



General Assembly

Distr.: General
11 February 2026

English only

Human Rights Council

Sixty-first session

23 February–2 April 2026

Agenda item 2

**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

Written statement submitted by Sikh Human Rights Group, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status*

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[26 January 2026]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Rethinking Human Rights Implementation: Context, Culture, and Community Responsibilities

The High Commissioner's report A/HRC/61/23 has concentrated on the technical and administrative aspects of human rights implementation as well as reporting mechanisms. This is important feedback on the steps taken by the different UN bodies in ensuring uptake and compliance with the human rights instruments agreed at the United Nations. However there is a need to look at the question of why human rights are deteriorating in many regions and whether this is simply an issue of compliance or are there other factors such as the assumptions within the implementation and compliance system.

Human Rights instruments cover many aspects of human life and the environment. While they became part of the international community as a codified list in 1948, it must not be ignored that decency and dignity of the human has always been central to most civilisations and cultures for hundreds if not thousands of years. Societies have lived with a considerable degree of respect, dignity, cultural diversity and environmental consciousness.

In the adoption of UN human rights instruments and subsequent implementation regimes as well as reviews, there may have been an unwitting displacement of centuries and millennia old existing systems that ensured dignity, respect, duties and responsibilities with a new epistemological basis of ensuring dignity, respect, duties and responsibilities.

The emphasis on the implementation is focussed significantly on the Occidental civilisation's post enlightenment concentration on individual rights given its own history of suppression of the individual to absolute sovereigns and religious dogmas. This singular approach often fails to appreciate that enlightenment is a particular Occidental progress and transformation of a harsh and medieval civilisation in Europe. This did not exist in many parts of the world where cultures and norms were a lot advanced.

This implementation approach appears not to be cognisant of value systems, norms and long established and intricate balances that have existed in many civilisations and cultures. The reviews also miss this significant aspect of civilisations and cultures that inform their long established norms around dignity, respect, duties and responsibilities.

Article 29 of the UDHR implies understanding of the duties of the individual to the community. There is no elaboration to strengthen these articles as well.

1. Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.
2. In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

The Preamble of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights also recognises the duties and responsibility that individuals have to the community and to other individuals. This

'Realizing that the individual, having duties to other individuals and to the community to which he belongs, is under a responsibility to strive for the promotion and observance of the rights recognized in the present Covenant.

This paragraph is repeated in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Implementing human rights might be more successful if context is also considered, the culture and civilisation is appreciated and balances between individual rights, duties and responsibilities understood as being different in different cultures and civilisation.

It may also be useful to co-opt cultures and civilisations in implementing human rights. With their cooperation human rights could be put in context of the values and norms of those to ensure that human rights are understood, implemented and observed as part of their own normative systems rather than be seen as a neo colonialist attempt as many accuse international human rights instruments to be..

Further, some of the Articles in the UDHR and the two main treaties cannot be realised without significant support from the international community and institutions.

For instance, the Article 25 of the UDHR

1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

This right cannot realistically be implemented in least developed countries without the assistance of international financial institutions such as World Bank giving direct funds to ensure this right or an alternative fund that will support this right.

1. Article 22, 'Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Everyone desires a social security network particularly when misfortune strikes even the wealthy. This is not feasible in least developed countries and even some developing countries. An international system financing Universal Basic Income in the developing countries would ensure this support net. It is necessary for leading developed countries to come together to strengthen some of the most basic rights of UDHR and the ICESCR for people to have some of the most basic essentials of life today.

The general Assembly report A/79/336 is referenced in the High Commissioner's report. Significantly A/79/336 also recognises the need for representation of different forms of civilisation and different forms of legal systems. Quoting

f) To encourage States parties, with regard to the election of treaty body experts, to give due consideration to equitable geographical distribution, the representation of the different forms of civilization and the principal legal systems, balanced gender representation and the participation of experts with disabilities, as well as recognized competence in the field of human rights, independence and impartiality in the membership of the human rights treaty bodies, including through their nomination of candidates and their voting (see also General Assembly resolution 68/268 para. 13, and A/78/311, paras. 26 and 27);

In summary, while the continuing alarm around deteriorating human rights is heard by all halls of the United Nations, perhaps a wider debate with broader representation is needed now to ensure the sentiments and principles of human rights are strengthened.