

Defense of human rights

Everybody has the right to promote, develop and protect human rights by lawful and peaceful means. Such peaceful means include the rights to freedom of expression, association and movement, and the right to take part in the conduct of public affairs.

According to the 1998 United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, states have the prime responsibility to take all necessary steps to ensure the protection of those who defend human rights. Although the Declaration is not legally binding, it draws together provisions from other conventions and covenants most relevant to human rights defenders that are legally binding.

The right to freedom of speech and expression

This right is vital for many activities relating to the defence of human rights. For example, people have the right to seek, obtain, receive and hold information about human rights and human rights violations.

States should ensure that people are able to peacefully protest, publicize and circulate information and criticize the failure of governments to protect or promote human rights.

International standards

Articles 6, 8 [UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders](#)

Article 19 [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)

Article 19 [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#)

Regional standards

Article 9 [African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights](#)

[Declaration of principles on freedom of expression in Africa](#)

Article 13 [American Convention on Human Rights](#)

Article IV [American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man](#)

[Inter-American Declaration on principles of freedom of expression](#)

Article 10 [European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights](#)

Article 32 [Arab Charter on Human Rights \(2004\)](#)

The right to peaceful assembly

People have a right to assemble together to promote and protect human rights through peaceful protest or the expression of their views.

States have a responsibility to ensure that people are able to demonstrate peacefully and express their views without facing threats, intimidation or violence.

International standards

Articles 5, 12 [HYPERLINK "http://www.unhcr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/\(Symbol\)/A.RES.53.144.En?OpenDocument"](http://www.unhcr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/(Symbol)/A.RES.53.144.En?OpenDocument)
[http://www.unhcr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/\(Symbol\)/A.RES.53.144.En?OpenDocument](http://www.unhcr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/(Symbol)/A.RES.53.144.En?OpenDocument)>UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders

Article 20 < [HYPERLINK "http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html"](http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html) <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>>Universal

Declaration of Human Rights

Article 21 < HYPERLINK "http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/ccpr.htm"

<http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/ccpr.htm>>International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Regional standards

Article 11 [African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights](#)

Article 15 [American Convention on Human Rights](#)

Article XX1 [American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man](#)

Article 11 [European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights](#)

Article 28 [Arab Charter on Human Rights \(2004\)](#)

The right to freedom of association

States have an obligation to ensure that people are free to form and participate in associations to promote and protect human rights. This includes being able to seek and receive resources, to organise and to peacefully promote and protect human rights in association with others.

International standards

Articles 1, 5 [UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders](#)

Article 20 [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)

Article 22 [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#)

Article 8 [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#)

Regional standards

Article 10 [African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights](#)

Article 16 [American Convention on Human Rights](#)

Article 4(h) [Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women](#)

Article XXII [American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man](#)

Article 11 [European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights](#)

Article 24 [Arab Charter on Human Rights \(2004\)](#)

The right to freedom of movement

States have an obligation to ensure that everyone who is lawfully within their territory has freedom of movement to investigate, promote and protect human rights. This includes being able to freely leave and re-enter one's own country.

International standards

Article 13 [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)

Article 12 [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#)

Regional standards

Article 12 [African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights](#)

Article 22 [American Convention on Human Rights](#)

Articles 2, 3 [Fourth Protocol to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms](#)

Article 27 [Arab Charter on Human Rights \(2004\)](#)

The right to take part in the conduct of public affairs

Everyone has the right to participate in the conduct of public affairs, either through direct involvement or through the election of representatives. The conduct of public affairs refers to the exercise of political power and the development and implementation of policy in all areas of public administration.

International standards

Article 8 [UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders](#)

Article 25 [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#)

Article 7 [Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women](#)

Article 21 [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)

Regional standards

Article 13 [African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights](#)

Article 23 [American Convention on Human Rights](#)

Article 24 [Arab Charter on Human Rights \(2004\)](#)

The right to receive and impart information

People have a right to seek, obtain and hold information about human rights. Individuals and groups are entitled to access to national, regional and international information regarding human rights.

States must ensure that people have unobstructed access to all forms of media, including the Internet. Everyone should also be free to submit complaints of human rights violations to human rights mechanisms without obstruction or hindrance.

International standards

Article 6 [UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders](#)

Regional standards

Article 9 [African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights](#)

Article 13 [American Convention on Human Rights](#)

Article 10 [European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights](#)

Article 32 [Arab Charter on Human Rights \(2004\)](#)

[The Compilation of International and Regional Instruments for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders](#) by International Service for Human Rights is a useful reference manual on rights for human rights defenders.