

Human Rights Law

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Introduction

The [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in 1948 lists the **fundamental human rights** that are common to all people. These rights include the right to life, the prohibition against slavery, torture and arbitrary arrest, equality before the law, and the freedom of movement, peaceful assembly, and participation in government. Subsequent international human rights treaties and state practice have elaborated upon and expanded these rights, thus making international human rights a large and complicated field.

Researchers in the field of international human rights must navigate a sometimes confusing array of treaties, reports, case law and other documents. This guide is intended to lead researchers through the primary materials and introduce important secondary sources.

Books and treatises on Human Rights can be found in the Law Library between call numbers K3230 – 3249; Humanitarian Law, KZ6471; and International Tribunals and the International Criminal Court, KZ6310.

Links to many of the human rights organizations and resources listed in this research guide can be found on the UI Law Library website – Legal Research – [International Law](#).

Background Sources

International Human Rights Systems: Treaties and Treaty Bodies

This section will give you an **overview** of the international human rights systems, both the United Nations and the regional systems. This section focuses on the **major human rights treaties**. There are many other additional human rights treaties in force. For more detailed information on how to locate the text and check the status of individual treaties, see our research guides on locating [U.S. and Non-U.S. Treaties](#).

United Nations Human Rights Treaties and Their Corresponding Treaty Bodies

There are seven main U.N. human rights treaties. Each treaty has a corresponding "**treaty body**" which administers the treaty, keeps track of state parties and their reservations and declarations, receives and responds to **reports** compiled by state parties, and often **hears complaints** lodged pursuant to the treaty.

Note: See the next section, Human Rights Case Law, for information on how to **find decisions** of the U.N. treaty bodies, courts and commissions.

Text of Treaty	Corresponding Treaty Body
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	

Finding Reports, Concluding Observations, Comments and Other Documents Relating to Treaty Bodies

Theoretically, there is a **dialogue** between the treaty body and the individual state parties to the U.N. treaties. Pursuant to the terms of the treaties, state parties are **required to report** on their progress towards attaining the goals of the treaties. In response, the treaty bodies provide the state parties with observation and comments on their reports. These documents are an important part of human rights research.

Below are some sources for locating these types of documents.

- Bayefsky.com
This site provides links to reports, concluding observations, ratifications, reservations and declarations, jurisprudence and other types of documents on the major U.N. human rights treaties. It is searchable by type of document, country or subject matter.
- United Nations Document System (ODS)
ODS is a source for **pdf copies** of U.N. documents of all sorts, including treaty body materials. It is best used when you have a U.N. document number (e.g. CERD/C/225/Add.1) and want the full-text of the document.

Regional Human Rights Systems

There are regional human rights systems **Europe, the Americas and Africa**. Below are listed the major human rights treaties for each region.

- Europe: [Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms](#)
- Americas: [American Convention on Human Rights](#)
- Africa: [African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights](#) (Banjul Charter)

Additional Sources for Human Rights Treaties

Texts of international human rights instruments ar

Status of Instruments

What does it mean to check the status of an international instrument or treaty? Checking the status includes:

- determining if the treaty is **in force**, and when it entered into force
- finding out if a country has **ratified** a treaty and has become a **state party**
-

[Guide](#) (access restricted to UI community) will help in identifying the reporters for a given jurisdiction. The official reporter will always be published in the language of the country.

Commercial print reporters, such as ***International Human Rights Reports***, often publish a **combination of cases** from international courts and national courts.

Finally, many **treaty bodies** (e.g. the U.N. Human Rights Committee) also hear complaints and publish decisions. Although not the same as a decision from a national or international court, these treaty body decisions are easily grouped together with other case law materials for the purposes of human rights research.

