



The Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

A Plain English Guide

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What is the UPR process?

Under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) the human rights situation of all the countries within the United Nations (UN) are reviewed. This is a new human rights monitoring system of the UN Human Rights Council. It aims at improving the human rights situation on the ground in each of the 192 countries within the UN.

What benefits can the UPR bring to my work or campaign?

The result of the UPR examination will be a list of recommendations made by other countries on how to improve the human rights situation in Ireland. You can use the recommendations to call for changes in Irish law or policy where current practice is in not in line with the recommendations.

UPR is important because countries are examined by their peers, that is, other countries.

UPR can be used to promote public awareness of a human rights issue.

Under the UPR, the government must conduct a national consultation exercise. This is a good opportunity for NGOs and civil society to share their human rights concerns with national policy makers.

Also see the answer to the question below **How can I contribute to the UPR?** (page 9)

What is the UN Human Rights Council?

The UN Human Rights Council is responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the world. Government representatives of 47 UN countries are elected to sit on the Council. The Council's main purpose is to address situations of human rights violations and make recommendations on them.

Where does the UPR examination take place?

Members of the UN Human Rights Council examine countries under the UPR in the UN headquarters, Palais des Nations, in Geneva, Switzerland.

How often does the UPR examination happen?

Under the UPR, the UN Human Rights Council reviews all UN countries every four years (48 countries are reviewed each year during 3 UPR sessions dedicated to 16 countries each). However, the UPR is a continuous process and countries should be monitoring the implementation of human rights at all times during the four years.

How does the UPR process work?

There are three main stages:

- **Review** of the country's human rights situation;
- **Implementation** of the recommendations accepted in the review and voluntary pledges and commitments made by the country during the review;
- **Reporting** at the next review on the implementation of those recommendations and pledges and on the country's human rights situation since the previous review.

What are the human rights issues examined under the UPR?

The UPR assesses how countries respect the commitments they made and agreements that they signed under international law. Particularly, countries are reviewed on their human rights obligations contained in the:

- Charter of the United Nations

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- UN Human rights treaties ratified by the country concerned (a list of the treaties signed by Ireland is available on page 10)
- Voluntary pledges and commitments made by the country
- International humanitarian law

See the list of key words at the end of the document on page 15.

Do all members of the UN Human Rights Council conduct the UPR review?

The UPR review is conducted by a working group of the UN Human Rights Council called the UPR Working Group (which in practice is all 47 members of the UN Human Rights Council).

What is the troika?

The troika consists of representatives from 3 countries in the UPR Working Group. The troika assists the UPR Working Group in the review.

The troika members are selected by the drawing of lots among members of the UN Human Rights Council. They can be diplomats or experts nominated by the country. Each country under review will have a different troika.

What is the role of the troika?

Before the UPR Working Group session where the review takes place, countries that are members of the UPR Working Group can send written questions for the country under review to the troika. These questions are passed to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and sent to the country concerned.

The troika also prepares the report of the UPR Working Group with both the country concerned and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (see below under **What happens after the UPR Working Group review session?** on page 8)

How does the UPR Working Group choose which issues to address in the review?

The countries of the UPR Working Group use 3 documents to conduct the review:

1. **State report:** Information prepared by the government of the country concerned, for example, a national UPR report. The report cannot be larger than 20 pages. The Irish Government's deadline to submit this report is 5 July.
2. **Report with a summary of information from UN reports:** This report is prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. It summarises information in UN reports. This includes reports of UN treaty bodies, UN special procedures and other UN documents. This report cannot be larger than 10 pages.
3. **Report with a summary of information from non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations and the national human rights institution:** This report is prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. It contains a summary of the information included in reports sent to it by independent NGOs, other civil society organisations such as trade unions and the national human rights institution (in Ireland this is the Irish Human Rights Commission). This document cannot be larger than 10 pages if submitted by a group of organisations or 5 pages if submitted by a single organisation. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights will only use credible and reliable information coming from identified and trusted sources. The deadline for organisations to submit these reports is 21 March 2011.

How does the review work?

There are three main parts to the review:

- UPR Working Group session and interactive dialogue
- Report of the UPR Working Group (outcome report)
- UN Human Rights Council adopts the outcome report

How does the UPR Working Group session operate?

