

MINORITY RIGHTS GUIDE



TOM
LANTOS
INSTITUTE

INTRODUCTION

2022 marks the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities](#) (UNDM), which represents the most expansive elaboration of the rights of national or ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities at the level of the United Nations. In conjunction with the 30th Anniversary of the UNDM, the Tom Lantos Institute developed this guide on the minority rights protection regime of the United Nations. The aim of the guide, which consists of this written material, short animated video clips, and PowerPoint presentations, is to provide minority representatives, their advocates, and others working in the field of minority rights a clear and concise overview of the norms and mechanisms of the United Nations used for the protection of the human rights of minorities. This guide was released in conjunction with other events marking the 30th anniversary of the UNDM, such as the 2022 Regional Forums on Minority Issues, and the 10th Global Minority Rights Summer School.

BRIEF HISTORY OF MINORITY RIGHTS

The modern conception of minority rights largely developed following the end of World War I, which marked the dissolution of many of the great empires of Europe and the consolidation of new states along ethnic and/or linguistic lines. The shifting borders of Europe meant that, while many new states had formed around a common ethno-linguistic identity, significant populations were cut off from their kin-states due to the often arbitrary drawing of new borders. This, in addition to economic and industrial advancements, as well as assimilationist policies by nation-states, meant that there was increasing pressure on ethnocultural minority groups to adopt majority languages and cultures.

The League of Nations was established at the 1920 Paris Peace Conference that officially ended World War I. The League of Nations was the first intergovernmental organization tasked with maintaining world peace. Given the geopolitical landscape of the time, minority issues were of primary concern for the newly established League of Nations. Protection of the rights of minorities was seen as a way to reconfigure the liberal international order and create stability and security. As a condition for membership in the League of Nations, the new, defeated and enlarged states of Central and Eastern Europe established after the fall of the Austro-Hungarian, German, Russian and Ottoman empires were obliged to adopt minority treaties that would ensure the basic rights of minority groups living on the territory of the state.

These minority treaties generally included the rights to equality and non-discrimination; the right to citizenship; the right to private and public use of one's own language; and the right to establish minority religious, cultural, and educational institutions. While the minority treaties were limited in terms of their scope of application, as they were primarily bilateral treaties between a handful of states and the League, and did not establish any universal application of the rights contained in them, they did serve as an important step in the establishment and recognition of the rights of minorities in international law.¹

With the lead up to World War II and the ensuing atrocities committed before and during the War, the protections contained in the minority treaties were mostly ignored, and the League of Nations itself was dissolved in 1946. The United Nations was established to replace the League in 1945. Over the decades of its existence, the United Nations developed a number of instruments establishing international human rights norms, including those governing the rights of minorities. The Charter of the United Nations (1945), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948), the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), are of particular significance for minorities.

In 1992, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the fullest elaboration of the rights of minorities with the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Linguistic, and Religious Minorities. This instrument, as well as the relevant provisions of the aforementioned conventions, will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Early Development of Human Rights Norms related to Minorities

The early human rights instruments of the United Nations do not mention minority rights specifically, however, they do include provisions relevant to minorities, which would establish a framework for the future elaboration of the rights of minorities. For instance, Article

¹ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Promoting and Protecting Minority Rights: A Guide for Advocates*, Geneva and New York, 2012.

1.3 of the United Nations Charter establishes that one of the purposes of the United Nations is to “*promote and encourage respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.*”² Similarly, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights does not explicitly reference minorities, but does establish a broad range of rights and freedoms that should be enjoyed by all “*without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status*”. It also contains important provisions on anti-discrimination.³

The later adoption of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide enshrined the prohibition on the destruction “*in whole or in part, of a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such,*”⁴ recognizing that minority groups have disproportionately been targeted by genocide and ethnic cleansing.

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination also enshrined non-discrimination norms relevant to minorities, prohibiting distinctions “based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin.”⁵

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) was adopted by the UN in 1966, and entered into force 10 years later. The Covenant enshrines a range of civil and political rights, and was the first international human rights treaty to specifically refer to minority rights. Its Article 27 reads: “*In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.*”⁶ The Human Rights Committee has provided further interpretation of ICCPR Article 27 in its General Comment No. 23, stating “*this article establishes and recognizes a right which is conferred on individuals belonging to minority groups and which is distinct from, and additional to, all the other rights which, as individuals in common with everyone else, they are already entitled to enjoy under the Covenant.*”⁷ Thus, Article 27 and the corresponding interpretation provided by the Human Rights Committee establish rights for per-

² United Nations Charter, Article 1.3

³ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 2

⁴ Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Article 2

⁵ International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Article 1

⁶ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 27

⁷ CCPR General Comment No. 23: Article 27 (Rights of Minorities), para. 1

sons belonging to minorities to be enjoyed “individually, as well as in community with other members of the group”⁸, and that are additional to and distinct from the other human rights guaranteed to individuals under the Convention.

Article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was adopted later in 1989 and came into force the following year, contains an analogous provision to Article 27 of the ICCPR, and establishes similar rights for children belonging to minorities. It reads: “*In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.*”⁹

Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Linguistic and Religious Minorities

After nearly 50 years of this rather fragmented development of minority rights norms, and a relative neglect of minority issues, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to Ethnic or National, Linguistic, and Religious Minorities in 1992 with Resolution 47/135.¹⁰ As there is no international human rights treaty that specifically focuses on minority rights, the UNDM represents the fullest elaboration of minority rights at the global level. However, the UNDM is simply a declaration, and does not impose binding legal obligations on states.

The UNDM refers to “national or ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities”, but does not contain any definition of who exactly are minorities. Nor is there an internationally accepted consensus on who constitutes minorities. The wide range of situations in which minorities live makes it difficult to establish a one-size-fits-all definition. Francesco Capotorti, Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, offered a definition containing both objective and subjective requirements that may provide some guidance on determining who is a minority:

“*a group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a state, in a non-dominant po-*

⁸ Commentary of the Working Group on Minorities to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/2005/2, para. 53.

⁹ Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 30

¹⁰ General Assembly Resolution 47/135: Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities

sition, whose members – being nationals of the state – possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language.”¹¹

Thus, objective criteria may include numerical size, non-dominant position, and the distinct ethnic, linguistic, or religious characteristics of the group. The desire of the group to preserve their distinct cultural, linguistic, or religious identity is a subjective criterion that emphasizes the group nature of minority rights.

However, the definition put forth by Caportorti is not definitive. Other approaches have been put forward to determine who constitute minorities. Given the lack of consensus on the definition of a minority under international law, questions have been raised about the scope of minority rights.¹²

For instance, it is generally accepted that indigenous peoples may be minorities, not all minorities are indigenous peoples, who are distinguished by their specific history and experience related to settler colonization. Moreover, indigenous peoples have specific, and often more robust, mechanisms within the United Nations human rights system for the protection and promotion of their rights.

The issue of citizenship has also caused debate in relation to who constitute minorities. Generally, under international human rights law, states have an obligation to guarantee the human rights, including special rights afforded minorities, to all persons on their territory regardless of citizenship status. However, upward trends in mobility and migration in recent years have highlighted the tension between so-called “old” and “new” minorities. Interpretations of the UNDM have clarified that citizenship status should not preclude the enjoyment of rights contained in the Declaration, but that other factors, for example, the amount of time a group has resided on a territory, may be relevant in determining the scope of rights that should be afforded to the group.¹³

¹¹ Caportorti, Francesco, Study on the Rights of Persons Belonging to Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, New York, 1979, E/CN.4/Sub.2/384/Rev.1, para. 568.

¹² For recent discussions on the scope of minority rights, see the definition of the current Special Rapporteur on minority issues, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Minorities/SRMinorities/Pages/ConceptMinority.aspx>, and Thematic Commentary No. 4: The scope of application of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016806a8fe8>.

¹³ Commentary of the Working Group on Minorities to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/2005/2, paras. 10–11

In recent years, other minoritized identities, such as LGBT+ and disabled people, have also been brought within the scope of minority rights from the perspective of intersectionality and multiple forms of discrimination. The Special Rapporteur on minority issues has recently published a report on a study of the significance and scope of the four categories of national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities in the United Nations.¹⁴ The report offers key guidance on the scope of beneficiaries of UN minority protection, and which groups fall under the four categories of minorities in the United Nations.

Four Pillars of Minority Rights

The rights contained in the UNDM are structured around the four key pillars of minority rights: the right to exist, the right to non-discrimination, the right to protection of identity, and the right to effective participation. The right to exist entails ensuring the survival and protecting the existence of minority groups, including from genocide and crimes against humanity. Article 1 of the UNDM enshrines this right and calls upon states to “*protect the existence [...] of minorities within their respective territories.*”¹⁵ As discussed above, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide also enshrines the right to exist by prohibiting the destruction of national or ethnic, linguistic, or religious groups.

The Declaration calls for the protection of the right to non-discrimination of minorities. Article 2.1 states that persons belonging to minorities have the right to enjoy their own culture, use their own language, and practice their own religion without discrimination.¹⁶ Article 2.5 establishes their right to freedom of association with other members of their groups and other minorities without discrimination.¹⁷ Meanwhile, Article 3 sets out that persons belonging to minorities shall exercise the rights contained in the Declaration without any form of discrimination.¹⁸ Accordingly, Article 4 calls upon states to take measures to ensure that persons belonging to minorities are able to exercise their human rights without discrimination.¹⁹

¹⁴ Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues: Effective promotion of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, A/75/150, available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/190/15/PDF/N2019015.pdf?OpenElement>

¹⁵ United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Linguistic and Religious Minorities [hereinafter UNDM], Article 1

¹⁶ Id., Article 2.1

¹⁷ Id., Article 2.5

¹⁸ Id., Article 3

¹⁹ Id., Article 4

The right to equality and non-discrimination is further enshrined in all UN human rights instruments, and is the particular focus of ICERD. ICERD not only establishes that all persons, including minorities, shall not be subjected to discrimination, but also that “States Parties shall, when the circumstances so warrant, take [...] special and concrete measures to ensure the adequate development and protection of certain racial groups or individuals belonging to them, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the full and equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.”²⁰

The right to non-discrimination is such a fundamental component of minority rights that some experts have even argued that ICERD itself represents a legally binding expression of minority rights as a universal concept.²¹ While not originally conceived as a minority rights treaty, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, in its pursuit to implement ICERD and work towards the elimination of racial discrimination, has expanded its interpretation of the scope of race under the Convention, and has shown a clear concern for the rights of linguistic and religious minorities as well, particularly when there is an ethnic or racial component to the discrimination faced by such groups.²² The Committee has issued general recommendations on a number of specific groups, including non-citizens (No. 11 and No. 30), refugees and displaced persons (No. 22), indigenous peoples (No. 23), Roma (No. 27), descent-based groups (No. 29), and people of African descent (No. 34)²³. ICERD is a particularly powerful tool for the protection of minority rights, since, unlike the UNDM, it is a widely-ratified and binding treaty with a corresponding treaty body to monitor and promote its implementation.

The third pillar, the right to protection of identity includes a broad range of specific rights aimed at ensuring the freedom of minorities to maintain their culture, practice their religion, and use their language in both the public and private spheres. This is underlined in Article 1 of the UNDM, which also calls upon states to adopt legislative and other measures to ensure the protection of the identities of its minorities.²⁴ To this end, Articles 4.2 and 4.3 read “states shall take measures to create favourable conditions to enable persons belonging

²⁰ International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Article 2.2

²¹ David Keane and Joshua Castellino, ‘Is the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination the de facto minority rights treaty?’. In Carla Buckley, Alice Donald and Philip Leach (eds.), *Towards Convergence in International Human Rights Law: Approaches of Regional and International Systems*. (Brill/Nijhoff 2016)

²² Id.

²³ The General recommendations of CERD are available at: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=en&TreatyID=6&DocTypeID=11

²⁴ UNDM, Article 1

to minorities to express their characteristics and to develop their culture, language, religion, traditions and customs”, and “States should take appropriate measures so that, wherever possible, persons belonging to minorities may have adequate opportunities to learn their mother tongue or to have instruction in their mother tongue.”²⁵ The right to protection of identity is also enshrined in the form of a binding obligation on states parties in Article 27 of the ICCPR and Article 30 of the CRC.

Finally, the UNDM establishes the right to effective participation in a number of its articles. Article 2.2 establishes that “minorities have the right to participate effectively in cultural, religious, social, economic and public life.”²⁶ While Articles 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5 ensure the right of minorities to participate in decision-making that affects them, and to participate in and form their own associations. Article 5.1 states that “national policies and programmes shall be planned and implemented with due regard for the legitimate interests of persons belonging to minorities”.²⁷ Article 4.5 calls upon states to “consider appropriate measures so that persons belonging to minorities may participate fully in the economic progress and development in their country.”²⁸ The right to effective participation encompasses both substantive and procedural rights. It represents a fundamental component of minority rights, as effective participation ensures that minorities are able to influence laws and policies affecting them, bring their grievances to the attention of authorities, and secure their other fundamental human rights.

UNITED NATIONS MECHANISMS FOR MINORITY PROTECTION

The United Nations has two primary mechanisms in place for the protection and promotion of the rights of persons belonging to minorities: the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, which is part of the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, and the annual Forum on Minority Issues, which was also established by the Human Rights Council. The two mechanisms share the dual mandate of establishing dialogue and cooperation on issues related to minorities and promoting the implementation of the UNDM.

²⁵ Id., Arts. 4.2, 4.3

²⁶ Id., Art. 2.2

²⁷ Id., Arts. 2.3, 2.4, 2.5

²⁸ Id., Art. 4.5

Special Rapporteur on minority issues

The mandate of the [Special Rapporteur on minority issues](#) was established by the Commission on Human Rights (the precursor to the Human Rights Council) on 21 April, 2005 by Resolution 2005/79. The mandate has been subsequently renewed several times.²⁹ To date, there have been three Special Rapporteurs on minority issues: Gay McDougall (2005-2011), Rita Izsák-Ndiaye (2011-2017), and Fernand de Varennes (2017-present). The mandate of the Special Rapporteur includes the following objectives:

- a) To promote the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, including through consultations with Governments, taking into account existing international standards and national legislation concerning minorities;
- b) To examine ways and means of overcoming existing obstacles to the full and effective realization of the rights of persons belonging to minorities;
- c) To identify best practices and possibilities for technical cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner, at the request of Governments;
- d) To apply a gender perspective in his/her work;
- e) To cooperate and coordinate closely, while avoiding duplication, with existing relevant United Nations bodies, mandates and mechanisms and with regional organizations;
- f) To take into account the views of and cooperate closely with nongovernmental organizations on matters pertaining to his/her mandate;
- g) To guide the work of the Forum on Minority Issues, prepare its annual meetings, to report on its thematic recommendations and to make recommendations for future thematic subjects, as decided by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 19/23; and
- h) To submit an annual report on his/her activities to the Human Rights Council and to the General Assembly, including recommendations for effective strategies for the better implementation of the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities.³⁰

Each Special Rapporteur identifies a number of thematic priorities for their mandate, around which they focus their work and activities.

²⁹ See Commission on Human Rights Resolution 2005/79, and Human Rights Council Resolutions 7/6, 16/6, 25/5, and 34/6.

³⁰ Human Rights Council Resolution 25/5: Mandate of the Independent Expert on minority issues

The Special Rapporteur employs several methods of work in the fulfillment of his mandate. He may solicit and receive information on minority issues from a wide range of stakeholders, including states, intergovernmental organizations, UN agencies, NGOs, and minority representatives. Based on the information received, the Special Rapporteur will issue communications to states regarding the implementation of the UNDM. [Communications](#) may address individual cases of alleged violations of the human rights of minorities, or information concerning the general situation of minority rights in a state. In certain cases, the Special Rapporteur may issue urgent appeals when the alleged violations may involve loss of life or other grave damage to the victims. In connection with such communications, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights launched an [online tool](#) to facilitate the effective submission of information on human rights violations. The tool guides users through its steps and details what information should be provided to allow the Special Rapporteur to properly assess a case. [Submissions may also be sent directly to the mandate](#) if the OHCHR's online tool is not accessible.

The Special Rapporteur is also responsible for submitting and presenting [annual reports](#) to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly. The reports provide an overview of the activities undertaken by the Special Rapporteur over the course of the year. In addition, the reports generally have a focus on a specific issue relevant to the human rights of minorities. Recent thematic foci have included "hate speech, social media, and minorities", "education, language, and the human rights of minorities", and "statelessness as a minority issue".

The Special Rapporteur may undertake [country visits](#) at the invitation of states in order to consult with governments on the promotion and protection of minority rights and the implementation of the UNDM. The Special Rapporteur generally conducts two country visits per year, during the course of which he meets with government officials, members of the legislature and judiciary, and representatives of UN agencies, civil society, and minority associations and communities. The Special Rapporteur will examine national laws, policies, and practices related to minority issues, and provide recommendations on how to further promote the effective implementation of the UNDM. Pursuant to each country visit, the Special Rapporteur also publishes a report on the visit, which includes his assessment of laws and policies affecting minorities, an overview of the situation of minorities in the country and the main issues affecting them, as well as conclusions and recommendations to the government concerned.

Finally, the Special Rapporteur complements and provides input into the work of other UN bodies and mechanisms that address minority rights, in particular the UN Forum on Minority Issues. The Special Rapporteur is responsible for guiding the work of the Forum, organizing its sessions, selecting thematic subjects for the Forum, and reporting on the thematic discussions and recommendations that result from the Forum.

Forum on Minority Issues

In 2007, the Human Rights Council, with resolution 6/15, established the [Forum on Minority Issues](#). According to the resolution, the purpose of the Forum is to “provide a platform for promoting dialogue and cooperation on issues pertaining to persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities.”³¹ In addition, the Forum is meant to complement the work of the Special Rapporteur by providing thematic contributions and expertise to inform his work. It does so by identifying and analyzing “best practices, challenges, opportunities and initiatives for the further implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.”³²

Since 2008, the Forum has met every year for two working days. It is convened around a specific theme selected by the Special Rapporteur, and led by a Chair selected by the Human Rights Council. The Forum is generally held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, but has been held online or in a hybrid format since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Forum is open to the participation of states, experts, minority representatives, and civil society organizations. The Forum is unique among many UN events in that consultative status with ECOSOC is not required for participation. This means that a broader range of civil society organizations, many of whom are unable to undergo the lengthy process of obtaining consultative status with ECOSOC, are able to participate simply by registering for the Forum. This ensures equitable participation and provides all participants the opportunity to make interventions.

As described earlier, the Special Rapporteur is responsible for guiding the work of the Forum, selecting Forum themes, organizing the Forum sessions, and reporting on the thematic discussions and recommendations resulting from the Forum. The Forum is generally divided into four thematic sessions organized around the selected theme. Invited experts

³¹ Human Rights Council Resolution 6/15 : Forum on Minority Issues

³² Id.

make short presentations at the beginning of each session, which are then followed by interactive discussion. Participants are allocated 2 minutes to make interventions and suggest recommendations to be included in the final set of Forum recommendations. The set of Forum recommendations, directed at states and other stakeholders, represents the main output of the Forum. Following the conclusion of the Forum, the Special Rapporteur and the Chair of the Forum submit a report to the Human Rights Council on the recommendations and discussions held at the Forum.

