

# International human rights instruments

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**International human rights instruments** can be classified into two categories: **declarations**, adopted by bodies such as the United Nations General Assembly, which are not legally binding although they may be politically so; and **conventions**, which are legally binding instruments concluded under international law. It should be noted that international treaties can, over time, obtain the status of customary international law.

International human rights instruments can be divided further into **global instruments**, to which any state in the world can be a party, and **regional instruments**, which are restricted to states in a particular region of the world.

Most conventions establish mechanisms to oversee their implementation. In some cases these mechanisms have relatively little power, and are often ignored by member states; in other cases these mechanisms have great political and legal authority, and their decisions are almost always implemented. Examples of the first case include the UN treaty committees, while the best exemplar of the second case is the European Court of Human Rights.

Mechanisms also vary as to the degree of individual access to them. Under some conventions – e.g. the European Convention on Human Rights (as it currently exists) – individuals are permitted automatically to take individual cases to the enforcement mechanisms; under most, however, (e.g. the UN conventions) individual access is contingent on the acceptance of that right by each state party, either by a declaration at the time of ratification or accession, or through ratification of or accession to a protocol to the convention. This is part of the evolution of international law over the last several decades. It has moved from a body of laws governing states to recognizing the importance of individuals and their rights within the international legal framework.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights are sometimes referred to as the **international bill of rights**.

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## Declarations

- Declaration of the Rights of the Child 1923
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948)
- American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man (OAS, 1948)
- Cairo Declaration of Human Rights (OIC, 1990)
- Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN, 2007)

## Conventions

### Global

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
- International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (ICSPCA)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
- Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- Convention Against Torture (CAT)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (MWC)
- Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance

### Regional: Africa

- African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
- Maputo Protocol

### Regional: America

- American Convention on Human Rights
- Inter-American Convention to Prevent and Punish Torture
- Inter-American Convention on Forced Disappearance of Persons
- Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women
- Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities

### Regional: Europe

- European Convention on Human Rights
- European Convention on Torture
- European Social Charter

## See also

- Universal jurisdiction
- Rule of Law in Armed Conflicts Project (RULAC)
- International Criminal Court (established in 2002)
- Human rights treaty bodies

## External links

- International Human Rights Instruments - U.N. list (<http://www.ohchr.org/english/law>)

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