

Holy See (Vatican City)

Holy See has observer status at the Council of Europe (COE) and has permanent observer state status at the United Nations (UN), and has human rights obligations at the universal level.

Regional: European System



Holy See was granted [observer status](#) with the Council of Europe on March 7, 1970. As an observer State, it has the opportunity to cooperate with the COE and to accept its guiding principles of democracy, rule of law, human rights, and fundamental freedoms. Holy See may send observers to its expert committees and conferences of specialized ministers. Observer States are also allowed to send representatives to observe the regular meetings of the Council's Ministers' Deputies and to appoint permanent observers to the COE.

The Holy See has not ratified any regional human rights treaties and is not subject to oversight by the COE human rights mechanisms.

United Nations System

As a [non-member State](#), Holy See received a standing invitation to participate as an observer in the sessions and the work of the UN General Assembly. It also maintains a permanent observer [mission](#) at UN Headquarters. [Permanent Observer](#) States have access to most UN meetings and relevant documentation.

Holy See has ratified the following **UN human rights treaties**:

- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)

As a party to specific universal human rights treaties, Holy See's policies and practices are monitored by UN [treaty bodies](#). It has not accepted the complaints procedure of any treaty bodies.

Holy See has submitted a reservation, declaration, or understanding that modifies its obligations under the following treaties: [CAT](#) and [CRC](#).



Holy See has not ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR aimed at abolishing the death penalty. Holy See has ratified the Optional Protocols to the CRC addressing children in armed conflict and the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography. Holy See has a duty to submit **State reports** to the UN treaty body associated with each UN human rights treaty Holy See has ratified. These reports must be submitted on a periodic basis and describe the steps taken to implement the treaty provisions.

Holy See has not ratified **optional protocols** nor made appropriate declarations allowing individuals to submit **complaints** against the State alleging violations of the treaty bodies. Additionally, certain UN treaties contain **inquiry procedures**, which allow the UN treaty body to consider allegations of grave or systematic human rights violations. Holy See has accepted the inquiry procedures of the CAT.

Holy See has not extended a **standing invitation** to UN special procedures, which means that special rapporteurs and working groups must seek specific invitations from Holy See to conduct a visit within the State. For example, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief went on a mission to Holy See in September 1999 and published a visit [report](#) in February 2000.

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

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