

Human Rights Impact stories 2024

Treaty Bodies

Special Procedures

Human Rights Council

The United Nations Voluntary
Fund for Victims of Torture

United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on
Contemporary Forms of Slavery

Universal Periodic Review





Human Rights Mechanisms: Treaty Bodies

Date: April 2023

Country: Türkiye

Thematic focus: Rights of the child, right to health

Impact Story: Following the registration of an individual communication with the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in January 2023, concerning the separation of a child hospitalized for cancer treatment from his imprisoned mother, Türkiye amended Law number 5275 on the Execution of Penalties and Security Measures (in April 2023) by adding Article 16A, which concerned “the postponement of the sentence of a female convict due to her child’s illness”. According to this new Article, the prison sentence could be suspended for a period of up to one year” under certain conditions, including in cases where the female convict has a child under the age of eighteen 18 who is in need of care due to disability or suffers from a serious illness”. Based on this new provision, on 18 April 2023, the Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office ordered the suspension of the execution of the child’s mother for a period of one year. As a result, the case pending before CRC was discontinued.



Human Rights Mechanisms: Treaty Bodies

Date: 30 January 2023

Country: France

Thematic focus: Racial discrimination

Impact Story: The French Prime Minister has presented a National Plan to Combat Racism, Anti-Semitism and Discrimination for 2023-2026. The National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH) welcomed the publication of this plan after the publication of the Concluding Observations of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination which called on France to “address as a priority the structural and systemic causes of racial discrimination present in the State party” (CERD/C/FRA/CO/22-23, para. 10).



Human Rights Mechanisms: United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery

Date: 2023

Countries: Niger, Chad, Mali, Mauritania

Thematic focus: Right to birth registration

Impact Story: In 2023, the "Ecole-Parrainage et Actions de Développement de base" (EPAD), delivered birth certificates to more than 1.000 children subject to Wahaya practice, whereby girls and women of “slave caste” are bought and used for free labour and sexual gratification of their master. EPAD, founded in 2006, aids women and

their children who are victims of the Wahaya practice, and provides holistic assistance to people subjected to contemporary forms of slavery in Niger. The birth certificates will allow them to access free healthcare, obtain a citizenship certificate, and enroll in schools. Some of these children also received school kits. In 2022, the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery (UNVTF-CFS) launched a Special Call for the Sahel region in collaboration with the International Labor Organization (ILO) to build the capacity of grassroots organizations and survivor associations addressing the often-overlooked needs of survivors of traditional and decent based slavery in the Sahel region. The Fund awarded nine grants, for a total of 270.000 USD, to organizations helping over 4.000 victims of traditional and descent-based slavery in Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, including EPAD.



Human Rights Mechanisms: United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture

Date: 15 May 2023

Country: Democratic Republic of Congo

Thematic focus: Forced pregnancy, rape, torture, crimes against humanity, right to reproductive autonomy and health, right to family, women's rights

Impact Story: In 2023, for the first time in history, a national criminal court handed down a conviction for forced pregnancy as an international crime in the Democratic Republic of Congo, thanks to the support provided by the International Justice Task Force, composed of MONUSCO (UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo /Prosecution Support Cell, the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office, UN Development Program, Avocats Sans Frontières and the NGO TRIAL International through a project implemented by the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture's (UNVFVT's). The perpetrator, a warlord, was sentenced to life imprisonment for crimes against humanity, including torture, rape, sexual slavery and forced pregnancy, and ordered to provide financial compensation to survivors. The members of the task force supported the efforts to document the crimes and provided free legal assistance and judicial protection to victims in the judicial procedure that led to this verdict as part of a project supported by the Fund. UN partners and the Civil Society Organizations (CSO) have been supporting survivors of sexual violence through strategic litigation, psychological expertise and by building the capacity of local actors to seek accountability for international crimes with financial support from the Fund since 2016.



Human Rights Mechanisms: Treaty Bodies, Human Rights Council, High Commissioner

Date: 5 July 2023

Country: Venezuela

Thematic focus: Right to life, Right to health, gender-based violence, domestic violence, femicides, impunity, reproductive rights

Impact Story: In July 2023 the High Commissioner for Human Rights (HC), Mr. Volker Türk, noted during the Human Rights Council's (HRC) Interactive Dialogue (ID) on Venezuela (HRC, 53rd session) that the Office of the Attorney General of Venezuela has agreed to develop a protocol for the investigation of gender-based killings, or femicides, following the Committee on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women's (CEDAW) recommendation in its Concluding Observations (May 2023, CEDAW's 85th Session). The Committee therein stressed the need for

Venezuela to strengthen measures to prevent, prosecute and punish cases of gender-based violence against women, including by designing a gender-sensitive protocol for the investigation of femicides and adopting a national action plan to combat gender-based violence against women (CEDAW/C/VEN/CO/9, para 26 (a), (d)). However, the efforts to develop such a protocol have been on hold since the suspension of the OHCHR's technical assistance mandate in February 2024 and the departure of its staff.

