



# Spotlight: Human rights achievements in Taiwan

## International assessments

**2024:** Freedom House listed Taiwan as a free country for the 26th consecutive year. It ranked Taiwan the second-freest country in Asia after Japan and, in terms of internet freedom, seventh in the world and first in Asia.

**2024:** The World Press Freedom Index 2024 released by Reporters Without Borders ranked Taiwan's press freedom 27th in the world and first in Asia.

**2024:** The US State Department's annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices reaffirmed Taiwan's democratic political system and respect for and protection of freedoms and human rights.

## Freedom of religion

**2020:** Taiwan was invited to join the International Religious Freedom or Believe Alliance as an observer.

**2019:** President Tsai Ing-wen appointed Pusin Tali, a Protestant minister and a member of the indigenous Atayal community, as Taiwan's first ambassador-at-large for religious freedom. Ambassador Tali and ROC (Taiwan) Representative to the United States Stanley Kao attended the second Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom in Washington, DC. Taiwan and the United States hosted the Civil Society Dialogue on Securing Religious Freedom in the Indo-Pacific Region. In 2024, President Lai Ching-te extended Ambassador Tali's term and appointed Wang Pao-tsung, chairman of Holy Glory Temple, as another ambassador-at-large for religious freedom. The above actions underscored Taiwan's commitment to the promotion of religious freedom.

## Marriage equality

**2019:** Taiwan's Legislative Yuan in 2019 passed a bill to legalize same-sex marriage, making Taiwan the first country in Asia to do so. In 2023, Taiwan relaxed restrictions on transnational same-sex marriages and the right of adoption for same-sex couples.

**2017:** Judicial Yuan Interpretation 748 declared unconstitutional provisions in the Civil Code that did not allow two persons of the same sex to create a permanent union of intimate and exclusive nature for the purpose of living a common life.

## Empowering women

**2024:** In the legislative elections, women won 41.6 percent of seats, the highest percentage in Asia. In the 2022 local elections, women won 56.3 percent of city mayor and county magistrate seats and more than one-third of seats on local government councils.

**2024:** Amendments to the Gender Equality in Employment Act, the Sexual Harassment Prevention Act, and the Gender Equity Education Act were passed in 2023 and entered into effect on March 8, 2024—International Women's Day—further enhancing Taiwan's gender-mainstreaming environment.

**2021:** Based on the metrics of the UN Development Programme's Gender Inequality Index, Taiwan ranked seventh globally and first in Asia for gender equality.

**2020:** Tsai Ing-wen, Taiwan's first female president, was reelected.

**2016:** Tsai Ing-wen was elected president of Taiwan, becoming the first woman to hold this position.

## National Human Rights Commission

**2020:** The Organic Act of the Control Yuan National Human Rights Commission was adopted in January. The NHRC formally began operations on August 1. Its functions and powers include investigating human rights violations, providing suggestions and reports to government agencies, assisting in incorporating key international human rights instruments into domestic law, publishing important case studies and annual reports on Taiwan's human rights situation, releasing independent evaluation opinions on national reports of government agencies, supervising the promotion of human rights education, and fostering international exchanges and cooperation on human rights. The NHRC works to substantially advance human rights protections in Taiwan.

## Incorporation of international human rights conventions into domestic law

**2020:** The Executive Yuan approved an action plan incorporating the terms of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).

**2014:** The Act to Implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Implementation Act of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) were adopted and went into effect.

**2012:** The Enforcement Act of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) went into effect following its passage in 2011.

**2009:** The Act to Implement the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) was adopted and went into effect.

## National reports under human rights conventions

Since submitting the first national reports for the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Taiwan has created a unique international review mechanism. Following UN practices, it has invited international human rights experts to Taiwan to review national reports, make suggestions on the situation in Taiwan, and draft concluding observations and recommendations. Taiwan has been recognized by the international community for its voluntary compliance and implementation of core human rights instruments.

**2024:** The first international review meeting on the national report for the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination was convened.

**2022:** The third international review meeting on the ICCPR and ICESCR national reports, the second international review meeting on the Convention on the Rights of the Child national report, and the fourth international review meeting on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women national report were convened.

**2022:** Taiwan submitted its first national report under the ICERD.

**2022:** Taiwan submitted its fourth national report under CEDAW.

**2021:** Taiwan submitted its second national report under the CRC.

**2020:** Taiwan submitted its third national reports under the ICCPR and the ICESCR.

**2020:** Taiwan submitted its second national report under the CRPD.

## National Human Rights Action Plan

**2022:** The Executive Yuan published the National Human Rights Action Plan for 2022 to 2024.

**2020:** Taiwan published its first National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights for the period 2021 to 2024.

## Human trafficking prevention and migrant worker rights

**2022:** The Executive Yuan approved the Action Plan for Fisheries and Human Rights to help ensure the rights of workers on fishing vessels.

**2019:** The Human Rights Task Force under the Executive Yuan adopted a resolution to incorporate into domestic law the International Labour Organization's Work in Fishing Convention.

**2009:** Taiwan promulgated the Human Trafficking Prevention Act. For 14 consecutive years between 2009 and 2023, Taiwan was listed as a Tier 1 country in the US State Department's annual Trafficking in Persons Report. In 2024, the above act was amended to incorporate labor exploitation and relevant punishments to strengthen Taiwan's alignment with international norms and protection of victims' rights.

## Rights of indigenous peoples

**2024:** A total of 85 regulatory items had been enacted or amended in accordance with the Indigenous Peoples Basic Law (IPBL) by 2024.

**2016:** President Tsai Ing-wen formally apologized to Taiwan's indigenous peoples for the discrimination they faced in the past.

**2006:** The IPBL Promotion Committee was established to take stock of related regulations and ensure comprehensive implementation of the IPBL.

**2002:** The Council of Indigenous Peoples was established.

## Judicial reform

**2023:** The citizen judges system was launched, giving the public the opportunity to participate in the trials of certain major criminal cases. This brings more diverse perspectives to trials while enhancing judicial transparency and credibility.

**2019:** Amendments to the Judges Act were passed to strengthen disciplinary action against judges engaging in illegal or unprofessional behavior. This created a new supervisory mechanism that allowed for diverse outside participation, ensured adherence to proper procedure, and expedited the disciplinary process.

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