



# **Declaration of First Principles for a Free Humanity**

*A universal foundation of liberty, responsibility, stewardship, and  
coexistence*

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**To be used freely and shared widely.**

**Purpose, Scope, and Use of This Declaration**

This Declaration is not a moral doctrine, political program, or worldview. It does not prescribe how people should live, what they should believe, or what ends they should pursue. It establishes only the minimum conditions required for free and peaceful coexistence among diverse peoples.

Its purpose is to define the boundaries beyond which authority becomes illegitimate. It identifies when power has exceeded consent, imposed coercion without harm, or blocked the right of exit. It does not seek agreement, unity, or shared values, only the conditions under which many ways of living may exist without domination.

These principles are universal in a limited sense. They do not claim universal truth about meaning or morality. They apply only to conditions that make coexistence possible: life, individual agency, responsibility for harm, consent. They also recognize the recurring tendency of unconstrained power to concentrate and dominate, which makes such limits necessary.

This Declaration must be treated as a boundary, not a goal. It asks only whether an action preserves the conditions of coexistence, not whether it is virtuous, correct, or desirable. Any use of these principles to impose belief, conformity, or authority beyond consent violates the Declaration itself.

This Declaration does not grant any person, group, institution, or federation the right to intervene, enforce compliance, impose sanctions, occupy territory, compel reform, or rule others on the basis of these Principles.

A finding that authority has lost legitimacy under this Declaration does not transfer authority to any other actor. It releases only the moral obligation to comply and justifies defensive resistance to direct harm, nothing more.

Any attempt to use these Principles to justify conquest, humanitarian intervention, ideological enforcement, collective punishment, or permanent supervision violates the Declaration and nullifies any claim of legitimacy made in its name.

**This Declaration must be adopted and interpreted as a whole. Selective adoption or partial enforcement invalidates any claim of legitimacy under it.**

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## **Preamble**

Life is the foundation of all value. Without life, there can be no experience, choice, meaning, or responsibility. To recognize that anything matters is to recognize that life matters.

Life continues through action. Every living being must be able to move, choose, respond, and adapt in order to survive. Freedom of action is therefore not a privilege granted by authority, but a condition of life itself. Where freedom is denied, life is diminished.

Human beings act by choice. Each person experiences consequences in their own body and time. No collective can choose, suffer, or repair harm in place of another. For this reason, freedom begins with the individual, and no person is born with rightful authority over another.

Because all people share this condition of life and agency, equal dignity belongs to every person. No life is inherently superior or expendable. Authority, where it exists, must arise from consent and remain accountable to those it affects.

Choice carries responsibility. To act freely is to become responsible for foreseeable consequences. When harm occurs, relationships are damaged; when repair is made, relationships are restored. Justice serves as the protection of life and the repair of harm, rather than the enforcement of belief.

Human life is relational. No one survives alone. Each person depends on others, on land, water, air, and the living systems that sustain all life. Freedom is not isolation from these relationships, but participation without coercion. Responsibility therefore extends beyond the self, without erasing individual choice.

These First Principles define the minimum conditions under which diverse peoples may live together without domination. They establish a moral floor beneath all systems of power and bind only those who claim authority over others.

They do not prescribe a way of life, belief, or purpose. They do not authorize conquest, forced reform, or rule without consent. Their purpose is to preserve the conditions of life, freedom, responsibility, and relationship, so that many ways of living may coexist without one claiming the right to govern the rest.

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## **Articles**

### **Scope of These Articles**

These Principles establish a floor, not a ceiling. They govern the legitimacy of authority and the use of force. They do not dictate culture, belief, economic systems, family structures, or moral ideals beyond what is necessary to prevent harm, coercion, and domination.

**Foundations of Human Dignity** (Articles 1–4)

**Rights and Duties in Action** (Articles 5–10)

**Shared World and Governance** (Articles 11–13)

**Limits on Power and Abuse** (Articles 14–20)

### **Article 1 — Equal Worth**

Every human being has equal dignity and value. No one is born with the right to rule another. Children and vulnerable people share this dignity and may never be treated as property. No collective, majority, or institution may override the equal dignity, liberty, or consent of any person. The individual may not be sacrificed to the group.