The HC also encouraged Venezuela to take further measures to advance women's rights, including by amending restrictive legislation on abortion, as stated as a specific recommendation in the same Concluding Observations (para. 38 (a)). Under Venezuelan law, women face such restrictions even in cases of rape, incest, and severe fetal impairment, and in cases of threats to the life or health of the pregnant woman. In the aforementioned COBs the Committee also urged Venezuela to ensure adequate access to safe abortion and post-abortion services. Currently, Venezuela has approved the enactment of the "Organic Law for Women's Equality" in the first round of discussions. However, it is still awaiting full approval. Despite concerns about the consultation process of this legislation, its development follows the recommendations from CEDAW (CEDAW/C/VEN/CO para. 26 (b)) and OHCHR's own reporting (A/HRC/53/54 para. 73 (e), A/HRC/56/63 para. 80 f.).



Human Rights Mechanisms: Treaty Bodies

Date: 29 November 2023

Country: Spain

Thematic focus: Discrimination of persons with disabilities

Impact Story: In a judgment of 29 November 2023, the Spanish Supreme Court considered a cassation appeal filed by the author of an individual communication before the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, where the Committee found that Spain had violated the victim's rights under the Convention. The Supreme Court determined that the CRPD's views were legally binding on the State party.



Human Rights Mechanisms: Treaty Bodies

Date: 29 December 2023

Countries: Israel, Palestine, South Africa

Thematic focus: Racial discrimination

Impact Story: On 29 December 2023, South Africa filed an application before the International Court of Justice instituting proceedings against the State of Israel including a request that the Court indicates provisional measures to protect fundamental human rights from imminent and irreparable loss. The applicant alleged that Israel violated its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Genocide Convention) concerning military actions against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. In its application South Africa extensively referred to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), namely to its Declarations (CERD/C/66/1), Concluding Observations (CERD/C/ISR/CO/17-19), Statements (Statement 5 [2023] Israel and the State of Palestine,

27 Oct. 2023), and its Early Warning and Urgent Action (EWUA) procedure. Subsequently, the International Court of Justice on January 2024 indicated provisional measures urging Israel to take all measures within its power to prevent all acts within the scope of Article II Genocide Convention and to ensure with immediate effect that its military forces do not commit any of the acts described therein. Furthermore, according to the Court, Israel must take immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, as well as to take effective measures to prevent the destruction and ensure the preservation of evidence related to allegations of acts within the scope of Article II and Article III of the Genocide Convention against members of the Palestinian group in the Gaza Strip. On 24 May 2024, the International Court, after another request by South Africa "for the modification and indication of provisional measures", added provisional measures, that the State of Israel shall, in conformity with its obligations under the Genocide Convention and in view of the worsening conditions of life faced by civilians in the Rafah Governorate:

"Immediately halt its military offensive and any other action in the Rafah Governorate, which may inflict on the Palestinian group in Gaza conditions of life that could bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; maintain open the Rafah crossing for unhindered provision at scale of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance; and take effective measures to ensure the unimpeded access to the Gaza Strip of any commission of inquiry, fact-finding mission or other investigative body mandated by competent organs of the UN to investigate allegations of genocide."



Human Rights Mechanisms: Treaty Bodies

Date: November 2023, January 2024

Country: Guatemala

Thematic focus: Right to freedom, right to address human rights, right to freedom of opinion and expression, human rights defenders

Impact Story: The visibility of CEDAW's Concluding Observations (November 2023, 86th session), as well as joint international pressure and the continuous efforts of the OHCHR field office, contributed to a favorable outcome of the review and appeal processes in cases concerning two women human rights defenders deprived of liberty. In one of the cases the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention had issued an opinion in favor of the detainee.

In the case of Ms. Virginia Laparra, the former head of the Special Prosecutor's Office against Impunity (FECI), she was arrested in February 2022, sentenced to four years in prison in December 2022, and has been in pre-trial detention for almost two years, after investigating cases of alleged corruption involving various political and military figures. She was later re-convicted in another case (June 2024) to a further 5 years in prison.

