



POLICE & HUMAN RIGHTS

Human Rights

ABSTRACT

The relationship between Police Institutions and Human Rights is one of the most debated issues in modern governance. Police forces are entrusted with maintaining law and order, preventing crime, and protecting citizens.

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POLICE & HUMAN RIGHTS

📖 Introduction: Police & Human Rights

The relationship between **Police Institutions and Human Rights** is one of the most debated issues in modern governance. Police forces are entrusted with maintaining law and order, preventing crime, and protecting citizens. However, their actions must always align with **fundamental human rights principles** such as dignity, equality, and freedom from torture or arbitrary detention.

- **Human Rights Framework:** Rooted in international conventions like the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)** and the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)**, these standards require police to respect the rights of all individuals, regardless of background.
- **Core Challenges:** Across the world, issues such as **custodial violence, racial profiling, excessive use of force, and lack of accountability** highlight the tension between policing and rights protection.
- **Balancing Act:** Effective policing must strike a balance between **security needs** and **civil liberties**, ensuring that measures taken to protect society do not themselves become violations of human rights.
- **Oversight & Reform:** Independent bodies like **human rights commissions, courts, and civil society organizations** play a vital role in monitoring police conduct and pushing for reforms.

👉 Police are meant to be **protectors of rights**, not violators. The challenge lies in building systems of accountability, transparency, and training that ensure law enforcement operates within the boundaries of justice and human dignity.

Police are tasked with upholding human rights, serving the community, and protecting all persons against illegal acts while adhering to principles of legality, necessity, and non-discrimination. They must protect the dignity and rights of all individuals, including suspects, and are forbidden from using "superior orders" to justify violations like torture or unlawful killings.

Key Principles and Responsibilities

- **Protection of Rights:** Law enforcement must respect, protect, and promote human rights, particularly for vulnerable groups like women, children, and minorities.

- **Accountability:** Police are accountable to the law and the public for their actions.
- **Use of Force:** All police actions must be consistent with international standards, ensuring that any use of force is proportional and necessary.
- **Custodial Care:** Police are responsible for the safety of individuals in their custody and must prevent illegal detention or abuse.

International and Local Standards

- **UN Standards:** The OHCHR provides training materials on human rights standards for law enforcement.
- **Human Rights Training:** Police are expected to participate in training to understand legal powers and their limitations.
- **Monitoring:** Organisations like **Amnesty International's Police and Human Rights Programme** monitor and provide resources on policing practices.

Common Human Rights Violations in Policing

- Illegal detention or arrest.
- Torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.
- Discriminatory policing based on race, gender, or status.
- Excessive use of force.

Critical Issues

Police and human rights remain a critical issue in India, with recent reports highlighting custodial violence, lack of accountability, and systemic discrimination against weak & poor people. The **National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)** continues to investigate cases and push for reforms, but structural challenges persist.

Key Data & Trends

- **Custodial Deaths:** Bharat (India) recorded **over 175 custodial deaths in 2024–25**, with torture being a recurring concern.¹

¹ [commoncause.in](https://www.commoncause.in)

- **Complaints to NHRC:** The NHRC receives **tens of thousands of complaints annually**, ranging from police brutality to bonded labour and denial of justice.²
 - **Minority Protection:** Studies show **systemic discrimination against marginalized groups** (religious, caste, ethnic, gender minorities) in policing practices.³
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📷 Case Examples

- **Punjab, 2014:** A widely circulated photo showed a policeman punishing a woman carrying an infant alongside her disabled partner — symbolic of public “street justice.”⁴
 - **Uttar Pradesh, 2026:** NHRC investigated bonded labour cases in brick kilns, exposing police negligence in protecting vulnerable workers.⁵
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📊 Graph: Complaints vs. Custodial Deaths (India, 2020–2025)

Year	NHRC Complaints (approx.)	Custodial Deaths
2020	75,000+	165
2021	80,000+	170
2022	85,000+	168
2023	90,000+	172
2024	95,000+	175

(Data compiled from NHRC reports and policing studies⁶; figures approximate)⁷

² [National Human Rights Commission India](#)

³ [journalofpoliticalscience.com](#)

⁴ [commoncause.in](#)

⁵ [National Human Rights Commission India](#)

⁶ [commoncause.in](#)

⁷ [National Human Rights Commission India](#)

⚖️ □ Challenges

- **Custodial Violence:** Torture remains hidden, often occurring away from public view.
 - **Accountability Gap:** Police officers are rarely prosecuted; internal inquiries lack transparency.
 - **Representation:** Minorities are underrepresented in law enforcement, reinforcing bias.
 - **Training Deficit:** Limited human rights education for police recruits.⁸
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✓ Reform Recommendations

- **Independent Oversight:** Strengthen NHRC and state commissions with prosecutorial powers.
 - **Police Reform:** Police department reformation is very important with accurate monitoring model with non-involvement of external bodies.
 - **Community Policing:** Build trust through local engagement, especially with marginalized groups.
 - **Legal Enforcement:** Implement Supreme Court's *Prakash Singh* directives on police reform.
 - **Monitoring Model:** System monitoring and authentication is most important.
 - **Technology Use:** Body cameras, digital complaint tracking, and transparency portals.⁹
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Effective solutions for integrating human rights into policing focus on strengthening accountability, updating training to emphasize constitutional rights, and fostering community trust through transparency. Key strategies include implementing civilian oversight, adopting non-discriminatory policies, and using technology to monitor, rather than just enforce.

⁸ journalofpoliticalscience.com

⁹ journalofpoliticalscience.com

Key Solutions & Reforms

Strengthening Accountability:

- **Civilian Oversight:** Implementing independent bodies to investigate complaints against police, reducing impunity.
- **Internal Oversight:** Establishing clear, transparent disciplinary procedures for misconduct.
- **Legal Responsibility:** Ensuring officers are personally accountable to the law for acts of omission or commission.

Training and Education:

- **Human Rights Curriculum:** Restructuring training to focus on constitutional rights, conflict de-escalation, and international standards for the use of force.
- **Sensitization:** Training officers to respect the dignity of all citizens and avoid discriminatory practices based on race, gender, or religion.

Operational and Structural Reforms:

- **Community Policing:** Engaging with the community to build trust and solve problems, moving from force-based to service-based policing.
- **Diverse Recruitment:** Implementing affirmative recruitment policies to ensure police forces represent the demographics of the communities they serve.
- **Data-Driven Strategies:** Using data to identify and eliminate bias in policing and using technologies like body-worn cameras to improve transparency.

Technology and Transparency:

- **Body-Worn Cameras:** Deploying cameras to enhance accountability and gather evidence.
- **Public Data Dashboards:** Providing online platforms for tracking police performance and handling public grievances.

International Standards and Principles

- **Use of Force:** Adhering to international law, which mandates that the use of force must be necessary, proportional, and for the protection of life.
- **Non-Discrimination:** Enforcing laws impartially, with special attention to protecting vulnerable sections of society.
- **Democratic Policing:** Operating under the principle that police are accountable to the public and must uphold fundamental rights.

Resources for Action

- **OHCHR Training Materials:** The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) provides manuals and pocketbooks on human rights standards for law enforcement.
- **Amnesty International Course:** Offers online training on human rights in policing, available on Amnesty's Human Rights Academy.
- **Human Rights Commissions:** National commissions, such as the NHRC in India, provide mechanisms to report abuses and provide guidance on compliant policing

✦ Conclusion

Police and human rights in Bharat (India) remain at a crossroads: while watchdogs like NHRC highlight abuses, systemic reform is slow. **Custodial deaths and discrimination against minorities are pressing concerns**, requiring stronger accountability, better training, and independent oversight to align policing with democratic and human rights principles.