Researching International Human Rights Law

There is no centralized database of international human rights law. As such, researching jurisprudence and treaty law in this field requires creativity and, oftentimes, using more than one database. Furthermore, because the universities and organizations that maintain the key databases have limited resources and do not charge a fee to users, each website or resource tends to have its own limitations or gaps. For your future reference, the IJRC website contains a list of research aids that we periodically update (http://www.ijrcenter.org/research-aids/), as well as thematic research guides (http://www.ijrcenter.org/thematic-research-guides/). Please do not hesitate to contact IJRC with any questions related to researching or using international human rights protections: ijrc@ijrcenter.org

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Treaty Texts & Ratifications

OHCHR Core Instruments Webpage
- URL: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CoreInstruments.aspx
- Content: the core United Nations human rights instruments, including optional protocols, with links to treaty bodies.
- Scope: UN human rights treaties

OHCHR Status of Ratification Interactive Dashboard
- URL: http://indicators.ohchr.org/
- Content: information on States’ ratification of the core UN human rights instruments, organized by State or by instrument.
- Scope: UN human rights treaties
- Note: Click on the “Underlying Data” link for a spreadsheet with ratification specifics, including whether each State has also accepted the relevant complaints mechanism.

UN Treaty Collection, Human Rights Chapter
- Content: Most up-to-date information on State ratifications of UN human rights treaties, with text of reservations, understandings, and declarations (RUDs), as well as information on adoption and entry into force.
- Note: By clicking on a treaty name and then on the “Full Details” link, you can access various language versions of the treaty text in PDF.

UN Treaty Series Online Collection, Popular Name Search
- URL: https://treaties.un.org/pages/UNTSOnline.aspx?id=1
- Content: A quick reference for both regional and UN human rights treaties by their popular names (e.g., “Pact of San Jose”).
- Scope: various multilateral treaties
- Note: Many regional and international treaties are not included in the existing list. Use the “Title Search” tab to search by treaty title, instead.

University of Minnesota Human Rights Library
- URL: http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/ainstls1.htm
- Content: List of regional and universal human rights treaties, soft law principles, and select other documents, organized by theme.
- Scope: Regional and universal human rights instruments.
- Note: This list does not include instruments or other documents adopted during the past year. The information and links on entry into force and on ratification are mostly out of date, unless they link directly to the UN Treaty Collection or another external, official source.
Regional Human Rights Bodies
The webpages of the regional human rights bodies also contain their own treaties, soft law, statutes, and rules of procedure.

- Arab Human Rights Committee: [http://www.lasportal.org/ar/sectors/dep/HumanRightsDep/Pages/Mechanisms.aspx#tab1](http://www.lasportal.org/ar/sectors/dep/HumanRightsDep/Pages/Mechanisms.aspx#tab1) and [http://www.lasportal.org/ar/sectors/dep/HumanRightsDep/Pages/Committee.aspx](http://www.lasportal.org/ar/sectors/dep/HumanRightsDep/Pages/Committee.aspx)

Additionally, you can access each of the UN human rights treaty bodies and their respective instruments and rules from the following OHCHR webpage: [http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/Pages/HumanRightsBodies.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/Pages/HumanRightsBodies.aspx)

Resolutions & Declarations

**OHCHR Charter Body Database**

- Scope: United Nations documents
- Note: To access a UN document to which you do not have a link, when you know the UN document number, type in: [www.undocs.org/](http://www.undocs.org/) followed by the document number (e.g., [www.undocs.org/A/HRC/27/L.1](http://www.undocs.org/A/HRC/27/L.1))

**Regional Intergovernmental Organizations**

- Organization of American States: [http://www.oas.org/dii/declarations_and_resolutions.htm](http://www.oas.org/dii/declarations_and_resolutions.htm)
Judgments & Decisions

