



UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review

Why in News?

Recently, the [Human Rights Council \(HRC\) Universal Periodic Review \(UPR\)](#) session was held in Geneva, where India's human rights record was examined by the **Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group**.

What is UPR?

▪ About:

- The UPR is a unique process which **involves a periodic review of the human rights records of all 193 UN Member States**.
- Since its first meeting was held in April 2008, all 193 UN member States have been reviewed **thrice within the first, second and third UPR cycles**.
- The ultimate aim of this mechanism is to **improve the human rights situation in all countries and address human rights violations** wherever they occur. Currently, no other universal mechanism of this kind exists.
- During the review process, **States outline specific steps they have taken to implement recommendations** posed during their previous reviews and highlight their recent human rights developments.

▪ UPR for India:

- The three country representatives serving as rapporteurs ("troika") for the review of India are: **Sudan, Nepal and the Netherlands**.
- This review marks the beginning of the **UPR fourth cycle**. India's first, second and third UPR reviews took place in April 2008, May 2012 and May 2017, respectively.

▪ Reviews are Based on:

- National report - information provided by the State under review
- Information contained in the reports of independent human rights experts and groups, known as the Special Procedures, human rights treaty bodies, and other UN entities
- Information provided by other stakeholders including national human rights institutions, regional organizations and civil society groups.

What are the Highlights of the Review?

- Greece, the Netherlands and Vatican City called upon the Government of India to ensure **freedom of religion and end discrimination against human rights defenders** and religious minorities.
 - India appreciates the role of human rights defenders, journalists and activists in the democratic system but the activities of these groups and individuals should be in conformity with the law of the land.
- **Germany** expressed concern about the **rights situation in India** especially religious minorities as well as women and girls.
- Germany also said that the [Foreign Contribution Regulation Act](#) should not "unduly restrict" the "freedom of association" in India.
 - The **German representative called upon India to strengthen the National Human Rights Commission** and said the discrimination against Dalits should end.
- Nepal called for India to **strengthen measures to end violence against women** and end child marriage.

- Russia asked India to continue to **take policies that will eradicate poverty** and called for “responsible corporate behaviour”.
- India said that actions were taken against some organizations due to their illegal practices including malafide re-routing of money and wilful and continuing violations of extant legal provisions, foreign exchange management rules and tax law of India.

What is UNHRC?

▪ **About:**

- The Human Rights Council is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of **human rights** around the world.

▪ **Formation:**

- The Council was created by the United Nations General Assembly in 2006. It replaced the former United Nations Commission on Human Rights.
- The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) serves as the Secretariat of the Human Rights Council.
- OHCHR is headquartered in **Geneva, Switzerland**.

▪ **Members:**

- It is made up of 47 United Nations Member States which are elected by the UN General Assembly (UNGA).
- The Council's Membership is based on equitable geographical distribution. Seats are distributed as follows:
 - African States: 13 seats
 - Asia-Pacific States: 13 seats
 - Latin American and Caribbean States: 8 seats
 - Western European and other States: 7 seats
 - Eastern European States: 6 seats
- Members of the Council serve for a period of **three years** and are not eligible for immediate re-election after serving two consecutive terms.

▪ **Procedures and Mechanisms:**

- **Advisory Committee:** It serves as the Council's “think tank” providing it with expertise and advice on thematic human rights issues.
- **Complaint Procedure:** It allows individuals and organizations to bring human rights violations to the attention of the Council.
- **UN Special Procedures:** These are made up of **special rapporteurs**, special representatives, independent experts and working groups that monitor, examine, advise and publicly report on thematic issues or human rights situations in specific countries.

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