### **Article 2 — Life and Safety**

Every person owns their body and their life. No one may be enslaved, tortured, mutilated, or subjected to cruel, degrading, or inhuman treatment under any circumstance. No person may be compelled to labor, serve, or fight against their will except by voluntary and revocable consent.

### **Article 3 — Consent and Right to Exit**

No power is valid without consent. Consent must be free, informed, specific, and revocable at any time. Every person holds the right to leave any group, contract, or association. All obligations must be limited, clearly defined, and time-bound. No group may impose endless duties, hidden terms, or punitive conditions on exit. No person may be bound by obligations imposed before they were capable of consent.

### **Article 4 — Freedom of Movement**

Every person has the right to free movement within their community and across borders, except where temporarily restricted to prevent direct harm to others. No authority may obstruct exit with barriers, penalties, or deprivation of survival needs. Entities controlling essential access corridors (roads, ports, water sources) must allow non-hostile passage sufficient for exit, subject to reasonable safety conditions. Freedom of movement guarantees the right to leave without penalty; it does not obligate any community to grant entry without consent.

### **Article 5 — No Aggression**

No one may initiate violence, coercion, theft, or fraud of any kind. Defensive force is justified only to stop an immediate and actual threat, must be proportionate to that threat, and must end once the threat has passed.

### **Article 6 — Right of Defense**

Every person and community retains the right to defend themselves against aggression, using means proportionate to the threat and consistent with these Principles. No authority may forcibly disarm or deny the capacity for proportionate defense. Personal

arms suitable for individual defense remain legitimate. Individuals may voluntarily limit their own arms by agreement, provided exit remains open. Weapons or methods that cause indiscriminate or irreversible destruction to mass populations or the shared environment, such as chemical, biological, or nuclear arms, are illegitimate.

#### **Article 7 — Responsibility and Restitution**

To claim a right is to accept the duty to respect it in others. To harm means to violate a person's body, freedom, property, or to damage the shared environment beyond repair. Each person is responsible for harms they knew or reasonably should have known their actions would cause. When harm occurs, the duty is to restore or repair it as far as possible. In cases of irreversible harm (e.g. death), restitution extends to dependents, heirs, or community. Duties extend to future generations, whose equal freedom must not be destroyed by present actions. No debts, obligations, or conditions may be imposed on those who did not and could not consent.

#### **Article 8 — No Repeated Punishment**

No person may be tried or punished more than once for the same act of harm. No person may be compelled to confess, testify against themselves, or submit to repeated proceedings for the same act. A closed case may be reopened only if materially new evidence emerges that could not reasonably have been presented earlier and an independent body authorizes review under strict limits.

#### **Article 9 — Freedom of Belief, Speech, and Association**

Every person is free to think, believe, speak, publish, and assemble peacefully. No worldview may be forced. Speech may not be punished unless it directly violates rights, such as fraud and coercion, or is direct and intentional incitement of violence.

#### **Article 10 — Privacy**

Every person has the right to privacy of body, home, communications, and possessions. Intrusions, surveillance, or seizures are illegitimate without consent or due process as defined herein.

#### **Article 11 — Care for Earth and Shared Resources**

Air, water, soil, and ecosystems are the common inheritance of all. They may be used but not destroyed or degraded beyond timely and practical repair. They must be cared for and passed on in healthy condition to future generations. Exploitation that destroys the base of life is a violation of these Principles. Protection of commons cannot justify confiscation of private use that causes no demonstrable harm.

#### **Article 12 — Fair Rules**

All authority must be open to independent and public audit by bodies not controlled by those in power. Rules must be published, predictable, and subject to challenge and appeal before a neutral and transparent process. Every person accused of harm has the right to know the charges, to answer them, to present evidence, and to be assisted in their defense by others of their choosing.

#### **Article 13 — Local Decisions**

Decisions must be made at the most local level capable of resolving the matter without violating these Principles. These Principles must be applied with respect to lived relationships, local conditions, cultural contexts, and ecological realities. No abstract rule may be enforced in a way that severs people from land, kin, or community without consent or demonstrable harm.

#### **Article 14 — No Hereditary or Permanent Power**

No office or position of authority may be inherited, permanent, or beyond recall. All power exists only by the continuing consent of the People and must remain practically and continuously subject to removal or replacement.