- **Presentation.** The government of the country under review presents its national report on the human rights situation in the country, including laws, policies, good practices and challenges. The government of the country also answers any written questions or other issues that have been raised in advance (see the answer to the question above [What is the role of the troika?](#) on page 5)
- **Interactive dialogue.** After the government's presentation, a dialogue takes place between the country under review and the countries that are members of the UPR Working Group, as well as observer countries (that is, UN member countries that are not members of the UN Human Rights Council). The UPR Working Group countries and observer countries ask questions of and make recommendations to the country under review. The UPR Working Group countries can speak for three minutes each and observer countries for two minutes each.
- **Concluding remarks** - During this stage the country under review may make commitments to improve human rights in a particular way. The country under review may also reply to any of the recommendations made by other countries or to questions asked during the interactive dialogue.

The review runs for three hours in total and the overall speaking time for the country under review is one hour. See page 17 for information on where you can view a UPR session on the internet.

What happens after the UPR Working Group review session?

Within two weeks of the UPR Working Group session but not earlier than 48 hours after the session, the UPR Working Group meets to adopt the UPR Working Group report (see the answer to the next question below). This is usually scheduled to take place in a session of the UPR Working Group 2 days after the review.

What is in the report of the UPR Working Group?

The outcome of the interactive dialogue session is the report of the UPR Working Group, referred to as the “outcome report”. This document is prepared by the troika. The report contains a summary of the interactive dialogue, responses and voluntary commitments made by the country being reviewed and recommendations by other countries during the UPR Working Group session. The country being reviewed can accept or refuse recommendations. Both accepted and refused recommendations are included in the report.

What is the role of the UN Human Rights Council?

The UN Human Rights Council passes a decision to adopt the outcome report of the UPR Working Group. This takes place during a one hour session where time is divided between the country under review, countries that are members of the UN Human Rights Council, observer countries, NGOs and civil society groups and the national human rights institution.

- The country under review has 20 minutes to speak about issues raised and recommendations made during the interactive dialogue. At this stage the country provides responses to the recommendations made;
- Representatives of UN Human Rights Council countries and observer countries have 20 minutes (between them) to give statements on the outcome of the review.

- Representatives from NGOs, civil society organisations and the national human rights institution have 20 minutes (between them) to make general comments about the review.

What happens during the four years between reviews?

The government of the country has a duty to implement the recommendations contained in the final outcome report. The next UPR will assess if the country has done so. If not, the UN Human Rights Council has the power to address cases of persistent non-cooperation.

Are there any UPR activities in Ireland or does everything take place in Geneva?

As part of the UPR process, governments are required to conduct national consultations before producing the national UPR report. You can get more information on the government's work from the Department of Foreign Affairs (details on page 14).

Independent and government-funded organisations will also be organising UPR-related activities in Ireland.

How can I contribute to Ireland's UPR?

For Ireland to gain as much as possible out of the UPR process, independent NGOs, other civil society groups, every government department and the Irish Human Rights Commission, all have a role to play (see pages 12 to 14 below).

UN Human rights treaties ratified by Ireland

- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), 1965
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1966
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1979
- Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (CAT), 1984
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), 1989

UN Human Rights treaties not yet ratified by Ireland

- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CMW), 1990
- International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), 2006
- International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICAED), 2006

These treaties are available on the website of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights www.ohchr.org.

Time Frame for Ireland's UPR Examination

21 March 2011	Independent NGOs, other civil society organisations and the Irish Human Rights Commission must send their reports to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
4 July 2011	The Irish Government must send its report to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
6 October 2011	Ireland's UPR review in Geneva
8 October 2011	UPR Working Group adopts the outcome report on Ireland
Early 2012	The Human Rights Council adopts the outcome report on Ireland

Who's working on the UPR in Ireland?

NGOs and Civil Society - UPR Cross Sectoral Steering Group



Sixteen civil society organisations, including the Irish Council for Civil Liberties, have come together to ensure that the collective voice of civil society is heard during Ireland's UPR examination. The steering group plans to consult with groups and organisations around the country and feed this information into the report. We hope that as many civil society organisations and groups as possible will contribute and sign up to the report. Experience shows that the recommendations of civil society will be stronger if we work together. We plan to use the UPR recommendations as building blocks upon which to base our work for change in Irish law, policy and practice until Ireland's next UPR examination (in four years).

If you would like more information about this work and/or would like to contribute to the coordinated civil society report, please contact Mary O' Shea, UPR Coordinator, whose details are below.

