

**Forum:** Human Rights Council

**Issue:** Addressing the Abuse of Power and Human Rights Violations by Global Police Forces

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## Introduction

Justice is the very foundation of the world we live in, where order is maintained by ensuring that all actions are addressed, both the positive and the negative. If justice is unclear, if there are grey areas, then the maintenance of such a vital system is not possible, and unfortunately, this is the case in many places all around the world. [Police Brutality](#) is a very prevalent issue that affects millions of people each year, especially people of color and other ethnic or religious minorities. As the Human Rights Council it is our duty to address these problems and work towards eradicating this major issue.

According to the International Human Rights Standards stated by the [Human Rights Watch](#), as of December 2018 up to present day, 172 countries have ratified the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#). The ICCPR states: "Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to respect and to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognized in the present Covenant, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political, or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status," and that "Every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life," "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment...." and finally "all persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law."

Unfortunately, as can be seen from present events, it appears that many nations have failed to uphold and adhere to this covenant. The 2020 series of events preceding the mistreatment of an African American named George Floyd started a fire of protests against [racial discrimination](#) and police treatment of African Americans in not only the U.S but globally. To combat this there are multiple aspects that have to be changed, and a few solutions that can be implemented by the UN including [demilitarisation](#), changes in police culture, monitoring police, and mapping police violence.

## **Definition of Key Terms:**

### **Police Brutality:**

The unwarranted or excessive, illegal use of force against civilians

### **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR):**

A global human rights treaty providing protection for a range of civic and political rights, signed by member states in March 23, 1966

### **Racial Discrimination:**

Is intolerance against a certain person or people due to their ethnicity or skin color.

### **Human Rights Watch :**

An International non-governmental and non-profit organization that conducts research on human rights and advocates for them.

### **Demilitarisation:**

Reduction of a nation's military/army, weapons, to an agreed minimum.

### **UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials (BPUFF):**

Treaty signed by member states which makes emphasis on the limits to police forces and their treatment of civilians.

### **The Gang's Matrix:**

This is a database launched by the metropolitan police in 2012, which includes names of suspected members of gangs in London.

### **Probable Cause:**

Reasons to come to the conclusion that a particular person has committed a crime.

### **Accountability:**

In terms of ethics and governance, accountability is the ability to take responsibility or finding someone liable for a particular issue or problem. It is mostly associated with being able to take the blame for something, such as the person who committed a crime being responsible for the consequences their actions bring.

### **Implicit Bias:**

This is when people subconsciously hold biases or prejudices and certain beliefs, regarding others or particular stereotypes of some people.

### **Non-Government Organization (NGO) :**

A non-profit organization that operates separately from any form of government.

## **Key Issues**

### **Lack of Incorporation of International Human Rights Laws into Domestic Legislation**

Although there have been countless treaties signed to protect civilians such as the ICCPR, and the BPUFF, abuse of power by police forces is still a very prevalent issue, and this is due to the lack of emphasis on these laws in countries themselves. Some examples of this include Mexico, where the new law implemented called the National Law on the Use of Force does not limit the use of weaponry or force in lethal situations. This means that officers can use as many weapons as they want, whatever equipment they want, regardless of the situation- whether it's confronting an unarmed man, or a child robbing a shop. It does not require officers to use minimum force possible when dealing with a situation. According to the

Amnesty International Report, none of the states in the US meet the international standards on the use of lethal force by officers, and that 9 states have no laws whatsoever on the use of lethal force by officers. Due to the lack of emphasis on this issue, police officers continue to practice maximum force which helps them solve situations (it's up to interpretation how well they solve them) quickly.

## Accountability

Many countries with high rates of police brutality are those with a lack of accountability- those who have the duty to hold the law should not be considered above it. Many cases in which police forces have used excessive force have been swept under the table, making it much easier for police officers to get away with things like unlawful killing, etc. There are many ways in which officers get away with these kinds of things, such as police and security forces threatening the judiciary, witnesses or survivors, or pressuring them to drop charges. In some countries, there are laws to provide protection for officers, which is essentially an obstruction of justice: an example of a country with such a law is Brazil. Police officers never get criminally prosecuted in many countries which allows the continuation of the abuse of power. In the Philippines, when President Duterte assumed office in June 2016, he ordered police officers to eliminate any individuals which they believed to be connected with the drug trade and gave officers immunity, which makes accountability impossible.