#### **Article 15 — No Punishment Without Harm**

No one may be punished unless they have caused actual harm as defined in these Principles or violated consent. Punishment refers to any imposed penalty or deprivation used to compel compliance, regardless of how it is described. Collective punishment is forbidden.

### **Article 16 — Presumption of Liberty**

Freedom is the default. What is not forbidden by these Principles is allowed. Rights not listed are still retained by the People so long as they do not violate these Principles.

### **Article 17 — No Monopoly of Force or Essentials**

No institution may hold unchecked monopoly over force, food, water, or other essentials of life. Such powers must remain subject to independent oversight and must allow for real, viable, and accessible alternatives. A monopoly is illegitimate when it blocks exit, coerces compliance, price-gouges essentials, prevents feasible alternatives, or exploits unavoidable geographic chokepoints without transparency, nondiscrimination, published rules, and independent audit. Where geography creates unavoidable concentration, legitimacy requires open access standards, public accountability, and challengeable oversight. Economic systems must not compel permanent dependence, debt-slavery, or taxation without consent. Voluntary contributions, user fees, and time-limited cooperative agreements do not constitute coercion. Every person retains the right to acquire, use, and exchange property peacefully, subject only to these Principles.

### **Article 18 — Truthful Information for Consent**

Consent is void if built on lies, secrecy, or withheld knowledge. All systems that govern or mediate essential information, including technology, communication, and algorithms, must remain transparent, accountable, and subject to independent audit. Authority built on concealed manipulation has no legitimacy. Secrecy is valid only to protect individuals' privacy, never to shield authority.

### **Article 19 — Limits on Emergency Powers**

Emergencies do not erase rights. Powers claimed in crisis must be strictly limited to addressing the immediate and specific threat, must be demonstrable and evidence-based, must be temporary and time-bound, and must be subject to independent review as defined in Article 12. All emergency powers must end once the threat has passed, and no sequence of emergencies may be used to impose permanent powers or to override these Principles. Any authority that fails to fully relinquish emergency powers, repair resulting harms, and restore all suspended liberties immediately upon resolution of the threat permanently forfeits legitimacy.

### **Article 20 — Non-Imposition of Principles**

These Principles establish the standard by which authority may be judged by those subject to it. They do not grant any person, group, or institution the right to impose compliance, enforce conformity, or intervene by force, coercion, sanction, or domination beyond what is strictly necessary for immediate self-defense against direct aggression. Loss of legitimacy does not authorize conquest, occupation, forced reform, or moral rule over others.

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### **Closing Statement**

This Declaration does not define a common purpose, belief, or way of life. It exists to mark the limits beyond which authority loses legitimacy and coercion replaces consent. It is a measure by which any system of power must be judged.

These principles set a boundary, not a destination. They preserve the conditions under which free and diverse peoples may coexist without domination, while leaving meaning, culture, and purpose to individual choice.

Where life, consent, responsibility, and the right of exit are respected, coexistence remains possible. Where they are violated, compliance is no longer morally required, and defensive resistance to harm becomes justified.

This Declaration endures not as an instrument of rule, but as a restraint upon it.

All rules, customs, and laws derive their authority from the constitutions or agreements of the societies that adopt them and remain legitimate only so long as they do not violate these Principles.

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## Rules of Interpretation

- **These Rules are binding on all interpretation and application of this Declaration.**
  - These principles define the limits of legitimate authority and may not be overridden by power, procedure, or emergency.
  - New principles may be added only if they align with and strengthen these.
  - Interpretation shall remain open and contestable, without granting final authority to any interpreter. No individual, council, institution, or federation may claim final or exclusive authority to define their meaning. Any interpretation that concentrates unchallengeable interpretive power violates these Principles.
  - Where an interpretation expands these Principles beyond coexistence into prescription of belief, identity, or virtue, that interpretation is invalid.
  - Where terms in these Principles require clarification, they shall be understood according to the Definitions section of this Declaration. When meaning is disputed, it must always be resolved in favor of:
    - Consent and the right to leave (including freedom of movement)
    - Equal dignity and bodily autonomy
    - Non-aggression and responsibility (limited to foreseeable harm)
    - Freedom of belief, speech, and association
    - Stewardship of Earth and commons
    - Fairness, transparency, and local choice
    - Liberty from monopoly, secrecy, unearned power, and collective punishment
    - Conscientious refusal where no one else's rights under this declaration are directly harmed
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## Definitions

**Consent:** An explicit, informed, specific, and revocable agreement. Consent is invalid if obtained by force, fraud, coercion, deception, or secrecy. Incapacity, or inability to refuse is not consent. Consent must be ongoing, explicit, and never presumed by silence, membership, birth, or location. Revocation of consent terminates future obligations but does not erase duties already incurred under clearly defined and voluntarily accepted agreements. Termination may require fulfillment of previously agreed and proportionate settlement terms.

**Amendment to 'Consent' — Capacity for Binding Consent:** Capacity for binding consent is the demonstrated ability of a person to understand the nature and foreseeable consequences of a decision, evaluate alternatives, communicate a voluntary choice, and accept responsibility for its outcomes.

Equal dignity does not depend on capacity. All persons possess equal dignity regardless of age or condition. The exercise of binding consent and full responsibility depends upon demonstrated capacity.

Capacity is presumed at an age defined by local constitution or governing agreement, but may be recognized earlier, in whole or in limited contexts, through a neutral and independent process consistent with this Declaration. No age may be set arbitrarily high to delay autonomy.

Until capacity is established, guardians may exercise temporary fiduciary stewardship solely to protect the person's safety and developing autonomy. Guardianship does not constitute ownership or permanent authority and must be exercised in the least restrictive manner consistent with protection from demonstrable harm.

Determinations of incapacity must be transparent, reviewable, and proportionate. No person may be declared permanently incapable without periodic review. Capacity may not be removed as punishment.

No binding obligation may be imposed before capacity for binding consent is established.

**Legitimacy:** The quality of rightful authority. Power loses legitimacy when it violates these Principles, regardless of custom, force, or law.

**Person:** Any living human being, regardless of age, sex, ability, or condition. Each person bears equal dignity and is the subject of rights. The exercise of duties depends on capacity and responsibility. Institutions and legal fictions are not persons.

**Right of Exit:** The unbroken right of any person to leave a group, contract, association, or system of authority. Obligations must be limited, clearly defined, and time-bound. The right of exit includes freedom of movement across borders and resettlement without coercive restraint. Exit may not be obstructed by physical barriers, penalties, or deprivation of survival needs. Exit must be free of retaliation or deprivation.

**Harm:** A violation of life, liberty, equal dignity, rightful property, or the shared environment that sustains life. Harm includes direct and demonstrable attempts to violate these interests where a credible and imminent threat is present. Harm does not include mere offense, disagreement, or emotional discomfort unless caused by fraud, coercion, or direct violation of these Principles. Harm must be non-trivial and demonstrable with evidence. Where actions create a credible, evidence-supported risk of serious or irreversible harm to the commons, proportionate mitigation or protective measures may be required. Such measures are preventive, not punitive.

**Coercion:** Compelling action or inaction by credible threat of harm to life, body, liberty, property, or essential needs.

**Fraud:** Obtaining agreement through deliberate deception, concealment, or false representation of material facts necessary for an informed choice.

**Property:** The rightful control of tangible goods, land, or creations acquired through peaceful use, voluntary exchange, or original stewardship of unowned resources. Original stewardship must be bounded, actively maintained, non-destructive of commons, and may not deprive others of essential access. Claims that enclose or monopolize essential resources or access corridors are invalid. Property does not include persons, authority over others, symbols, ideas, or collective myths. Property claims must respect equal dignity, liberty, survival needs, and commons protections.

**Reasonable Care:** The caution a prudent person uses when risks are known or reasonably should be known.

**Restitution:** The duty to repair or compensate for harm caused. Where exact restoration is impossible, restitution must provide fair replacement or equivalent remedy. In cases of irreversible harm (e.g. death), restitution extends to dependents, heirs, or community.

**Commons:** Shared resources not created by any one person and relied upon by all, such as air, water, and ecosystems, which no one may rightly destroy, degrade beyond timely and practical repair, or monopolize. Repair must occur before irreversible collapse.

**Stewardship:** Using resources while maintaining or improving them for future life, including active repair of damage caused.

**Due Process:** Fair and open procedures: public rules, impartial and independent judgment, reasons for decisions, and the right to appeal to a neutral body. Judgment must come from an independent body as defined in Article 8. Secret laws, evidence, or courts are illegitimate.

