



info sheet Human Rights

WHAT ARE SPECIAL PROCEDURES?

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The special procedures of the Human Rights Council are either an individual (called "Special Rapporteur" or "Independent Expert") or a working group composed of five members, one from each of the five United Nations regional groupings: Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and the Western group.

The Special Rapporteurs, Independent Experts and members of the Working Groups are independent human rights experts with mandates to report and advise on human rights from a thematic (e.g. religion) or country-specific (e.g. Afghanistan) perspective. They are non-paid and elected for 3-year mandates that can be reconducted for another three years. As of September 2020, there are 44 thematic and 11 country mandates.

APPOINTMENT

Independent United Nations experts of the Human Rights Council are appointed through a competitive and transparent process which involves:

- Interested parties fill in an online written application in response to a call for candidatures issued by the Secretariat.
- Shortlisted candidates are then interviewed by telephone by the Consultative Group composed by five Ambassadors nominated by each of the five regional groups.
- The Consultative Group makes recommendations to the President of the Human Rights Council through its public report.
- The appointment is finalized when the selected candidate put forward by the President is approved by the Human Rights Council.

SPECIAL PROCEDURES MANDATES

With the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), special procedures:

- undertake country visits
- act on individual cases of reported violations and concerns of a broader nature by sending communications to States and others
- conduct annual thematic studies, seek information from calls for input and convene expert consultations
- contribute to the development of international human rights standards, and
- engage in advocacy, raise public awareness, and provide advice for technical cooperation.

COUNTRY VISITS

At the invitation of States, mandate-holders carry out country visits to analyse the human rights situation at the national level. Some countries have issued "standing invitations" to the Special Procedures, which means that they are prepared to receive a visit from any thematic mandate-holder. At the end of their visits, special procedures' mandate-holders engage in dialogue with the State on their findings and recommendations and present a report to the Human Rights Council.

COMMUNICATIONS

Most Special Procedures receive information on specific allegations of human rights violations and send communications (urgent appeals, allegation and other letters) to States, and occasionally to non-State actors, asking for clarification and action. Mandate-holders may send letters to States seeking information about legal, policy or structural developments, submitting observations, or following-up on recommendations.