



## Human Rights

One of the great achievements of the United Nations is the creation of a comprehensive body of human rights law — a universal and internationally protected code to which all nations can subscribe and all people aspire. The United Nations has defined a broad range of internationally accepted rights, including civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. It has also established mechanisms to promote and protect these rights and to assist states in carrying out their responsibilities.

The foundations of this body of law are the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly in 1945 and 1948, respectively. Since then, the United Nations has gradually expanded human rights law to encompass specific standards for women, children, persons with disabilities, minorities and other vulnerable groups, who now possess rights that protect them from discrimination that had long been common in many societies.

Rights have been extended through ground-breaking General Assembly decisions that have gradually established their universality, indivisibility and interrelatedness with development and democracy. Education campaigns have informed the world's public of their inalienable rights, while numerous national judicial and penal systems have been enhanced through UN training programmes and technical advice. The UN machinery for monitoring compliance with human rights treaties has acquired a remarkable cohesiveness and weight among member states.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights works to strengthen and coordinate UN efforts for the protection and promotion of the human rights of all persons around the world. Human rights, however, is a central theme that unifies the Organization's work in the key areas of peace and security, development, humanitarian assistance, and economic and social affairs. As a result, virtually every UN body and specialized agency is involved to some degree in the protection of human rights.

*[Basic Facts about the United Nations, © 2011](#)*



Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt of the United States holding a Declaration of Human Rights poster in English. 1 November 1949.  
United Nations, Lake Success, New York (UN Photo #1292)

## UN Websites

- Human Rights: <http://www.un.org/en/rights/>
- Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights: <http://www.ohchr.org>
  - What are human rights?  
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Pages/WhatareHumanRights.aspx>
  - Human Rights Issues  
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Pages/ListOfIssues.aspx>
- UN Human Rights Council: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/HRCIndex.aspx>
  - Special Procedures: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/Welcomepage.aspx>
- Human Rights Bodies (Charter-based and Treaty-based Bodies):  
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/Pages/HumanRightsBodies.aspx>
- General Assembly Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural):  
<http://www.un.org/en/ga/third/index.shtml>

## Research & Documentation

- United Nations Documentation - Research Guide on Human Rights  
<http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/resguide/spechr.htm>
- United Nations System Pathfinder – Human Rights  
<http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/pathfind/humanrig/0800.htm>
- Additional Sources for Human Rights Research  
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Library/Pages/HRGuide.aspx>
- A Brief Guide to Finding UN Human Rights Documents  
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Library/Pages/FindingUNHumanRights.aspx>
- Treaty Body Database (Documents on human rights issues arranged by treaty)  
<http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf>
- Documents of Charter-based Bodies  
<http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/Documents?OpenFrameSet>
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights in more than 380 translations  
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Pages/Introduction.aspx>
- International Law Instruments Relating to Human Rights  
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/>
  - Status of Ratification (UN Treaties Collection)  
<http://treaties.un.org/pages/Treaties.aspx?id=4&subid=A&lang=en>

## Further Information

- Human Rights Day – 10 December: <http://www.un.org/en/events/humanrightsday/>
- Briefing Papers for Students – Human Rights:  
<http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/briefing/rights/index.htm>
- UN CyberSchoolBus – Human Rights Curriculum:  
<http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/humanrights/index.asp>
  - Indigenous People  
<http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/indigenous/index.asp>
  - Ethnic Discrimination  
<http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/discrim/ethnicity1.asp>
  - Racial Discrimination  
<http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/discrim/race.asp>