

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The United Kingdom (UK) is a Member State of the Council of Europe (COE) and of the United Nations (UN), and has human rights obligations at the regional and universal levels.

Regional: European System



As a Member of the COE, the UK has ratified the European Convention on Human Rights and is subject to the jurisdiction of the [European Court of Human Rights](#). The UK has ratified the European Social Charter, but has not authorized the [European Committee of Social Rights](#) to decide collective complaints against it. Its human rights policies and practices are also monitored by the [COE Commissioner for Human Rights](#), who identifies gaps in human rights protection, conducts country visits, engages in dialogue with States, and prepares thematic reports and advice.

Individuals and groups have submitted complaints of human rights violations committed by the UK to the European Court of Human Rights. For example, the Court considered the case of a male widower who was denied the social security benefits that would be provided to a female widow, and held that the State had violated the man's right to freedom from discrimination. See ECtHR, [Willis v. the United Kingdom](#), no. 36042/97, ECHR 2002, Judgment of 11 September 2002. Additionally, the Court may grant [interim measures](#) to protect people in urgent situations of risk in the UK.

As a State party to the European Social Charter, the UK must submit yearly reports to the European Committee of Social Rights on its implementation of the Charter's provisions.

The UK is a [party](#) to the following **regional human rights treaties**:

- European Convention on Human Rights and several of its [protocols](#)
- European Social Charter
- COE Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
- COE Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
- European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

United Nations System

As a UN Member State, the UK is subject to the oversight of various [UN human rights bodies](#), including the [Human Rights Council](#) and its [Universal Periodic Review](#) and thematic [special procedures](#). As a party to specific universal human rights treaties, the UK's policies and practices are monitored by UN [treaty bodies](#). It has accepted the complaints procedure of two treaty bodies.

The UK has ratified the following **UN human rights treaties**:

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)

The UK has submitted a reservation, declaration, or understanding that modifies its obligations under the following treaties: [ICCPR](#), [ICESCR](#), [CAT](#), [CEDAW](#), [CRPD](#), [CRC](#), and [CERD](#).

The UK has also ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR aimed at abolishing the death penalty, and optional protocols to the CRC addressing children in armed conflict and the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography. The UK has a duty to submit **State reports** to the UN treaty body associated with each UN human rights treaty the UK has ratified. These reports must be submitted on a periodic basis and describe the steps the UK has taken to implement the treaty provisions.

The UK has also ratified [optional protocols](#) and made appropriate declarations allowing individuals to submit **complaints** against the State alleging violations of the CEDAW and CRPD. Additionally, certain UN treaties contain **inquiry procedures**, which allow the UN treaty body to consider allegations of grave or systematic human rights violations. The UK has accepted the inquiry procedures of the CAT, CEDAW, and CRPD.

In March 2001, the UK extended a **standing invitation** to UN special procedures, which means that any such mandate holders are welcome to conduct visits in the UK. For example, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants went on a mission to the UK in 2009 and published a visit [report](#) in 2010.

For more information on the UK's engagement with [UN human rights bodies](#), visit <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/countries/ENACARegion/Pages/GBIndex.aspx>.

Last updated: February 2020