STUDY NOTES · BASIC CONCEPT

What are Different UN conventions and laws on Prisoners and convicts?

International Relations

25 Dec 2014

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The UN does not have a single “prison law,” but it has a set of international rules, conventions, and guidelines that member states are expected to follow for the humane treatment of prisoners. These are globally recognized standards.

UN Convention Against Torture (CAT, 1984)

- Prohibits torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment of any detainee.
- Applies to all prisoners, including political prisoners and convicts.
- Solitary confinement beyond 15 days is considered a form of psychological torture by the UN Committee Against Torture.

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UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules, 2015)

- These are the most important international prison standards. Key principles:
- Prisoners must be treated with dignity and respect.
- Cells must have adequate ventilation, lighting, hygiene, and space.
- Solitary confinement must not exceed 15 days and must never be indefinite.
- Prisoners must have access to healthcare, outdoor exercise, and communication with family.
- Surveillance must not violate human dignity.
- No prisoner may be denied access to religious practice.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966)

- Prohibits torture and inhuman treatment.
- Mandates humane conditions of detention.
- Protects the rights of detainees to legal counsel, fair trial, and communication.
- Requires separation of convicted prisoners from pre-trial detainees.

UN Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners (1990)

States that:

- All prisoners are entitled to human rights, except those restricted by lawful detention.
- Prison conditions should help in rehabilitation, not punishment alone.
- Access to education, work, and healthcare is essential.

UN Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons Under Any Form of Detention (1988)

Protects detainees from:

- Arbitrary detention
- Forced confession
- Denial of medical care
- Secret detention

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Also guarantees:

- Right to lawyer
- Right to family visits
- Right to humane treatment

UN Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners (Bangkok Rules, 2010)

- Special protections for female detainees:
- Healthcare specific to women
- Protection from sexual abuse
- Treatment with dignity during pregnancy and childbirth

UN Principles on Medical Ethics (1982)

Mandates that:

- Prison doctors must act independently, not as tools for punishment.
- No medical professional may participate in torture or degrading treatment.