

Upholding human rights

Promotion and protection of human rights

The opening of the fifty-fifth session of the Human Rights Council is held in Geneva.

(Geneva; February 2024) © UN Photo/Elma Okic

What we do

- Supporting human rights treaty bodies
- Supporting the Human Rights Council, its subsidiary bodies and mechanisms
- Advisory services, technical cooperation and field activities
- Human rights mainstreaming, the right to development, research and analysis

Our team

- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Freedom, Equality, and Justice for All



A discussion on the future of human rights and peace and security at a high-level event commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

(Geneva; December 2023)
© UN Photo/Elma Okic

Context

In a world rife with conflict, poverty and environmental degradation, human rights regressed in 2023. In spite of the challenging times, **the United Nations remains committed to promoting and protecting human rights.** To revitalize a global commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights upon its seventy-fifth anniversary, more than 150 countries and 120 non-governmental organizations, national human rights institutions and other actors made nearly 800 pledges **reaffirming their dedication to advancing human rights.**

Our goals

Our work for human rights is set on six pillars: **supporting international mechanisms; mainstreaming human rights** both within development and within peace operations; and **advancing the core human rights principles** of equality, non-discrimination, participation and accountability. The Secretary-General's call to action for human rights and Our Common Agenda serve to reinforce human rights at the heart of the Organization.



"Justice and rights are the foundations of enduring peace. They are the basis of development that is inclusive and sustainable. They build greater well-being – and greater trust."

Volker Türk,
United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights

Our achievements

To sustain the global commitment to human rights, we **engaged with Member States in leading human rights forums**, including the Human Rights Council. Our work helped to increase lawmakers' capacity to engage effectively with the Council's universal periodic review. With our assistance, 13 countries ratified or acceded to 16 international human rights treaties in 2023. We **supported the establishment or strengthening of nearly 60 national mechanisms to improve human rights reporting and follow-up** with treaty bodies. We also supported 60 human rights experts in conducting country visits and delivering communications to Governments concerning alleged human rights violations.

To drive human rights within development efforts, we worked with the United Nations country team and national counterparts to **build national capacities and incorporate human rights-based approaches into development plans and policies** for the 2030 Agenda. As a result of our support, over 60 least developed countries and small island developing States implemented recommendations on the basis of international human rights mechanisms. We **helped to advance economic, social and cultural rights in the legislation and policies of more than 80 countries** and supported the inclusion of human rights in climate negotiations, as, for example, in the outcome reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Human rights in 95 locations globally

- 44** human rights advisers deployed to United Nations country teams
- 19** country offices
- 12** regional offices and centres
- 11** human rights components in United Nations political and peace missions
- 9** other types of field presences



Staff members of the human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine assess the site of a missile strike in the village of Hroza, Kharkiv Province.

(Hroza; October 2023) © OHCHR/Yevhen Nosenko

Our support for Member State cooperation

3,000+ official documents submitted for meetings of human rights mechanisms, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council

139 concluding observations adopted by treaty bodies

58 Governments hosted 82 visits by special procedure mandate holders

16 treaty actions including 8 ratifications and 8 accessions to treaties and optional protocols

In our peace and security work, we provided robust monitoring and reporting measures to help to decrease violence by security forces and **introduced protection measures for individuals facing threats.**

Our advocacy served to combat discriminatory practices, including against people of African descent, migrants, Indigenous Peoples, minorities, women, LGBTIQ+ persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, children and young people. Our fellowship programme helped 100 human rights defenders to deepen their understanding of international law. We **collaborated with nearly 700 organizations globally to advance disability rights through the implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy.** Our work also helped in integrating international standards nationally to protect the rights of persons with disabilities in Timor-Leste and influenced significant legal victories for disability rights in Mexico.

The Grants Committee for human rights-related funding **awarded over 50 grants to enhance civic engagement to civil society organizations.** The grants served to promote, protect and strengthen the work of human rights defenders and civil society organizations worldwide. **We engaged with nearly 5,500 youth-led and women's rights organizations to develop public policies** that better reflect human rights concerns specific to those groups.

We advocated the use of transitional justice processes globally and promoted accountability in multiple countries, including for crimes against humanity. We **secured the release of arbitrarily detained human rights defenders** and helped to establish the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic. We also conducted nearly 2,000 visits to detention centres globally, yielding improved conditions for persons in detention.

Advancing human rights through the Sustainable Development Goals

1.6M downloads of the OHCHR report on human rights indicators tied to the Goals

3,900+ participants from 144 countries in the twelfth Forum on Business and Human Rights

400 national statisticians in 56 countries trained on human-rights approaches to data

29 common country analyses supported by OHCHR



A United Nations human rights expert conducts an assessment involving migrants arriving in the Darién Gap in Panama.

(Darién Province; May 2023) © OHCHR/Carlos Rodriguez



Children displaced by war in the Syrian Arab Republic benefit from improved living conditions after moving from tents into dignified shelters in the Shuayb Camp in Idlib.

Our human rights work

59,000+

survivors of torture in 92 countries received rehabilitation support

12,000+

victims of contemporary forms of slavery in 36 countries received direct support

564

human rights staff across United Nations peace missions

(Idlib; April 2023) © OCHA/Ali Haj Suleiman

Our report on privacy rights influenced a landmark ruling by the European Court of Human Rights, ensuring that technology is grounded in human rights principles. We have also established a first-ever centre for core expertise in innovation, data and statistics, digital transformation and foresight in service of humanity and of embracing human rights as a driving force to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow.

Expertise and support for the Human Rights Bodies

