

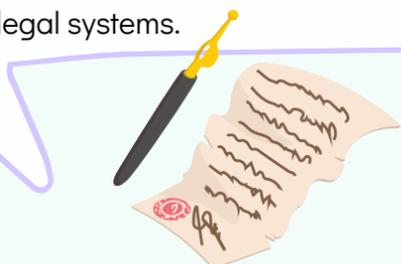
International human rights law - a summary

What are human rights?

Human rights are those rights inherent to every person without distinction of any kind. They apply throughout a person's life from birth until death.

They cannot be taken away, although most rights can be limited under certain circumstances, such as maintaining public order or national security.

Human rights are found and protected in both international and regional human rights law, as well as most states' national legal systems.



What is international human rights law?

International human rights law sets out obligations on states to act - or not to act - in certain ways, to respect, protect and fulfil human rights.

States commit to these obligations upon signing and ratifying an international human rights treaty.

The United Nations (UN) framework of legal instruments - the international human rights treaties - provide a foundation for globally recognised human rights.



Ratification

When a state ratifies an international treaty, it consents to be bound by the treaty provisions. A state that has ratified a treaty is called a 'state party' to a treaty.

Human rights treaties allow time between signing and ratification so that a state can amend its laws or take other measures to ensure that its national law follows the obligations set out in the treaty.

International human rights treaties



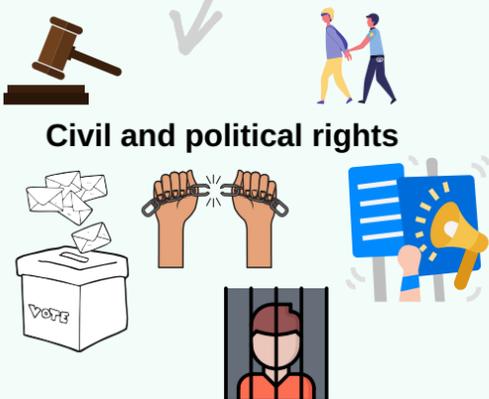
Environmental rights



Economic, social, and cultural rights



Civil and political rights



Although human rights can be divided into different categories, they need each other to function properly.

They all affect the enjoyment of one another.

Human rights are interrelated, indivisible and interdependent.



Monitoring states' legal obligations

All UN human rights treaties have a committee of experts to monitor how well states are complying with their human rights obligations. They are called treaty bodies.

One such example is the Human Rights Committee that oversees the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

State parties must submit reports on their actions to the treaty body every few years. The treaty body examines the report and makes recommendations to the state on areas where they are excelling and where they need to improve their human rights protections.

Civil society organisations can take part in the review process by submitting a shadow report to the treaty body. Shadow reports often highlight valuable human rights concerns which are not brought up in the official state report.

The UN monitors states' human rights performance in several ways. In addition to the treaty bodies, there are several review mechanisms overseen by the UN Human Rights Council.

State report to treaty body on how rights are being implemented + civil society shadow reports

State party takes on board recommendations and prepares to submit the next report

Concluding observations on concerns and recommendations to state party by treaty body

December 10th

December 10th commemorates international human rights day.

This is the anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by the UN General Assembly in 1948.



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