

Human Rights Glossary

Affirmative action: action taken by a government or private institution to make up for past discrimination in education or employment.

African Charter on Human and People's Rights (African Charter): a Regional human rights treaty for the African continent adopted by the Organisation of Africa Unity (OAU) in 1981.

Alternative care: In the event of the biological family not being able to take care of a child (because of death or illness of the parent(s), violence in the family, abuse or neglect of the child or family breakdown), state authorities or the court determine whether it is in the best interest of the child to be placed in alternative care. (*Based on the CRC*)

American Convention on Human Rights (American Convention): a human rights treaty adopted by the Organisation for American States (OAS) in 1969. It covers North, Central and South America.

Antigypsyism/anti-Roma racism: A specific form of racism, an ideology founded on racial superiority, a form of dehumanisation and institutional racism nurtured by historical discrimination, which is expressed, *inter alia*, by violence, hate speech, exploitation, stigmatisation and the most blatant kind of discrimination towards people and groups (perceived as) Roma by individuals or by institutions. A belief and a treatment of Roma as inferior people, based on stereotypes, prejudices and systemic discrimination.

Antisemitism: fear, hatred, resentment, suspicion, prejudice, discrimination or unfair treatment of people of Jewish origin or those who confess Judaism. Modern forms of antisemitism include Holocaust denial. A certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred towards Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and / or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities. (IHRA working definition <https://holocaustremembrance.com>). Discrimination, prejudice, hostility or violence against Jews as Jews, or Jewish institutions as Jewish (Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism www.jerusalemdeclaration.org).

Bullying: Bullying refers to aggressive behavior which is repeated and intends to hurt someone. It can take the form of physical, psychological or verbal aggression. Bullying can be direct, confronting a person face-to-face, or indirect by spreading rumours or harming someone over the Internet, for example.

Codification, Codify: the process of formalising law or rights into written instruments.

Collective rights: the rights of groups to protect their interests and identities; sometimes referred to as part of 'third generation rights'.

Convention: binding agreement between states; used synonymously with treaty and covenant. A convention is stronger than a declaration because it is legally binding for governments that have ratified it. When, for example, the UN General Assembly adopts a convention, member states can then ratify the convention, turning it into international law.

Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (Women's Convention, CEDAW), adopted in 1979: the first legally binding international document prohibiting discrimination against women and obligating governments to take affirmative action to advance the equality of women.

Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), adopted in 1965: a UN Convention defining and prohibiting discrimination based on race.

Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Genocide Convention), adopted in 1948: an international convention defining and prohibiting genocide; the first international treaty of the United Nations.

Convention on the Rights of the Child (Children's Convention, CRC), adopted in 1989: a convention setting forth a full spectrum of civil, cultural, economic, social, and political rights for children.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), adopted in 2006: the first convention affirming the human rights of people with disabilities of any kind, including physical and psycho-social.

Council of Europe: founded in 1949 to protect and promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Today its 46 member states cover virtually the entire continent of Europe. It is based in Strasbourg.

Covenant: binding agreement between states; used synonymously with convention and treaty. The major international human rights covenants are the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Both were adopted in 1966 and entered into force in 1976.

Declaration: Document stating agreed upon principles and standards but which is not legally binding. UN conferences, like the 1993 UN Conference on Human Rights in Vienna and the 1995 World Conference for Women in Beijing, usually produce two sets of declarations: one written by government representatives and one by nongovernmental organisations (NGOs). The UN General Assembly often issues influential but legally non-binding declarations.

Declaration on the Rights of the Child: Adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1959, this non-binding instrument sets forth ten general principles, which later formed the basis for the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which was adopted in 1989.

Democratic citizenship: refers to the active participation by individuals in the system of rights and responsibilities which is the lot of citizens in democratic societies.

Digital Environment: information and communication technologies, including the Internet, mobile and associated technologies, and devices, as well as digital networks, databases, content and services.

Discrimination: Discrimination occurs when people are treated less favorably than other people are in a comparable situation only because they belong or are perceived to belong to a certain group or category of people. People may be discriminated against because of their age, disability, ethnicity, origin, political belief, race, religion, sex or gender, sexual orientation, language, culture and on many other grounds.

Education: any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character, or physical ability of a person. It has a fundamental influence on the capabilities and potentials of individuals and communities to achieve development as well as social and economic success.

Entering into force: the process through which a treaty becomes fully binding on the states that have ratified it. This happens when the minimum number of ratifications called for by the treaty has been achieved.

Environment: the aggregate of surrounding things, conditions, or influences.

European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment: a regional human rights treaty adopted in 1987 by the Council of Europe that aims to prevent various violations against people who are detained by a public authority in places like prisons, juvenile detention centres, police stations, refugee camps or psychiatric hospitals.

