

Human Rights of Armed Forces Personnel:

COMPENDIUM OF STANDARDS, GOOD PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This is an overview of rights covered in Chapter 16 of HUMAN RIGHTS OF ARMED FORCES PERSONNEL: COMPENDIUM OF STANDARDS, GOOD PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS developed by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) together with the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF) to safeguard and strengthen the rights of people working in the armed forces. For more information, see: osce.org/odihr/ArmedForcesRights

Civil and political rights

Equal opportunities and non-discrimination

Rights related to military life (e.g., working and living conditions)

Procedural rights (e.g., military justice and oversight mechanisms)

Human Rights Education

Human rights education helps service personnel understand their rights and obligations. It also helps to create a positive working environment free from discrimination, intolerance and bias. This is particularly true in countries that have experienced intercommunal conflict or violence, where human rights education can contribute to post-conflict reconciliation and recovery.

For these reasons, human rights education should form a central part of recruit training. Officers have a special responsibility to maintain a respectful and inclusive working environment for all personnel, and should receive regular and specialized human rights training. Human rights education should also be prioritized in pre-deployment training for service personnel, and a demonstrated awareness of human rights issues should be a precondition for their participation in peacekeeping missions.

Codes of conduct

Codes of conduct provide an overview of professional military ethics and are a practical training resource. They can also be used as a reference point for the investigation of alleged misconduct. Tolerance, equality and neutrality are key principles in many codes of conduct.

Example: Canada's 2012 Code of Values and Ethics requires service personnel to respect the dignity of all people, including by:

- Treating every person with respect and fairness;
- Valuing diversity; and
- Helping to create and maintain workplaces that are free from harassment and discrimination.

Military colleges

Mainstreaming human rights education into military college training programmes ensures that new recruits have a thorough understanding of human rights. Teaching hours and seminars dedicated to the subject and the assessment of recruits on their human rights awareness should form a core part of military training. Appointing a human rights officer in military colleges can help ensure the development and implementation of human rights education in the armed forces.

Example: In Finland, service personnel first receive human rights education in military colleges, and continue this training in units and peacekeeping pre-deployment training programs. All personnel also receive training on Women's Rights and UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

Good practices for human rights education include:

- » Incorporating human rights into training programmes and materials for all recruits;
- » Providing officers with regular and specialized training on human rights issues;
- » Including the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security in armed forces training programmes;
- » Developing codes of conduct for all service personnel;
- » Drawing on the expertise of civilian experts and civil society organizations for human rights training;
- » Inviting an ombuds institution or other independent body to monitor the content and quality of human rights training.

Example: Since 2015, Azerbaijan's Commissioner for Human Rights has held human rights education events in military units and institutions of the ministries of defence, interior and emergency services. These include meetings with service personnel and attendance at military oath-swearing ceremonies. A similar programme is implemented in Armenia with the support of the Council of Europe.

