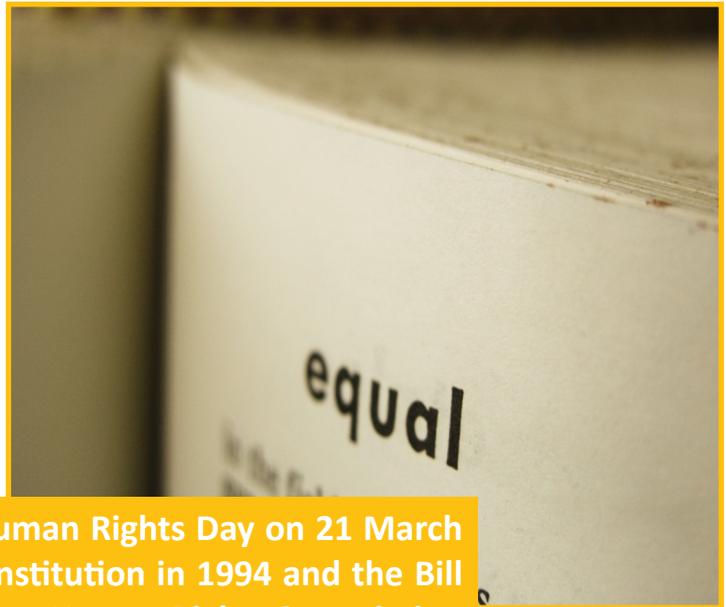


# Celebrate Human Rights Day



Every year South Africa celebrates Human Rights Day on 21 March to recognise the formation of the constitution in 1994 and the Bill of Rights in particular. The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) aims to “promote respect for human rights, promote the protection, development and attainment of human rights, and to monitor and assess the observance of human rights in South Africa.”

The day also pays homage to the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960, where 69 people lost their lives to protest the pass laws that stipulated that African citizens had to carry pass books with them at all times, which the authorities used to trace and restrict the movement of non-white people.

The protesters presented themselves, without their pass books, for arrest outside various police stations, but at the Sharpeville police station, the police opened fire. This incident sparked international criticism and is often cited as the turning point in South Africa’s history. The South African Human Rights Commission is one of the institutions which the constitution provides for, and was established in 1996.

## What are human rights?

Human rights are those rights granted to all people equally, regardless of gender, age, race, nationality, sexual orientation or anything else. These are the rights which are defended under the Bill of Rights in South Africa, as part of our constitution. These are the most basic rights of people. The Bill of Rights is considered to be the cornerstone of democracy in South Africa. Human

dignity, equality, and freedom are the main aspects which the Bill of Rights seeks to uphold.

Some provisions of the Bill of Rights include:

- Equality of all citizens in which all citizens have equal right to protection under the law.
- The right to human dignity.
- The right to life.
- The right to freedom and security of the person including bodily and psychological integrity.
- No one may be enslaved, subject to servitude or forced labour.
- The right to privacy.
- The right to freedom of religion, belief, and opinion.
- The right to freedom of expression.
- The right to assemble, demonstrate, picket, and petition.
- Freedom of association.
- Every citizen is free to make political choices, such as forming a political party and partaking in political activities.
- No citizen may be deprived of their citizenship.

Use this day to reflect on your own rights and responsibilities as a South African citizen.