In addition to the formal outputs of the Forum, the Forum represents a key tool for minority activists and their representatives in the form of advocacy and networking. The Forum is the sole international platform where minorities are able to meet annually, form advocacy networks, share best practices, and impact the development of norms. To this end, Forum participants have the opportunity to organize side-events to increase discussions around specific topics under the theme of the Forum itself. These side-events represent additional opportunities for discussion, networking, and sharing best practices.

TABLE OF THEMES OF THE FOURTEEN SESSIONS OF THE FORUM AND ITS SIDE EVENTS

YEAR	THEME	SIDE EVENTS
2008	Minorities and the Right to Education	UNESCO: Overcoming Inequalities in Education: The Importance of Inclusion
		MRG: Challenging the Denial of Education Rights
2009	Minorities and Effective Political Participation	
2010	Minorities and Effective Participation in Economic Life	UNPO, MRG: Minorities & Natural Resources: Promoting Minority Rights in the Development and Management of Natural Resources
		OHCHR: Towards Effective Participation of Minorities in Economic Life: Addressing Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights and the Application of the Minorities Declaration
		UNICEF, MRG: Outcomes of a stock-take of UNICEF's policy and practice in the promotion of the rights of minority children and women
2011	Guaranteeing the Rights of Minority Women	OHCHR: Empowering minority women to claim their rights: identifying effective practices
		MRG, UNPO: Violence against minority women and their access to justice
2012	Implementing the United Nations Declaration on Minority Rights: Identifying Positive Practices and Opportunities	
2013	Beyond Freedom of Religion or Belief: Guaranteeing the Rights of Religious Minorities	
2014	Preventing and Addressing Violence and Atrocity Crimes Targeted against Minorities	
2015	Minorities in the Criminal Justice System	OHCHR: Minority Rights Protection in the UN System: Looking back and looking ahead--A Forum for the Future
2016	Minorities in Situations of Humanitarian Crises	OHCHR: Protecting Minorities through Visual Art
		Al-Hakim Foundation: Minorities situations and the actual humanitarian situation in Iraq
		Alliance Defending Freedom: Book Launch: "Never Again: Legal Responses to a Broken Promise in the Middle East"
		Maloca Internationale and Others: Best Practices to protect minorities in humanitarian crises in Iraq and Syria
		MRG: Excluded: Statelessness minorities in time of crisis
		UNPO, Society for Threatened People: Forgotten crises, forgotten victims: Minorities and Humanitarian Challenges
		International Human Rights Observer Pakistan: Minorities in situation of humanitarian crises in Pakistan CANCELLED
		International Investment Centre: Minority Healthcare Issues in situations of humanitarian crises in post-soviet countries
2017	Minority Youth: Towards Diverse and Inclusive Societies	Permanent Mission of Austria, MRG: Minority Youth: No equality without economic opportunity
		AfriForum: Minority Youth Rights in South Africa

