



## **Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran**

to the United Nations Office and  
other International Organizations in Geneva

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### **Statement**

by

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United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva

before

**The Joint High-Level Roundtable:**

**“Role of the Manifesto of Cyrus the Great in the Formation of  
Modern Human Rights and Freedoms”**

Co-organized by the Permanent Mission of Republic of Tajikistan and  
the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran

**Geneva, 15 April 2026**

**Excellencies,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At the outset, I would like to welcome H.E. Minister Muzaffar Ashuriyon to this event and thank him for his invaluable remarks.

We have gathered here today to reflect on a remarkable part of humanity’s shared heritage, one that stands far ahead of the standards of its time. The Cyrus Cylinder, attributed to Cyrus the Great in the 6th century BCE, represents an extraordinary vision of governance rooted in respect,

tolerance, and human dignity. At a time when conquest was often accompanied by destruction and oppression, Cyrus introduced a different approach, one that recognized the value of cultural diversity and upheld the rights of communities to preserve their beliefs and traditions.

From this perspective, his legacy can be seen as an early moral foundation for what we now understand as international human rights. Although expressed within the context of an ancient empire, the principles embodied in his proclamation including freedom of belief, protection of identity, and humane leadership, continue to resonate in today's global discourse. As we face modern challenges, revisiting this shared heritage reminds us that the pursuit of justice and dignity is not new, but a deeply rooted aspiration that unites humanity across time and cultures.

Although the Cyrus Cylinder stands as a distinguished representative of ancient Persian civilization, its significance transcends national and cultural boundaries. It is not solely the legacy of one nation, but a valuable part of the common heritage of humankind. Its message of tolerance, respect, and humane governance has earned recognition and admiration across the world, making it both a symbol of Iran's rich past and a universal testament to values that continue to inspire all nations.

**Dear Colleagues,**

In recent years, the effectiveness of foundational instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Geneva Conventions has been increasingly challenged by political tensions, uneven enforcement, and rapidly evolving global realities. The current state of international human rights law reflects mounting pressure. Armed conflicts and violations of humanitarian law continue to result in displacement, civilian

casualties, and limited access to basic necessities, exposing the limits of existing enforcement mechanisms. At the same time, some states have withdrawn from or resisted international agreements, weakening collective efforts to uphold justice.

In this complex landscape, the historical legacy of the Cyrus Cylinder, as one of the earliest documents reflecting human rights principles, offers a meaningful perspective for rethinking our approach. Its articulation of religious tolerance, respect for cultural diversity, protection of certain individual freedoms, and rejection of forced displacement aligns with values echoed in modern frameworks such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. While scholars debate the extent to which it reflects contemporary legal concepts, its moral and historical significance remains powerful.

Cyrus, founder of the Achaemenid Empire, is remembered as a leader who promoted tolerance and respect for diversity. His decision to allow displaced peoples to return to their homelands and practice their religions freely—including permitting the Jewish people exiled in Babylon to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple—illustrates a model of governance that differed markedly from the brutality typical of ancient conquests.

Today, the ideals associated with the Cyrus Cylinder can serve as a unifying narrative to reinforce the universality of human rights, emphasizing respect for diversity and coexistence, principles urgently needed in an increasingly polarized world. For an international audience, its relevance extends beyond historical interest; it stands as a powerful symbol of shared human aspirations and cross-cultural values.

Governments and international organizations can draw on these principles to promote intercultural understanding and strengthen legal protections, while ensuring accountability for violations. Civil society and advocacy groups can also use this legacy as a cultural bridge, framing human rights as a shared human heritage rather than an external imposition. Integrating these values into public discourse and international dialogue can help build a common ethical foundation, foster cooperation among states, and reinforce respect for international norms.

By bridging ancient principles with contemporary frameworks, the legacy of the Cyrus Cylinder enhances both the legitimacy and resonance of human rights across different societies. It serves as a powerful reminder that the pursuit of human rights is a continuous and universal responsibility.

Improving the global human rights situation requires both strong institutions and compelling narratives. The legacy of Cyrus the Great offers an early historical example of leadership grounded in respect and inclusion. While the Cyrus Cylinder is not a legal document in the modern sense, it provides a powerful story that continues to shape global values.

By combining such historical inspiration with concrete policy measures and international cooperation, the global community can move closer to realizing the fundamental goal of human rights: dignity, freedom, and justice for all.

### **Distinguished guests**

The legacy of the Cyrus Cylinder should also be understood as a source of cultural identity and resilience for the Iranian people in times of external

pressure and uncertainty. Rooted in principles of dignity, independence, and respect for one's beliefs, the values associated with Cyrus the Great have contributed to a historical consciousness that emphasizes perseverance and self-determination. This enduring heritage has helped shape a collective spirit that resists domination while upholding a sense of justice and cultural pride. In this way, the Cyrus Cylinder may be seen not only as an ancient document, but as a lasting moral inspiration that continues to inform the Iranian nation's commitment to safeguarding its sovereignty and identity.

The developments of the past nearly two months, and the courageous resistance of the Iranian people in the face of aggression, are among the clear manifestations of this influence.

Thank you.