

UNITED NATIONS DAY



The United Nations Was Created to Prevent War and Protect Human Rights

After World War II ended in 1945, the world faced a terrible truth. More than 60 million people had died in the war. Cities lay in ruins. Families were torn apart. Leaders from around the world knew they had to do something to prevent such a terrible war from ever happening again.

That same year, representatives from 50 countries met in San Francisco, California, on April 25, 1945, to create something new: the United Nations. Their goal was simple but powerful. They wanted to help all nations work together for peace instead of fighting each other.

The leaders wrote the United Nations Charter, which is like a rulebook for how countries should treat each other. The Charter said that all nations, big and small, are equal and should respect each other's independence. It promised that countries would try to solve their disagreements through talking and cooperation, not through war.

Three years later, in 1948, a woman named Eleanor Roosevelt helped create the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. After her husband, President Franklin Roosevelt died, she dedicated herself to peace and human rights. The Declaration stated something revolutionary: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." This meant that every person in the world deserved to be treated fairly and with respect, no matter their race, religion, or where they lived.

The United Nations was built on an important lesson from history. After World War I ended in 1918, countries had created something called the League of Nations to keep peace. But the League failed because powerful countries didn't truly support it, and it

couldn't stop World War II from happening. The United Nations was meant to be stronger and better.

Today, 193 countries belong to the United Nations. While the UN has not stopped all wars, it continues working every day to help countries solve problems peacefully and to protect human rights around the world.

Countries Around the World Celebrate United Nations Day on October 24th

Every year on October 24th, people around the world celebrate United Nations Day. This special date marks the birthday of the United Nations. When enough countries signed the Charter, it officially came into force on October 24, 1945.

On United Nations Day, nations remember the UN's mission: to maintain peace, protect human rights, and help people live better lives.

Celebrations look different in each country. At UN headquarters in New York City, diplomats from many nations gather for special ceremonies. Some schools teach students about global cooperation and different cultures. Communities might hold concerts featuring music from various countries, or host cultural festivals where people share food, crafts, and traditions from around the world.

Though the United Nations faces challenges in bringing peace to every corner of the globe, UN Day reminds us that countries can choose to work together rather than fight. It celebrates the hope that by talking, listening, and cooperating, nations can solve problems that affect everyone. These problems include a wide variety of things, ranging from protecting the environment to helping children get an education.

The UN Tries to Solve Global Problems But Countries Sometimes Disagree

The United Nations works hard to solve problems that affect the whole world. These include wars, hunger, changes in climate, and human rights. But there's a big challenge: the 193 member countries don't always agree on what to do.

The UN Security Council is supposed to keep peace in the world. It has 15 members, but five countries—the United States, Russia, China, France, and the United Kingdom—have special power. These five can block any decision, even if all the other countries want it. This power is called the “veto.”

Sometimes, this veto power stops the UN from helping people who desperately need it. For example, when wars break out, one country might use its veto to stop a peace agreement. The United States has used its veto many times to protect its ally Israel. Russia has used it during the conflict in Ukraine. When this happens, millions of people continue to suffer even though most countries in the world want the fighting to stop.

Even getting food and medicine to people in danger zones can become difficult when countries disagree. During recent conflicts, aid trucks carrying food sat at borders while people went hungry because governments couldn't agree on letting them through.

Many countries, especially smaller and poorer nations, think this system is unfair. They believe that five countries shouldn't have more power than everyone else. Some leaders have called for changes to make the UN more equal. But changing the rules is extremely hard because the five powerful countries (the United States, Russia, China, France, and the United Kingdom) would have to agree to give up their special powers. So far, the five powerful countries haven't wanted to do that.

Despite these problems, the UN still does important work. It sends peacekeepers to protect civilians, delivers food to hungry families, and helps refugees find safety. The challenge is making sure that when the world faces a serious crisis, countries can work together in a fair and appropriate way.

Some Nations Vote Against UN Resolutions on Hope, Education, and Peace

Every year, countries vote on important resolutions. Resolutions are official statements about what the UN believes is right. Many of these resolutions are about things everyone should want: helping people learn, ending poverty, protecting human rights, and building peace.

But something surprising happens at these votes. While most countries in the world vote “yes” on resolutions about democracy, education, and peace, a small group of wealthy nations, including the United States, Canada, and many European countries, often vote “no.”