Mary O'Shea, UPR Coordinator

Irish Council for Civil Liberties

9 – 13 Blackhall Place

Dublin 7

Tel: (01) 799 4504

Email: mary.oshea@iccl.ie

www.iccl.ie or www.rightsmonitor.org

The Irish Council for Civil Liberties has also produced a **Toolkit on International Human Rights Monitoring** which includes information for NGOs and civil society groups on how to work effectively with the UPR process. The toolkit includes details on preparing a UPR report, organising effectively, lobbying and attending the session itself in Geneva. This is available on the website of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties at www.iccl.ie and www.rightsmonitor.org.

International NGOs will also be submitting UPR reports on Ireland including:

Amnesty International, Irish section

Amnesty International Ireland

Seán MacBride House

48 Fleet Street

Dublin 2

Ireland

Tel: (01) 863 8300

Email: info@amnesty.ie

www.amnesty.ie

Irish Human Rights Commission

The Irish Human Rights Commission (IHRC), as Ireland's National Human Rights Institution (NHRI), will submit a UPR report in March 2011. To inform its report, the IHRC is seeking contributions from the Irish public and civil society organisations.

The IHRC is working to support those interested in taking part in the UPR process, by providing information on the process and practical advice on how you can submit a report directly to the UN. The IHRC will also provide input to the Irish Government on the State Report, as appropriate.

Avril Hutch, UPR Project Officer
Irish Human Rights Commission (IHRC)
Fourth Floor
Jervis House, Jervis Street
Dublin 1
Tel: (01) 858 9601
Email: upr@ihrc.ie
www.ihrc.ie

Department of Foreign Affairs

The Department of Foreign Affairs is coordinating the work of the Irish Government on the UPR.

Human Rights Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs
69-71 St. Stephen's Green
Dublin 2
Tel: (01) 478 0822
LoCall: 1890 426 700
www.dfa.ie

Key Words

United Nations (UN)

The United Nations (UN) is an international organisation which was founded in 1945 after the Second World War. It works to maintain international peace and security; develop friendly relations among countries and promote social progress, better living standards and human rights. At present 192 countries are members. The General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council are all organs or bodies of the UN.

<http://www.un.org/en/>

Charter of the United Nations

The United Nations Charter is the founding document of the United Nations which was signed in 1945. As a Charter it is a constituent treaty, and all signatories are bound by its articles. Among other things, the Charter contains provisions on membership of the UN, powers of the organs of the UN and UN administrative staff known as the UN secretariat.

<http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter>

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The Declaration was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. It sets out various human rights including the rights to life, liberty, and a fair trial, the right to social security and to participation in the cultural life of one's community.

<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

International Humanitarian Law

International humanitarian law is often called the laws of war. The two main legal treaties in international humanitarian law are the Geneva Conventions and the Hague Conventions.

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

The High Commissioner for Human Rights is the principal human rights official of the United Nations. The High Commissioner heads the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and leads the work of the United Nations on human rights. The OHCHR is a part of the United Nations Secretariat with headquarters in Geneva. The OHCHR has offices in various countries and regions and works to get human rights standards implemented in practice. The OHCHR supports the work of the UN treaty bodies and the UN Human Rights Council.

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Pages/WelcomePage.aspx>

UN Treaty Bodies

There are nine core international human rights treaties and some of these set up treaty bodies to monitor their implementation. There are eight human rights treaty bodies. Treaty bodies are committees of independent experts that monitor the implementation of the core international human rights treaties. The treaty bodies are supported by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/Pages/HumanRightsBodies.aspx>

UN Special Procedures

Special procedures are used by the Human Rights Council to address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights supports the special procedures.

Special procedures are either an individual called "Special Rapporteur", or a working group usually composed of five members. Depending on the special procedure, they can carry out country visits to investigate the situation of human rights, respond to individual complaints, conduct studies, provide advice on

technical cooperation at the country level, and engage in general promotional activities.

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/chr/special/index.htm>

Some useful organisations and websites

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (www.ohchr.org)

International Service for Human Rights (www.ishr.ch)

UPR-info.org (www.upr-info.org, you can watch a live UPR session on this website, see details under media centre, webcast)

About this Guide

This Plain English guide to the UPR process has been produced by the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL) in collaboration with UPR-info.org. The ICCL is working with other civil society organisations in a cross-sectoral steering group to ensure that the collective voice of civil society is heard during Ireland's UPR examination.