**Subsidiarity:** The principle that decisions must be made at the most local level capable of resolving the matter effectively, with higher levels acting only where local capacity is insufficient.

**Capable Local Level:** A matter is presumed to belong to the most local level unless a higher level publicly demonstrates necessity, with evidence, that it cannot be resolved locally without violating these Principles.

**Authority:** The exercise of power over others, whether by individual, group, or institution. Authority is legitimate only when it conforms to these Principles.

**Obligation:** A duty voluntarily accepted or clearly defined in advance, limited in scope and time, and not imposed without consent.

**Neutral / Independent:** Free from control or influence by any party to the conflict or subject of the decision. Independence requires transparency, accountability, and verifiable separation from those in power.

**Independent Body:** A body is independent only if composed through publicly verifiable random selection or equivalent safeguards that demonstrably preserve neutrality, transparency, accountability, and freedom from control by parties to the dispute. For small communities where full randomization is impracticable, rotating panels, cross-community juries, or mutually agreed external arbiters may serve, provided conflicts of interest are disclosed and challengeable.

**Incitement:** Only direct, intentional advocacy of imminent violence, under circumstances where such violence is likely to occur, qualifies as incitement.

**Alternatives:** Alternatives are real (technically feasible), viable (affordable and reliable), and accessible (non-discriminatory and practically available to all persons). Sham or token alternatives do not qualify.

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## FAQ

**This FAQ is explanatory only. In case of conflict, the Articles, Rules of Interpretation, and Definitions govern.**

### **Q1. What is this Declaration?**

It is a set of universal conditions for legitimacy that no authority may break. They are the foundation of liberty, responsibility, and stewardship. Any constitution or government must respect them or lose legitimacy. This Declaration is not a moral doctrine or worldview; it is a framework for peaceful non-domination among people who may never agree on meaning, purpose, or truth.

### **Q2. Why are these Principles considered universal?**

Because they rest on observable facts: people can consent or not, harm and repair can be measured, and all humans share equal dignity and dependence on Earth's life-support systems. These are not opinions but conditions of reality.

### **Q3. Does this ban all authority and government?**

No. Authority can exist, but only if it is voluntary, transparent, recallable, and bound by these Principles. Governments, councils, and leaders may exist, but their legitimacy depends on continuing consent.

### **Q4. How are disputes resolved without centralized power?**

Through open and neutral processes. Communities may use juries, restorative circles, or councils selected by lot. Higher federations may be created to handle disputes that cross community boundaries, but all remain accountable to these Principles.

### **Q5. What if someone refuses to follow these Principles?**

They remain free as long as they do not violate the rights of others. If they cause harm, they must make restitution. If they persist in aggression, communities may exclude or isolate them, but not torture or degrade them.

**Q6. How are children protected?**

Children share the same dignity as all people and cannot be treated as property. They may not yet exercise full responsibility, but their care is a duty of family and community until they are capable of self-responsibility.

**Q7. Why include the Earth?**

Because liberty cannot survive on a dying planet. Air, water, land, and ecosystems are shared inheritance. They may be used, but not destroyed or degraded beyond repair.

**Q8. Does this require open borders?**

No. Everyone has the right to exit freely, but entry into another community or federation requires that group's consent. Freedom of movement means no one can be trapped, not that anyone must be accepted against others' will.

**Q9. Can communities organize militias or defense groups?**

Yes, provided they are voluntary, defensive in nature, and accountable to the Principles. Militias may not initiate aggression, enforce rule by force, or prevent people from leaving.

**Q10. Can a community ban guns or weapons if they want to?**

Yes, but only by voluntary consent. A community may agree among its members to live without firearms or other weapons. However, no one can be forced to comply against their will. Those who disagree must always retain the Right of Exit without penalty. The Principles protect both choices: the freedom to live without weapons, and the freedom not to be disarmed by force.

**Q11. Are weapons of mass destruction allowed?**

No. Defense must always be proportionate and consistent with the Principles. Weapons that cause irreversible harm to life, liberty, and the Earth's systems—such as nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons—are inherently illegitimate.

**Q12. Does this system allow for taxation or compulsory service?**

No authority may impose taxation, conscription, or permanent debt without consent. Communities may pool resources or organize labor, but only through voluntary agreements.