To search the judgments and decisions on individual complaints from all the regional and universal human rights bodies, you will need to use at least four different databases (specifically, WorldCourts, the HUDOC databases for the European Court of Human Rights and European Committee of Social Rights, and the UN Treaty Body Search). Additionally, once you have found decisions of interest, you should check the individual websites of the bodies that have emitted them to make sure that there are not more recent cases that cite or modify their holdings. You may want to start your jurisprudence search by referring to a compilation or guide, such as those produced by the European Court of Human Rights or Inter-American Commission on Human Rights; IJRC also produces thematic research guides on various topics, which are available on our website: http://www.ijrcenter.org/thematic-research-guides/

GLOBAL

WorldCourts.com
- URL: http://www.worldcourts.com
- Content: Searchable database of judgments, decisions, interim measures, advisory opinions, and other orders from most regional human rights bodies (except the European), some UN treaty bodies, many international criminal tribunals, and some sub-regional courts.
- Scope: Supranational courts and quasi-judicial bodies
- Note: This is the most comprehensive human rights case law database, although it is not entirely up-to-date; the timeliness varies by body. Check the index page for each body to see a reverse chronological list of all documents for that body (e.g., http://www.worldcourts.com/ecowasccj/eng/index.htm).

WorldLII and subsidiary databases
- URL: http://www.worldlii.org/
- Content: Searchable database of case law from sub-regional courts, many human rights courts and commissions, international criminal tribunals, some UN treaty bodies, and other international adjudicatory bodies. This database does not include the European Committee of Social Rights or African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights, but does include select judgments of the European Court of Human Rights.
- Scope: Supranational courts and quasi-judicial bodies
- Note: This database is several years out of date for some bodies. Click on each body’s name (http://www.worldlii.org/int/cases/) to see a list of its decisions and the year in which each section was last updated.
UN BODIES

UN Treaty Body Search
- Content: Views (and other documents) of the UN treaty bodies concerning individual complaints. Contains decisions from all eight bodies that currently accept complaints.
- Scope: UN treaty bodies
- Note: Select “Jurisprudence” in the “Filter by Document Type” section to see only decisions on individual complaints.

OHCHR Jurisprudence Database
- URL: http://juris.ohchr.org/
- Scope: some UN treaty bodies
- Note: The content of this database was taken from the SIM database, which is no longer in operation. Currently, this database is not as complete as the OHCHR Treaty Body Search.

UN Special Procedures, Communications Reports
- URL: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/CommunicationsreportsSP.aspx
- Content: Summaries of alleged violations communicated to States by the UN special procedures and the States’ responses, submitted thrice annually to the Human Rights Council.
- Scope: UN special procedures
- Note: These reports are from December 2010 onward. For prior communications, see either the individual pages of the special procedures (accessible from http://spinternet.ohchr.org/_Layouts/SpecialProceduresInternet/ViewAllCountryMandates.aspx?Type=TM) and view their annual reports to the Human Rights Council (which are also collected on this page, for the years 2007-2014: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/AnnualreportsHRC.aspx)

AFRICA

African Case Law Analyser
- URL: http://caselaw.ihrda.org/doc/search/
- Content: Decisions and judgments of the continental human rights bodies and sub-regional courts, searchable by keyword, country, and other criteria.
- Scope: African human rights bodies and sub-regional courts
- Note: This database is approximately one year out-of-date for the African human rights bodies, and has some other gaps or missing decisions. Use the Keywords page to quickly access decisions related to particular topics (http://caselaw.ihrda.org/keywords/). Links sometimes do not work on this site; to access a decision when you know the case number, type in caselaw.ihrhdai.org/doc/ followed by the case number (e.g., http://caselaw.ihrda.org/doc/001.12/)
www.ijrcenter.org

African Commission on Human & Peoples’ Rights
- URL: http://www.achpr.org/communications/
- Content: List of decisions on complaints (communications) decided by the African Commission.
- Scope: African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights

African Court on Human & Peoples’ Rights
- URL: http://en.african-court.org/#finalised-cases
- Content: List of decisions and judgments issued by the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights, organized chronologically and by status.
- Scope: African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights
- Note: These documents are scanned copies of the original judgments and decisions, making readers cannot search the text. To see these documents in ordinary PDF or html, use the Case Law Analyser.

THE AMERICAS

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Rapporteurship Webpages
- Content: Lists of key judgments and decisions (including on admissibility and friendly settlements) from the Inter-American Commission and Court that are related to the vulnerable groups and issue areas covered by the Commission’s rapporteurships.
- Scope: Inter-American Commission and Court
- Note: Use these pages as a starting place for identifying relevant doctrine, if your search is related to one of the rapporteurships’ mandates. Keep in mind that some pages may be more frequently updated than others. See the full list of Commission decisions (http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/decisions/merits.asp) and Court judgments (http://www.corteidh.or.cr/cf/Jurisprudencia2/busqueda_casos_contenciosos.cfm?lang=en) on their respective websites.

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Thematic Reports
- Content: The thematic reports of the Inter-American Commission go into significant detail on issues of concern in the region and refer to the Commission and Court’s holdings.
- Scope: Inter-American Commission and Court
- Note: Note the date of publication of each report to determine whether more timely research is additionally required.

Inter-American Court of Human Rights
- URL: http://www.corteidh.or.cr/cf/Jurisprudencia2/index.cfm?lang=en
- Content: Searchable database of Inter-American Court judgments, orders, and other documents.
- Scope: Inter-American Court
- Note: The database is inconsistent and not reliable in the results it produces, particularly in English. Also note that the most recent judgments, and many orders, will only be available in Spanish. See the Court’s Jurisprudence Bulletin for concise summaries of recent judgments (http://corteidh.or.cr/index.php/en/court-today/publicaciones).
Loyola Law School
- URL: https://iachr.ills.edu/database
- Content: Searchable database of Inter-American Court judgments, along with summaries.
- Scope: Inter-American Court
- Note: The database does not include the most recent decisions.

BJDH
- Content: Jurisprudence of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, searchable by keyword and other criteria.
- Scope: Inter-American Court
- Note: The interface of this database is only in Spanish, as are the results it generates. In addition to including provisional measures orders and other Inter-American Court documents, it also includes select UN and Mexican decisions.

EUROPE

European Court of Human Rights, HUDOC
- URL: http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/
- Content: Judgments and decisions taken by the European Court of Human Rights and the former European Commission on Human Rights, searchable by many different criteria and by keyword or exact phrase.
- Scope: European Court of Human Rights
- Note: Use the filters in the left sidebar to narrow down your results by level of importance to see the most significant judgments. Use the hyperlinks within the text of judgments and decisions to directly access the case law cited. See the Judgments and Decisions webpage (http://www.echr.coe.int/Pages/home.aspx?p=caselaw&c=) for compilations of reported judgments and decisions.

European Court of Human Rights, Factsheets
- URL: http://echr.coe.int/Pages/home.aspx?p=press/factsheets
- Content: Summaries of the European Court’s most important judgments, organized by topic. The factsheets do not cover every issue area or vulnerable group, but they do cover many topics.
- Scope: European Court of Human Rights
- Note: The factsheets include both decided and pending cases.
European Court of Human Rights, Case-Law Guides & Research Reports
- URL: http://echr.coe.int/Pages/home.aspx?p=caselaw/analysis&c=#n14278064742986744502025_pointer
- Content: Concise description and analysis of the European Court’s jurisprudence on select issue areas.
- Scope: European Court of Human Rights
- Note: Double check the holdings in these guides against the more recent “Overview of the Court’s Case-Law” synthesizing precedential decisions, which is published at least annually (http://echr.coe.int/Pages/home.aspx?p=caselaw/analysis&c=#n13794084798725475324837_pointer).

Council of Europe Handbooks
- Content: Description and analysis of the European Court’s interpretation of select articles of the European Convention on Human Rights.
- Scope: European Court of Human Rights
- Note: Some handbooks may be a decade or more out of date. Use the other resources listed above to identify more recent judgments. Also see the Commissioner for Human Rights’ issue papers on select topics (http://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/issue-papers).

European Committee of Social Rights, HUDOC
- URL: http://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng#
- Content: Searchable database of the European Committee of Social Rights’ decisions on collective complaints and its conclusions regarding State reports.
- Scope: European Committee of Social Rights
- Note: Use the filters in the left side bar to narrow down your search.

European Committee of Social Rights Website
- URL: http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/socialcharter/Complaints/Complaints_en.asp
- Content: List of decisions on admissibility and merits, and other case documents, concerning collective complaints, organized chronologically by case.
- Scope: European Committee of Social Rights

ESCR-Net Caselaw Database
- URL: https://www.escr-net.org/caselaw
- Content: Searchable database of select national, regional, and international decisions concerning economic, social, and cultural rights, along with summaries.
- Scope: domestic, regional, and international courts and quasi-judicial bodies
- Note: This database not comprehensive, but rather only includes select decisions from certain bodies. It also does not include more recent decisions. The “keyword” search field is not a full text search function and will only return results where the word is truly a keyword in the decision.
Global Health and Human Rights Database
- URL: http://www.globalhealthrights.org/
- Content: Searchable database of decisions, judgments, general comments, and instruments related to health and human rights.
- Scope: Most regional and international human rights bodies
- Note: Visit the instructional page for guidance on using this database: http://www.globalhealthrights.org/how-to-use-the-database/.

UNODC Human Trafficking Case Law Database
- URL: https://www.unodc.org/cld/index.jspx
- Content: Searchable database of select national and regional court judgments related to trafficking in persons.
- Scope: domestic and regional courts
- Note: Use the criteria in the left side bar to narrow your search, including by specific court.

Global Freedom of Expression database
- URL: https://globalfreedomofexpression.columbia.edu/
- Content: Searchable database of decisions, with summaries and other analysis, related to freedom of expression. Includes the regional human rights courts, sub-regional courts of Africa, and UN treaty bodies.
- Scope: domestic and regional courts and UN treaty bodies
- Note: Use the “Filters” tab to narrow your search.

Refworld
- URL: http://www.refworld.org/type,CASELAW,,,,0.html
- Content: Searchable database of select national, regional, and international courts and human rights bodies’ judgments and decisions related to asylum and the rights of refugees.
- Scope: domestic, regional, and international courts and human rights bodies
- Note: The “Court Interventions” section contains UNHCR and other amicus curiae briefs. (= http://www.refworld.org/type,AMICUS,,,,0.html).

Other Interpretations of Standards

General (non-case specific) interpretations and analysis of international human rights law include UN treaty bodies’ general comments (and those of the African Commission), as well as courts’ advisory opinions. See the webpages of each human rights body or court for a list of its advisory opinions, general comments, and other interpretations of a general nature.

OHCHR General Comments Webpage
- URL: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/Pages/TBGeneralComments.aspx
- Content: Links to the general comments and general recommendations of the UN human rights treaty bodies.
- Scope: UN treaty bodies
Observations on State Implementation & Conditions

There are multiple sources for analysis and conclusions regarding States’ fulfillment of their human rights obligations. These include the outcome documents of the Universal Periodic Review, concluding observations from UN treaty bodies and several regional bodies, and reports by the Inter-American Commission and the European Commissioner for Human Rights.

Universal Human Rights Index

- URL: http://uhri.ohchr.org/
- Content: Searchable database of all UN human rights mechanisms’ country-specific findings and recommendations, including Universal Periodic Review outcomes, in addition to other documents.
- Scope: UN human rights bodies
- Note: Use the advanced search (http://uhri.ohchr.org/search/annotations) to filter by country or by body type. See special procedures’ recommendations prior to 2006 via the OHCHR website (http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/Recommendations.aspx).

