

## Preface

Human rights are too important to be left to the good will of national governments, regardless of how benevolent and well-intentioned they may be. That was the thinking behind the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and the European Convention on Human Rights two years later. Since then, the body of international law protecting human rights has grown significantly, but so have the threats to our fundamental rights and freedoms.

This publication brings together in a single volume a selection of major international instruments. Some of them were adopted by the United Nations, others by regional organisations such as the Council of Europe, with its unique system based on a legally binding convention enforced through a permanent court.

International terrorism represents without any doubt the most serious threat to our societies today. Our governments have the duty to protect us from the violence of extremists. But they must do it right. In the fight against terrorism, human rights are an asset – not a liability. Yet some countries confronted with an imminent threat may decide to ignore this point, and that is dangerous. The most effective safeguard against such short-sighted policies are international standards which are effectively monitored and effectively enforced. You will find the most important ones in this book. Please use it.

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