YEAR	THEME	SIDE EVENTS
2017	Minority Youth: Towards Diverse and Inclusive Societies	World Federation of the Deaf: Inclusive Education and Sign Language
		European Centre for Democracy Development: Xenophobia: threat to young generations in Europe
		Tom Lantos Institute/University of London: Global governance on minority rights: Assessing the UN Forum on Minority Issues
		Collectif Jeune Bretagne: Jeunesse et identité culturelle en France
		Maloca Internationale: Minority Youth in Iran
		World Uyghur Congress: Minority Youth and Native Languages
		UNPO: Unrepresented Youth: Preserving minority identities among new generations
2018	Statelessness: A Minority Issue	MRG, OHCHR and Permanent Mission of Austria: Not Just Paper: Intersectional and Aggravating Factors Affecting the Rights of Stateless Minorities
		UNPO: Minority Empowerment: A Human Rights Approach to Counter Statelessness
		Maloca Internationale and Zagros Center: Stateless Kurds in Syria
		Tom Lantos Institute/University of London: Launch of the website gathering the essential UNFMI documents and statements
		OHCHR Minority Fellows: Enhancing Participation of Minorities in the UN
		JSOR Youth Organization: "Ibelong": Statelessness and the Right to Citizenship
2019	Education, Language and the Human Rights of Minorities	OHCHR: Telling human rights stories of minorities: Short films and conversation with OHCHR minority fellows
		Tom Lantos Institute: The New Regional Forums on Minority Issues
		The Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA): Educational Rights of Muslim Minorities in Europe
		Permanent Mission of Austria and MRG: Linguistic minorities and access to education in situations of conflict and displacement
		Permanent Missions of Canada and Hungary and UENA Agency: Innovative Approaches to Policy Making in Education, Language and the Human Rights of Minorities
		OHCHR Minority Fellows: 1) Media as an educational tool in promoting language and minority rights. How can media support the implementation of linguistic rights of minorities? 2) Minority Language Policies: a way to ensure diversity and combat discrimination?
2020	Hate speech, social media and minorities	
2021	Conflict prevention and the protection of the human rights of minorities	

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

This short guide presents a brief overview of international norms related to the human rights of minorities, and describes the United Nations mechanisms for the protection of minority rights. This text is supplemented by short animated videos, as well as PowerPoint presentations, which present this information in a shortened, simplified format. [Link] Additional resources can be found on the website, www.minorityforum.info. This website contains a database of documents from the Forum on Minority Issues, including statements and recommendations, other UN documents relevant to minorities, a library of minority rights standards, a video library, links to other datasets, news, and documentation from the Regional Forums on Minority Issues. For those interested in additional guides on minority rights, Appendix 1 contains a list of additional guides that are accessible on [Minority Forum Info](http://www.minorityforum.info).

APPENDIX 1: ADDITIONAL GUIDES ON MINORITY RIGHTS

[Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: A Guide for Minorities and Indigenous Peoples, Minority Rights Group International, Ed. Margot E. Salomon, 2005.](#)

This guide introduces a number of specific economic, social and cultural rights and explains how they may empower minorities and indigenous peoples. Its analysis, examples and ideas will help to ensure that minorities and indigenous peoples enjoy a central role in the dynamic and growing movement for economic, social and cultural rights. Designed for community organizations, the publication is a practical, user-friendly, advocacy tool in relation to the economic, social and cultural rights of minorities and indigenous peoples.

[ICERD and CERD: A Guide for Civil Society Actors, International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism \(IMADR\), Daisuke Shirane, 2011.](#)

The Guide importantly combines an illuminating account of the norms and standards of ICERD together with an analysis of the procedures, employing explanatory case studies where appropriate. The Convention is not an easy instrument to understand. The Guide takes the reader to first base and beyond; putting knowledge into practical effect necessitates further applied analysis and reflection, and hard work.

[Know your rights: a community guide to the UN Declaration on Minorities, Minority Rights Group International, Nicole Girard, 2012.](#)

This guide aims to celebrate the international recognition of minority rights and to help community activists protect their rights at the national and local levels. We hope this guide will promote awareness of the Declaration among minority communities and help ensure that more governments respect the principles that it contains.

[Marginalised Minorities in Development Programming, United Nations Development Programme, Corinne Lennox, 2010.](#)

This guide highlights the positive impact that the integration of minority issues can have on development programming processes. While recognizing that diverse development situations involve different challenges and require specific solutions, the document provides practical guidance by drawing on various standards and principles and by providing examples and entry points. The Guide is primarily intended for UNDP country office practitioners and those with policy advisory responsibilities, but it may also serve as a reference document for other UN agencies, multilateral organizations, government counterparts and institutions, and civil society organizations.

