

Understanding the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) – the Basics

Video transcript

The Universal Periodic Review, or the UPR, is one of the most accessible human rights mechanisms of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

It's a useful tool for human rights defenders, and the reason is right there in the name.

It is **universal**, covering all 193 States and all human rights; civil, political, economic, social and cultural.

It is **periodic**, meaning that the process is regular and predictable, with each State reviewed approximately every five years.

And it is a peer **review** process, where other States can make recommendations to your country on its human rights progress.

The scope and breadth of the UPR means that you, as a human rights defender, can use it to raise awareness of the human rights situation in your country and to hold States accountable.

Although the UPR process is led by States, you can take part at every stage in a variety of ways.

Before the review begins

The review is based on information submitted in national, UN and civil society reports. By inputting into these reports, you can influence the content and course of the review itself.

For example you might participate in a national consultation or lobby your government directly to make sure they include your concerns in the official State report.

You can also prepare your own civil society report highlighting the most pressing human rights issues in your country. And you don't have to do this alone! Working with partners and other civil society actors can help amplify your voice and impact.

You could also use a UPR Pre-session to meet with delegates from other States and encourage them to raise certain issues. This is particularly effective because the States conducting the review do not necessarily know the human rights situation on the ground.

During the Review



The review itself happens in Geneva and takes the form of an interactive dialogue. This is where reports are considered and States make their recommendations. The State under review can then either accept the recommendations or note them.

While only representatives of [UN] Member States are permitted to speak during the interactive dialogue you can still follow the session, and raise awareness of proceedings through the media.

When the UPR outcome report is later presented for adoption by the Human Rights Council, you have the option to make an oral statement. This can be a good opportunity to highlight issues raised during the UPR.

After the review

It might seem that once the review in Geneva is finished then it's all over for the next 5 years. But this is not the case!

Your country is expected to implement the recommendations it has received before the next review.

By publicizing the recommendations and engaging in advocacy, you can help keep the focus on their implementation. You can also monitor progress by producing a UPR mid-term report.

Each and every country in the world has a responsibility to protect human rights. Through the Universal Periodic Review, human rights defenders can ensure States abide by human rights standards, live up to their commitments and promote and protect the rights of all.