



DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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8 December 1972

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

The Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr E.G. Whitlam, today issued the following statement on the occasion of Human Rights Day.

"Human Rights Day on 10th December 1972 marks the twenty-fourth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on 10th December, 1948. I recall with a sense of pride that it was an eminent Australian, the late Dr Herbert Evatt, who was President of the General Assembly at the time that the Declaration was adopted.

Since the adoption of the Universal Declaration, the United Nations has been active in drawing up new international conventions and declarations aimed at the protection of human rights. Altogether they spell out in considerable detail the various rights and freedoms set out in the Declaration. Of the Conventions, perhaps the most important are the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1965, and the International Covenants on Human Rights which were adopted by the United Nations General Assembly a year later.

My Government attaches great importance to Australia becoming a party to these international instruments. Racism and racial discrimination are reprehensible and we shall take all necessary steps to prohibit discrimination on grounds of race. Indeed, I have already set in train

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action to expedite Australia's ratification of the Racial Discrimination Convention and relevant I.L.O. Conventions.

The two International Covenants on Human Rights cover important economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights. It is our intention that Australia should shortly sign the two Covenants, as a first step towards ratification."

Mr Whitlam drew particular attention to the preamble of the Universal Declaration which called on peoples all over the world to renew their determination "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women ... and to promote racial progress and better standards of life in larger freedom".