European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention, European Convention on Human Rights, ECHR): A regional human rights treaty adopted in 1950 by the Council of Europe. All Council of Europe member states are party to the ECHR, and new members are expected to ratify the convention at the earliest opportunity.

European Court of Human Rights: situated in Strasbourg, it is a supra-national court, established by the European Convention on Human Rights, which provides legal recourse of last resort for individuals who feel that their human rights have been violated by a contracting party to the Convention.

European Cultural Convention: adopted by the Council of Europe in 1954, a regional treaty that provides the official framework for the Council of Europe's work on education, culture, heritage, youth and sport. A complement to the European Convention, the Cultural Convention seeks to safeguard European culture and to develop mutual understanding and the appreciation of cultural diversity among its various peoples.

European Social Charter (ESC, adopted by the Council of Europe in 1962; revised in 1996): a regional treaty that guarantees social and economic human rights; it complements the European Convention on Human Rights, which principally addresses civil and political rights.

European Union (EU): an economic and political union of member states located in Europe and committed to regional integration and social cooperation.

Evolving capacity: A principle used in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) that recommends greater exercise of a child's rights in relation to his or her growing cognitive and emotional maturity.

First-generation rights: a term referring to all civil and political human rights such as voting, expression, religion, assembly, fair trials, and life. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) principally codifies these rights. Because the term suggests a hierarchy of civil and political rights over second generation rights, or economic and social rights, it is increasingly falling from use.

Formal education: structured education system that runs from primary school to university and includes specialised programmes for technical and professional training.

Gender: a social construct that informs roles, attitudes, values and relationships regarding women and men. While sex is determined by biology, gender is determined by society, almost always functioning to subordinate women to men.

Gender Equality: equal visibility, empowerment and participation of both sexes in all spheres of public and private life. Gender equality is the opposite of gender inequality, not of gender difference, and aims to promote the full participation of women and men in society.

Geneva Conventions: four treaties of humanitarian law adopted in 1949 under the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Geneva, Switzerland. These treaties revise and expanded original treaties adopted in 1864 and 1929. They address the treatment of sick and wounded soldiers and sailors, prisoners of war and civilians under enemy control.

Genocide: acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.

Hate Speech: Advocacy, promotion or incitement, in any form, of the denigration, hatred or vilification of a person or group of persons, as well as any harassment, insult, negative stereotyping, stigmatisation or threat in respect of such a person or group of persons and the justification of all the preceding types of expression, on the ground of “race”, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, language, religion or belief, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation and other personal characteristics or status (ECRI).

Health: a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

Humanitarian law: the body of law, mainly based on the Geneva Conventions, that protects certain persons in times of armed conflict, helps victims and limits the methods and means of combat in order to minimise destruction, loss of life and unnecessary human suffering.

Human rights framework: the evolving and interrelated body of international instruments that define human rights and establish mechanisms to promote and protect them.

Human rights instruments: any formal, written document of a state or states that sets forth rights as non-binding principles (a declaration) or codifies rights that are legally binding on those states that ratify them (a covenant, treaty, or convention).

Inalienable: refers to rights that belong to every person and cannot be taken from a person under any circumstances.

Indivisible: refers to the equal importance of each human rights law. A person cannot be denied a human right on the grounds that it is ‘less important’ or ‘non-essential’.

Informal education: the lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from the educational influences and resources in his or her own environment and from daily experience (e.g. with family and neighbours, in the marketplace and library, from the mass media and play).

Interdependent: refers to the complementary framework of human rights law. For example, your ability to participate in your government is directly affected by your right to express yourself, to get an education and even to obtain the necessities of life.

Intergovernmental organisations (IGOs): organisations sponsored by several governments that seek to coordinate their efforts; some are regional (e.g. the Council of Europe, the Organisation of African Unity), some are alliances (e.g. the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, NATO); and some are dedicated to a specific purpose (e.g. the World Health Organisation [WHO]).

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR): adopted in 1966, the ICCPR establishes that all people have a broad range of civil and political rights and sets up ways to monitor their respect by the member states.

International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR): adopted in 1966, the ICESCR establishes that all people have a broad range of economic, social and cultural rights.

International Labour Organisation (ILO): established in 1919 as part of the Versailles Peace Treaty, the ILO became a specialized agency of the UN in 1946. Under its mandate to improve working conditions and promote social justice, the ILO has passed a number of conventions pertaining to the human rights of children, especially concerning child labour.

Lanzarote Convention (European Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse): an international treaty adopted in 2007 by the Council of Europe to prevent and combat sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, to seek protection of victims and to promote national and international co-operation in the process of implementation of the foreseen measures in the treaty.

Member States: states that are members of an intergovernmental organisation (e.g. the United Nations, the Council of Europe).

Migration: Migration is a process of moving, either across an international border or within a country, encompassing any kind of movement of people, regardless of the causes.

