



# The Right to Water

Water is the essence of life. Safe drinking water and sanitation are indispensable to sustain life and health, and fundamental to the dignity of all. The international community has increasingly recognized that access to safe drinking water and sanitation must be considered within a human rights framework.

- 🔹 **The right to water contains freedoms.** These freedoms include protection against arbitrary and illegal disconnections; prohibition of unlawful pollution of water resources; non-discrimination in access to safe drinking water and sanitation; non-interference with access to existing water supplies, especially to traditional water sources; and ensuring personal security when accessing water or sanitation outside the home, particularly for women and children.
- 🔹 **The right to water contains entitlements.** These entitlements include access to a minimum amount of safe drinking water to sustain life and health; access to safe drinking water and sanitation in detention; and participation in water- and sanitation-related decision-making at the national and community levels.
- 🔹 Water supply for each person must be **sufficient and continuous** to cover personal and domestic uses including drinking, food preparation and personal and household hygiene.
- 🔹 Water for personal and domestic uses must be **safe and acceptable**. It must be free from microbes and parasites, chemical substances and radiological hazards threatening a person's health. Water must also be of an acceptable colour, odour and taste to ensure that individuals will not resort to more attractive, yet polluted, alternatives.
- 🔹 Water and sanitation facilities must be **physically accessible** and within safe reach for all, taking into account the needs of particular groups, such as persons with disabilities, women, children and older persons.
- 🔹 Water services must be **affordable** to all. No individual or group should be denied access to safe drinking water because they cannot afford to pay.

Human Rights

## In sum, Water is a Human Right !

To learn more on the human right to water:

**OHCHR / WHO / UN-HABITAT**  
**The right to water**

OHCHR Human Rights Fact Sheet n°35

Download: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/PublicationsResources/Pages/FactSheets.aspx>

Ordering hard copies: [publications@ohchr.org](mailto:publications@ohchr.org)