## Organizational Cultures of Police Forces

### *Dehumanization*

After rigorous screen testing, looking into integrity, etc., all police officers begin training, where the core theme is that the world is a dangerous place. According to Seth Stoughton, professor of law at the University of South Carolina Law School and a former police officer, the dangers of hesitation or inattention and police safety are emphasized to such an extent that officers are wired to shoot before a threat is fully recognized. The constant fear and expectations of the worst-case scenario, of getting stabbed by thugs, shot, losing their lives in general, police officers are in constant fear and learn to hide their vulnerability, 'turn off their humanity' to get the job done. This depersonalization of citizens being dealt with causes dehumanization - they don't see

from the perspective of other individuals, their humanity, the possibility that they might be scared too. The training police officers go through automatically makes them perceive all individuals as threats, and this cultural regime of dehumanization is one of the fundamental ways as to how police brutality is enabled. Unfortunately, this structure has been constructed and enforced by many police departments all over the world.

### *Uneven Distribution of Training Hours*

According to a 2013 Bureau of Justice Report, approximately 70% of police officers say they have never fired a gun on the job, however spend 71 hours weekly on average for practicing firearm skills and 60 hours on self-defense. Regardless of the lack of requirement of violence, they spend only 43 hours on less violent community-policing approaches, such as cultural-diversity training, mediation, conflict management, and human relations. This wires officers to attempt solving situations strictly through violent means, and not think of dealing with situations through effective communication, which increases the possibility and hence occurrences of abuse of power, and excessive use of force.

### **Racial Bias**

The probability of being a person of color, unarmed, and shot by the police is about 3.5 times the probability of being white in the same situation according to Cody T. Ross, a doctoral student in anthropology at the University of California, Davis. Other studies also show that people of color are more likely to be stopped by the police. According to Stanford University, psychologist Jennifer Eberhardt, Ph.D., and colleagues analyzed some data from the California Oakland police department and found that black people made up for 28% of Oakland's population, but 60% of police stops were for people of color. As can be seen from the statistics above, racial bias is a key issue for police brutality. According to John Dovidio, Ph.D., a social psychologist at Yale University who studies both implicit and explicit prejudice, biases are rooted from unconscious and unintentional beliefs. Dovidio says that "a large proportion of white Americans have these implicit biases, and it's hard to expect police officers to be any different."

The most common [implicit bias](#) amongst police officers is the direct connection between people of color and crime. These officers may not be racist, but this unconscious association will definitely influence their actions.

## **Major Parties Involved and Their Views**

### **Amnesty International**

Founded in 1961, this non-profit organization works towards protecting the human rights of individuals all across the globe through research and effective campaigning. They are working on a variety of issues, namely armed conflict, arms control, the death penalty, discrimination, etc. At present, Amnesty has been conducting a lot of research to create campaigns for stopping police brutality, such as bringing light to the Gangs Matrix in the UK. Amnesty International is heavily involved in many human rights issues, and one notable achievement was that they formed the first effective torture abolishment campaign in 1972. 1059 wrongfully-prosecuted prisoners were released in 1974 alone, and they were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977.

### **Human Rights Watch**

The HRW was founded in 1978 and was previously known as the 'Helsinki Watch,' as they started their work focusing on countries that signed Helsinki Accords, mainly nations behind the Iron Curtain. In 1988 many Watches founded in other nations merged with the Helsinki Watch, forming the Human Rights Watch known by many today. They have worked on many projects ranging from massacres to genocides, baseless arrests of opposing politician figures and activists, discrimination against people of color, women in the workforce, etc. One of their biggest accomplishments was forming the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, and the treaty in 2008 to ban cluster munitions.

### **United States**

Unlike most areas, the United States fails to uphold the standards necessary for maintaining a police force with excessive abuse of power. According to the Amnesty International Report, there aren't any states in the US where the international standards on the use of lethal force by officers are met, and 9 of these states do not have any laws on lethal force by officers in the first place. The nation also has not integrated the ICCPR into their

legislative laws, making this area rather become overlooked or not focused on at all for building better communities. A recent example of such discrimination and abuse of power by the police force is evident through the killing of George Floyd-which shows the lack of improvement as 6 years ago a similar event occurred to another African-American, Michael Brown, who was killed by a police officer in Missouri.

This misguided perception of the police force as mentioned previously is the insensitive dehumanizing police culture followed rigorously in the United States. The police force is being portrayed as silencers, or those with no attachments to the people or a sense of serving their community. This has been amplified recently with President Trump's call for the National Guard and promoting a highly violent police response against the peaceful protestors of the Black Lives Matter movement. The main issue in the United States is the lack of unity of the people in matters like discrimination, or creating a peaceful society where the upholders of the law are not above the law.

