

ODIHR's Work on Human Rights



Who we are

The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is the human rights institution of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the world's largest regional security organization. ODIHR is mandated to support OSCE participating States in fulfilling their commitments to ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, uphold the rule of law and strengthen democratic institutions.

ODIHR's work on human rights contributes to this mandate by giving stakeholders the tools to advance human rights across the 57 OSCE participating States, thereby building comprehensive security.

What we do

We support governments, law enforcement, armed forces, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), human rights defenders and other civil society actors to implement human rights commitments in key thematic areas through:

- **Monitoring and reporting** — identifying trends, risks and gaps
- **Capacity-building** — training and technical assistance
- **Policy guidance** — developing standards, tools and recommendations

- **Dialogue and engagement** — convening stakeholders to foster co-operation, exchange and solutions
- **Civil society empowerment** — strengthening the participation, advocacy, skills and the protection of human rights defenders
- **Early warning** — identifying emerging challenges before they escalate

Why it matters

Respect for human rights, democratic governance and the rule of law are essential to human flourishing and peaceful coexistence. By supporting participating States to uphold their commitments, ODIHR contributes directly to conflict prevention and comprehensive security.

“The protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms is one of the basic purposes of government, and ... the recognition of these rights and freedoms constitutes the foundation of freedom, justice and peace.” — [Copenhagen Document](#), 1990

What ODIHR offers

- ✓ Recognized human rights expertise with unique specialist knowledge
- ✓ Strong methodologies that have been tried and tested over time

- ✓ The ability to bring together governments and civil society for dialogue and co-operation
- ✓ A trusted platform for peer exchange, co-operation and capacity building
- ✓ Strong field engagement and partnerships
- ✓ Practical support to participating States in implementing OSCE commitments and international human rights obligations

ODIHR's human rights work includes:

Monitoring the situation of [human rights defenders](#), engaging with authorities and defenders, and speaking up about cases of concern. ODIHR provides guidance on protecting defenders, ([Guidelines on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders](#)) and supports defenders through in-person activities and [FreedomLab.io](#), a platform dedicated to defenders.

Supporting governments in preventing and [combating human trafficking](#) and promoting survivor inclusion through the International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council (ISTAC). ODIHR also helps strengthen legal and policy frameworks and national referral mechanisms for the identification and support of trafficking victims and survivors.

Training public officials and security actors on **human rights-compliant counter-terrorism**, facilitating dialogue between authorities, civil society and affected communities.

Monitoring developments on **freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief**, providing expert advice and training, and promoting dialogue to advance this right. ODIHR is supported by a **panel of experts** on freedom of religion or belief.

Monitoring the situation of **National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)**, supporting their establishment and development. Through the annual NHRI Academy and other training opportunities, ODIHR builds capacity and encourages knowledge-sharing across the OSCE region.

Helping to protect the right of **Freedom of peaceful assembly** by developing policy guidance and standards, monitoring peaceful assemblies and training law enforcement officials, NHRIs and civil society organizations. ODIHR hosts a network of organizations engaged in independent monitoring of freedom of peaceful assembly.

Promoting children's rights by supporting child-sensitive policies, strengthening safeguards against violence and exploitation, and encouraging children's participation in decisions affecting them.

Supporting participating States in advancing **human rights and gender equality in the security sector** and

providing advice on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) national action plans, as well as addressing violence against women and girls (VAWG) and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in places of deprivation of liberty.

Preventing torture and the death penalty through legal reviews, monitoring and training, promoting victims' rights and accountability, and supporting dialogue on the abolition of the death penalty.

Working on **Human rights and new technologies** to ensure that human rights remain central to technological development by promoting safeguards, human oversight, and inclusive public debate, and by providing guidance and tools.

The **Ukraine Monitoring Initiative (UMI)**, through which ODIHR monitors, documents and reports alleged violations of international human rights and humanitarian law related to the international armed conflict in Ukraine. Information is gathered and analyzed through field interviews, remote monitoring and open-source research to support reporting, accountability efforts and awareness of the human rights impact of the conflict.

Read more about ODIHR's human rights work building **comprehensive security** and defending human rights defenders on our website.

Key ODIHR resources ↓



Think Again: Freedom of Thought in the Age of Artificial Intelligence



Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly: Second Edition



Human Rights of Armed Forces Personnel: Standards, Good Practices and Recommendations



Guidelines on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders



Protecting Human Rights in Prisons, Preventing Radicalization



Belief, Dialogue and Security — Fostering dialogue and joint action across religious and belief boundaries



Guidance Document on the Nelson Mandela Rules: Implementing the United Nations Revised Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners



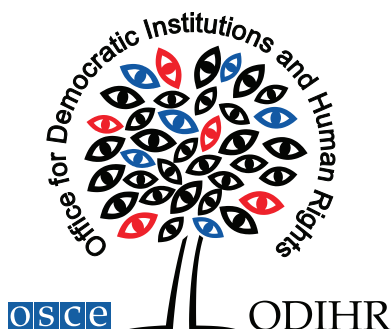
Border Management and Human Rights



Strengthening the Resilience of Adults and Responding to Trauma: Guidance Tool



ODIHR National Referral Mechanisms Handbook, 2nd Edition



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