In the case of a former lawyer of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) and current defense attorney, Ms. Claudia Gonzales, she was accused of having ordered allegedly anomalous proceedings against a judge of the Supreme Court of Justice in a corruption case in 2017. She was arrested in August 2023 and subject to pre-trial detention, while she was the defense attorney in several cases. Ms. Gonzales criticized the judge in charge of the case for not summoning her to testify before ordering her arrest.

CEDAW urged Guatemala to eradicate the arbitrary use of criminal law, including for arrest warrants and pre-trial detention, as reprisals against women human rights defenders in judicial functions and to refer the cases of Virginia Laparra and Claudia Gonzalez for retrial and release them immediately pending trial (CEDAW/C/GTK/CO/10, paras. 30 and 31.). The deprivation of liberty of Ms. Gonzalez was converted to home arrest in November 2023 and that of Ms. Laparra in January 2024. Both human rights defenders remain under house arrest and are not allowed to leave the country.



Human Rights Mechanisms: Treaty Bodies

Date: 31 January 2024

Country: United Kingdom (Northern Ireland)

Thematic focus: Children's rights

Impact Story: The High Court of Justice in Northern Ireland, King's Bench Division (application by the Children's Law Centre for Leave), judicial review application, 2024: The Children's Law Centre, a charity in Northern Ireland, sought judicial review regarding the legality of the process leading to the Northern Ireland Budget (number 2) Act 2023, not challenging the legislation itself but the failure to conduct a cumulative equality impact assessment (CEIA) on its impact on children and young people. The application was expressly based, inter alia, on the CRC's Concluding Observations on the sixth and seventh periodic reports of the UK, published in June 2023, which recommended the withdrawal of the Northern Ireland budget and the adoption of a child rights-based approach into budgeting processes. The application for leave to apply for judicial review was granted.



Human Rights Mechanisms: Treaty Bodies

Date: 31 January 2024

Countries: Ukraine, Russian Federation

Thematic focus: Racial discrimination

Impact Story: The International Court of Justice has found that the Russian Federation violated Articles 2 (1) (a) and 5 (e) (v) of CERD arising out of the limitations on the availability of Ukrainian as the language of instruction in primary schools in Crimea (Judgement, para. 404). It is the first time that a CERD case in front of the ICJ reached the merits stage.

While the Court rejected the majority of Ukraine's claims under CERD due to insufficient evidence, the International Court of Justice found that the Russian Federation's conduct in bringing about a sudden and steep decline in the provision of primary school instruction in Ukraine amounted to a pattern of racial discrimination. In this manner, the Court gave considerable weight to data from OHCHR's reports which found that there was an 80 percent decline in the number of students receiving an education in the Ukrainian language during the first year after 2014 and a further decline of 50 percent by the following year. In terms of interpreting the provisions of CERD, the Court comprehensively referred to the Committee, for instance to the Committee's General Recommendations XIV regarding the definition of "racial discrimination" (Article 1 CERD). In addition to that, the Court also referred to Concluding Observations by the Committee of 1 June 2023 (CERD/C/RUS/CO/25-26; para. 333). Ukraine relied extensively on statements (para. 383) by the Committee, as well as OHCHR reports, to support its allegations. The Court's findings of violations of Articles 2 and 5 CERD ultimately reflected the high probative value given to the views of CERD and OHCHR.



Human Rights Mechanisms: Treaty Bodies

Date: 3 March 2024

Country: Albania

Thematic focus: Right to a fair trial

Impact Story: In its judgment, *Leka v. Albania*, the European Court of Human Rights handled a complaint of an Albanian citizen, who has been convicted of life sentence on the charge of robbery resulting in death. Although the Court did not find a violation of the right to a fair trial, it referred in its preliminary thoughts “relevant international law” to Article 14 ICCPR, the CCPR’s General Comment number 31 and several Views of the Human Rights Committee (CCPR), in which the Committee has widened the scope of the right to a fair trial. This reference demonstrates the importance of the Committee’s work since regional human rights courts use the Committee’s Comments and Views in terms of the interpretation of specific human rights. The unity regarding such interpretation by different international human rights institutions also contributes to the further development and strengthening of international human rights law in general.



