

“Along with the new consciousness of human rights that we are witnessing, grows a new confidence in self-worth and respect for others.”

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay

UNIVERSAL IDEALS

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights represents the world's commitment to the promotion, protection and realization of the full range of human rights and fundamental freedoms set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed more than 60 years ago. It describes in its 30 articles the fundamental human rights that every individual is entitled to enjoy and declares that all human beings are born free and equal; that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security; that all are equal before the law; that everyone has the right to a nationality, to food and water, to work, and to express themselves; and that the will of the people is the basis of the authority of government.

Non-discrimination and equality are fundamental principles underlying the Declaration: everyone, without distinction of any kind, is entitled to enjoy all of its rights and freedoms. All of the rights in the Declaration are considered indivisible, interrelated, interdependent and universal.

These ideals have been progressively enshrined in binding international treaties. Countries that ratify the treaties are obliged to implement laws and policies that transform the fundamental human rights principles into a practical reality.

The United Nations Human Rights Office aims to make the protection and promotion of human rights a reality in the lives of people everywhere. In so doing, the Office plays a crucial role in safeguarding the integrity of the three pillars of the United Nations: peace and security, human rights, and development.



A group of Palestinian children at a United Nations Human Rights Office summer camp.

© OHCHR

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The work of the Office is focused on five broad areas: human rights standard-setting, global human rights advocacy, human rights guidance, human rights monitoring and supporting human rights implementation at country level.

International human rights law underpins all of its work, for instance in investigations of gross violations of human rights, providing human rights education to armed and police forces, assisting with institution-building in post-conflict societies or assessing States' human rights records.

OUR PRIORITIES

The Office has identified six strategic priorities:

- Countering discrimination
- Combating impunity and strengthening accountability
- Pursuing economic, social and cultural rights and combating poverty
- Protecting human rights in the context of migration
- Protecting human rights during armed conflict, violence and insecurity
- Strengthening international human rights mechanisms and the progressive development of international human rights law

HOW WE WORK

The Office is headed by the High Commissioner for Human Rights who is the leading voice on human rights globally. The High Commissioner is assisted by staff members in Geneva, New York and in the field, whose essential role is to identify, highlight and develop responses to human rights challenges in close collaboration with governments, the United Nations system, civil society, and others. The Office advocates and promotes the rights of women, children, minorities, the disabled, and other vulnerable groups.

Governments have the main responsibility for protecting the human rights of people within their countries. The role of the United Nations Human Rights Office is to assist States in meeting their human rights obligations under international human rights law. The activities of the Office include advising on national legislation to ensure it is in line with international human rights standards. The Office works with local authorities to ensure conditions for people in detention meet minimum standards and also supports access to justice and transitional justice processes to fight impunity and strengthen accountability. The Office speaks out publicly when necessary to highlight human rights violations and best practices.



Darfur women march in a campaign against gender-based violence.

© UN Photo/Albert Gonzalez-Farran

The Office also acts as the secretariat to the Human Rights Council, which is the key United Nations intergovernmental body responsible for the promotion and protection of human rights. The Council is made up of representatives of 47 Member States of the United Nations, elected by the General Assembly for three years, with the possibility of one renewal.

The Council addresses violations, works to prevent human rights abuses, responds to emergencies, serves as an international forum for human rights dialogue, and makes recommendations to the General Assembly for developing international human rights law.

The Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) assesses the human rights records of all 193 United Nations Member States every four years. The Office provides advice and expertise to States to assist them in meeting their UPR reporting requirements and in implementing its recommendations and those of other human rights mechanisms.

The Office further assists the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council who are independent human rights experts charged with investigating and reporting on 36 specific human rights thematic mandates, such as water and sanitation, food, involuntary disappearances, migrants, torture and human trafficking, and 12 mandates relating to countries or territories.

Support is also provided by the Office to the 10 committees of experts that monitor countries' compliance with the international human rights treaties they have ratified.

human rights in numbers for 2010-2011*

*OHCHR Report 2011

6 special sessions of the Human Rights Council in response to critical human rights situations

123 ratifications of international human rights treaties and their optional protocols

30 countries/territories put legislation and policies in place to ensure better access of discriminated groups to basic services, including health, water and sanitation

3 commissions of inquiry established by the Human Rights Council and two fact-finding missions

149 country visits by the independent experts, the special procedures mandate-holders

GLOBAL PRESENCE

The United Nations Human Rights Office is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland and has 58 field presences: 12 country/stand-alone offices, 12 regional offices, 18 human rights advisers and 16 human rights components of United Nations peace missions (as of July 2012).

In many countries, the United Nations Human Rights Office works with academia, media, civil society and groups independent of government to strengthen advocacy for human rights.

FUNDING

The Office is funded from the United Nations regular budget and from contributions volunteered by donors who are primarily Member States. In 2010-11, the ratio of regular budget versus voluntary contributions was approximately 40 to 60 percent.

For 2012-13, total resource requirements are expected to reach \$448 million. Of this amount, regular budget funding is expected to cover \$156 million. Donors are called upon to generously commit to provide the remaining \$292 million to fully implement the programme of work.

Almost half of the total budget is devoted to the field operations of the Office.

THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



© UN Photo/Jean-Marc Ferré

Navi Pillay, a South African national, became High Commissioner for Human Rights on 1 September 2008. Appointed by the United Nations Secretary-General and approved by the General Assembly, with due regard to geographical rotation, the post is for a fixed term of four years, with the possibility of one renewal. The High Commissioner's mandate was renewed through August 2014.

OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

PALAIS DES NATIONS
CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
+41 22 917 9000
InfoDesk@ohchr.org

PETITIONS AND COMPLAINTS
petitions@ohchr.org

DONOR AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS
dexrel@ohchr.org

CIVIL SOCIETY
+41 22 917 9656
civilsociety@ohchr.org

PUBLICATIONS
publications@ohchr.org

MEDIA
press-info@ohchr.org

- Website: www.ohchr.org
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/unitednationshumanrights
- Twitter: <http://twitter.com/unrightswire>
- YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/UNOHCHR>

Human rights for everyone everywhere



UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER