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# RESEARCH GUIDEBOOK FOR LAW LIBRARIES





# INTRODUCTION

International law is a complex, all-encompassing and ever-expanding field.

This mini guidebook is destined for lawyers, law students and paralegal professionals in the private and public sectors, NGOs, researchers and academics who are studying, researching, or practicing law-related matters. It will guide them on how the UN iLibrary can be a valuable resource for them.

# 1. UN and the importance of Law, brief history, and overview

One of the greatest achievements of the United Nations since 1945 is the development of a comprehensive body of international law, which is central to advancing international peace and security, promoting and protecting human rights and the rule of law, and enhancing economic and social development--from the regulation of transport to combatting climate change. Such international law is enshrined in conventions, treaties and standards. The multilateral treaties created under the aegis of the UN form the basis of the law that governs relations among nations. These instruments have a daily impact on the lives of people everywhere.

The Charter of the United Nations specifically calls on the Organization to help in the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means including arbitration and judicial settlement (Article 33) and to encourage the progressive development of international law and its codification (Article 13).

Over the years, more than 500 multilateral treaties have been deposited with the UN Secretary-General. Many other treaties are deposited with governments or other entities. The treaties cover a broad range of subject matter such as human rights, disarmament and the protection of the environment.

The United Nations multifaceted activities in the legal domain are presented in many publications reflecting the diversity of the Organization's concerns, and all are available in the UN iLibrary.



## **2. UN secretariat departments, agencies, programmes, funds, institutes and entities mandated to work on the Law and justice-related matters**

When one thinks about international law, one often thinks primarily about the International Court of Justice seated in The Hague. However, the international legal system consists of many other actors that are equally important but not as well known.

The United Nations iLibrary comprehensively carries an ever-expanding body of legal content from United Nations Secretariat, International Court of Justice, International Tribunals for Rwanda and for the Former-Yugoslavia, OHCHR, OLA, UNCITRAL, UNECE, UNECA, UNESCAP, UNESCWA, UNECLAC, UNOOSA, UNODC, UNISDR, UNODA, UNISDR, International Law Commission, UNICEF, UN Women, IOM, International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, ITU, UNESCO, Counter-Terrorism Committee, UNICRI, SRSR/VAC and UNCTAD.

## **3. Types of law-related content can users find on the iLibrary?**

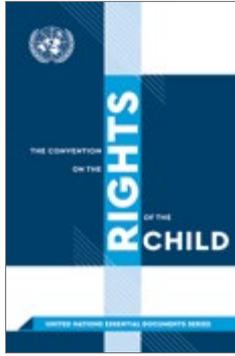
The United Nations has been at the forefront of efforts to provide a legal framework in such areas as protecting the environment and combating climate change, promoting disarmament, providing for safer methods of transport, enhancing women's rights, curbing drug and wildlife trafficking and combating terrorism. This body of work is in constant evolution as international law assumes a more central role across an expanding spectrum of issues including human rights law, international humanitarian law, space law, international trade law, the law of treaties, and the Law of the Sea, to name just a few.

Publications on all aspects of law covered by the United Nations system come in the form of monographs on thematic issues, periodic reports, training materials, journals, reviews, parliamentary documentation, historical overviews on selected international instruments and mechanisms, and handbooks on the working of international bodies. Most are available on the UN iLibrary.

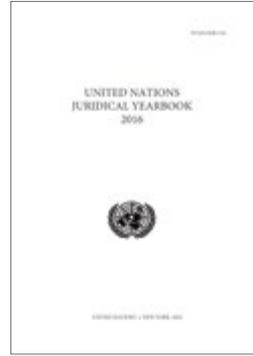
## 4. List of substantive legal works from the UN System available on the UN iLibrary



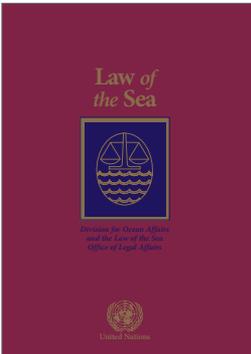
Publications on the work of the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and for Rwanda (ICTR)