For example, in November 2023, the UN General Assembly held an important meeting. Countries voted on several resolutions. One called for promoting democracy and fairness for all nations. Another supported protecting different cultures and human rights. A third resolution condemned the use of hired soldiers, called mercenaries, who fight wars for money instead of protecting their own countries.

The results were surprising. Around 130 countries voted in favor of these resolutions about hope and fairness. But about 54 countries voted against them. These countries said “no” to ideas about democracy and human rights that most of the world supported.

Why would any country vote against democracy or education? The reasons are complicated. Sometimes powerful countries worry that international rules might limit their own power. Other times, they disagree about what democracy or human rights really mean. But the pattern is clear: a small group of wealthy nations often stands against what the rest of the world wants.

This teaches us an important lesson from history. From the very beginning, the most powerful nations gave themselves special privileges, including the power to block decisions they didn't like. Today, those divisions still exist, reminding us that creating a fair world requires listening to everyone—not just the strongest voices.

The UN Cannot Force Countries to Follow Its Rules But It Sets an Example

The United Nations is different from most organizations you might know about. Unlike a principal who can punish students who break school rules, the UN cannot force countries to do what it says. It does not have its own army or police force that can make countries obey its decisions.

When the UN creates agreements or rules about important issues—like protecting human rights, fighting climate change, or keeping peace—countries must choose to follow them. This means that sometimes countries ignore UN rules, and the UN cannot stop them.

However, the UN still plays an important role by setting standards and showing the world what is right. When the UN passes resolutions, it sends a message to the entire world about how nations should behave. For example, nearly every country votes each year to say that economic sanctions hurting innocent people are wrong. Even though

some powerful countries continue these sanctions anyway, the UN's voice matters because it shows what most of the world believes is fair.

The UN also helps countries work together to solve problems that no single nation can fix alone, such as pandemics, hunger, and war. UN agencies provide food, medical care, and education to millions of people in crisis. These humanitarian efforts demonstrate compassion and international cooperation, even when political leaders disagree.

By documenting human rights violations, providing humanitarian aid, and bringing world leaders together to discuss solutions, the United Nations sets an example of how the global community can work toward peace and justice—even when it cannot force anyone to participate.

Vocabulary Terms for United Nations Day

Charter. A charter is an important official document that explains the rules and goals of an organization. The United Nations Charter is like a rulebook that tells countries how they should work together peacefully.

Cooperation. Cooperation means working together with others to achieve a goal. Countries practice cooperation when they help each other solve problems instead of fighting.

Delegate. A delegate is a person chosen to represent their country at an important meeting. Delegates from 50 countries met to create the United Nations.

Diplomat. A diplomat is a person whose job is to represent their country and help it get along with other countries. Diplomats from many nations gather at UN headquarters for special events.

human rights. Human rights are the basic freedoms and fair treatment that every person deserves, no matter who they are or where they live. The UN works to protect human rights around the world.

member countries. Member countries are nations that have officially joined an organization. Today, 193 member countries belong to the United Nations.

Resolution. A resolution is an official statement or decision made by a group after voting. UN countries vote on resolutions about important world problems.

United Nations Day. United Nations Day is celebrated every year on October 24th to remember the birthday of the United Nations and its mission to bring peace to the world.

United Nations Security Council. The United Nations Security Council is a special group within the UN that is supposed to help keep peace in the world. It has 15 member countries.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a famous document created in 1948 that states all people should be treated fairly and with respect no matter their race, religion, or where they live.

Veto. A veto is the special power to stop or block a decision. Five countries on the UN Security Council can use their veto power to block decisions even if other countries want them.

Discussion Questions About United Nations Day

Question 1: Fair Rules for Everyone

The reading explains that five powerful countries have veto power, which means they can block decisions even when most other countries disagree with them. Do you think this system is fair? Why or why not?

Your answer:

Question 2: Working Together vs. Fighting

The United Nations Charter says that countries should solve their disagreements through talking and cooperation instead of war. Can you think of a time in your own life when talking through a problem worked better than fighting? How is that similar to what the UN tries to do?

Your answer:

Question 3: Human Rights for All People

Eleanor Roosevelt helped create the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which says “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” What do you think this statement means? Why was it revolutionary (new and important) in 1948?

Your answer:

Question 4: Voting Against Good Things

The reading explains that some wealthy countries vote “no” on resolutions about education, peace, and democracy that most other countries support. Why do you think powerful countries might vote against things that seem good for everyone?

Your answer:



Coloring Sheet

