

INTERNATIONAL MECHANISMS FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

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Annotation: *This article explores the pivotal role of the United Nations (UN) in the promotion and protection of human rights across the globe. It examines the institutional framework and mechanisms established under the UN Charter and international treaties to ensure state accountability and safeguard human dignity. The paper distinguishes between charter-based and treaty-based bodies, analyzes their functions and limitations, and assesses the overall effectiveness of the UN human rights protection system. Despite existing challenges such as political selectivity and weak enforcement mechanisms, the UN remains the cornerstone of the international human rights regime.*

Keywords: *United Nations, human rights, international law, protection mechanisms, Human Rights Council, treaty bodies, Universal Periodic Review.*

INTRODUCTION

Human rights are the foundation of dignity, freedom, and equality for every individual. After the atrocities of World War II, the international community recognized the urgent need to establish a global framework for the protection of human rights. The United Nations (UN), founded in 1945, became the central institution tasked with promoting and safeguarding these rights worldwide. Over the past decades, the UN has developed a comprehensive system of treaties, bodies, and mechanisms aimed at ensuring the respect and enforcement of human rights norms by member states. This paper examines the role of the United Nations in human rights protection and explores the international mechanisms designed to safeguard these rights.

The UN Charter itself enshrines the promotion of human rights as one of the organization's core purposes. Articles 1(3) and 55 emphasize international cooperation in promoting universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The General Assembly (GA) and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) are the main organs that oversee human rights work at the political level. However, the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948 marked a historic moment, laying down a common standard of achievement for all nations.

To operationalize these principles, several UN bodies and agencies have been established. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) serves as the leading UN entity responsible for promoting and protecting human rights globally. The UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), created in 2006 to replace the former Commission on Human Rights, plays a vital role in addressing human rights violations and promoting dialogue among states. It conducts the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), through which every UN member state's human rights record is evaluated periodically.

International Mechanisms for the Protection of Human Rights. The UN's human rights protection system is built upon both charter-based and treaty-based mechanisms.

Charter-based mechanisms derive their authority from the UN Charter itself and are open to all member states. The most notable of these is the Human Rights Council, which holds regular sessions to discuss urgent issues, establish special procedures, and appoint independent experts known as Special Rapporteurs. These experts monitor, investigate, and report on human rights situations in specific countries or thematic areas such as freedom of expression, torture, or violence against women.

Treaty-based mechanisms are established under specific international human rights treaties. There are currently ten core human rights treaty bodies, including the Human Rights Committee (ICCPR), the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). These committees monitor state compliance with treaty obligations by reviewing periodic reports submitted by states and issuing concluding observations. In some cases, they can also receive individual complaints when states have accepted this competence.

Another essential mechanism is the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), introduced in 2008. The UPR is a peer-review process where states examine each other's human rights performance. It is considered one of the most innovative and inclusive mechanisms, ensuring that all countries, regardless of size or power, are held accountable for their human rights records.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) and other specialized international tribunals, such as the International Criminal Court (ICC), also contribute to human rights protection by holding states and individuals accountable for violations such as genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

Despite the impressive institutional framework, the UN's human rights protection system faces several challenges. Political selectivity and double standards often undermine the credibility of the Human Rights Council. Powerful states sometimes escape scrutiny due to political alliances or veto powers within the Security Council. Additionally, the enforcement of human rights decisions remains weak since most UN bodies lack binding authority.

Financial and logistical limitations also hinder the effective implementation of recommendations at the national level. Nevertheless, these mechanisms have contributed significantly to raising awareness, promoting dialogue, and pressuring states to improve their human rights practices.

The adoption of universal norms, such as those enshrined in the International Bill of Human Rights, and the increasing involvement of civil society organizations demonstrate the gradual strengthening of the global human rights regime.

To conclude, The United Nations has played a transformative role in establishing and advancing the international human rights system. Through both charter-based and treaty-based mechanisms, it has created a comprehensive framework that promotes accountability and transparency among states.

While challenges persist—particularly regarding enforcement and political influence—the existence of these mechanisms has undeniably enhanced the global commitment to human dignity and justice.

Continued reform, stronger cooperation among states, and genuine political will remain essential for ensuring that the universal ideals of human rights become a reality for all.

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