

Special Procedures

The [Human Rights Council's Special Procedures mandate holders](#) (Special Procedures) are made up of special rapporteurs, independent experts or working groups composed of five members who are appointed by the Council and who serve in their personal capacity. Special Procedures undertake country visits; act on individual cases and concerns of a broader, structural nature by sending communications to States and other actors bringing alleged violations or abuses to their attention; conduct thematic studies and convene expert consultations; contribute to the development of international human rights standards; engage in advocacy; raise public awareness; and provide advice for technical cooperation. Protection clusters, with their extensive experience and access on the ground, can bring information the attention of the Special Procedures to better inform their work

How does it work?	
Which human rights are covered?	Special Procedures focus either on specific countries or specific theme, depending on their mandate.
Which countries are covered?	All countries are covered by the thematic mandate holders. For the country-specific mandates, only one country is covered. Currently Country-Specific Mandate Holders are appointed for Belarus, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Eritrea, Iran, Mali, Myanmar, Occupied Palestinian territories, Somalia, and Syria. Currently 44 Thematic Mandate Holders are in place.
How frequent is the monitoring?	Ongoing: Each Special Procedure publishes one or two annual reports on their country or theme, and they issue reports following any country visits conducted. They can also issue press communications throughout the year, if there are serious human rights violations occurring in a country. Individual communications can also be referred to Special Procedures at any time
What are its tools?	Country visits. Annual reports to the Human Rights Council and/or the UN General Assembly. Act on individual cases (known as individual communications).
Can they make country visits?	Yes. All Special Procedures can go on country visits, but official visits are only possible if a State has invited them to do so.
Who makes the recommendations and to whom?	The Special Procedures (experts) make recommendations to States, but also to other actors (e.g., businesses, civil society, UN agencies).

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What type of impact do they produce?	Varies from limited to significant impact, depending on the State's level of compliance/implementation of recommendations received. ¹ The means of engagement and the response and follow-up activities of clusters and other actors to the outcomes of the Special Procedures may vary based on the State's level of compliance and implementation.
How quickly does it react?	Fast: On urgent individual communications, Special Procedures can react within as few as 24 hours. However, most cases may take several weeks for a communication to be issued. Timing for country visits, inputs to annual reports, and other activities varies.
How accessible is it?	Very: any organization can engage by submitting information and interacting with the Special Procedure mandate holders. Thematic inputs can be provided unilaterally, or in response to calls for input issued by the mandate holders.

Advocacy impact	
Immediate advocacy	Special Procedures can issue urgent appeals to Governments in urgent cases. The exhaustion of domestic remedies is not required, and complaints may be brought against any State. Communications are not legally binding, and the human right in question must be within the mandate of a special procedure which has the ability to act on individual cases.
Medium-term advocacy	A country visit by a Special Procedure can be an opportunity to start a confidential dialogue with the mandate holder to raise relevant issues. During country visits, the mandate holder can visit relevant locations in country for first-hand accounts and can meet directly with Government officials at multiple levels as well as UN agencies and civil society. Depending on the context, it can be advisable to elicit high visibility and attention to visits and recommendations, particularly in national media.
Long-term advocacy	Humanitarian actors can encourage a State to invite a visit, or a special procedure to prioritize a particular country for a visit. They can also interact with Special Procedures with a view to contributing to thematic studies, reports, and other initiatives undertaken by the mandate holders, and which may contribute to the development of soft law on a thematic issue.

¹ The recommendations from the Special Procedure can be taken very seriously by several States and/or depending on the profile the issue covered has in the country or wider region. In a particular country, country visit reports may have more influence than thematic reports. For individual communications, some States regularly comply with their findings while others may disregard them.

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How can the protection cluster engage?

Potential actions (direct, indirect, or in collaboration with other entities)

1. Stay up to date in terms of [upcoming country visits](#) by Special Procedures
2. Share information about upcoming country visits by Special Procedures with protection cluster members
3. Propose a briefing to a mandate holder ahead of or during a planned country visit
4. Stay up to date in terms of upcoming thematic reports of Special Procedures
5. Share information about upcoming thematic reports of Special Procedures Mandate Holders with protection cluster members
6. Contribute to upcoming thematic reports of Special Procedures Mandate Holders with protection cluster members
7. Propose issues and provide information for ad hoc press communications issued by SPMH to complement or fill the gap of cluster's communication products
8. Prioritize a list of Special Procedures Mandate Holders, based on the context, with which the cluster will systematically engage
9. Proactively share relevant information on confidential basis with the prioritized list of Special Procedures, based on the context. This would include sharing key operational updates to those mandates which have been specified as a priority for the Cluster
10. Refer sensitive individual cases to Special Procedures, where appropriate, for intervention
11. Invite a mandate holder to participate in relevant high level events organized by the cluster
12. Utilize references to recommendations, reports or other outcomes of the SPMHs in the protection cluster's advocacy strategy and/or activities

How did the protection cluster engage?

Actions taken from the list above	What did the cluster do under this action	What challenges did the cluster face in taking this action	Result of the action	Further support needed from HRE TT

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