[Minority Rights: A Guide to United Nations Procedures and Institutions, Minority Rights Group International and Raoul Wallenberg Institute, Gudmundur Alfredsson and Erika Ferrer, revised by Kathryn Ramsay, 2004.](#)

The aim of this guide is to demystify the human rights mechanisms and procedures of the United Nations (UN) and to demonstrate how minorities and minority non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can use these tools to promote respect for minority rights. The guide gives an overview of the mechanisms available, highlights their strengths and weaknesses as instruments for minorities to use in their work, and emphasizes NGOs' contributions.

[Minority Rights: International Standards and Guidance for Implementation, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2010.](#)

This publication was prepared by OHCHR to raise additional awareness, among its staff and colleagues in other United Nations organizations and specialized agencies, of minority rights and the impediments minorities face in the enjoyment of these rights. It is expected that this publication will assist United Nations colleagues to help strengthen programmes for minorities at the country level based on the principles established in relevant international human rights instruments and documents, in particular the United Nations Minorities Declaration.

Promoting and Protecting Minority Rights: A Guide for Advocates, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2012.

This guide explains, in a reader-friendly way, who are the main actors working on minority issues in the United Nations and in key regional organizations, and what are the best ways of engaging them.

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination: A Guide for NGOs, International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR) and Minority Rights Group International, Atsuko Tanaka and Yoshinobu Nagamine, 2001.

The purpose of this manual is twofold: to explain what the main provisions of the Convention are, and throw light on the working procedure of CERD; second, to suggest what roles NGOs can play, including in the work of CERD, and how NGOs can use the Convention as an effective tool for the fight against discrimination and racism.

The International Labour Organization: A Handbook for Minorities and Indigenous Peoples, Anti-Slavery and Minority Rights Group International, Chandra Roy and Mike Kaye, 2002.

The main purpose of this guide is to provide an introduction to the ILO, and the openings it provides for defending and promoting the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples. It gives the reader an overview of the ILO's main structures, committees and working methods, in an accessible format, and with practical advice on their use.

THE TOM LANTOS INSTITUTE (TLI) IS AN INDEPENDENT HUMAN AND MINORITY RIGHTS ORGANISATION WITH A PARTICULAR FOCUS ON JEWISH AND ROMA COMMUNITIES, AND ON HUNGARIAN AND OTHER ETHNIC OR NATIONAL, LINGUISTIC AND RELIGIOUS MINORITIES. IT IS A BUDAPEST-BASED ORGANISATION WITH A MULTI-PARTY BOARD OF TRUSTEES, AN INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, AND ADVISORY BOARD. TLI OPERATES INTERNATIONALLY IN TERMS OF SCOPE, FUNDING, STAFF AND PARTNERS. AS A RESEARCH AND EDUCATION PLATFORM, TLI AIMS TO BRIDGE THE GAPS BETWEEN RESEARCH AND POLICY, NORMS AND PRACTICE. TLI FOCUSES ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND IDENTITY ISSUES IN GENERAL, AND ALSO WORKS ON THREE SPECIFIC ISSUE AREAS. THESE INCLUDE: JEWISH LIFE AND ANTISEMITISM; ROMA RIGHTS AND CITIZENSHIP; AND HUNGARIAN MINORITIES.

ABOUT THE GUIDE

In conjunction with the 30th Anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, the Tom Lantos Institute developed this short guide on the minority rights protection regime of the United Nations. The aim of the guide is to provide minority representatives, their advocates, and others working in the field of minority rights a clear and concise overview of the norms and mechanisms of the United Nations used for the protection of the human rights of minorities. This guide is accompanied by two short animated videos on minority rights norms and minority protection mechanisms at the UN. This guide was released in conjunction with other events marking the 30th anniversary of the UNDM, such as the 2022 Regional Forums on Minority Issues, and the 10th Global Minority Rights Summer School. For more information about the guide, please contact Marcus Oda at marcus.oda@tom-lantosinstitute.hu.

AUTHOR: Marcus Oda

EDITORS: Anna-Mária Bíró and Evelin Verhás

DESIGN: Ildikó Petrók

1062 Budapest, Bajza utca 44. Hungary
info@tomlantosintitute.hu
www.tomlantosinstitute.hu

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