

Early social structures established rules through negotiation, evident in Babylonian, African, and Roman civilizations. However, these legal frameworks lacked modern human rights concepts, instead promoting inequality, discrimination, slavery, and reinforcing power hierarchies. The concept of human rights gradually emerged alongside evolving political societies and governance, initially as philosophical ideals.

Landmark documents like the Magna Carta, Petition of Right, and Bill of Rights aimed to curtail monarchical power. The term "human rights" appeared in 18th-century texts, notably the Virginia Declaration of Rights (1776), followed by the US Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789). The French Declaration explicitly used the phrase and linked the violation of human rights to societal suffering and governmental corruption, highlighting the political protection of natural rights.