
Issue Brief

(HRC2)

Nelson Mandela Rules

The Nelson Mandela Rules are a revision to the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, adopted by the General Assembly on the 5th of December 2015. The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners was a series of guidelines to which prisoners should be held to; such as access to medical care and freedom from discrimination. Originally adopted in 1955, they have since underwent revision in 2011 in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and this new version has been named the Nelson Mandela Rules.

There are two main parts to the Nelson Mandela Rules. Part one, the Rules of General Application, details the general principles of managing prisons and treatment of prisoners, covering a number of topics including personal hygiene, discipline, religion, and the practice of punishment; there are 85 rules in this section in total. In part two, Rules Applicable to Special Categories, guidelines regarding individualization of prisoners, system of privileges, and rehabilitation, are laid out. In total, there are 112 rules, with some being divided even further into subpoints.

Although the Nelson Mandela Laws themselves are not legally binding, they have been massively influential, with many member states adopting principles laid out within these rules. Continued effective implementation of the Nelson Mandela Laws will drastically improve conditions within prisons and drive the and the upkeep of human rights in every aspect of our society.

Juntae Park
Co Secretary General