

[Human Rights Council: 9th session](#)

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Latest news

The Human Rights Council (the Council) will hold its 9th session from **8 to 23 September 2008**. The programme of work for the session is available [here](#). Read our [Council Alert](#) on the 9th session.

Every day during the Council session, check our [Daily Updates](#) and sign up to receive them by e-mail. To see all our reports on the Human Rights Council, see the [Council Monitor](#).

Background

The Human Rights Council (the Council) was established on 19 June 2006 to replace the Commission on Human Rights (the Commission) by General Assembly [Resolution 60/251](#). The establishment of the Council was accompanied by high rhetoric that promised, or at least looked to, a new era in the United Nation's (UN) human rights work. There was much talk of new beginnings, new starts, new chances. The truth, however, was that no one believed it was going to be easy to effect real change. The Council was conceived in the context of the destruction of its predecessor and politically charged debates in the General Assembly between those States wanting a Council with no real teeth and those that argued for a body that was more effective than the Commission.

The Council is the main body of the United Nations dealing with human rights, and is mandated, among other things, to:

- Promote **universal respect for the protection of all human rights** and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind
- Address **situations of violations** of human rights, including gross and systematic violations, and make recommendations thereon
- Undertake a **universal periodic review** (UPR), based on objective and reliable information, of the fulfilment by each State of its human rights obligations and commitments in a manner which ensures universality of coverage and equal treatment with respect to all States

Resolution 60/251 also mandated the Council to review the mechanisms and mandates it has inherited from the former Commission. This process of review, the so-called '**institution-building**' has come to an end with the adoption of Human Right Council [Resolution 5/1](#) (also called 'the institution-building package') on 18 June 2008. For more information on the Council's mechanisms, please use the menu on the left.

After a year and a half, an initial assessment can be made: the Council is neither as good as it needs to be nor as bad as it could be. Indeed it is proving to be significantly better than many defenders and activists had feared, though it still has a long way to go before it can be said to be an effective protector and promoter of human rights.

Further reading

- ISHR together with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung has produced a *Handbook on issues of transition from the Commission to the Council*. Even though it was published prior to the institution-building phase, it provides an overview of the issues involved. Download the English version / [Version française](#)

- ISHR's [Human Rights Monitor](#) reviews the international human rights system, including the Council, on an annual basis. It is available in English, and is disponible en français
- During sessions of the Council, ISHR publishes a *Daily Update*, summarising the most important developments of the day. After each session, we also produce an analytical overview of the main debates and decisions. Please see the Publications section
- [Official Human Rights Council website](#)
- Other analytical texts on the Council's first two years include:
 - Meghna Abraham, *Building the New Human Rights Council*, [Outcome and analysis of the institution-building year](#), Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Occasional papers, No. 33/ August 2007
 - Rachel Brett, [Neither Mountain nor Molehill](#), *UN Human Rights Council: One Year On*, Quaker United Nations Office (Geneva, August 2007)

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