Research Handbook on International Water Law
Research Handbooks in International Law series
Edited by Stephen C. McCaffrey, Christina Leb and Riley T. Denoon

Chapter 14: The human right to water
Inga T. Winkler

Abstract
While water has been the subject of international agreements for millennia, it has only been considered through the lens of human rights more recently. The human right to water has gained increasing recognition over the last 15 years. It was recognized by the UN General Assembly and is guaranteed as an implicit component of the right to an adequate standard of living. The UN General Assembly explains that the right to water ‘entitles everyone, without discrimination, to have access to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic use’. The chapter also discusses other relevant human rights, including the human rights to sanitation, food and work. The human rights principles of non-discrimination, participation and accountability guide the allocation of water between different uses. As such, the human rights framework influences the interpretation of international water law by prioritizing basic human needs.

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Rights-holders can claim their rights and duty-bearers must guarantee the rights to water and sanitation equally and without discrimination. Challenges and opportunities. International human rights law demands a specific focus on those people who do not fully enjoy their rights, leading to explicitly ‘pro-poor’ development in many countries. The ‘human rights-based approach’ stresses the correspondence between rights and obligations, providing a framework for Member States and other organizations that aims to ensure that respect for human rights are integrated into development plans at all levels. A child from the Za’atari Refugee Camp in Jordan raised a flag to represent Goal 6, Safe Water and Sanitation. Photo: UNICEF Jordan/badran. The right to water and sanitation has been a fundamental human right since 2010. Catarina de Albuquerque, first UN special Rapporteur on this subject, takes stock on the conditions necessary for its real implementation on ID4D. 22 May 2018. International cooperation. Water & Sanitation. Catarina de Albuquerque was the first UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Right to Water and Sanitation from 2008 to 2014. She is now Executive Chair of the global partnership Sanitation and Water for All. After having contributed to the recognition of access to water and sanitation as a fundamental human ri...