

Contribution to European Commission's Rule of Law report

2025



UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
Regional Office Europe

RULE OF LAW & HUMAN RIGHTS

The 'rule of law' is a concept at the heart of the United Nations' mission. It refers to a principle of governance which is consistent with international human rights standards ([S/2004/616](#)). There is no rule of law within societies if human rights are not protected and human rights cannot be protected in societies without a strong rule of law. This interlinkage is reiterated by the UN Secretary-General in his [New Vision for the Rule of Law](#): *"Human rights and the rule of law are mutually reinforcing – the advancement of the rule of law is essential for the protection of all human rights, and human rights are central to the rule of law."*

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR, also known as UN Human Rights Office) is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote and protect the enjoyment and full realization, by all people, of all human rights. As part of its mandate, OHCHR works to mainstream human rights to strengthen the rule of law ([Management Plan 2024 - 2027](#)).

Established in 2009, OHCHR Regional Office for Europe (ROE) aims to advance the protection and promotion of human rights in the European Union and its member States. ROE works to mainstream international human rights standards to strengthen the rule of law in the EU by engaging in and contributing to the European Commission's Rule of Law Report. ROE furthermore promotes the UN human rights mechanisms and processes by giving their work visibility at the regional level.

OHCHR ROE'S CONTRIBUTION

The contribution by OHCHR Regional Office for Europe (ROE) is grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and nine international human rights treaties:

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CAT)
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CERD)
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICMW)
- International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CPED)

The current submission consists of a compilation of findings and recommendations contained in reports of UN international human rights mechanisms including human rights treaty bodies, special procedures and the Universal Periodic Review of the UN Human Rights Council. It also includes statements and reports by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and his Office.

UN HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISM

Each of the nine international human rights treaties creates a **human rights treaty body or committee of independent experts** to monitor the implementation of the provisions of the treaty. With the support from OHCHR, the treaty bodies:

- consider reports submitted by State parties detailing how they are implementing the treaty;
- adopt general comments interpreting the treaty provisions, and organize discussions on themes related to the treaties; and
- consider complaints (communications) from individuals alleging that their rights have been violated by a State party, provided that the State has accepted the complaints procedure.

The **UN Human Rights Council (HRC)** is a subsidiary body of the UN General Assembly and the main intergovernmental body within the UN responsible for human rights. It meets at the UN Office at Geneva in three regular sessions each year, and may convene special sessions to respond to urgent human rights situations. The HRC benefits from substantive, technical, and secretariat support from OHCHR.

The **special procedures of the UN Human Rights Council** are independent human rights experts with mandates to report and advise on human rights from a thematic or country-specific perspective. As of November 2024, there are 46 thematic and 14 country mandates. With the support of OHCHR, special procedures undertake country visits, act on individual cases of alleged violations and concerns of a broader nature by sending communications (letters of allegation) to States and other entities; contribute to the development of international human rights standards; and engage in advocacy.

The **Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the UN Human Rights Council** is a State-led mechanism that conducts a peer review of the human rights situation of each UN Member State once every 4.5 years. It is carried out by the UPR Working Group of the Human Rights Council. In each review, the State under review reports on the actions it has taken to improve its human rights situation and overcome challenges to the enjoyment of human rights. It also receives recommendations from UN Member States for improvement. In addition to the national reports of States under review, the UPR is informed by compilations of stakeholder information and UN system reports.

In recent years, States have established **National Mechanisms for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up (NMIRF)**, some of whom with the technical assistance of UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). This mechanism, which is often based within the ministry of foreign affairs, has a mandate which includes following-up on all treaty body obligations, UPR recommendations, as well as recommendations from other international and regional human rights mechanisms, and generally works closely with government ministries, national human rights institutions and civil society organizations. (See: [National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up: A Study of State engagement with International Human Rights Mechanisms](#); [A Practical Guide to Effective State Engagement with International Human Rights Mechanisms](#))

The **Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)** also known as **UN Human Rights Office** is the main human rights entity of the UN to protect and promote all human rights for everyone everywhere. The High Commissioner for Human Rights leads OHCHR. He is the principal human rights official of the United Nations.

INSIDE THE CONTRIBUTION

OHCHR Regional Office for Europe (ROE)'s contribution is country-specific and encompasses all 27 Member States of the European Union and 4 enlargement countries (Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) during the reporting period of 2024. An overview of the work of international human rights monitoring bodies on the 27 EU member States and 4 enlargement countries can be found below. Country-specific contributions are available in separate documents.