Non-formal education: Any planned programme of personal and social education outside the formal education curriculum that is designed to improve a range of knowledge, skills and competencies.

Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs): organisations formed by people outside of government. NGOs monitor the proceedings of human rights bodies such as the Human Rights Council of the United Nations and are the ‘watchdogs’ of the human rights that fall within their mandate. Some are large and international (e.g. the Red Cross, Amnesty International, the Scouts); others may be small and local (e.g. an organisation to advocate for people with disabilities in a particular city; a coalition to promote women’s rights in one refugee camp).

Ombudsman/offices: a person or office established to safeguard the rights of individual citizens, or a particular group of citizens, in relation to the powers and actions of government (ENOC).

Optional Protocol: a treaty that modifies another treaty adding additional procedures or provisions). It is called ‘optional’ because a government that has ratified the original treaty can choose whether or not to ratify the changes made in the protocol.

Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (2000): amendment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) that raises the minimum age for participation in armed conflict from the original fifteen to eighteen years.

Race: A term used to separate people into groups based on their appearance (or other factors), which has no scientific basis. There is only one human race.

Racism: the belief that a ground such as perceived ‘race’, skin colour, language, religion, nationality or national or ethnic origin justifies contempt for a person or a group of persons, or the notion of superiority of a person or a group of persons.

Participation: Participation and active citizenship is about having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and, where necessary, the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society. (Compass: Manual for Human Rights Education with young people, Human Rights Themes)

Peace: Peace is a way of living together so that all members of society can accomplish their human rights.

Positive discrimination: see affirmative action.

Poverty: a human condition characterized by sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.

Race: A term used to separate people into groups based on their appearance or other factors, which has no scientific basis. There is only one human "race".

Racism: the belief that people’s qualities are influenced by their ethnic group or tribe and that the members of other groups and tribes (“races”) are not as good as the members of their own, or the resulting unfair treatment of members of other “races”.

Ratification, Ratify: process by which the legislative body of a state confirms a government’s action in signing a treaty; formal procedure by which a state becomes bound to a treaty after acceptance.

Reservation: the exceptions that states parties make to a treaty (e.g. provisions that they do not agree to follow). Reservations, however, may not undermine the fundamental meaning of the treaty.

Second-generation rights: a term referring to economic, social and cultural rights, such as an adequate standard of living, health care, housing and education. The International Covenant on Economic, Social,

and Cultural Rights principally codifies these rights. Because the term suggests a hierarchy of civil and political rights over economic and social rights, it is increasingly falling from usage.

Sexual abuse: sexual activities of an adult with a child who, according to provisions of national law, has not reached the legal age for sexual activity.

Sexual exploitation: abuse or exploitation of another person's sexuality without consent, for the perpetrators own advantage or benefit, or for the benefit or advantage of anyone other than the one being exploited. It includes causing the prostitution of another person; electronically recording, photographing, or transmitting intimate or sexual utterances, sounds or images of another person.

Sexual trafficking: the illegal business of recruiting, harboring, transporting, obtaining, or providing a person and especially a minor for the purpose of sex.

Shadow report: an unofficial report prepared by institutes or individuals representing civil society submitted to a committee monitoring a human rights treaty. Such reports usually contradict or add to the official report on treaty compliance and implementation submitted by a government as part of its treaty obligations.

Solidarity rights: see collective rights.

Special Rapporteur: a person chosen by a UN human rights body to report on a particular theme (e.g. on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; on violence against women) or on the human rights situation in a particular country.

Stereotype: an oversimplified, generalised and often unconscious preconception about people or ideas that may lead to prejudice and discrimination.

Third generation rights: see collective rights.

Trafficking in human beings: recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. (Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings)

Treaty: formal agreement between states that defines and modifies their mutual duties and obligations; used synonymously with convention and covenant. When member states ratify a treaty that has been adopted by the UN General Assembly, the articles of that treaty become part of its domestic legal obligations.

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization): it seeks to build peace through international cooperation in Education, the Sciences and Culture. UNESCO develops educational tools to help people live as global citizens free of hate and intolerance and to support each child's access to quality education.

UNICEF (the United Nations Children's Fund): mandated by the United Nations General Assembly, UNICEF advocates for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. UNICEF is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and strives to establish it as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behaviour towards children.

Universality: a principle that all human rights are held by all persons in all states and societies in the world.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Universal Declaration, UDHR): adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10 December 1948. A primary UN document establishing human rights standards and norms which all member states have agreed to uphold. Although the declaration was intended to be non-binding, through time its various provisions have become so widely recognized that it can now be said to be customary international law.

Violence: intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.

World Health Organisation (WHO): an intergovernmental organisation under the auspices of the United Nations that works to promote health worldwide.

Xenophobia: A fear of foreigners, of persons from other countries or of things foreign generally. Xenophobia can lead to discrimination, racism, violence and even armed conflict against foreigners.