

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



# HUMAN RIGHTS FRIENDLY SCHOOLS

A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

## WHAT IS A HUMAN RIGHTS FRIENDLY SCHOOL (HRFS)?

A HRFS is a community that practises and promotes human rights values in all aspects of school life and beyond.

HRFS make a commitment to teaching:

**ABOUT human rights** so that the school community understands what they are and why they are important

**THROUGH human rights** so that the school becomes a model of excellence in human rights practice

**FOR human rights** so that all members of the school community know their rights and learn to protect the rights of others

HRFS take a whole-school approach. This means that human rights are applied to four areas of school life: governance, relationships, curriculum and environment.

When human rights come into the classroom, onto the schoolyard and into the hearts and minds of young people, it begins to change how people think, feel and behave. Students, teachers and other members of your school's community learn about applying human rights principles in their daily lives.

Inclusion, tolerance and respect for diversity are core principles of human rights. When these principles start to direct the thoughts and actions of the school community, little room is left for bullying and discrimination. We begin to relate to each other as human beings made equal by the rights we share.

Members of HRFS communities act, speak out and stand-up for their rights. They recognize and live up to their responsibilities by respecting the rights of others.

## WHY HRFS?

HRFS cultivate the skills needed by the leaders of today and tomorrow. (That's you!)

By creating a human rights-friendly culture your school gives you and other members of your school community a meaningful voice in decisions that affect your lives.

In becoming human rights friendly, your school opens doors for you to:

- Make more choices about what and how you learn
- Participate in school decisions
- Find creative new ways of helping students relate to one another
- Learn about human rights by practising them

Amnesty International's experience has shown that schools benefit from this by:

- Improving relationships between students and teachers
- Creating a school community where people treat each other with respect
- Creating a learning environment where students are interested and engaged
- Teaching students how to participate in school and society as responsible people

When your school decides to become human rights friendly, it makes a decision to support you and your classmates as future leaders who can improve lives in your community.

### Cover Image:

International Stop Bullying Youth Camp

© Amnesty International Portugal

## SOUNDS GREAT! HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

### HAVE YOUR SAY

HRFS ask students to talk about their opinions and experiences. Make sure you take the chance to share your thoughts.

### KNOW YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

What does it mean to respect human rights? HRFS discuss this question in many different ways. Take the time to pay attention and contribute your ideas.

### LEARN MORE

The HRFS Toolkit gives schools information about how to get started. It is available online: follow the link on the back cover.

### PARTICIPATE

Students at HRFS have opportunities to take part in planning processes. Does your school have a Human Rights Working Group or Human Rights Club? Ask how you can get involved.

### BE CREATIVE

If you have any ideas about how you or your school can take action to become more human rights friendly, please share your ideas!

### CONNECT

Ask your nearest Amnesty International office about how your school can contribute to local human rights campaigns and activities. Contact information can be found on the back cover.



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## INDIA: STUDENT COUNCIL ELECTIONS AS A STEPPING STONE TOWARD HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ALL

Al-Azhar foundation is an NGO-run school located in a largely Muslim neighbourhood in South Bangalore. As part of its journey to becoming human rights friendly, the school began running student council elections.

“I will try to solve problems of my friends and ensure that everyone gets equal opportunity to participate in school events”, said Kushnaaz Begum (aged 13) as soon as she was elected head girl.

Kushnaaz along with twelve other students had been running for office in the school’s second student council election. A week before election day, the excitement of election was in the air with students speculating on the winner. Their enthusiasm was contagious and one could see the spark of democracy and the sense of responsibility that the students were preparing to shoulder. After the results were announced, Mohd Salauddin (aged 12), who was not elected, said, “I will try next year again and will do more campaigning... Inshaallah I will be head boy next year. I will do good work.”

Imrana, a teacher in Al-Azhar said, “This year, the students themselves came up and gave their names for nominations, unlike last year.” She added, “Last year the student council came up with the idea of a suggestion box and we actually received bullying complaints through the box. The issue was addressed by talking to the students and teachers. The student council had an important role to play in this.”

Informed decision making, enabled by a democratic student council, can make a difference in the school system. Students feel empowered, and grow to recognize their right to be heard. This move towards democratic governance can be a stepping stone towards ensuring human rights for all.



**Image:** Students working with teachers – preparing for a student council election Al-Azhar foundation, South Bangalore. © Amnesty International India.

## HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

Contact your school, or your nearest Amnesty International office:

You can find your local **Amnesty International office** by searching for your country here: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/>

**Regional Office** contacts are here: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/about-us/contact/>

**See also:** <https://www.amnesty.org/en/human-rights-education/human-rights-friendly-schools/>