Multi-Institutional Sources

- ***International Human Rights Reports*** Law Library Periodicals
- [Lexis](#): Human Rights Cases Database [Legal > Area of Law, by Topic > International Law > Human Rights Cases]

Sources for Specific Courts, Commissions and Other Bodies

- *European Court of Human Rights / European Commission of Human Rights*
 - [Hudoc](#) (European Court of Human Rights)
 - [Westlaw](#): EHR-RPTS Database (1979 - present) (Court & Commission)
 - Print: ***Leading Cases of the European Court of Human Rights***, Law Library KJC 5132 A52 G85 1997
 - Print: ***Theory and Practice of the European Convention on Human Rights***, Law Library KJC 5132 D55 2006
- *Inter-American Court of Human Rights / Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (OAS)*
 - [Decisions and Judgments](#) (1987 - present) (IA Court website)
 - [Cases Published by the IACHR](#) (selective 1974 - present) (IA Commission website)
 - [Westlaw](#): IACHR-OAS Database (1994 - present) (Commission)
 - Print: ***The Inter-American Human Rights System***, Law Library KDZ578 I5 D38 1997
 - Print: ***Practice and Procedure of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights***, Law Library KDZ579 I58 P376 2003
- *U.N. Human Rights Committee (HRC)*
 - [Bayefsky.com: CCPR Jurisprudence](#)
 - [Treaty Body Database](#)

- U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)
 - [Bayefsky.com: CERD Jurisprudence](#)
 - [Treaty Body Database](#) (choose CERD, then jurisprudence)
 - U. of Minnesota Human Rights Library: [Opinions of the CERD](#)
- U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
 - [Bayefsky.com : CEDAW Jurisprudence](#)
 - U. of Minnesota Human Rights Library: [CEDAW Jurisprudence under the Optional Protocol](#)
- U.N. Committee Against Torture (CAT)
 - [Bayefsky.com: CAT Jurisprudence](#)
 - [Treaty Body Database](#) (choose CAT, then jurisprudence)
 - U. of Minnesota Human Rights Library: [Decisions and Views of the CAT under Article 22 of the Convention](#)

Country Reports

Many international organizations and some governments produce reports on the **human rights conditions in various countries**. Human rights activists and lawyers rely on these reports for asylum proceedings and when appearing before various treaty bodies and tribunals. These reports may contain detailed information on issues such as human trafficking, FGM, rape, extra judicial killings, and political prisoners, to name a few topics.

- Amnesty International, **Annual Reports** (1993 - present)
- U.S. Department of State, **Country Reports** (1993 - present). See also the [Annual Report on International Religious Freedom](#) (1999 - present) and the [Trafficking in Persons Report](#) (2001 - present).
- Human Rights Watch, **World Report** (1989 - present)
- International Committee of the Red Cross, **Annual Report** (1994 - present)
- Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, [Publications](#) (selected documents, 1962 - present)
Website includes annual reports, country reports and other publications.
Many of these are available in print.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), **The State of the World's Refugees** (five editions, published in 2006, 2000, 1997, 1995 & 1993)
Also available in print (2000, 1997, and 1995) UI Main Library K3230.S677.
- UNICEF, **The State of the World's Children** (1997 - present)
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), **Human Development Report** (1990 - present)

- Freedom House, *Freedom in the World* (2002 - present)

Foreign Law

Coverage is limited to OSCE member states. Many--but not all--of the laws are translated into English.

- [NATLEX](#)

Journals

- o [International Labour Organization](#)
- o [Council of Europe](#)
- o [Organization of American States](#)
- o [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe](#)
- o [African Union](#)

Selected Non-Governmental Organizations

- o [Amnesty International](#)
- o [Human Rights Internet](#)
- o [Human Rights Watch](#)
- o [Human Rights First](#)
- o [International Committee of the Red Cross](#)

Bibliographies and Other Research Guides

Bibliographies

Bibliographies **do some of your research for you!** They're usually a list of articles and books on a specific topic. They can save you a lot of time in your research. Human rights law is an area that offers a **wide range of bibliographies**, both general and topic-specific (trafficking, crimes of honour, human rights in Asia, etc.)

- Bibliographies from the University of Minnesota [Human Rights Library](#)
- ASIL Guide to Electronic Resources for International Law: [Human Rights](#)
- [United Nations Documentation: Research Guide on Human Rights](#)
- [International Human Rights Research Guide](#) (GlobaLex)
- [Human Rights Research: Get Started Online](#) (Harvard)
- [Human Rights Research: Frequently Asked Questions](#) (Columbia)
- [Human Rights Education Associates](#) (HREA) Guides on various topics.

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