Human Rights in Islam
JSIS 487 B Special Topics Middle East
Winter 2019
University of Washington
Seattle Campus

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt holding a copy of the UN Declaration of Human Rights © UN Photo

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Course website:	http://depts.washington.edu/hrislam/
Meeting on:	W & Fr 09:30 PM - 11:20 AM
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An excerpt from the Syllabus:

Ever since its adoption and promulgation in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) has been criticized in some parts of the world as culturally biased, insensitive, and centered around the Western secularist values. Thus, as a response to the UDHR of the United Nations, in 1981, a group of Islamic scholars proposed the Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights (UIDHR). A great many ideas from the latter document can be found in the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam (CDHRI) adopted in 1990 by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and signed by forty-five member states at the time, among them secularist Turkey and theocratic Iran. In 2004, the Arab League adopted the Arab Charter on Human Rights (ACHR), which has as its ultimate goal "the protection of universal and interrelated human rights." In 2008, the OIC established its Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) that adheres to "promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all people without distinction as to race, sex, or religion."

In spite of these generally acceptable attitudes expressed in the mentioned Islamic and Arab documents, nonetheless, many scholars, lawyers, and politicians still question the compatibility between the Islamic and Western visions of human rights.

In this course we shall be exploring precisely the question of compatibility of the Western and Islamic understandings of "universal human rights" while analyzing the current human rights issues in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region alongside appropriate religious scriptures and historical documents.

Hence, in this course we shall be looking beyond the abuses of human rights in the Middle East with a view toward

(1) problematizing traditional doctrinal thinking and concepts in the region;
(2) ascertaining comparative and historical roots of human rights abuses in the Middle East, and
(3) developing strategies for improving human rights conditions of the vast majority of people more generally and those of women, minorities and marginal communities more particularly.

For more information, please visit the course website at

http://depts.washington.edu/hrislam/