

Introduction

Declarations of human rights go back many years from the Magna Carta through the rights of man of the French Revolution to the constitutions that many countries abide by. They are essential to the liberation of the people

After the second world war a New 'Declaration of Human Rights' was composed to lay out the entitlements and freedoms that all human beings throughout the world should have in order to escape tyranny and dictatorship.

By and large, with many exceptions, this has worked in many global democracies. Governments and people have a set of guidelines beyond which they should not pass and the fourth estate, the press and media, has acted as a guardian to ensure that they are adhered to. There are of course many examples where this is not the case.

In the 21st century, however, governments in more and more nations have tested the limits of the declaration. Dictators and 'strong leaders' have proliferated, sometimes through democratic election and often by a coup d'état, and they have imposed ever harsher regimes on their populations. In so doing they have by-passed or swallowed up the media to achieve their own ends.

Sophisticated methods of persuasion, often accompanied by subtle manipulation of news channels, television and social media outlets have replaced integrity, honesty and probity. The rapid speed of change has left many people behind and open to domination by the few over the many. Democracy itself is endangered. Human rights are exposed. People are managed and controlled, rather than liberated, by the machinations of those elements of the media that seek to confound, rather than to inform.

My mother always told me that with rights come responsibilities and this is as true for international behaviour as for family rectitude. With this in mind I have tried to put together a charter of human responsibilities that mirror the charter of rights. I have expressed it in the same language as the declaration of rights, and have included not just the responsibilities of people but also the obligations of the media, governments and companies. It is a draft and I hope that it can be adapted by those cleverer than me to give back the dignity and the power to a newly enfranchised and properly-informed people.

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