

A Human Rights Handbook for Civil Society

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The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights this week unveils its new guide for civil society actors - Working with the United Nations Human Rights Programme: A Handbook for Civil Society.

The new user-friendly guide explains how the different United Nations human rights mandates and mechanisms work, and how members of civil society, such as human rights defenders, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions, can engage with them most effectively.

"Today, civil society's views, practical knowledge and scholarship are as crucial to the human rights movement as ever in the pursuit of justice and equality for all," High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay writes in her foreword to the Handbook.

The Handbook includes sections on the Human Rights Council, the human rights treaty bodies, the special procedures, the universal periodic review mechanism and the various complaint procedures.

Each chapter, accessible as a stand-alone reference on specific mechanisms or mandates, provides entry points for members of civil society and best practice examples of their initiatives and contributions.

The Handbook also promotes collaboration between civil society and OHCHR. It introduces the role and activities of OHCHR, publications and resource materials, fellowship and training programmes, and funds and grants.

The High Commissioner welcomes the Handbook's release as an opportunity to emphasize "civil society's transformative capacity".

"One cannot over-estimate the contribution that civil society at large has made towards the development of international human rights standards, their advocacy, and the functioning of human rights mechanisms.

"It is my hope that this Handbook will be used to facilitate civil society actors' understanding of and access to the United Nations human rights system. It is a modest but significant resource in our joint endeavour to make human rights, dignity and equality a universal reality," she says.

The Handbook, now available in English, will shortly be available in Arabic, Russian, Spanish and French. It may be downloaded in full or on a chapter by chapter basis from the OHCHR website, and can be ordered from OHCHR's Publications Desk by contacting publications@ohchr.org.

A new UN Human Rights (OHCHR) handbook for civil society has just been issued. It is available electronically on our website (www.ohchr.org) and may also be ordered through our publications section. It should be very useful for anyone wanting to better understand UN human rights procedures and bodies.

Further information about the new publication from our website is below. I hope this is of interest to you and that you will share it with others who may find it of interest.

Direct link to the pdf version of the whole publication (206 pp.):
<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/NgoHandbook/ngohandbook.pdf>

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