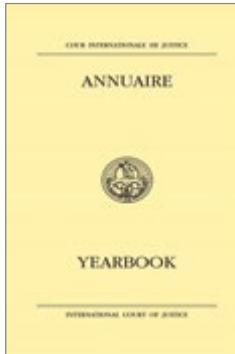
UN Essential Documents series



United Nations Juridical Yearbook



Law of the Sea publication series



Yearbook of the International Law Commission



United Nations Legislative Series

COUR INTERNATIONALE  
DE JUSTICE



INTERNATIONAL COURT  
OF JUSTICE

### Publications from the International Court of Justice, including:

- Reports of Judgments, Advisory Opinions and Orders
- Pleadings, Oral Arguments, Documents
- Acts and Documents
- Bibliography



UNITED NATIONS  
**HUMAN RIGHTS**  
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

**Publications from the Office of the High-Commissioner on Human Rights, including:**

- Special issue publications
- Training and education publications
- Reference publications
- Policy and methodological publications

**ADR**

**Publications on the International Carriage of Goods, including:**

- Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road
- Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods – Model Regulations
- Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals
- European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Inland Waterways
- Recommendations for Enhancing National Road Safety Systems
- European Code for Inland Waterways

## 5. Why are UN legal publications essential for lawyers and law students?

Publications are of critical importance to those working in the legal profession. Reliable and expert content helps them understand agreements, arguments, concepts and rules. Dependable and authoritative content enlightens, informs and persuades.

Jurisprudence is in constant evolution. Law is continuously evolving. Learning is vital for practice. Expert content affects the effective administration of justice, furthers human rights and is the rock upon which the rule of law, democracy and peaceful resolution stands among States.

The UN publishes a range of excellent resources for lawyers. Books are one of the greatest investments that any lawyer and student of international law can make. Whether you need information about international law or are looking for a publication to help you prepare your research or for exams, you can rely on UN publications. Whether you need a quick refresher or are studying for your Masters or PhD, the UN has expert content you are looking for. And if you are an avid reader, you will appreciate having access to all of the most sought-after international law books in one convenient location, in the UN iLibrary.



## 6. Supplementary information: Main UN legal bodies

International law is a primary concern of the United Nations. The third preambular paragraph of the UN Charter states as a key goal of the organization “to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained”. The Statute of the International Court of Justice is an integral part of the Charter, and the ICJ is a principal organ of the UN.

The General Assembly is composed of representatives from each UN Member State and is the main deliberative body on matters relating to international law. Many multilateral treaties are adopted by the General Assembly and subsequently opened for signature and ratification.

The International Law Commission was established to promote the progressive development of international law and its codification. The Commission is composed of 34 members who collectively represent the world’s principal legal systems, and serve as experts in their individual capacity, not as representatives of their governments. They address issues relevant to the regulation of relations among States.

International humanitarian law encompasses the principles and rules that regulate the means and methods of warfare, as well as the humanitarian protection of civilian populations, sick and wounded combatants, and prisoners of war. Major instruments include the 1949 Geneva Convention for the Protection of War Victims and two additional protocols concluded in 1977 under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The United Nations has taken a leading role in efforts to advance international humanitarian law. The Security Council is involved in protecting civilians in armed conflict, promoting human rights and protecting children in wars.

The primary United Nations organ for the settlement of disputes is the International Court of Justice. The Court has considered more than 170 cases, issued numerous judgments and issued advisory opinions in response to requests by UN organizations. It has addressed international disputes involving economic rights, rights of passage, the non-use of force, non-interference in the internal affairs of States, diplomatic relations, hostage-taking, the right of asylum and nationality. By achieving peaceful settlement on such questions as land frontiers, maritime boundaries and territorial sovereignty, the Court has often helped to prevent the escalation of disputes.

# CONCLUSION

United Nations publications covering legal subjects are considered essential for practitioners and students in many different areas of work. They can play a significant role in the life of a lawyer, student or an activist.

UN publications are a veritable treasure trove of information for so many people at so many levels.

They are also meant to empower and enrich readers and thus improve the living standards of many communities through the dissemination of knowledge and intellectual capacities.



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