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.

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.