## Brazil

The abuse of power is a heavily prevalent situation with the police force in Brazil. Although Afro-Brazilians make up over half of the country's population they are discriminated against and receive brutal treatment when encountering police. One of the most recent cases occurred in 2018 during a police operation. As officers were patrolling the alleys in Manguinhos, they found a walkie-talkie on the road in front of one of the houses. They entered the property without warning and found a black man to be asleep. The police arrested the 25-year-old on the grounds that he worked for a drug dealer in the community, and the walkie talkie was how he communicated with his employers. Without any proper incriminating evidence, he was put behind bars for 8 months, waiting for his trial.

The issue in Brazil is that although the constitution states that every citizen has a right to a lawyer, citizens who pass through these situations are usually unaware of this. Wellington, the man in question, was helped by a lawyer who took the case as pro bono, otherwise, the young man would still be waiting for his trial in jail.

## Japan

Community Policing is an area in which Japan has been making efforts since 1874, and it's really showing. Near the outskirts of Tokyo, Sakura mini police stations called Kobans are found near a railway station, a bank, bakeries, etc. There are 6000 Kobans in Japan, and they all have transparent doors and windows so police as well as citizens outside can see each other very clearly, which builds trust. Former commissioner general of the National Police Agency in Japan, Hidehiko Sato, says that "Japanese police officers won't even reach for their guns if they get hurt." Not only are police trained in negotiation and conflict management, but the relations between police and citizens are usually peaceful because, in Japanese society, citizens defer to the authority of law enforcement officers. Additionally, hierarchy is an important value in the country. Due to this, police power is always kept in check and if an officer is involved in an unjustified shooting they are immediately demoted.

### Development of Issue/Timeline:

Date	Event and Description	Outcome
10 December 1948	Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)- adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations preceding the world wars in an attempt to bring the treatment of all humans to an adequate level regardless of their backgrounds. The UDHR is not legally binding.	This declaration by the UN led many countries to incorporate the protection of human rights and freedoms into their national constitutions and legal frameworks.
December 16, 1966	The UN <a href="#">International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights</a> treaty is a legally binding treaty for and was signed by 62 member states in order to protect individuals' civil and political rights.	The treaty has ensured the protection of many citizens and their political views, and basic human rights. It essentially further developed the UDHR, which was not legally binding, and hence was more of a guideline to follow

		whereas the ICCPR is much more specific and is legally binding.
May 13, 1977	UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, also known as the Nelson Mandela Rules, honoring the late president of South Africa and his time in jail for 27 years while struggling for human rights in his nation. The rules were adopted by the UN Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders in 1955, and later in time approved by the UN Economic and Social Council in 1957. The rules give guidelines on how inmates should be treated in prisons, and highlights the fact that just because they have committed crimes they can not be deprived of their basic human rights.	The rules adopted in 2011 later by the General Assembly ensures that member nations that have signed the treaty ensure adequate treatment of their prisoners. The revision of this treaty in 2015 to honor Nelson Mandela has led to many developments in prison conditions all over the world, and the creation of frameworks to monitor prisons for abuse or torture by officers or unfair treatment of any form.
17 December 1979	UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials- the law states an oath law enforcement must swear by and adhere to: "My fundamental duty is to serve mankind; to safeguard lives and property; to protect the innocent against deception, the weak against oppression or intimidation," Adopted by General Assembly resolution 34/169	This code of conduct has ensured many countries incorporate this ideology in their law enforcement from military to police to other community servants.

3 September 1981	UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the General Assembly in order to determine what counts as discrimination against women.	The convention ensures that specifics are addressed and that many countries have incorporated laws to end all types of discrimination against women such as exclusion on the basis of gender, nullifying recognition, pay, and many other aspects.
29 November 1985	UN Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of power was passed by the General Assembly resolution 40/34 to address the violation of human rights of victims of police brutality.	This treaty provided nations with a guideline for the treatment of victims of particular crimes. Under this declaration, a person is considered a victim regardless of the status of the perpetrator, whether it be an officer, spouse, a relative, or a stranger. It ensures access to justice and equal treatment.
26 June 1987	UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment is a global legally binding human rights treaty, to eradicate torture or other acts of cruel and pain-inflicting behavior.	The treaty ensures member states to strengthen surveillance judicial prisons, access to healthcare in persons of police custody, and many legislations with a Penal code now ban and penalize torture.
9 December 1988	UN Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention	The treaty further emphasizes on key aspects of the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment

	or Imprisonment (later on known as Body of Principles) is passed by the UN General Assembly.	by only focusing on prisoners and their adequate detainment, including treatment in a humane manner, any form of violation of their human rights regardless of the perpetrator's status is questionable and the victim will get their justice.
27 August to 7 September 1990	<a href="#">UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials</a> - used in Havana, Cuba for a few weeks to bring down the rates of police brutality.	The treaty states that “Juveniles deprived of their liberty shall not for any reason related to their status be denied the civil, economic, political, social or cultural rights to which they are entitled under national or international law, and which are compatible with the deprivation of liberty.” These basic principles helped bring down the number of police brutality cases in Havana significantly, however were only used for a short period of time.
14 December 1990	Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty passed by the UN.	This resolution helped decrease the problematic events in which children are denied political, social, cultural, and civil rights.
March 3, 1991	Rodney King Scandal - Four Los Angeles policemen, three of which were white	The savage beating was recorded by a bystander and shared on the

	beat up a black man named Rodney King for 15 minutes straight. King's injuries reported multiple fractures, broken bones, and permanent brain damage.	internet. This sparked riots all over Los Angeles, where most unrest occurred in the South. Eventually, King was awarded a settlement and was able to buy a modest house for his mother and himself.
29 August 1993	The Vigario Geral Massacre occurred when 33 law enforcement officers including 28 military officers killed and assaulted numerous civilians to avenge four police officers that were killed in the area.	The officers killed 21 local residents in the community, the majority of whom were black citizens and included 8 teenagers who were asleep.
20 December 1993	UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly to eradicate violence specific to women.	The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, (CEDAW) was not specific enough in the sense that it didn't refer directly to violence against women and girls. This declaration is more specific and called member states to action for developing a framework to reduce cases of gender-specific abuse.
August 9, 2014	Michael Brown (18 years old) was shot when he was leaving a convenience store, unarmed, with cigars which he had stolen. The police officer Darren Wilson shot Brown 12 times but was never charged for murder.	A lot of protests began after Brown's death and the grand jury's decision not to indict Wilson, due to lack of <a href="#">probable cause</a> . Officers used particularly violent methods to repress protesters including an

		<p>extended range of military weapons, and tear gas.</p> <p>These protests paved the way for a new movement led by young black political activists called “Hands up, don’t shoot.”</p> <p>After these uprisings in 2015 legal reforms started taking place in Ferguson, where President Barack Obama canceled the 1033 program, which stopped the transfer of large amounts of military equipment to police departments, enabling <a href="#">demilitarisation</a> to occur. (President Donald Trump restored the program in 2017)</p>
August 21, 2015	Campaign Zero is launched as an American Police Reform campaign.	The plan has 10 proposals all aimed at reducing police violence, which have already been gaining a lot of traction in the community.
May 25, 2020	George Floyd (46 years old) was pinned to the ground with a knee to his neck due to using a counterfeit \$20 bill. Floyd pleaded multiple times that he could not breathe, but Derek Chauvin and his team of three other officers did not back down.	The autopsy revealed that Floyd died from “asphyxiation from sustained pressure”, concluding that his death was a homicide. All four police officers were fired. His death led to a series of protests starting in Minneapolis to multiple cities across the US and the world. The protests were about police violence and lack of police

		<p><a href="#">accountability</a>. The movement also sparked cries for recognition and justice for other black individuals such as Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old, who was shot after the police forcibly entered her home. Officials have started promising some changes. In June, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti said that he plans to cut more than \$150 million from the police department's budget and invest in beneficial programs for people of color, specifically black people and their communities. Meanwhile, in Minneapolis, the city council announced that it will be disbanding the majority of the police department. All four police officers involved with the death of George Floyd have been arrested.</p>
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## Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

### UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials (BPUFF)

This treaty adopted by the UN General Assembly focuses on the limits to the police force's military and force they can use, as well as their treatment of civilians. The treaty provides a great amount of insight on key areas such as the development of non-lethal incapacitating weapons, prioritizing restraint over retaliation, as well as that no one is above

the law, even law enforcement can be subject to trial and questioning. Regardless of these numerous advantages, the treaty has been ineffective because it is non-binding, that is governments are not obliged to integrate these initiatives into their legal frameworks. Additionally, many governments take a subjective perspective to cases of police brutality, rather than objective. This causes law enforcement to see themselves as above the law, and that citizens are usually at fault. Therefore even if a potential case does arise, law enforcement does not perceive it in that way, which makes this treaty ineffective as governments do not see the need to implement it due to their perspective on situations.

