

Human Rights Report – July 2025

Australia

Victoria will legislate for permanent First Peoples' Assembly later this year

Body will be able to advise government and make decisions on issues directly affecting Aboriginal people in the state.... The goal is to establish a state-based, democratically elected body to provide advice on laws and policies related to Aboriginal people. The agreements come at the same time as the handing down of the final report of the Yoorrook Justice Commission, after four years of hearings.

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/podcast-episode/victoria-embraces-truth-telling-and-treaty-with-state-voice-to-parliament/q7q7vyl8h>

Rights Made Real – a special series by the Queensland Human Rights Commission for this year's NAIDOC week.

<https://open.spotify.com/show/4G1EUKzZz8UZ7HZ3Koh0iV>

Young workers exploited: A third of young workers in Australia are underpaid by employers, according to a new study by Melbourne Law School. The study found that 38 per cent had experienced underpayment, and 36 per cent had been forbidden to take entitled breaks while on shift.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-07-15/young-workers-exploitation/105527046>

International

UN Women has issued a warning about a global regression in gender equality, highlighting increased violence against women, poverty and exclusion from digital spaces and peace processes. The agency's latest data shows that nearly one-fourth of countries are experiencing backlash against women's rights, femicides rose to 85,000 in 2023 and the number of women and girls living within 30 miles of a conflict zone has jumped 50% in the last decade.

<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/governance/un-women-warns-of-global-rollback-on-gender-equality-amid-rising-violence-and-poverty>

A major gender study designed to provide guidelines for several major upcoming UN conferences is available here:

<https://womensmajorgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/WMG-HLPF-2025-Position-Paper-Final-.pdf>

As digital technologies rapidly reshape every aspect of society, the UN's top human rights official has called for human rights to be placed at the centre of this transformation..... "It is precisely in the face of massive change, that we need more human rights, not less," he said on Monday, addressing a high-level event on the [twentieth anniversary of the World Summit on the Information Society](https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/07/1165338) (WSIS) in Geneva. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/07/1165338>

For Xian Guevarra, AI disinformation is an urgent matter. In the Philippines, where he serves as deputy secretary general of the Computer Professionals Union, an

organization of IT professionals and digital rights advocates, he observes, on a daily basis, how elected officials are using AI to share disinformation.

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/in-the-philippines-digital-justice-takes-center-stage>

The UN human rights chief spoke at a high-level political forum on the rights of Indigenous Peoples on Monday 14 July.... Many still lack formal land recognition, while mining activity, deforestation and large-scale agricultural development often cause environmental destruction. Indigenous Peoples also experience immense discrimination and face the brunt of climate chaos, Mr. Türk stressed. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2025/07/hc-turk-wisdom-and-experience-indigenous-peoples-hold-important>

Stricter border and visa regulations increasingly prevent citizens from the Global South from attending major international conferences on climate, health and economic issues, limiting their participation in discussions that directly affect them. Individuals often lose hundreds or even thousands of dollars on application fees, travel bookings and preparation, only to be turned away at the last minute, and the economic losses are compounded by the costs of appeals and non-refundable expenses, underscoring how exclusionary visa systems deepen existing economic inequalities. <https://www.context.news/socioeconomic-inclusion/tighter-borders-bar-poor-nations-from-summits-on-poor-nations>

Environment & climate change

After two tense weeks of negotiations, one breakthrough emerged in the SB 62 climate talks: civil society's Just Transition priorities were officially tabled in the UN climate process, thanks to relentless pressure from social movements, workers, and frontline communities. This vital step opens the door in the fight for transitions that put people first – ensuring climate action centres justice, dignity, and decent work, rather than enabling corporate greenwashing or elite control.

But beyond this opening, Bonn laid bare a system in crisis.

Even as NATO leaders just 200km away pledged more than US\$1 trillion a year in additional military spending, rich polluting countries showed up at the climate talks pleading poverty. The silence on war, genocide, and rising global inequality was deafening.

Despite the escalating toll of climate impacts and injustice, these talks revealed a growing chasm between the urgent demands of communities on the frontlines of climate breakdown and the hollow, evasive language of a process struggling to retain relevance.

<https://climatenetwork.org/2025/06/26/breakthrough-for-justice-at-bonn-climate-talks/>

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights has issued a landmark ruling on States' responsibilities to tackle the climate crisis.... In this major judicial ruling (known as [Advisory Opinion 32](#)), the Court set out what human rights law demands of governments in the face of the climate emergency. The ruling draws on an [unprecedented participatory process](#) involving over 260 amicus briefs and 160 delegations of States, Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples, frontline communities, and civil society groups taking part in the oral hearings.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk has praised the Inter-American Court of Human Rights for a decision affirming the legal obligations of states in the Americas to address climate change. "People have a right to a stable climate and a healthy environment," Turk says. "States have a bedrock obligation under international law not to take steps that cause irreversible climate and environmental damage, and they have a duty to act urgently to take the necessary measures to protect the lives and rights of everyone."

A leading [UN](#) expert is calling for criminal penalties against those peddling disinformation about the [climate crisis](#) and a total ban on fossil fuel industry lobbying and advertising, as part of a radical shake-up to safeguard human rights and curtail planetary catastrophe.... Elisa Morgera, the UN special rapporteur on human rights and climate change ... argues that the US, UK, Canada, Australia and other wealthy fossil fuel nations are legally obliged under international law to fully phase out oil, gas and coal by 2030 – and compensate communities for harms caused.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/jun/30/un-expert-urges-criminalizing-fossil-fuel-disinformation-banning-lobbying>

Speaking at the [Human Rights Council](#) in Geneva, High Commissioner Volker Türk asked Member States whether enough was being done to protect people from the escalating impacts of climate change. **"Are we taking the steps needed to protect people from climate chaos, safeguard their futures and manage natural resources in ways that respect human rights and the environment?"** asked delegates at the ongoing session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva.... **"What we need now is a roadmap that shows us how to rethink our societies, economies and politics in ways that are equitable and sustainable,"** he said.

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/06/1165106>

Joint submission by the Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Queensland and the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania to the Call for Input – **Human Rights in the life cycle of Renewable Energy and Critical Minerals.**

<https://ucaqld.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Uniting-Church-Submission-to-UN-Special-Rapporteur-on-climate-change-April-2025.pdf>

Wendy Flannery

Vice-President Human Rights