

Understanding the Basics video transcript: Treaty Bodies

The United Nations human rights system is based on a number of key documents and agreements, including nine core treaties.

These treaties cover some of the most basic, fundamental rights and freedoms that should be available to and enjoyed by everyone.

When a country ratifies a treaty, it is bound to uphold those rights and freedoms; protecting them in its laws and for its people.

The UN created the Treaty Bodies to monitor the implementation of these treaties on the ground. They're there to make sure every country is living up to its responsibilities and obligations.

There are 10 Treaty Bodies or Committees, made up of independent international experts. They vary in size from around 10 to 25 members.

A Treaty Body can examine any violation of the rights enshrined in a particular treaty. They can make recommendations, examine individual cases, and monitor situations over time.

Treaty Bodies are often a mediator; offering definitive interpretations of international laws and giving advice on how they should be applied to real situations.

Their recommendations have influenced many national laws, policies and institutions around the world.

Although the Committee Members are elected by States, they serve as individuals rather than representatives of their countries, and so are not influenced by national interests.

What really sets the Treaty Bodies apart is the level of scrutiny and focus they bring. Of all UN human rights mechanisms, they are able to go right into the detail of an issue and propose solutions based on binding international human rights norms.

Treaty Bodies are open and accessible. They rely on defenders like you to tell them what's going on locally.

Whether it's by filing a complaint about a specific human rights violation in your country, contributing to the development of general comments, or by actively participating in country reviews, you can use Treaty Bodies to protect and promote human rights and push for change in your community.