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# International Human Rights and the Northern Ireland Constitutional Identity

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## Résumé

In his Farewell address given on January 14, 1981, Jimmy Carter declared "America did not invent Human Rights. In a very real sense, Human Rights invented America". Couldn't this statement be applied to Northern Ireland whose constitutional inception was based upon the concept of Human rights? It has been repeatedly asserted that the thirty years of escalating violence, commonly called "The Troubles", had been fuelled by systematic human rights violations. For a long time, Human Rights were an unknown notion in Northern Ireland simply because such rights were not defined in any legal document, hence they were unprotected. The new constitutional framework for Northern Ireland hinged upon Human Rights values which were eventually enshrined in the Good Friday Agreement. This paper intends to demonstrate how international Human Rights documents have helped introduce new concepts into Northern Ireland and incorporate them in Northern Irish constitutional law. It will seek to show how such international influence came to bear upon the Peace Process. It will provide evidence on the peace situation which has prevailed since 1998 thanks to models borrowed outside the UK. How can a culture of Human Rights help Northern Ireland start a "new departure" and therefore invent a new Northern Ireland?

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