INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW, STANDARDS & PROTECTION MECHANISMS

Introduction

This course introduces participants to the international human rights legal framework and its practical application in contemporary governance, justice, development and institutional settings. It provides a comprehensive understanding of the fundamental principles, treaties, conventions, standards and mechanisms that underpin the international human rights system, while examining the responsibilities of states and institutions in protecting, promoting and fulfilling human rights. The programme explores how international human rights obligations are translated into national laws, public policies, institutional practices and protection systems, with particular attention to the roles of governments, courts, national human rights institutions, civil society organisations, regional bodies and international mechanisms. Participants will examine state obligations, human rights monitoring, reporting procedures, complaints mechanisms, remedies, accountability processes and strategic advocacy. Moving beyond theoretical legal concepts, the course uses practical case studies, contemporary human rights situations and institutional scenarios to help participants assess human rights risks, identify protection and compliance gaps, and determine appropriate responses. It also examines how international and regional human rights mechanisms can be used to strengthen accountability and advance the effective implementation of human rights standards.

Course Objectives

- Understand the international human-rights system.
- Examine major international human-rights instruments.
- Understand state obligations.
- Analyse regional protection mechanisms.

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- Understand reporting obligations.
- Examine complaints and remedy mechanisms.
- Apply human-rights standards to institutional situations.
- Strengthen human-rights advocacy and reporting.

Course Modules

> Module 1: Foundations of International Human Rights Law
- Concept and evolution of human rights
- Universality and indivisibility
- State responsibility
- Human-rights obligations

> Module 2: Universal Human Rights Instruments
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- International human-rights covenants
- Core human-rights conventions
- Treaty implementation

> Module 3: Civil and Political Rights
- Right to life
- Freedom of expression
- Liberty and security
- Political participation

> Module 4: Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- Right to health
- Right to education
- Right to work
- Social protection and dignity

> Module 5: Equality and Non-Discrimination
- Equality before the law
- Direct discrimination
- Indirect discrimination
- Protection of vulnerable groups

> Module 6: Regional Human Rights Systems
- Regional mechanisms
- Regional commissions and courts
- Complaints procedures
- Regional jurisprudence

> Module 7: Human Rights Monitoring and Reporting
- State reporting
- Civil-society reporting
- Treaty-body processes
- Documentation standards

> Module 8: Complaints, Remedies and Accountability
- Complaints mechanisms
- Investigations
- Remedies and reparations
- Institutional accountability

> Module 9: Human Rights Advocacy
- Evidence-based advocacy
- Policy engagement
- Strategic litigation
- Coalition building

> Module 10: Applying International Standards
- Legal and institutional assessment
- Compliance gaps
- Corrective measures
- Human-rights implementation strategy