- **Universal Periodic Review (UPR)**

- UPR 4th cycle, 44th session (6 - 17 Nov 2023): Germany (report adopted in 2024)
- UPR 4th cycle, 45th session (22 Jan 2024 - 2 Febr 2024): Malta
- UPR 4th cycle, 46th session (29 Apr 2024 - 10 May 2024): Cyprus, North Macedonia, Slovakia
- UPR 4th cycle, 47th session (4 - 15 Nov 2024): Albania, Portugal
- Forthcoming: UPR 4th cycle: 48th session (20 - 31 Jan 2025): Italy, Slovenia; 49th session (28 Apr 2025 - 9 May 2025): Spain, Sweden

- **Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)**

- 114th Session (25 Nov 2024 - 13 Dec 2024): Greece
- 112th Session (8 - 26 Apr 2024): Albania

- **Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)**

- 75th session (12 Feb 2024 – 01 Mar 2024): Ireland, Romania, Sweden
- 76th session (9 Sept 2024 – 27 Sept 2024): Albania, Cyprus, Poland
- Forthcoming: 77th session (10 Feb 2025 – 28 Feb 2025): Croatia

- **Human Rights Committee (CCPR)**

- 140th session (4 - 28 Mar 2024): Serbia
- 141st session (1 - 23 Jul 2024): Croatia, Malta
- 142nd session (14 Oct 2024- 7 Nov 2024): France, Greece
- Forthcoming: 143rd session (3 - 28 Mar 2025): Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia

- **Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD)**

- 30th Session (4 - 22 Mar 2024): Sweden
- 31st Session (12 Aug 2024 - 5 Sep 2024): Belgium, Denmark, The Netherlands
- Forthcoming: 32nd Session (3 - 21 Mar 2025): European Union

- **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**

- 87th Session (29 Jan 2024 - 16 Feb 2024): Greece, Italy
- 88th Session (13 - 31 May 2024): Estonia, Montenegro
- Forthcoming: 90th Session (3 - 21 Feb 2025): Luxembourg

- **Committee against Torture (CAT)**

- 79th Session (15 Apr 2024 - 10 May 2024): Austria, Finland, North Macedonia
- Forthcoming: 82nd Session (7 Apr 2025 - 2 May 2025): France

- **Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**

- 95th Session (15 Jan 2024 - 2 Feb 2024): Lithuania, Bulgaria
- 96th Session (6 - 24 May 2024): Estonia
- Forthcoming: 98th Session (13 - 31 Jan 2025): Slovakia, Spain; 99th Session (5 - 23 May 2025): Romania

- **Visit by Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (SPT)**
 - Greece (6 - 17 Oct 2024)
 - Albania (14 - 20 Apr 2024)
- **Visit by expert mechanisms of the UN Human Rights Council**
 - Italy: The International Independent Expert Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice and Equality in the Context of Law Enforcement (from 2 to 10 May 2024)
- **Visits by special procedures of the UN Human Rights Council**
 - Denmark: The Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity (8 - 18 Apr 2024)
 - Finland and Sweden: The Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence (11 - 22 Mar 2024).
 - Germany: The Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights visited Germany (28 Nov - 9 Dec 2022) (Report presented in 2024)
 - Germany and Macedonia: The Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism (3 - 12 July 2023) (Report presented in 2024)
 - Lithuania: The Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy (12 - 16 Dec 2022)
 - The Netherlands: The Special Rapporteur on right to adequate housing (11 - 21 Dec 2023)
 - Luxembourg: The Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (7 - 26 Apr 2023)
 - Poland: The Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences (from 27 Feb - 9 Mar 2023)
 - Sweden: The Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence (11- 22 March 2024)
 - Albania: The Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (1 - 12 July 2024) (Report forthcoming, to be presented in 2025)
 - Serbia: The Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression (28 Mar - 6 Apr 2023)
 - Montenegro: The Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers (19 - 26 Sept 2023) (Report presented in 2024)
- **Reports by special procedures of the UN Human Rights Council**
 - The Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression on global threats to freedom of expression arising from the conflict in Gaza ([A/79/319](#))
 - The Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression presented a thematic report on journalists in exile ([A/HRC/56/53](#))
 - The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders on contributions made by human rights defenders to achieving the Sustainable Development Goal ([A/79/123](#))
- **Communication letters by special procedures of the UN Human Rights Council**
 - To Cyprus ([CYP 1/2024](#)) dated 14 Feb 2024; ([CYP 2/2024](#)) dated 27 June 2024; ([CYP 4/2024](#)) dated 24 Sept 2024
 - To France ([FRA 5/2024](#)) dated 4 July 2024
 - To Hungary ([OL HUN 1/2023](#)) dated 8 Dec 2023
 - To Spain ([ESP 5/2025](#)) dated 29 Aug 2024; ([ESP 1/2024](#)) dated 12 Feb 2024
 - To Montenegro ([MNE 1/2024](#)) dated 8 March 2024; ([MNE 2/2024](#)) dated 20 August 2024
 - To Serbia ([SRB 1/2024](#)) dated 20 Feb 2024; ([SRB 2/2024](#)) dated 30 Apr 2024; ([SRB 3/2024](#)) dated 1 July 2024
- **The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)**
 - The High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a [statement](#) dated 23 May 2024 welcoming the UN General Assembly resolution ([A/RES/78/282](#)) to commemorate 1995 genocide in Srebrenica
 - The Office published a report on the question of human rights in Cyprus ([A/HRC/55/20](#))



