The right to life

The right to life is a moral principle based on the belief that a human being has the right to live and, in particular, should not be killed by another human being. The concept of a right to life arises in debates on issues of capital punishment, war, abortion, euthanasia, justifiable homicide and, by extension, public health care.

In human history, there has not been a general acceptance of the concept of a right to life that is innate to individuals rather than granted as a privilege by those holding social and political power. The evolution of human rights as a concept took place slowly in multiple areas in many different ways, with the right to life being no exception to this trend, and the past millennia in particular has seen a large set of national and international legal documents (examples being the Magna Charta and the UN Declaration of Human Rights) codifying the general ideal into specifically worded principles.