



The Human Right to Water

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More than a billion people lack access to safe drinking water. Two and a half billion people live without access to adequate sanitation systems necessary to reduce exposure to water-related diseases. The failure of the international aid community, nations, and local organizations to satisfy these basic human needs has led to substantial, unnecessary, and preventable human suffering. Tens of thousand of people, mostly young children and the elderly, die *every day* from water-related diseases.

In this analysis I address three critical questions:

1. Is there a human right to water?
2. If there is a human right to water, what is the advantage and implications of acknowledging such a right?
3. What are the obligations of states, regional governments, organizations, and individuals in achieving these rights?

Is there a “human right” to water?

This question is the heart of the problem. An extensive body of covenants and international agreements formally identify and declare a range of human rights. Among the most important of these are the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the InterAmerican Convention on Human Rights, the Declaration on the Right to Development, and the European Convention on Human Rights. Among the rights protected by these various declarations and covenants are the

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