UN Treaty Body Search

- Content: Searchable database of UN treaty bodies’ outputs, including concluding observations on State reports and the Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture’s country visit reports.
- Scope: UN human rights bodies
Universal Periodic Review
- URL: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/Documentation.aspx
- Content: Reports and recommendations related to the Universal Periodic Review. Access the national report, compilation of UN information, stakeholders’ (civil society) information, questions, and outcome document, organized by country and cycle.
- Scope: Universal Periodic Review
- Note: Click the link at the top of the page for each country to access its prior review.

African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, Concluding Observations
- URL: http://www.achpr.org/states/reports-and-concluding-observations/
- Content: List of State reports and concluding observations on implementation of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights.
- Scope: African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights
- Note: Visit the “State Reporting” page to see communications (complaints), press releases and other information relating to each State (http://www.achpr.org/states/).

African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, Mission Reports
- URL: http://www.achpr.org/mission-reports/
- Content: List of the most recent reports concerning promotion and fact-finding missions carried out by the African Commission or its special mechanisms. For older reports, visit the Documents page and filter a search to include “Mission Reports” (http://www.achpr.org/search/?t=834).
- Scope: African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights
- Note: Use the search function to search the reports for any word found in the text.

Arab Human Rights Committee, Concluding Observations
- URL: http://www.lasportal.org/ar/humanrights/Committee/Pages/Reports.aspx (Arabic)
- Content: List of State reports and concluding observations on implementation of the Arab Charter on Human Rights.
- Scope: Arab Human Rights Committee
- Note: Use the Chrome browser to access a translated version of the Arabic site, using Google’s automated translation. The reports and concluding observations are in PDF, though, and only available in Arabic.

COE Commissioner for Human Rights, Country Visit Reports
- URL: http://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/country-reports-by-country
- Content: Database of reports prepared by the Commissioner following his visits to Council of Europe Member States.
- Scope: Council of Europe
- Note: Access the Country Visits page for additional statements, organized by State and year (http://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/country-monitoring).

European Committee for the Prevention of Torture, HUDOC Database
- URL: http://hudoc.cpt.coe.int/eng#
- Content: Searchable database of reports following country visits and other statements by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
- Scope: Council of Europe
- Note: Filter by language to eliminate duplicate results.
European Committee of Social Rights, HUDOC Database
- URL: http://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng#
- Content: Searchable database of conclusions regarding States’ reports on implementation of the European Social Charter, and other Committee documents.
- Scope: European Committee of Social Rights
- Note: Select “Conclusions” in the left side bar to see the Committee’s conclusions regarding State reports, and refer to the Social Charter or Revised Social Charter to filter by article number.

European Committee of Social Rights, Conclusions
- URL: http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/socialcharter/Conclusions/ConclusionsIndex_en.asp
- Content: List of conclusions concerning State reports on implementation of the European Social Charter, organized by State and by year.
- Scope: European Committee of Social Rights
- Note: See the Country Factsheets link in the left side bar for a summary of each State’s accepted provisions, reports, and domestic implementation of the European Social Charter (http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/socialcharter/links_en.asp).

European Committee against Racism and Intolerance, HUDOC Database
- URL: http://hudoc.fcnm.coe.int/ecri/query.asp?language=en
- Content: Searchable database of reports on racism and intolerance in Council of Europe Member States, including recommendations for improvement.
- Scope: European Committee against Racism and Intolerance
- Note: See the Committee’s website for information about its work and reporting cycles (http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/default_en.asp).

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Country Reports
- Content: List of the Commission’s reports concerning specific countries, organized chronologically.
- Scope: Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
- Note: See the Country Visits page for additional materials related to country visits, including those regarding which no official report has yet been issued (http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/activities/countries.asp).

