

THIRD PARTY SUBMISSION TO THE GANHRI SUB-COMMITTEE ON ACCREDITATION REGARDING SCOTTISH HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (SHRC)

47th SCA Session (20 April – 1 May 2026)

I. Submission from Human Rights Consortium Scotland (HRCS)

HRCS is Scotland's civil society human rights network and has 230 civil society/NGO members and 380 individual members. We exist to provide a strong, collective civil society voice and make sure that civil society has what it needs to promote and defend human rights.

HRCS is independent of Government. Our mission is to bring together organisations and campaigners to work for the incorporation of international human rights standards into Scottish law and policy, to ensure delivery of human rights and accountability, and develop accessible and informative resources. HRCS plays a vital role in amplifying marginalised voices and ensuring human rights are at the core of decision-making.

HRCS has not, as yet, been given ECOSOC Consultative Status by the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

II. Report submitted by

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III. Relationship with SHRC

HRCS has no formal relationship with the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC, the Commission) and is totally independent of it. HRCS and our members work in partnership with the SHRC and are committed to the same human rights values and principles. We have provided input into SHRC projects, research and working groups, spoken at and attended SHRC events, and sought advice and guidance from SHRC Commissioners and staff as required.

HRCS senior staff and representatives from our membership organisations regularly find themselves working and sharing platforms with representatives from the SHRC. This includes participation in workshops, panels, strategic working groups and Boards – examples include the Leadership Panel of the Scottish National Action Plan for Human Rights (SNAP 2), the Scottish Government's Human Rights Incorporation and Implementation Oversight Board and SHRC's recent event focussing on UN Human Rights Monitoring in Scotland. HRCS and our members frequently amplify the work done by the SHRC through social media and other digital communications.

SHRC staff regularly contribute to HRCS member events and working groups, promoting human rights and providing detailed explanations of processes and priorities.

IV. Compliance with the Paris Principles

The Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC/the Commission) is the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) for Scotland and was established by the Scottish Commission for Human Rights Act 2006. The Commission first became operational in 2008. In line with expectations placed on NHRIs by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutes, it is a positive force for change and ‘promotes a progressive definition of human rights which includes all rights set out in international, regional and domestic instruments, including economic, social and cultural rights.’

In line with the Paris Principles, the SHRCs’ status as a Parliamentary Corporate Body means it is independent of the Scottish and UK Governments, the UK and Scottish Parliaments, the Courts and other public bodies. It is able to make independent decisions about how it commits time and resources and its office bearers and staff are politically neutral, impartial, independent and accountable.

The Commission seeks to promote and protect the human rights of everyone in Scotland, working to increase awareness, recognition and respect for human rights, and make them more relevant and easier to apply in everyday life. The Commission aims to help everyone understand their rights and the shared responsibilities everyone has to each other and to their community.

The Commission aims to be a ‘bridge’ between international and domestic human rights systems. This means it ensures that international and regional bodies have the necessary facts to understand how human rights are being respected, protected and fulfilled in Scotland and that duty bearers in Scotland are acting compatibly with their obligations in Scottish and international law.¹

The Commission is clear about its role in holding ‘governments and parliaments accountable for their actions or failures to act by applying a consistent framework over time and regularly reminding them of their legal obligations’.^{2 3}

The following table highlights how the Commission works with civil society and the public sector to promote and support the progressive realisation of human rights by providing links to recently completed SHRC projects. This list of projects is not exhaustive but provides detailed examples of the work undertaken by the SHRC, all of which aligns with the Paris Principles:

Role and Purpose (aligned to Paris Principles)	Examples of Evidence
Monitoring how human rights are experienced in Scotland	ESC rights in the Highlands and Islands SHRC Spotlight Projects

¹ [Our Role as an NHRI](#)

² [State of the Nation | Scottish Human Rights Commission](#)

³ [Scottish Human Rights Commission reminds the Parliament of human rights obligations ahead of Housing Bill vote](#)

