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United Nations: Breakthrough in access to justice for all rights

Amnesty International welcomed today's adoption of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, by the UN General Assembly's Third Committee in New York.

"Many of those who have suffered violations of their rights, including rights to adequate housing, food, water and sanitation, health, education and decent work, are denied the ability and power to hold those responsible to account," said Amnesty International.

"This path-breaking instrument will give those people who couldn't access justice in their own countries, the chance to have their complaints assessed by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights."

The Optional Protocol introduced by Portugal and adopted today by consensus was co-sponsored by 52 states from all regions of the world. It will next be presented for final adoption by the General Assembly in plenary session on 10 December, the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

"That historic moment will help rectify the imbalance between civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights, which has particularly denied marginalized groups and those living in poverty the ability to demand an effective remedy when their rights are violated," said Amnesty International.

"The Optional Protocol is an important tool for implementing the declaration made 15 years ago at the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights that 'all human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated'. The international community must treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis."

Watch a two minute [animation film about the Optional Protocol](#)

For more information, see <http://www.amnesty.org/en/economic-social-and-cultural-rights>