### **UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment**

The treaty ensures member states to strengthen surveillance judicial prisons, access to healthcare in persons of police custody, and many legislations with a Penal code now ban and penalize torture. The treaty really brings to light the importance of proper treatment of individuals regardless of crimes that they commit and that under no circumstances can their rights be taken away from them. Although the treaty provides strict guidelines to adequate treatment of inmates, the treaty has a further optional protocol that only 90 parties have signed out of the 170 that signed the initial treaty. This optional protocol should in fact have been made part of the initial treaty because it is a very important aspect that would help check on nations and their facilities. The optional protocol allows the establishment of a system of frequent visits by independent international bodies (e.g. NGOs) to assess and prevent torture or other forms of abuse. Due to lack of follow-ups being made for most of these countries, even those that agreed to the initial treaty have not made an emphasis on these points and many facilities around the world go unchecked, leaving inmates prone to torture and abuse.

### **Campaign Zero**

This campaign was started by Black Lives Matter activists back in 2015 after the murder of 18-year-old Michael Brown. The campaign has gained a lot of publicity over the years especially in recent months with the Black Lives Matter protests, but little to no implementation has occurred. Campaign Zero has 10 key principles it would like to implement to eliminate all

police violence. These include areas such as ending 'broken windows' policing, community oversight, limiting the use of force, independently investigating and prosecuting, community representation, body cams/filming the police, training, end for-profit policing, demilitarisation, and fair police union contracts. These are all very relevant and important aspects to the root causes of police brutality, however, just campaigning and raising awareness has not been effective - until governments adopt this campaign no real change has or will occur. Additionally, the campaign is slightly unrealistic as its goal and belief is to eliminate police violence completely, which is unlikely to be achieved due to policing policies. There are always going to be circumstances in which police will have to resort to deadly force. This actually is another reason which makes influential individuals reluctant to back the campaign, and that is due to it being too ambitious.

## Possible Solutions

### Demilitarisation

Events of police brutality all over the world have shown that police departments can misuse military weaponry to repress people and that the larger the military weaponry arsenal, the more likely police are to kill civilians. For example in 2014, according to Campaign Zero research, militarized SWAT teams killed 38 people. Methods of [demilitarisation](#) include removing legislation or shipments to police departments where violence is very high, for example in the U.S. the main program providing military weapons to officers, known as 1033, is the reason why officers have access to excessive weapons and hence use these weapons more often. Limiting their access to such equipment would significantly reduce the police brutality rates in the U.S., and if other nations did the same with their own respective legislation aiming towards demilitarisation the global police brutality rates would significantly decrease.

### Improve Complaint Tracking About Abuse of Power

In most countries, as complaints against officers are not public such cases are hard to track. According to a study from Business Insider, police officers who have previously been accused of using excessive force are likely to influence their colleagues to become more violent as well. Researchers found that 8,600 Chicago police officers were named in multiple

complaints, and most of these police officers are usually in the same teams or working spaces. This shows how influential wrong mindsets can be to contaminate a whole police force. Therefore, creating a system for tracking complaints against officers and making this information public could aid in this process. Such data can be used to keep track records for police, and those that were fired for misconduct would then not be hired in another police station to cause an increase in police brutality, which could significantly help reduce cases.

### **De-Escalation Training**

Many nations neglect de-escalation training and focus fully on combat, which then really conditions police officers to respond to any situation in a violent manner without attempting to use more peaceful means. De-escalation training is not mandatory in most countries for police training, and officers at the academy are training usually only on combat and defense techniques. This does not help as even for a small political protest as this is what officers are trained to do: they will violently try to disperse the group which can result in many citizens being killed as was seen in past protests. De-escalation training should be made mandatory in all states and be an area which is prioritized over combat, as realistically speaking situations where violent interference is needed is much less compared to common situations where conflict management can solve a problem much more quickly.

### ***Special Task Force for Community-Policing:***

A further way to elaborate in the area of peaceful protests, or areas which police can solve problems simply through effective verbal communication, community-policing is very important. There are different policies and they all have separate jurisdictions: uniformed officers, detectives, state police and highway patrol officers, fish and game wardens, sheriffs, etc. These different departments vary in experience and rigor in their training, as well as the type of training they receive. Unfortunately, when dealing with protests, police of all backgrounds are sent to take care of the issue which makes it difficult to maintain a peaceful attitude to solve the problem. For example, asking detectives who frequently deal with murder cases and higher-intensity crimes automatically treat each individual as a suspect of the largest crime, which makes them perceive civilians as immediate threats. These officers will not approach the situation in a friendly or calm manner rather will be agitated and anxious, taking a more violent

approach. Due to this, creating a community policing force would effectively ensure that in most situations, conflict can be solved in a non-violent manner.

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## Appendices

- I. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights  
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- II. A recent campaign launched to combat police brutality  
<https://www.joincampaignzero.org/>