Human Rights Mechanisms: Treaty Bodies, United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture

Date: 18 March 2024

Country: Colombia

Thematic focus: Civil society, right to life, right to privacy and family, right to defend human rights

Impact Story: The Inter-American Court of Human Rights historically decided the case of “Colectivo de Abogados y Abogadas José Alvear Restrepo (CAJAR) vs. Colombia” in which the Court has recognized the international accountability of the Colombian State for systematically persecuting, harassing, stigmatizing, and surveilling members of CAJAR, a non-governmental human rights organization. The Court declared that Colombia violated the rights to life, personal integrity, private life, freedom of thought and expression, informational self-determination, to know the truth, dignity, judicial guarantees, judicial protection, freedom of association, freedom of movement and residence, the protection of the family, as well as the rights of the child and the right to defend human rights. This is the first time that a State has been condemned for violating the right to defend human rights as an autonomous right.

The Court referred in its judgment to General Comment number 32 by the Human Rights Committee (CCPR) and to Concluding Observations by the Committee Against Torture (CAT), the Human Rights Committee (CCPR), and the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

The case was filed by the Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL) as co-petitioner, with an expert report considered by the Court, submitted by the Corporación Centro de Atención Psicosocial (CAPS), both organizations are supported by the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture.



Human Rights Mechanisms: Treaty Bodies

Date: 26 March 2024

Country: Moldova

Thematic focus: Torture

Impact Story: The case of V.I. v. The Republic of Moldova (application no. 38963/18):

Involuntary placement and treatment of a minor in a psychiatric hospital, along with allegations of ill-treatment by medical staff and other patients, which the applicant argued, constituted violations of their right to freedom from torture, privacy and effective remedies. The European Court of Human Rights referred to Concluding Observations (CRC/C/MDA/CO/4-5, 20 October 2017, CRPD/C/MDA/CO/1, 18 May 2017 and CAT/C/MDA/CO/3, 21 December 2017) regarding the institutionalization and treatment of persons with disabilities in Moldova, emphasizing the need for safeguards to protect their rights and promote community-based support services. The Court found violations of freedom from torture and the right to effective remedies and ordered the respondent State to pay compensation to the applicant.



Human Rights Mechanisms: United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture

Date: 27 March 2024

Countries: France, Liberia

Thematic focus: Torture, crimes against humanity

Impact Story: In 2024, the Appeal Court in Paris confirmed the conviction and handed a 30-year sentence to the Liberian rebel commander, finding him guilty of various crimes, including torture and subjecting two men to forced labor, thanks to a project implemented by the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture's (UNVFVT) grantee Civitas Maxima. Civitas Maxima and their partner Global Justice and Research Project have stood alongside Liberian victims, assisting them in pursuing accountability for war crimes in courts outside Liberia. Empowering victims to leverage judicial decisions abroad in order to get justice in the country where the crimes were committed has always been a cornerstone of Civitas Maxima's model. They have documented the atrocities, held perpetrators accountable, built the capacity of local partners, and advocated for justice.



Human Rights Mechanisms: Treaty Bodies, Special Procedures, Human Rights Council

Date: 4 April 2024

Countries: N/A

Thematic focus: Sexual discrimination

Impact Story: On 4 April 2024, the Human Rights Council (HRC) adopted a resolution in which it addressed for the first time the necessity to combat discrimination, violence and harmful practices against intersex persons (A/HRC/RES/55/21). The adoption of this landmark resolution follows several years of advocacy and recommendations by OHCHR, the Treaty Bodies and the Human Rights Council's Special Procedures, including the Special Rapporteur [SR] on health, the SR on extrajudicial executions, the SR on torture, and the SR on violence against women and girls, concerning the human rights of inter-sex persons.



Human Rights Mechanisms: Treaty Bodies, Special Procedures

Date: 9 April 2024

Country: Switzerland

Thematic focus: Climate protection, right to private and family life, right to a fair trial

Impact Story: The European Court of Human Rights decided in a historic judgment, Verein Klimaseniorinnen Schweiz and Others v. Switzerland (Application no. 53600/20), that insufficient measures regarding climate protection and CO2 reduction by member states may violate Human Rights under the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 2 ECHR Right to life and Article 8 ECHR, Right to private and family life) and has asserted in the specific case that there had been a violation of Article 8 ECHR, as well as Article 6 ECHR (Right to a fair trial). The association "Klimaseniorinnen" (climate seniors) together with Greenpeace had filed a complaint calling for more effective measures in view of climate protection as elderly people, in particular, are severely affected by climate change (an increase of heat waves, etc.) regarding their physical and mental health. In the judgments preliminary issues under the section "relevant international materials" the Court comprehensively referred to previous conclusions and statements of different HRTBs, namely the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on the Elimination of All Discrimination against Women, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; further to a joint statement from 2019 including the Committee on the Protection of Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Court for instance reiterated General Comments (number 36, 2019), Views and Statements of the Human Rights Committee on the right to life and the right to privacy and family life regarding their link to environmental protection.

