

Hannukah and Human Rights – 2018 (5779)

Celebrating the light



Hannukah reminds us that we are lucky to be free, and gives us an opportunity to remember that there are people in the world who are still not free. In the *Hannukah* story, the Greeks sought to oppress and enslave the Jewish people, forcing them to give up their way of living and beliefs because of threat of violence.

For this *Hannukah*, René Cassin has outlined actions that you can take to protect and promote human rights.

1. Freedom from slavery

Hannukah is a time that once again celebrates the story of people rising up and overthrowing their oppressors to claim their freedom. In the *Hannukah* story, the Greeks sought to oppress and enslave the Jewish people, forcing them to give up their beliefs and way of living because of the threat of violence.

Hannukah begins this year on the evening of the **International Day of the Abolition of Slavery** on 2nd December. There are 40 million slaves in the world today of which over 100,000 are estimated to be in the UK.

Action at home: Last year the Chief Rabbi said that “speaking out against the flagrant violations of human dignity implicit in this crime, should be in our [the Jewish community’s] DNA”. Join him in his commitment to speak out against slavery.

Public Action: René Cassin is calling on the Government to support the Modern Slavery (Victim Support) Bill. Currently, victims of modern slavery in the UK are only entitled to 90 days of support, after which time the vast majority are left to fend for themselves, often at risk of homelessness and vulnerable to being re-trafficked. The Modern Slavery (Victim Support) Bill will give victims in England and Wales a guaranteed right to 12 months of support.

Email your MP and ask them to stand up for victims of modern slavery this Hannukah! René Cassin’s suggested template can be found [here](#).



2. Freedom of religion

The Maccabees fought for their right to be able to practice their religion openly. This right is protected by Article 9 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is celebrated during *Hannukah* with numerous civic menorah lightings that take place in town centers and public buildings.

Action at Home: Invite others to join your candle lighting and find ways to practice the other religious festivals that overlap with *Hannukah*

Public Action: Attend a public menorah lighting like, *Hannukah* in the Square.

3. Right to private property

The ultimate sign that the Maccabees had succeeded in their battle for their rights was when the Greek King conceded that they would be able to print their own coins. We still hand out *gelt* to this day in memory, often chocolate. However, we want to make sure that the '*gelt*' and the other items we use to celebrate our festival of freedom do not come from people who are enslaved themselves.

Action at Home: Make sure that the goods that you buy this *Hannukah* are from firms that have published a modern day slavery statement, in which they have committed to ending Modern Day Slavery under supply chain labour abuses. You can check if big business you shop at have done so at <https://www.modernslaveryregistry.org/>

4. Freedom from arbitrary detention

Throughout history, the ability to seek refuge has been essential to Jewish survival. However, in the UK today, those seeking refuge can be indefinitely locked up in immigration detention centres.

The UK is the only country in Europe to indefinitely imprison people in immigration detention centres. Every year, around 30,000 people are detained by the Home Office without charge and without time limit.

As an essential step towards a fairer system, René Cassin has long campaigned for the introduction of a 28-day time limit on detention. In other areas of law, 28 days is the maximum time considered acceptable to hold someone without charge. Evidence shows that after 28 days, the detrimental impact on mental health increases significantly. René Cassin also supports alternatives to detention, which would make the immigration process more humane, more effective, and less costly.

Public action: [Unlocking Detention](#) shines a spotlight on the hidden world of immigration detention. This 'virtual tour' of the immigration detention estate uses Twitter, Facebook and a website to 'unlock' the gates of immigration detention centres. This year's 'tour' runs from 22 October to 18 December 2018. Follow [@DetentionForum](#) [#Unlocked18](#) to learn more about immigration [#detention](#) in the UK and get involved in their weekly Q and A sessions with someone in detention.

5. Right to leisure and education

There are many rights that are important to us as Jews. One that is often overlooked but is particularly important is the right to leisure. Something the Greeks held against the Maccabees was that they did not work on Saturdays and observed Shabbat. Jews knew it was important to have a time for rest and leisure but also that the right to play could be educational. When the Jews were studying Torah, if Greek soldiers came past they would pretend to play the *dreidel*. As time went on the *dreidel* game itself evolved into a game for pleasure and learning. The game we play tonight connects us to Jews all around the world.

Action at home: Take the time to play the *dreidel* today.

Public Action: When playing the *dreidel* today take a picture of it and share it with the [#myUDHRlegacy](#) [#rightto play](#).



6. Freedom of expression

Hannukah is the only time that we are commanded to make a public declaration of the festival. We put the candles in the window to show that we are Jewish and that we are free and proud to declare our Judaism. We also need to be proud to declare the Jewish traditions and principles that we have brought to the wider world.

Many of the things we celebrate at *Hannukah* such as freedom of religion, freedom from slavery, and equality, were written into the Universal Declaration of Human Rights inspired by Jewish experience.

Public actions: Take part in our Universal Declaration of Human Rights legacy campaign, and share what your human rights legacy is in a thirty second video, post it on social media or send it to René Cassin on facebook. Tag it with #MyUDHRlegacy

7. Human Rights Shabbat

It is through our collective action that we can protect human rights and realise their promise. Our tradition emphasises the importance of community, supporting each other and the bonds of solidarity both within the Jewish people and beyond.

At the core of human rights protections are freedom of assembly and association.

Public Action: Organise your community to take part in Human Rights Shabbat on 8th December; Resources and content available on our website.

8. Continuing to advocate for Human Rights

The Maccabees continued to fight for their freedom over several more biblical books expanding their rights and guarding against new aggressors. If we wish to enjoy human rights we need to continue to fight for them, learn about them and value them.

Throughout history many Jews have stood up to defend human rights, such as our namesake, Monsieur René Cassin.

Action at Home: Share a story of a Human Rights defender/hero. You can find examples on our website.

Actions: René Cassin is running multiple events celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

- 10th December: Celebrating Jewish Human Rights Heroes.
- 12th December: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights at 70: a time to celebrate or a time to mourn?



Ongoing action: Become a René Cassin supporter or join René Cassin campaign groups. Contact info@renecassin.org for more information.