

The United Nations does not have an official, legally binding definition of "Indigenous Peoples," preferring to identify them rather than define them to ensure inclusivity. However, the UN uses a working definition based on historical continuity, self-identification, and distinct cultural/territorial ties. www.cbd.int +1

Key Characteristics of Indigenous Peoples (UN Framework)

- **Historical Continuity:** Pre-invasion/pre-colonial societies that developed on their ancestral lands.
- **Self-Identification:** Individuals identify as indigenous and are accepted by their community as such.
- **Distinctiveness:** Maintaining distinct social, economic, cultural, and political systems separate from the dominant society.
- **Non-Dominant Position:** Often form non-dominant sectors of society.
- **Territorial Connection:** A strong link to ancestral lands and natural resources.
- **Determination:** A resolve to preserve and pass on their ancestral territories and cultural identity to future generations. [The Blogs](#) +4

Key UN References

- **Jose Martinez Cobo's Report:** The 1986 study (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1986/7/Add.4) is often used as a foundational guideline for identifying indigenous populations.
- **UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP):** Sets out rights to culture, identity, and land, emphasizing the right to self-determination. www.un.org +3

The UN notes that this definition applies to diverse groups worldwide, including but not limited to the Inuit, Saami, Aboriginal peoples, and various communities across the Americas, Africa, and Asia

Indigenous group rights are collective and individual rights recognized under international law—most notably the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)—covering self-determination, land, culture, and free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC). These rights aim to protect marginalized populations from forced assimilation, marginalization, and dispossession of ancestral territories while promoting cultural preservation and autonomy. www.ancparliament.org.za +4

Key Aspects of Indigenous Rights

- **Self-Determination:** The right to freely determine their political status and pursue economic, social, and cultural development.
- **Land & Resource Rights:** Indigenous communities have rights over the lands, territories, and natural resources they traditionally own, occupy, or use.
- **Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC):** The right to give or withhold consent for activities affecting their lands and resources.
- **Cultural Integrity:** Protection of cultural heritage, languages, traditional knowledge, and practices.
- **Non-Discrimination:** Equal rights and protection against discrimination and forced assimilation. achpr.au.int +4

International Standards and Implementation

- **UNDRIP (2007):** A comprehensive framework for the survival, dignity, and well-being of indigenous peoples globally.
- **ILO Convention No. 169:** The most advanced international treaty specifically protecting the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples.
- **Implementation Challenges:** Despite international consensus, implementation remains inconsistent, with many indigenous groups still facing marginalization and rights violations by states and industries.
- **Regional Protection:** In Africa, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights has been used to advance the protection of indigenous communities' rights. achpr.au.int +4

Common Issues and Violations

- **Land Grabbing:** Lack of recognition of customary land rights often leads to displacement for development projects.
- **Criminalization:** Defenders of indigenous rights often face harassment, arrests, and violence.
- **Violent Crime:** Increased cases of gender-based violence against indigenous women and girls. [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...) +2

The UN and various human rights mechanisms continue to work on enforcing these rights and encouraging states to incorporate them into their national laws