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منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
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联合国教育、  
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**Message from Ms Irina Bokova,  
Director-General of UNESCO,  
on the occasion of Human Rights Day**

**10 December 2011**

The year 2011 is a turning point in the defence and promotion of human rights. In the Arab world, millions of people took to the street in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and elsewhere to assert their rights and demand change. Young activists and ordinary citizens did the same in Chile, Greece and cities such as Madrid, Jerusalem and New York, calling for more freedom and social equality.

Courageous men and women struggle daily for justice, freedom and dignity and against discrimination and the denial of their rights. They come up against all forms of violence and repression. They use new media to state their views and rally together, so no-one may claim to know naught of their struggle. This Day affords an opportunity to transmit their message and to give them support.

The Arab Spring movement has given us great hope. It is indeed our greatest hope for democratic progress since the fall of the Berlin Wall ... hope that must not be dashed. We know that such changes take time. Observance of human rights is a battle to be won each day. This is true of respect for the rights of women in particular. Their involvement in those acts of civil resistance has revealed their aspiration for greater autonomy. Their rights must not be trampled underfoot any more. They and all justice-loving citizens regard the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted on 10 December 1948, as the roadmap for the years ahead.

The observance of human rights and the requirement that they be given effect require us to conduct a thorough examination of our conscience. Whenever human rights are on the retreat, in our cities' streets and in the corridors of administrative bodies, the decline is universal. Whatever the circumstances or complexity of the

challenges that we face, the observance of human rights is not negotiable. It rests on quality education that disseminates the values of tolerance and understanding. Freedom of expression is the cornerstone of this struggle.

On 9 December 2011, the eve of Human Rights Day, UNESCO will award the UNESCO-Madanjeet Singh Prize to Mr Khaled Abu Awwad (Palestine) and Ms Anarkali Honaryar (Afghanistan), two outstanding human rights defenders. Mr Khaled Abu Awwad works to promote reconciliation among Palestinian and Israeli families that have lost close friends and relations to violence in the Middle East. Ms Anarkali Honaryar struggles to improve conditions for women and minority groups in Afghanistan.

Human rights are vested in each person and bring us together, our differences notwithstanding. The aspiration to freedom and human dignity is universal, and no one may invoke cultural diversity in order to infringe them or limit their scope. This strong message, keynote of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, the 10th anniversary of which is marked this year, is our guide now and for a long time yet.

Irina Bokova