**Q13. How does this Declaration address abortion?**

The Declaration does not set one answer. Different societies may define when life begins in their own constitutions, but no rule may be enforced without consent or the Right of Exit. Communities may choose their standards, but never by coercion.

**Q14. What about large societies with millions of people?**

Ideally, large populations would cooperate, but only as federations of smaller, voluntary communities. Each layer of association must remain open, accountable, and recallable. No permanent monopoly can rule millions from the top down.

**Q15. What about wealth, jobs, or housing?**

This Declaration does not guarantee economic outcomes. Those are matters for individual societies and their respective constitutions. What this Declaration ensures is that no one may be enslaved, exploited, or denied liberty by monopoly or coercion.

**Q16. What about drugs and personal behavior?**

The Declaration does not forbid personal choices unless they cause direct harm to others. Using drugs or engaging in private behavior is not a violation on its own, but fraud, coercion, or endangering others is.

**Q17. What about healthcare?**

Everyone has the right to seek care freely. Communities may choose to provide healthcare collectively, but no one can be forced into service or treatment without consent.

**Q18. What about raising and educating children?**

Parents and guardians have duties of care, but children are not property. Children share equal dignity, so education and upbringing must not violate their rights. Communities may set standards, but belief, conscience, and the Right of Exit remain protected.

**Q19. What about property and wealth?**

Peaceful ownership, exchange, and wealth are allowed. What is forbidden is monopoly over essentials or destruction of the commons.

**Q20. What about armies and war?**

Defense is legitimate if it is proportionate, voluntary, and aimed at stopping aggression. Aggression and conquest are illegitimate. No authority may conscript people into military service without consent.

**Q21. What about money creation and banks?**

Communities are free to create currencies or banking systems, but monopolies that trap people in debt or dependence are illegitimate. Alternatives must always remain open and accessible.

**Q22. Who decides what rules societies can add?**

Each society is free to create its own constitution and laws, however, no authority may violate these Principles without losing legitimacy. Communities that ignore them remain free to govern themselves, but if they cross these boundaries, they cannot claim just authority and may face defensive response.

**Q23. What happens if principles conflict?**

Conflicts must always be resolved in favor of liberty, consent, equal dignity, responsibility, stewardship, transparency, and accountability, as spelled out in the Rule of Interpretation.

**Q24. Are these Principles final or can they be changed?**

These Principles cannot be suspended or rewritten. Communities may create their own constitutions, rules, and cultures, but none may violate this floor of liberty, dignity, consent, responsibility, and stewardship.

**Q25. Can new principles be added?**

Yes, but only if they align with and strengthen these. None may contradict or weaken them.

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**Appendix: Grievances Against Tyrannical Authority**

**This Appendix is illustrative and explanatory only. It does not expand or alter the Principles.**

Throughout history, authority has betrayed the trust of the people and violated the natural foundations of justice. To remind ourselves why these First Principles are necessary, we set forth the common abuses by which liberty has been denied:

- They have claimed the right to rule by birth or blood, denying the equal dignity of all people.
- They have enslaved human beings, tortured bodies, and degraded lives in pursuit of power.
- They have bound people to governments and associations without consent, and denied the right to leave.
- They have initiated violence, theft, fraud, and coercion against those who have done no harm.
- They have punished without cause, inventing crimes where no injury exists, and have condemned the innocent by association.
- They have refused accountability for the harms they caused, hiding behind secrecy and power instead of making restitution.
- They have silenced voices, banned ideas, and forced worldviews upon people who did not consent.
- They have treated the Earth as spoil for plunder, destroying air, water, land, and life itself for short gain, leaving future generations in ruin.

- They have hoarded food, water, and arms, claiming monopoly over the essentials of life and leaving people dependent on their mercy.
- They have hidden truth, spread lies, and denied people the knowledge needed for real choice and consent.
- They have declared endless emergencies to seize power, suspending liberty without return.
- They have established offices of permanent and hereditary rule, placing themselves above the people and beyond recall.

Such acts have been repeated across ages and nations, proving that tyranny wears many masks but always seeks the same: domination without consent.

It is for defense against these wrongs, and for the protection of liberty and responsibility, that we establish the First Principles as unbreakable law.