

## Why NHRC's international accreditation is under review | Explained

What rating has the NHRC held since 1999? How relevant are GANHRI's ratings for India? Why concerns did the GANHRI cite while deferring the re-accreditation last year? How has the NHRC responded?

Updated - May 18, 2024 09:48 am IST | Published - May 17, 2024 02:12 pm IST

The story so far: How free and fair is India's National Human Rights Commission? The [question is under international review](#), in a process governed by the U.N.-recognised Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI). NHRC has held an 'A rating' since 1999; it was due for



re-accreditation by the Geneva-based body last year. On May 1, [GANHRI deferred NHRC's accreditation for the second year in a row](#). The concerns of the Sub-Committee for Accreditation (SCA) have carried over through the years: the composition of the human rights body lacks diversity, it has an opaque appointment process, fails to cooperate with civil society, involves police personnel in investigations creating "conflict(s) of interest," and is unable to respond to escalating human rights violations.

Experts and human rights bodies such as [Amnesty International have expressed fears](#) that the once storied NHRC has been reduced to an ornamental body, imperilling the fate of Indian democracy.

### What are the international ratings?

Per the Paris Principles, the NHRIs should have broad constitutional and/or legislative mandates that cover all human rights: independence; an array of express human rights promotion and protection responsibilities; a pluralist representation; adequate funding; and responsibilities to cooperate, consult and interact with UN bodies, regional organizations, other NHRIs, other statutory bodies responsible for human rights promotion and protection, and human rights NGOs."

The GANHRI (previously known as the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of

Human Rights) unites 120 National Human Rights Institutions globally. The SCA consists of sixteen 'A' status NHRIs, four from each region in the Americas, Europe, Africa, and the Asia-Pacific.

The body is responsible for reviewing and accrediting NHRIs in compliance with the Paris Principles adopted in 1993. The review process is conducted by the Sub-Committee for Accreditation (SCA) every five years. The SCA, as well as the U.N. Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR), the U.N. Development Programme (UNDP), International and regional organisations, and civil society members, collectively review the NHRI performance. The NHRI has to apply for re-accreditation every five years, or if a change in its function affects its compliance with the Paris Principles.

The Paris Principles function as a treatise for National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) globally, ensuring they meet minimum standards to be deemed credible. The six principles provide an anchor for NHRIs, requiring them to maintain autonomy and transparency in decision making, composition, processes and structure.

India's National Human Rights Commission and State bodies were formed only in 1993, with the enactment of the Protection of Human Rights Act (PHRA). This was a "face-saving gesture, wrote lawyer Shrutika Pandey in an article, when "human rights abuses in various regions of the country during the economic crisis of 1990" chipped away at donor interest.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/why-nhrc-international-accreditation-is-under-review-explainer/article68141899.ece>