

# UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS REGIME

Promoting and protecting human rights is a core mission of the United Nations (UN). There are two main types of UN human rights institutions: Charter Bodies and Treaty Bodies. Charter Bodies – such as the Human Rights Council – are established by the UN Charter itself or by bodies created by the Charter. Their mandates cover promoting human rights in all UN member states. Treaty Bodies are committees of experts responsible for monitoring and promoting compliance with the core human rights treaties listed below. Most of these committees receive and consider periodic reports by States Parties on their implementation of the treaty provisions. Many also have the power to consider individual and state complaints or conduct country inquiries and/or visits.

ACTIVE PRINCIPAL ORGANS & SUBSIDIARY BODIES

## General Assembly (GA)

The GA adopts human rights resolutions and declarations, most of which are negotiated by its Third Committee.

## Human Rights Council (HRC)

Made up of 47 elected UN Member States, the HRC is the main intergovernmental body responsible for addressing human rights violations within the UN. It mandates experts to monitor human rights in specific countries or priority themes (**Special Procedures**) and it manages the **Universal Periodic Review (UPR)**, a process through which each UN Member State's overall human rights record is examined.

## Secretariat

The Secretary General may refer to other UN bodies any situation of gross human rights violation or human rights emergency.

## Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

The OHCHR coordinates human rights activities throughout the UN system. Its responsibilities include playing an advisory role, conducting research and writing reports, supporting other human rights institutions, and promoting the establishment of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs).

## Security Council (SC)

The SC can authorise sanctions, peace operations and political missions in response to grave human rights violations. It has also established two ad-hoc criminal tribunals, for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and for Rwanda (ICTR).

## Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

ECOSOC is tasked, among other things, with promoting respect of human rights and basic freedoms. These issues are mostly covered by the Commission on the Status of Women and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

## International Court of Justice (ICJ)

The ICJ is the principal judicial organ of the UN but only states can bring contentious cases to it and it rarely deals with cases centred on human rights.

**Other UN organisations:** Many specialised UN agencies, funds and programmes have mandates that are relevant to the promotion and protection of human rights. These include, for example, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN Development Program (UNDP), UN Women, UNAIDS, the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Health Organisation (WHO), or the International Labor Organisation (ILO).

**Beyond the UN:** Today's global human rights regime is complex and the number of actors involved has grown exponentially. Many regional organisations – such as the Organization of American States, the European Union or the African Union – have established mechanisms and courts to promote and protect human rights. Most states have implemented binding human rights legislation in their national laws and constitutions and many have set up NHRIs to monitor and promote the domestic implementation of international human rights treaties and standards.

HUMAN RIGHTS TREATIES & TREATY BODIES



## INTERNATIONAL BILL OF HUMAN RIGHTS

### Universal Declaration of Human Rights

### International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)

Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights

### International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

Human Rights Committee

### International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

### International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICMW)

Committee on Migrant Workers

### Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

### International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CPED)

Committee on Enforced Disappearances

### Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

Committee on the Rights of the Child

### Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

### Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)

Committee against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment

Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture (monitors compliance with the Optional Protocol)