

Concluding Declaration of the 1st International Law Symposium on Vegan Rights

In recent decades, increasing numbers of people have chosen veganism: a way of living that seeks to exclude, as far as is possible and practicable, all forms of exploitation and cruelty against nonhuman animals: for food, clothing, or any other purpose.

The most common reason for adopting veganism is compassion towards animals. Vegans are motivated by their conscience to eat and live in a way that minimizes animal suffering. Others are motivated to choose veganism, or to adopt a plant-based diet, for different ethical concerns such as environmental protection and/or to lessen world hunger.

Veganism is protected in terms of the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and belief, entitling people to hold vegan beliefs and manifest them:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (“UDHR”) Art 18,
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (“ICCPR”) Art 18
- European Convention on Human Rights (“ECHR”) Art 9, and
- Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (“CFREU”), Art 10

The right to freedom of thought, conscience, and belief is also protected by the constitutions and/or national laws of many states. Other human rights that apply to veganism include the right to:

- freedom from discrimination (ICCPR Art 26; CFREU Art 21; ECHR Art 14)
- a private and family life (ECHR Art 8; ICCPR Art 23)
- adequate food and nutritional information (UDHR Art 25; International Covenant on Economic and Social Rights, Art 11), and
- freedom of expression (ICCPR Art 19(2); CFREU Art 11; ECHR Art 10).

As the number of vegans increase, the right of thought, conscience, and belief is increasingly a topic for national parliaments and governments, particularly in relation to Article 18.2 of the ICCPR which prohibits the imposition of policies and practices that impair the right to freedom of conscience. In this regard, vegans face misunderstanding, institutional discrimination, and structural barriers to accessing vegan food, infant formula, and alternatives to animal-derived products.

The growing public awareness of vegan nutrition and ethics thus calls for legislative, executive and judicial authorities to ensure there is full compliance with fundamental human rights by recognizing the protected status of veganism, and ensuring that the rights of vegans are upheld.

Therefore, the participants — representing 12 nations — at the 1st International Law Symposium on Vegan Rights call for:

1. guaranteed provision of vegan food in public institutions,
2. uniform, mandatory labelling of vegan and vegetarian products, especially food,
3. guaranteed provision of non-food vegan alternatives in public institutions, including (for illustrative purposes and without limitation of the general principle) educational assessments, uniforms and medicines and
4. the development of broad policies and practices that support the growing vegan community.