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Annual Reports
- URL: http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/reports/annual.asp
- Content: List of the Commission’s annual reports, which – in Chapter IV – include both an overview of human rights conditions in the Americas and a section focused on a small group of countries with particularly concerning human rights abuses.
- Scope: Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
- Note: See the annexes for the annual report of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression and other reports published during the previous year.
Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Hearings

- Content: Searchable database of audio and video recordings of thematic and case hearings held by the Commission. Use the country, topic, date, or participant filters to narrow your search.
- Scope: Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

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**National Legislation & Jurisprudence**

Sources on human rights-related national legislation and jurisprudence abound, although no database is comprehensive. A good starting point are the Yale Law Library’s country-specific foreign law research guides ([http://library.law.yale.edu/research/guides/country-guide](http://library.law.yale.edu/research/guides/country-guide)), which link to a number of other sources.

**GlobaLex**

- URL: [http://www.nyulawglobal.org/Globalex/index.html](http://www.nyulawglobal.org/Globalex/index.html)
- Content: List of research guides on individual countries’ legal systems, with links to primary sources.
- Scope: global (national legislation)

**Lexadin**

- Content: Links to primary sources of national law, organized by country.
- Scope: global (national legislation)

**Legal Information Institute (LII)**

- URL: [https://www.law.cornell.edu/world](https://www.law.cornell.edu/world)
- Content: Links to primary sources of national law, organized by country.
- Scope: global (national legislation)
- Note: Click on the regions under “National Law Material” for country-specific primary sources.

**Legislationline**

- URL: [http://www.legislationline.org/](http://www.legislationline.org/)
- Content: This OSCE/ODIHR database includes national constitutions, criminal codes, and other legislation related to civil and political rights, organized by State and topic, in addition to commentary on draft national legislation.
- Scope: OSCE participating States (national legislation)
- Note: To directly access constitutions and criminal codes, listed by State, click on the “Constitutions” ([http://www.legislationline.org/documents/section/constitutions](http://www.legislationline.org/documents/section/constitutions)) and “Criminal Codes”([http://www.legislationline.org/documents/section/criminal-codes](http://www.legislationline.org/documents/section/criminal-codes)) links.
WorldLII and subsidiary databases

- URL: http://www.worldlii.org/
- Content: Searchable database of case law and legislation from national (and other) jurisdictions. Use the advanced search (http://www.worldlii.org/forms/search1.html) to filter by jurisdiction and type of result.
- Scope: global (national legislation and case law)
- Note: Visit the Databases page to see other LII database and their contents (http://www.worldlii.org/databases.html).

Refworld

- URL: http://www.refworld.org/publisher/NATLEGBOD.html
- Content: Searchable database of national (and other) law related to asylum, nationality, and the rights of refugees.
- Scope: global (national legislation and case law)
- Note: See the “Case Law” section to search judgments from national courts (http://www.refworld.org/type,CASELAW,,,,,0.html).

NATLEX

- Content: Searchable database of national legislation related to workers’ rights.
- Scope: global (national legislation)

International Committee of the Red Cross, IHL National Implementation Database

- Content: List of national legislation relevant to international humanitarian law, organized by State and topic.
- Scope: global (national legislation)

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Case-Law Database

- Content: Searchable database of Court of Justice of European Union and European Court of Human Rights case law, as well as select national court decisions, referencing the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.
- Scope: European Union Member States (national and regional jurisprudence)
- Note: Use the filters in the right side bar to narrow your search by European Convention on Human Rights articles.

Network of the Presidents of the Supreme Judicial Courts of the EU, Common Portal of Case Law

- Content: Searchable databases of select European national courts.
- Scope: European Union Member States (national case law)
African Law Library

- URL: http://www.africanlawlibrary.net/
- Content: Searchable database of select continental, sub-regional, and national legislation and court decisions.
- Scope: Africa (national and regional legislation and case law)
- Note: Use the Court Decisions search (http://www.africanlawlibrary.net/search/court-decisions) for jurisprudence.