

Through the courts, any individual claiming a violation of human rights make seek compensatory damages, annulment of libelous or slanderous statements, compensation for non-financial loss and/or invalidation of administrative decisions if those decision have violated rights. There is no separate constitutional court to resolve disputes related to alleged violations of constitutionally protected human rights. The Ombudsman of the Althing is elected by parliament to which an annual report is submitted. The office functions independently, however, and has responsibility to secure the rights of citizens vis-à-vis the administrative authorities. Investigations may be undertaken on receipt of a complaint or on independent initiative. The opinions of the Ombudsman are not binding on administrative authorities but, in general, the authorities act on the opinions offered.

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Signed: 30 December 1968; ratified: 22 August 1979. Iceland's second periodic report (E/1990/C/Add.15) has been submitted and is scheduled for consideration by the Committee at its April/May 1999 session; the third periodic report is due 30 June 2001.

Civil and Political Rights

Signed: 30 December 1968; ratified: 22 August 1979. Iceland's third periodic report (CCPR/C/94/Add.2) was considered at the Committee's October 1998 session; the fourth periodic report is due in October 2003. *Reservations and Declarations:* Paragraphs 2 (b) and 3 of article 10; paragraph 7 of article 14; paragraph 1 of article 20; declaration under article 41.

Optional Protocol: Acceded: 22 August 1979. *Reservations and Declarations:* Paragraph 2 of article 5.

Second Optional Protocol: Signed: 30 January 1991; ratified: 2 April 1991.

Racial Discrimination

Signed: 14 November 1966; ratified: 13 March 1967. Iceland's 15th periodic report was due 4 January 1998.

Discrimination against Women

Signed: 24 July 1980; ratified: 18 June 1985. Iceland's third and fourth periodic reports were submitted as one document (CEDAW/C/ICE/3-4) which is not yet scheduled for consideration by the Committee; the fifth periodic report is due 18 July 2002.

Torture

Signed: 4 February 1985; ratified: 23 October 1996. Iceland's initial report (CAT/C/37/Add.2) was considered at the Committee's November 1998 session; the second periodic report is due 22 November 2001.

Rights of the Child

Signed: 26 January 1990; ratified: 28 October 1992. Iceland's second periodic report is due 26 November 1999.

REPORTS TO TREATY BODIES

Human Rights Committee

Iceland's third periodic report (CCPR/C/94/Add.2, March 1995) was considered by the Committee at its October 1998 session. The report prepared by the government focusses on new legislative and other measures since consideration of Iceland's 2nd periodic report in 1994. Among the legislation and other measures cited are: the Act on Administrative Procedure, January 1994; the Foreign Nationals Supervision Act, the establishment of the office of the Ombudsman for Children; and revisions to the human rights provisions in the Constitution. In terms of individual articles of the Covenant, the report contains information on, *inter alia*: prohibition of discrimination; the right to a remedy; the role and functions of the Ombudsman of the Althing (Parliament); equality between women and men, the Equal Status Complaints Committee and Act No. 28/1991 on the Equal Status of Men and Women; provisions in the General Penal Code, the death penalty; prohibition of torture and ill treatment; the 1994 Act on Community Services; provisions in the Code of Criminal Procedure, the treatment and accommodation of prisoners; provisions related to access to the courts and the functioning of the judiciary; the freedoms of religion, expression, assembly and association; the rights and protection of children, juvenile justice; the Marriage Act 1993, the rights and duties of spouses and parents; measures and considerations related to sexual orientation; the right to vote and be elected; equality under the law; and the rights of minorities.

The Committee's concluding observations and comments (CCPR/C/79/Add.98) welcomed, *inter alia*: the amendment to human rights provisions in the Constitution, including strengthening the indivisibility of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights; new legislative measures; and the establishment of the Office of the Ombudsman for Children.

The principal subjects of concern identified by the Committee were the persistence of certain areas of inequality between women and men and the persistence, in law and practice, of discrimination against children born out of wedlock.

The Committee recommended that the government, *inter alia*:

- ♦ ensure that all rights protected under the Covenant are given effect in domestic law; withdraw the remaining reservations to the Covenant;
- ♦ intensify efforts to achieve full equality between women and men, including in the employment sector;
- ♦ provide in the next report further information on measures taken to combat all forms of violence against women; and
- ♦ take steps to eliminate discrimination against children born out of wedlock.