Notably, there were 3rd party interveners, including the UN Special Rapporteurs on toxics and human rights; on human rights and the environment, the former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons.

Para. 379. "Noting the legal developments at the international and national levels, the interveners stressed that the question was no longer whether, but how, human rights courts should address the impacts of environmental harms on the enjoyment of human rights."



Human Rights Mechanisms: Special Procedures, Treaty Bodies

Date: 21 May 2024

Countries: Coalition of Small Islands States for Climate Change and International Law

Thematic focus: Climate protection

Impact Story: On 21 May 2024, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) delivered an advisory opinion on a request submitted to the Tribunal on 12 December 2022 by the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law. In its advisory opinion, ITLOS recognized that greenhouse gas emissions are a form of marine pollution and underscored that States have obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which are additional to those contained in the 2015 Paris Agreement climate, to implement measures mitigating their effect on oceans.

On 30 May 2023, Special Rapporteurs on human rights and climate change, toxics and human rights, and human rights and the environment submitted written comments as an amicus brief to ITLOS in line with the advisory opinion. Not only did a judge refer to the SR's amicus brief, but two of the judges who voted in favor of the relevant Advisory Opinion also referred to treaty bodies: One referred to the [Human Rights Committee's "Torres Strait Islander Case"](#) of 23 Sep 2022 and [called this decision "essential"](#). Another [judge referred](#) to a statement by the Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights [of 31 Oct 2018](#) related to climate change and the enjoyment of the rights to health, food, water and sanitation.



Human Rights Mechanisms: Treaty Bodies

Date: 03 June 2024

Country: Kuwait

Thematic focus: Women's rights, domestic violence, so-called "honour killings"

Impact Story: Following recommendations by the Committee (CEDAW) in its 5th periodic report review (2017), Kuwait partly implemented them by enacting the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence (Act no. 16). The Committee welcomed this amendment in strengthening the rights of women on the domestic level (6th periodic report review, June 2024).



Human Rights Mechanisms: Treaty Bodies

Date: 28 August 2024

Country: Tajikistan

Thematic focus: Corporal punishment, rights of the child

Impact Story:

The Committee on the Rights of the Child in its 2017 Concluding Observations on Tajikistan had identified “corporal punishment” as one of the priority areas to be addressed urgently. It expressed concern about the legislative framework not explicitly prohibiting corporal punishment against children, including in the home, alternative care, day care settings and penal institutions and urged Tajikistan to explicitly prohibit by law corporal punishment of children in all settings (CRC/C/TJK/CO/3-5, paras. 21, 22). Furthermore, the Committee against Torture in its 2018 Concluding Observations expressed its concern about the absence of amendments to national legislation to prevent all corporal punishment of children and recommended Tajikistan to amend national legislation in order to clearly prohibit and prevent all corporal punishment of children (CAT/C/TJK/CO/3, paras. 43, 44).

Following the recommendations in the aforementioned Concluding Observations, on 28 August 2024, it was announced that Tajikistan became the 67th country to prohibit corporal punishment of children in all settings after it enacted the Law of The Republic of Tajikistan on Responsibility for Child Education and Upbringing 2024 prohibiting all violent punishment of children, in all settings of their lives.

In its National Action Plan for 2019-2022 for the implementation of the recommendations of the CAT, the government stated to improve the legislation to ban violence against children.



Human Rights Mechanisms: Treaty Bodies

Date: 16 September 2024

Country: 17 countries, including 193 for Cuba, 159 for Colombia, 75 for Mexico, 14 for Peru

Thematic focus: Enforced disappearances

Impact Story: Under the Urgent Action procedure, the Committee on Enforced Disappearances can request States parties concerned to take immediate measures to search for a disappeared person and investigate the alleged disappearance. The first cases were registered in 2012. On 16 September 2024, the Committee registered its 1890th urgent action. At that date, the States parties with the highest number of registered urgent actions were Mexico (681) and Iraq (608). Throughout the procedure, the Committee maintains contact with the authors of the urgent action requests, who are usually the families of the victims, and with State authorities to provide recommendations as to the measures to take to search and investigate. Throughout these years, 512 disappeared persons have been located, including 408 alive.