by people in their everyday lives and communities	
Identifying where human rights are not being upheld	Cultural recognition of Scotland's Gypsy Travellers SHRC Spotlight Projects
Reporting to the United Nations and Scottish Parliament on areas of concern which it has identified	20230327-upr-statement-transcription.pdf icescr-pswg-for-publicationv2.pdf Letters to Equality, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee re Women's Rights Annual Report 2024-25
Be an expert, objective and independent authority on human rights	State of the Nation warns that essential human rights are out of reach for many in Scotland
Check if what law and policy say should happen is actually happening	Scottish Human Rights Commission warns of human rights breaches in lifelong prison sentences
Educate people about their human rights	Easy Read Scottish Human Rights Commission Scottish prisoners get a guide to rights under the prison rules for the first time
Educate duty bearers about their obligations and duties	What makes a strong National Human Rights Institution?
Help the Scottish Parliament make good decisions about the legislation it passes	Scottish Human Rights Commission reminds the Parliament of human rights obligations ahead of Housing Bill vote
Identify gaps and problems and bring them to public attention	Scottish Human Rights Commission warns prison complaints system is not working
Use its legal powers appropriately	SHRC Strategic Plan 2024-28
Evidencing strength and weakness in UK and Scottish human rights realisation	https://www.scottishhumanrights.com/media/2966/shrc-submission-to-icescr-january-2025.pdf

Furthermore, SHRC has a broad mandate and ambitious work plan as evidenced by its current strategic plan⁴. This is the Commission's fifth strategic plan and was set out before the Scottish Parliament in 2024.

SHRC's commitment to pluralism is evidenced by its ongoing relationships and work with the public sector, civil society and the non-governmental sector and the private sector focussing on the promotion and protection of human rights.

Furthermore, the above list of projects provides a number of examples which evidence the way in which the SHRC uses its powers through the ability to initiate inquiries and investigation, gather the evidence and documents it needs, consult with NGOs and State institutions and publicise their reports, findings and recommendations. In particular, the 'Tick Tock'⁵ report exemplifies this.

In line with its 'A' status accreditation, the Commission has undertaken significant work, increasingly with a community-based focus, on the monitoring of international human rights treaty implementation in Scotland.⁶

In recent years the SHRC has also been considering how it might best enhance its role and powers, especially as the Scottish Government considers how best to develop a new human rights Act for Scotland.⁷ HRCS and our membership are fully supportive of this and have called for action to be taken to increase protection of human rights in Scotland, and to ensure that the Commission has the powers and resources to ensure that everybody's human rights are protected. HRCS' Manifesto for the upcoming 2026 Scottish Election includes an ask of all political parties to commit to:

“Enhancing the powers of the Scottish Human Rights Commission, including greater powers of investigation and the ability to raise legal proceedings, backed by adequate and sustainable resource.”⁸

These enhanced powers and resourcing would enable the Scottish Human Rights Commission to become an even stronger advocate of the progressive realisation of human rights in Scotland and strengthen individual citizens' access to justice.

V. Additional Comments and Recommendation

In conclusion, HRCS and our members believe that the Commission fulfils its role as Scotland's NHRI in a strategic, planned and professional manner. It embodies our shared commitment to the progressive realisation of human rights in Scotland and the values of freedom, respect, equality and diversity on which they are founded.

⁴ [SHRC Strategic Plan 2024-28](#)

⁵ [Moving from institutions to independent living | SHRC Spotlight Projects](#)

⁶ <https://www.scottishhumanrights.com/projects-and-programmes/treaty-and-international-work/international-treaty-monitoring/>

⁷ [crossroads_what-next-for-human-rights-protection-in-scotland-shrc-june-2023.pdf](#)

⁸ [Our Rights. Your Move. Manifesto Briefing Document](#)

Human rights realisation in Scotland would be dealt a severe blow if the Commission were to lose its A status accreditation. We still have much to do to deliver our shared vision of a human rights respecting nation.

We are therefore strongly recommending that the SHRC retain its 'A' Status accreditation.

VI Permission to Share Submission

We are happy for you to share this submission with the Scottish Human Rights Commission.

Charlie McMillan, Director, Human Rights Consortium Scotland

Co-signatories: This report has been endorsed by the following Civil Society Organisations which are members of HRCS (listed in alphabetical order):

- AdvoCard
- Age Scotland
- Alcohol Focus Scotland
- AMINA (The Muslim Women's Resource Centre)
- ARGH (Autism Rights Group Highland)
- Ayr Housing Aid Centre SCIO
- C-Change Scotland
- CEMVO Scotland
- Choose Play (East Lothian Play Association)
- Citizens Rights Project
- Close the Gap
- Community Transport Association
- CORRA Foundation
- Deafblind Scotland
- Edinburgh and Lothians Regional Equality Council (ELREC)
- Empower Women for Change
- Equality Network
- Glasgow Disability Alliance
- Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE)
- Humanist Society Scotland
- Inclusion Scotland
- Lanarkshire Deaf Hub
- National Autistic Taskforce (NAT)
- Next Chapter Scotland
- Scottish Women's Convention
- Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance (SIAA)
- The Paristamen Charity
- The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisation (SCVO)
- Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights)
- Welfare Scotland
- Worker Support Centre