



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND LABOR



“Strong respect for human rights isn’t merely an indicator that a country is likely doing well. It actually unleashes a country’s potential, and it helps to advance growth and progress.”
- Secretary of State John Kerry

Business and Human Rights

Business today is conducted on a global scale. The activities of businesses have impacts on the lives of millions of people around the world. Even small enterprises have supply chains that span continents. U.S. companies strive to uphold high standards and ensure their activities respect the human rights of persons in the communities where they do business.

The State Department’s **Business and Human Rights (BHR) team** aims to support these efforts by partnering with companies, civil society, and other governments to promote respect for human rights. The BHR team engages in multi-stakeholder initiatives; leads U.S. government policy efforts to implement the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (Guiding Principles); and, in conjunction with other experts, such as the State Department’s Office of International Labor Affairs, contributes to finding solutions to urgent policy challenges that relate to business respect for human rights as outlined in the Guiding Principles. The team’s major work includes:

Security and Human Rights

Oil, gas, and mining companies operate in some of the most challenging and conflict-affected parts of the world. The *Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPs)* is both an initiative and a set of principles to guide extractive companies in conducting risk assessments and engaging with public and private security forces in a way that ensures respect for international human

rights. The *International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers* is an initiative designed to set forth human rights and humanitarian principles for private security service providers operating in complex environments and to convert those principles into related standards and a governance and oversight mechanisms.

State Department Approach to Business and Human Rights:

Support the innovations and other activities of business that help solve global challenges and improve the welfare of people;

Partner with business on projects in which business, civil society and government can effectively leverage their resources by working together; and

Promote the rule of law, respect for human rights, and a level playing field by encouraging responsible business behavior.

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International Tools

In promoting business respect for human rights as discussed in the Guiding Principles, it’s imperative for government and business to work together. *The Guiding Principles* are the first broadly accepted global set of guidelines on business and human rights, and provide a blueprint for companies to demonstrate respect for human rights and address any adverse impacts in which they are involved. Another international tool is the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, which include a human rights chapter that draws upon and is line with the Guiding Principles.

Conflict Resources

The sourcing of tin, gold, and other minerals from conflict-affected regions should entail stringent supply-chain due diligence so companies and consumers can ensure they are not contributing to violence and abuse through their purchases. Tools such as the OECD’s *Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict Affected and High Risk Areas* are designed to help curb the connection between resources and conflict.

