

Overview of International Human Rights Law

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(A concise, organized guide for quick reference)

1. Foundations & Core Concepts

Concept	Description
Human Rights	Inherent, universal entitlements belonging to every person by virtue of being human.
Universality	Rights apply to all individuals, regardless of nationality, race, gender, religion, or any other status.
Indivisibility & Interdependence	Civil?political, economic?social, and cultural rights are mutually reinforcing; progress in one area supports the others.
Non?Discrimination	Equality before the law; states must protect rights without unjustified distinction.
State Obligations	(a) Respect – refrain from violating rights; (b) Protect – safeguard individuals from third?party abuses; (c) Fulfill – adopt policies and provide resources to realize rights.

2. Historical Milestones

Year	Event	Significance
1945	United Nations Charter	Established the UN’s commitment to promote human rights.
1948	Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)	First global articulation of fundamental rights; normative reference for later treaties.
1966	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) & International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)	Form the International Bill of Human Rights ; legally binding on ratifying states.
1976	Additional Protocols to the ICCPR	Expand protections (e.g., abolition of the death penalty, protection of minorities).

Overview of International Human Rights Law

Year	Event	Significance
1993	Vienna Declaration & Programme of Action	Re-affirmed universality, introduced the principle of “ human rights education. ”
2006	UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) replaces the Commission on Human Rights	Strengthens monitoring and accountability mechanisms.
2011 – 2023	Emerging instruments (e.g., UN Guiding Principles on Business & Human Rights , Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons)	Extend human rights norms to new actors and issues.

3. Principal International Human Rights Instruments

Instrument	Type	Year Adopted	Core Scope
UDHR	Declaration (non-binding)	1948	30 articles covering civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights.
ICCPR	Treaty	1966	Civil & political rights (e.g., freedom of expression, fair trial, prohibition of torture).
ICESCR	Treaty	1966	Economic, social & cultural rights (e.g., right to work, health, education).
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)	Treaty	1979	Gender equality across political, economic, social, and cultural spheres.
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	Treaty	1989	Rights of children, including survival, development, protection, and participation.
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)	Treaty	2006	Full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by persons with disabilities.

Overview of International Human Rights Law

Instrument	Type	Year Adopted	Core Scope
Convention Against Torture (CAT)	Treaty	1984	Prohibits torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.

**International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICR