



**On human rights protection in  
Africa and the Americas:**

**A guide to why regional human  
rights systems are important and  
how they can be supported**

THE SWEDISH FOUNDATION  
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

## Introduction

### Why write about regional human rights systems?

The Swedish Foundation for Human Rights (SFHR) has been working together with partner organisations in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean since the beginning of the 1990s. Over the years we have become increasingly aware of the importance of regional human rights systems for the protection and promotion of human rights - as our partners have opted to increasingly use these systems to deal with human rights violations which they could not get redress for in their own countries, on a national level. For example, the Inter-American system also provides an important protective aspect to human rights defenders in the member states through the “preventative and protective measures”<sup>1</sup>. But we have also noted the different ways the regional systems have been exposed to attempts to weaken them or decrease their influence – in particular when it comes to the more explicit human rights mandates of the systems.

In 2017 we initiated a campaign to raise awareness of what regional human rights systems in Africa and the Americas have to offer the citizens of these regions. As part of that campaign we produced this publication with the aim to spread information on the importance of regional human rights systems and share some ideas on how we in the international community can support our partners that operate within the systems. We hope this will be useful for both state and non-state actors.

We are very grateful for valuable input and suggestions in the preparation of this publication, in particular from the Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA)<sup>2</sup>, the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights<sup>3</sup>, Center for Justice and International Law (Cejil)<sup>4</sup>, La Corporación Colectivo de Abogados José Alvéar Restrepo (CCAJAR) and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights<sup>5</sup>.

The responsibility of the content and any opinions expressed rests solely with the SFHR. The contribution does not attempt to be exhaustive or conclusive but a simple guide to those who are interested in regional human rights systems in Africa and the Americas.

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[www.humanrights.se](http://www.humanrights.se)

The Swedish Foundation for Human Rights is an independent foundation with no religious or party-political allegiance that was created in 1991, with a mandate to promote human rights in Sweden as well as internationally. As part of its mission, the Swedish Foundation for Human Rights has identified the strengthening of regional systems of human rights as an objective whose attainment has potential to increase the protection and promotion of human rights.

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- 1 In Spanish: Medidas provisionales y cautelares
- 2 See The Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa: [www.ibrda.org](http://www.ibrda.org)
- 3 See The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights: [www.achpr.org](http://www.achpr.org)
- 4 See The Center for Justice and International Law: [www.cejil.org](http://www.cejil.org)
- 5 See Inter-American Commission on Human Rights: [www.cidh.org](http://www.cidh.org)

## Foreword

*By Annika Ben David, Ambassador-at-large for Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden*

The regional human rights systems play an increasingly important role in upholding and enforcing human rights worldwide. When domestic institutions fail to uphold the law, or when they themselves are the violators of the law, it may be necessary to seek redress beyond national boundaries. Regional systems are far more accessible than their international counterparts. By moving the system closer to the most relevant countries you give people a much better chance to access justice. And you make it clear that human rights are for everyone, everywhere and all the time. The regional human rights systems can also help to bring positive change to the area by working with international bodies and support states in their work for human rights. But it is also important to recognize opportunities for regional bodies to promote positive change in international institutions by giving their local or regional input.

For these systems to get the financial and political support they need it is crucial to make their importance known. Sweden is a strong supporter of regional systems that work for human rights and democracy within their own frameworks. Sweden contributes, within our development corporation, to both the American and African regional human rights systems.

I also wish to stress the crucial role of civil society organisations and private actors when it comes to defending human rights. Sweden has always been committed to defend the independence of civil society organisations, inviting dialogue and drawing on their knowledge, pushing for good conditions for their work in line with the freedom of assembly, association and speech, and promoting their role as a collective voice and opinion. In both Africa and the Americas you can find a large and strong network of brave civil actors that are at the frontline in the defence for human rights. They have helped to deepen democracy and ensure that every person, especially those from historically excluded groups, is engaged and included

in public decision making processes. When you involve civil society organisations you gain a regional and a practical perspective. By taking into account regional considerations, such as shared regional customs, values, culture, and practices you strengthen the protection for human rights and democratic values.

In this global world, we have to realise that the consequences of our actions as a state go beyond our national borders. Therefore, we must keep on trying to solve problems, one by one, together and on the basis of assurance and cooperation. It is important to recognise that relinquishing national powers can mean that you gain the sovereignty to being able to solve a lot of difficulties. The regional human rights systems have a central role in building bridges between countries and strengthening human rights. They have brought incredible difference to the lives of individuals and peoples when it comes to access to justice, impunity and discrimination. They have made it obvious that the right way to go forward is not to push each other down, but by pulling each other up.

### Abbreviations

AU = African Union  
CAT = United Nations' Committee Against Torture  
CCAJAR = La Corporación Colectivo de Abogados José Alvéar Restrepo  
CEDAW = United Nation's Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women  
CEJIL = Center for Justice and International Law  
CSO = Civil Society Organisation  
FMG = Female Genital Mutilation  
LGBT = Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender  
NGO = Non-Governmental Organisation  
OAS = Organisation of American States  
SFHR = the Swedish Foundation for Human Rights  
IHRDA = the Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa  
UN = United Nations  
UN Charter = the Charter of United Nations

## Chapter 1. What are regional human rights systems and why are they important?

### Background

Following the atrocities of the Second World War, the world witnessed unparalleled development in international human rights law. New legal regimes, that have the protection of individuals at their core and aim to a limit the traditionally exclusive jurisdiction of states over their citizens, emerged. These developments have unfolded at the international, regional and national levels. The Charter of the United Nations (UN Charter) makes way for the development of regional human rights systems but primarily in the context of peace and security. At the regional level, human rights protection systems developed independently of the United Nations (UN) system.

Over the years, three principal regional human rights systems have developed as regional complements to the global UN human rights system, all of them making reference to the basic instruments developed by the United Nations system and in particular to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These are the African, Inter-American and European systems. They are called systems as they encompass a number of mechanisms and instruments, such as courts, commissions, special rapporteurs and legal documents, binding and non-binding. Together these parts create a system for the protection of human rights. Regional human rights systems were created to bring rights and violations closer to the countries where they are the most relevant and to contribute to peace and human security. The regional systems have many advantages – among countries with similar political and cultural development it may be easier to achieve common resolutions. It is also easier to bring about and monitor necessary changes within the human rights areas as they concern geographically more close-lying countries than the sometimes more abstract UN system. Globally the importance of common solutions to cross border challenges such as climate change, trafficking, drugs are increasing. The regional hu-

man rights systems are important instances in order to protect, promote and develop human rights near where the violations are committed.

Within the three most well-established regional human rights systems: in Europe, the Americas and Africa, human rights organisations have increasingly chosen to pursue justice through the regional systems rather than through the UN system when the national justice systems fail. In countries where the rule of law is weak and human rights violations are easier to ignore, thousands of people have been able to claim their rights through the regional human rights systems.

Most actors working within international cooperation, for example in Sweden, are well aware of the global UN system for the protection and promotion of human rights. Fewer appear to understand regional human rights systems' role and importance. The possibilities for human rights actors in Africa and the Americas to use the systems so that the rights for the inhabitants of those regions can be claimed are severely limited if their international partners – state and non-state – do not have enough awareness of these systems to understand their importance. And these international partners have enormous potential to influence the development of human rights, peace and security on the national and the regional level through their international cooperation policies, strategic plans, thematic and geographical focus areas – and of course subsequent funding.

Therefore the Swedish Foundation for Human Rights wants to contribute to greater awareness of regional human rights systems so that international actors can take better informed and more strategic decisions on their international cooperation.

### Why should they be supported?

In principle the member states of the regional human rights systems ought to be responsible for financially and politically guaranteeing the functioning of the systems. The role of the international community ought

to be primarily political, overseeing the compliance of these obligations. However many examples both within the African and the Inter-American human rights systems show that the member states are not complying with their financial undertakings whilst the demands for protection for human rights are increasing from victims as well as civil society organisations. In the Inter-American human rights system for example, the Commission and the Court, the two main pillars of human rights promotion and protection operate at around half the required resources that they need to fulfill their mandate. Therefore, it is important to encourage states to comply with their responsibilities but at the same time ensuring continued financial support to the systems promoting ever more effective and all-encompassing mechanisms. It also seems important that the international community insist on the necessity of regional mechanisms of protection of human rights rather than – what states tend to favour – the *promotion* of human rights.

## Chapter 2. The African human rights system

### Introduction

Regional protection of human rights in Africa mainly consists of three pillars – the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (from now on the Commission) and the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights (from now on the Court) – which constitute the African human rights system. Structurally, these organs are placed under the framework of the intergovernmental organisation African Union (which replaced the former Organisation for African Unity through its establishment in 2001).<sup>6</sup>

The African Union (AU) was founded in order to strengthen the status of human rights within the organisation and between its member states. Human rights started to play a major role and special mechanisms and mandates were adopted with the objective to promote and protect human and peoples’ rights.<sup>7</sup>

### The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights

The Commission on Human and Peoples’ Right is an organ within the African Union, established through article 30 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ rights. The Commission was inaugurated in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 1987. Its main task is to protect and promote human and peoples’ rights and to interpret the African Charter.<sup>8</sup> In order to protect and promote human rights, the Commission for example pursues constructive dialogues with member states regarding states’ implementations of human rights.<sup>9</sup>

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6 The African Union: <https://www.au.int/web/en/au-nutshell> [26/4 2017]

7 Ibid.

8 The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights: <http://www.achpr.org/about/> [24/4 2017]

9 The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights: <http://www.achpr.org/states/> [22/5 2017]

The 11 members of the Commission are elected by the African Union Assembly and serve a six year term. After their mandate period ends they are entitled for re-election. The Secretariat is located in Banjul, The Gambia.<sup>10</sup>

## The African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights

The African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights is a judicial body, seated in Arusha, Tanzania. The court was founded in 1998, came into force 2004 and delivered its first judgment in 2009.<sup>11</sup>

The Court consists of 11 judges, who serve a six year term. It has advisory and judiciary powers and its main function is to adjudicate cases based on the African Charter, or other regional human rights conventions. The court is entitled to hear complaints from individuals and non-governmental organisations.<sup>12</sup> According to the African Charter, admissibility is part of the Commission's protective mandate and case applications thus formally approved by the Commission.<sup>13</sup> However, the Court is also able to take on cases directly from applicants, if the contracting state in question allows it. The Court has the final judgement in cases brought before the Court, which is a binding decisions for all parties concerned.<sup>14</sup>

## The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights

The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights is one of the legal instruments of the regional protection of human rights in Africa, binding for contracting states that have signed and ratified the Charter. The

Charter was adopted in 1981 and came into force four years later.<sup>15</sup> So far, 53 of AU's 54 members have acceded to the African Charter and are thus obligated to follow it in accordance with the Charter's provisions.<sup>16</sup>

In line with the Charter, all individuals' and peoples' rights and freedoms shall be recognised and guaranteed by all member states, in respect of the notion of non-discrimination and with adherence to African traditions.<sup>17</sup>

## Special characteristics of the African system

The African human rights system is known for its focus on economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights. The essence of the system stems from historical events taking place on the African continent. Due to its history of slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism and Apartheid – among other forms of discrimination – the former Organisation for African Unity agreed on a human rights document in order to strengthen human but also peoples' rights and achieve liberation of Africa. The African Charter is in fact the only regional human rights convention containing provisions on both economic, social and cultural rights and civil and political rights. And also the only one holding provisions on peoples' collective rights.<sup>18</sup>

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10 The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights 2010. Rules of procedure of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights: [http://www.achpr.org/files/instruments/rules-of-procedure-2010/rules\\_of\\_procedure\\_2010\\_en.pdf](http://www.achpr.org/files/instruments/rules-of-procedure-2010/rules_of_procedure_2010_en.pdf)

11 The African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights: <http://en.african-court.org/index.php/about-us/court-in-brief> [9/5 2017]

12 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Establishment of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights 1998, article 5 and 6

13 The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights 1981, article 45

14 The African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights: <http://en.african-court.org/index.php/faqs/frequent-questions> [23/5 2017]

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15 The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights: <http://www.achpr.org/instruments/> [27/4 2017]

16 Ibid.

17 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, preamble, article 2

18 Ibid.

## Chapter 2.1 Contextualising the system – challenges and strengths

### Challenges

#### Financial and structural challenges

Many difficulties within the African human rights system are caused by financial and structural challenges. A sustainable financial strategy is needed in order to support the execution of mechanisms within the human rights system. Unfortunately the AU so far has been unable to take such initiatives. This along with insufficient support from AU member states has resulted in aid dependency from international donors. To reduce aid dependency, the member states would have to commit themselves to financially support the organisation and take responsibility for the human rights instruments they have introduced.

In comparison with other regional human rights courts the African Court is young and can be considered as inexperienced. The combination of lacking resources and experience has consequently lead to inefficient procedures, major delays, backlog of cases, a low number of completed cases and a lack of data. Due to these shortcomings, victims of human rights violations usually approach the African Commission instead of the Court to seek remedy. This can be considered as quite problematic in different ways. First, this has led to a backlog of cases also at the Commission and currently it is overloaded carrying out tasks which theoretically can be managed by the Court. Second, the African Court gets fewer possibilities to gain experience or to interpret the provisions stated in regional human rights documents, which also negatively impacts on the development of a common practice. From a victim's point of view, approaching the Commission is reasonable, and indeed crucial, since it is currently a more efficient and experienced mechanism. However, from a long term perspective, cases should be brought before the African Court more frequently. In legal terms, the Court has stronger power to protect human rights through its judging mandate and to impact upon African states through advisory opinions. In order to maintain

and to enhance the human rights system, in favour of individuals' access to justice, it is important to try to strike a balance between the Commission and the Court, on the basis of their individual function and mandate.

Additionally, our human rights partners in Africa have expressed concern regarding funding challenges. When litigation is likely to be long legal procedure, they also have to strategise how to overcome internal funding challenges in order to cope with protracted litigations. Hence, the existing structural challenges within the African human rights system also affect NGOs financial situation and thereby their possibilities to represent victims of human rights violations.

### Shrinking civic spaces and lacking political will

During the past few years the concept of *shrinking civic spaces* has become more relevant in Africa. Increasing limited capacities for NGOs and CSOs to take action, organise and be financially supported is now reality. This has a considerable impact on organisations' possibilities to undertake monitoring and advocating measures and therefor disadvantages the protection of human rights in Africa.

Closely connected to the increase in shrinking civic spaces, a lack in political is posing a serious threat to the realisation of human rights. There is a gap between African states' commitments and the respect shown for human rights in practice. On the one hand, as mentioned in chapter 1, the African Charter has been ratified by almost all AU member states (except South Sudan). On the other hand, decisions, recommendations or judgments by African human rights mechanisms are often not implemented to the required extent. Although decisions made by the African Court is judicially binding for all parties involved, the Court has no mandate to enforce states' implementations of decisions with coercive methods. This means that the protection of human and peoples' rights depends on African states' political will to carry out implementations. Another example demonstrating the gap is the fact that 49 of AU's 54 member states

have signed the protocol of the establishment on the African Court, but only 24 of them have so far ratified the protocol.<sup>19</sup> In practical terms, this complicates individuals' access to justice before the regional human rights court. It has to be recognised that there is a risk that this reluctance weakens the human rights mechanisms, since it signals that they are of no importance. We cannot be content with just signing human rights documents: policies, decisions and recommendations must find expression in concrete measures in order to properly fulfil human rights obligations. However, African states are not the only ones showing political unwillingness. The human rights system has generally not been prioritised by other international actors for a long time. For example, international actors have often had a focus on the AU as a central organ. Financial and capacity strengthening support has been given to the AU rather than the human rights mechanisms directly. From this, we might need to reconsider the AU's role in the protection of human rights and start to emphasise the human rights system and its mechanisms that actually have the mandate, and knowledge, to protect and promote human rights in an African context.

## Strengths

### *Contextualising human rights*

Regional human rights instruments have the advantage of being able to cater for human rights specifics, which is why the African Charter is the only regional human rights convention focused on both economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights. And furthermore, the only one containing provisions on individuals' and peoples' (collective) rights. These instruments are designed to bring justice and accountability closer to the countries where human rights violations occur. For example, a specific cultural practice – as in female genital mutilation (FGM) – that poses a serious threat to the protection of human and women's rights on

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<sup>19</sup> The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights: <http://www.achpr.org/instruments/court-establishment/ratification/> [18/12 2017]

the African continent can be managed in a regional perspective by using the legal instrument the Maputo Protocol<sup>20</sup>, since this protocol reflects this particular human right concern. In an African context of women's rights, the Maputo Protocol goes further than the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and explicitly forbids all forms of FGM. It also states provisions concerning participations in political and decision making processes, the protection of women in armed conflicts, marriage, food security and housing, education, employment and health. That is, challenges currently shown in many African states.

This above mentioned case of women's situation exemplifies how regional human rights documents contextually are motivated and formed with regard to the African history and culture, in order to come to terms with relevant human rights abuses. Moreover, it shows the benefits of addressing issues within regional human rights systems above the global human rights system.

## Monitoring and advocating mechanisms and the civil society

The Commission has the mandate to take precautionary actions to prevent human rights violations by pursuing fact finding missions when needed, analysing state reports and carrying out constructive dialogues with member states. In doing so, the Commission is able to observe widespread human rights abuses on the African continent. It may also address issues through name-and-shame methods as well as give recommendations concerning what actions have to be undertaken in order to achieve a higher level of human rights protection in different African states. However, the African region is relatively big and monitoring measures require great resources and time. Therefore, besides the African human rights monitoring and promoting mechanisms, the system entitles NGOs and CSOs, granted observatory status, to monitor states' compliance, submit activity

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<sup>20</sup> See The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol)



reports every two years and hand in shadow reports in response to official states reports - playing the role of regional watchdog. They are also allowed to take on individual cases on behalf of victims of human rights violations and advocate for human rights through strategic litigation within the African human rights system.

Civil society (including the media) is of a great importance when it comes to raising awareness of human rights abuses that take place in African states. Especially since they use different methods to protect human rights, highlighting issues from a grassroots perspective and helping victims claim justice and redress after violations. Furthermore contributing to make significant changes in African states' laws, policies and practice by advocacy and information campaigns.

### **Mobilise for change**

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' rights holds biannual public sessions. In connection with these, a Forum on the participation of NGOs in the sessions of the African Commission, also called the NGO Forum takes place. The Forum is a platform for discussion for NGOs who, while preparing for the session of the Commission, have the possibility to share information, meet the Commissioners, and adopt resolutions on questions that later on will be examined by the Commission. These resolutions are then submitted to the African Commission, who can use them as inspiration for the adoption of its own resolutions.

The NGO Forum is an excellent opportunity for NGOs to share their advocacy work, and speak in one voice with the aim of influencing the work of the Commission. The Forum is coordinated by the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies<sup>21</sup>. Many regular trainings, seminars, side events and special interest groups have been established

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<sup>21</sup> See The African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies: [www.acdhrs.org](http://www.acdhrs.org)

around the Forum. Based on the SFHR's experiences of participating in the NGOs Forum it can be contented that collective responsibility is a key to achieve proper and sustainable human rights protection in Africa. When hundreds of human rights organisations get together to highlight every day human rights challenges and to discuss common solutions in a transnational context, has proven to led to good outcomes. In the context of the current shrinking civic space in Africa and globally, such inclusive gatherings of actors from different sectors and countries are also a statement of the importance of standing up for international law standards. It is vital for the future of human rights and democracy.

Mobilising for change via cross-border cooperation, with a view to change attitudes of African governments, is a way to mitigate other crucial issues such as ongoing conflicts, bad governance and corruption, impunity and lack of an independent judiciary. Thus, the regional human rights system also contributes to overall peace and security on the continent.

### **Concluding analysis**

There is a gap between theoretical human rights and human rights in practice, which can be interpreted as African states showing political unwillingness. Yet it is more complex than to separate states into "willing" and "unwilling" to adhere to human rights obligations. States' lack of resources, technical facilities, trained expert staff and so forth can also have an impact on states' abilities to realise human rights implementations. States can desire to achieve an appropriate level of human rights protection but do not have the means to do so or have to do it gradually. For example, even though some of the member states' annual reports to the human rights mechanisms are sometimes late, they are in fact handed in eventually and constructive dialogues can carry on. Moreover, this is not extraordinarily for African states. This kind of "gapping issue" is a well-known and a common human rights critique shown within other regional and global human rights systems and their member states as well.

It should also be stressed that political will initially exists. Otherwise none of the human rights documents would have been signed or ratified by African states at all, the human rights mechanisms had not come into force and conferences like the NGO Forum had not been visited by hundreds of actors from civil society, global organisations and officials. From our experiences participating in the NGO Forum, we have over the years seen an increasing number of national and international actors attending, which represents a positive development regarding prioritising the human rights mechanisms. Hopefully this trend will increase the awareness and interest of the African human rights system in general.

## Chapter 3. The Inter-American human rights system

### Introduction

The Inter-American human rights system is responsible for monitoring and ensuring implementation of human rights guarantees in the 35 independent countries of the Americas that are members of the Organization of American States (OAS). OAS was established in 1948 with the purpose of promote solidarity and strengthen collaboration between the American states, including protecting their sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence. The central organs that make up the Inter-American System for the Protection of Human Rights are the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (from now on the Commission) and the Inter-American Court for Human Rights (from now on the Court).<sup>22</sup>

### Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

The Commission is an independent, principal organ of the OAS and was established in 1959. It consists of 7 members, elected from the member states and has its headquarters in Washington DC, USA. Its mission is to promote and protect human rights in the American hemisphere and giving advice on action that member states ought to take to strengthen human rights protection nationally. The Commission also examines individual complaints and processes those appropriate to be sent to the Inter-American Court of human rights.<sup>23</sup>

Individuals cannot submit complaints to the Court, only to the Commission. If the state in question does not comply with its decision, the Commission can submit the case to the Court. The Commission is therefore

<sup>22</sup> The Organization of American States: [http://www.oas.org/en/about/who\\_we\\_are.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/about/who_we_are.asp) [27/4 2017]

<sup>23</sup> The Organization of American States, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights: [http://www.oas.org/en/about/commission\\_human\\_rights.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/about/commission_human_rights.asp) [27/4 2017]

the body first dealing with the individual complaints and examining the requests. That is generally also the case with regard to protective measures.<sup>24</sup>

## The Inter-American Court of Human Rights

The Court was established in 1979 in San José, Costa Rica. The Court is an autonomous judicial institution whose purpose is the application and interpretation of the American Convention on Human Rights (see below).<sup>25</sup> It consists of 7 members. The Court's two main functions are *adjudicatory* and *advisory* which means that it hears and rules on the specific cases of human rights violations referred to it, as well as issues opinions on matters of legal interpretation brought to its attention by other OAS bodies or member states.<sup>26</sup>

The decisions the Court takes are binding on those states that have ratified the American Convention on Human Rights. Within its mandate it can order judicial redress such as policy and legal changes as well as psychological reparation such as symbolic redress.<sup>27</sup>

## The American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man and the American Convention on Human Rights – two fundamental legal documents

The American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man was adopted in 1948 as one of the first international human rights instruments of a general nature. It includes civil and political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights to be enjoyed by all citizens of OAS member states. It has developed from soft law to customary law. It is therefore considered a binding legal document.<sup>28</sup>

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24 Ibid.

25 The Inter-American Court of on Human Rights: <http://www.corteidh.or.cr/index.php/en/about-us/historia-de-la-corteidh> [2/5 2017]

26 The Inter-American Court on Human Rights: <http://www.corteidh.or.cr/index.php/en/about-us/estatuto> [2/5 2017]

27 Ibid.

28 Shaver, Lea, 2010. The Inter-American Human Rights System: An Effective Institution for Regional Human

In 1969 the American Convention on Human Rights was adopted in order to further strengthen the status of human rights and for individuals within the Inter-American human rights system. It has a legal character and is binding on those states that have ratified it.<sup>29</sup> The additional “Protocol of San Salvador” to the American Convention includes notions of economic, social and cultural rights.<sup>30</sup>

## Special characteristics of the Inter-American system

Protective measures are granted in serious and urgent situations to prevent irreparable harm to persons; they can be issued by the Commission, as well as ordered by the Court. The Commission may indicate protective measures on its own initiative or at the request of individuals, even if there is no pending petition or case before the Commission. The Court can also order protective measures at the request of the victim, if the case was already submitted to the Court by the Commission.<sup>31</sup>

A further special characteristics of the Inter-American Human Rights system is the value it places on symbolic aspects in its decisions or rulings. This may entail that a state is obliged to name a school after one of the human rights victims, or to erect a memorial in a village where a massacre took place. This derives from the UN Remedy/Reparation Principle 22, where satisfaction is one of five means of reparations and consists of a series of measures to commemorate and/or apologise to the victims, cease violations, and determine the truth. The European Court of Human Rights, UN Committee against Torture (CAT), and the African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights have ordered satisfaction but less often than the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and normally limited it to the obligation to investigate.<sup>32</sup>

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Rights Protection?. Washington University Global Studies Law Review

29 American Convention on Human Rights 1969

30 Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights “Protocol of San Salvador” 1988

31 Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada, 2012. Protective Measures in the Inter-American Human Rights System: <http://www.lrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Protective-measures-Inter-American-System.pdf>

32 American Society of International Law: <https://www.asil.org/insights/volume/20/issue/15/situation-reparations-inter-american-human-rights-system-analysis-and> [2/5 2017]

## Chapter 3.1 Contextualising the system – challenges and strengths

### Challenges

#### *Financial constraints*

One of the current challenges the Inter-American human rights system faces is related to financial issues. The lack of financial sustainability jeopardises its autonomy and its effectiveness in protecting human rights. The lack of financial resources also impacts on the backlog of cases, which is extremely high.

It is commonly agreed and understood that it is the member states themselves that should finance the human rights system since the issues concern their own citizens. However, as mentioned below, governments may lack the political will to promote and protect human rights. One example of this is the budget. Of the whole OAS budget covered by member states, only 14%<sup>33</sup> are allocated for the human rights pillars (the Commission and the Court). The Commission's budget, for example, is only about one tenth of that of its European counterpart.<sup>34</sup>

In 2016, the Commission announced that by the end of the year they would have to shut down 40% of their operations and fire 40% of their staff due to lack of resources. This meant that thousands of victims and beneficiaries of protective measures from the Commission would have been left unprotected. Fortunately, both the Commission, some member states and others such as civil society and international actors reacted by raising awareness among states on the important role the Commission plays and contributing to the securing of funding to avoid the drastic scenario that was announced. Financial and political support from non-state donors was key for the Commission to overcome a situation of acute eco-

conomic crisis in 2016. It seems clear that the Inter-American human rights system suffers from a structural and systematic lack of funds that must be addressed and resolved. There is a deep discrepancy between the mandate the member states of the OAS have given the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the financial resources they allocate to it.

There are also a number of human rights issues that may be sensitive to member states for financial and cultural reasons, such as extractive industries, access to information, failure to ensure participation from ethnic or rural communities on issues that concern them specifically, the protection of human rights defenders or LGBT-persons' rights (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender). These issues make nonmember state funding important. Another important reason for international actors to support the system financially relates to the fact that human rights jurisprudence of global importance has originated from the Inter-American human rights system<sup>35</sup>. Thus not only the citizens of the Americas benefit from this development.

### Structural challenges

#### *Universality of the Inter-American Instruments*

The basic treaties of the Inter-American human rights system have yet to be accepted by all OAS member states. To ensure the effective observance of human rights in the Americas, it is necessary for all member states to ratify all the Inter-American instruments.

The region currently has one Inter-American system with four levels of adherence: a universal and very basic one for all the 35 Member States whose inhabitants enjoy the protection of human rights recognised in the American Declaration and the OAS Charter under the supervision of the Inter-American Commission; a second system for the 23 member States that are parties to the American Convention; a third system for

<sup>33</sup> AG/RES. 1 (LII-E/17) PROGRAM-BUDGET OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR 2018 / (Approved at the plenary session held on November 10, 2017, and to be reviewed by the Style Committee)

<sup>34</sup> The European Court of Human Rights: [http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Budget\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Budget_ENG.pdf) [19/12 2017]

<sup>35</sup> One such example is the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, the first international convention in this area.

the 20 States that have ratified the Convention and accepted the Court's jurisdiction; and a fourth in which 7 Member States have ratified all the inter-American human rights treaties.<sup>36</sup> In conversation with us on this structure, the Commission concludes that this four-tiered system places millions of people at a disadvantage in terms of the degree of international protection of their rights.

In this context, it is also necessary to find and consolidate strategies to bring the Inter-American system closer to the countries of the Caribbean.

### **Victims' access to the Inter-American system**

The cases before the regional system serve to point out challenges and inadequacies at the national level and make their solution a priority. The Inter-American system must be a subsidiary source of redress and protection for victims. It is necessary to ensure that procedures are accessible, agile, and efficient.

The Inter-American Commission receives more than 2 000 petitions every year.<sup>37</sup> As a consequence of the lack of resources, the Commission has not had the capacity to respond quickly or in a timely manner to the total demand of individual petitions before the Inter-American system. The challenge for the Commission in the next stage of this process, in order for the Commission to provide a timelier response to the victims and to the states, is the implementation of a new initiative to address the current backlog at the admissibility stage. Also, the timely resolution of the admissibility issue can be an important factor in encouraging the parties to consider the friendly settlement procedure.

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<sup>36</sup> All numbers as of 2017

<sup>37</sup> Speech by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights Chair October 2016: <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/activities/speeches/19.10.16.asp> [19/12 2017]

The backlog at the admissibility stage was exacerbated even further in 2017 by the increase in petitions opened to processing (approximately 19 percent) as a result of the procedural backlog program. The Commission needs to address the backlog in this stage of the proceedings, including reviewing protocols and standardising case management, establishing strategies to reduce the time it takes to evaluate petitions at the admissibility stage, providing more attorney specialists, and assigning paralegals to provide operational support to the lawyers. During the period 2011-2015, an effort was made to reduce procedural delays of cases under initial review, and this program managed to reduce the backlog that existed in the initial review stage by 65 percent.<sup>38</sup> The Commission has advanced in those measures but still need resources to manage the program.

### **Compliance with the Inter-American system's recommendations and decisions**

Another challenge has to do with the full and effective compliance by the OAS member states with the recommendations and decisions of the Court and the Commission, and the recommendations from thematic and state reports. The member states must act as true guarantors of the system and must adopt the legislative measures necessary to establish a juridical mechanism that ensures enforcement at the domestic level of the decisions adopted by the Commission and the Court. While significant progress has been made with regard to implementation of the Commission's recommendations and compliance with the Court's judgments, it has still not been possible to reach an optimal level of compliance with the system's decisions.

In the case of the Inter-American human rights system since most of its decisions hold non-repetition measures, compliance also becomes key to change and implement public policies aimed at promoting positive

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<sup>38</sup> Speech by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights Chair June 2016: <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/activities/speeches/15.06.16.asp> [19/12 2017]

change and human development. Most decisions are partially complied with. States usually comply with economic reparations, public acts of acknowledgement of international responsibility and, in some cases, changes in public policies. Compliance of their decisions is key to effectively guarantee the full enjoyment of rights.

### Lack of data

The lack of systematised and comprehensive data on many areas of the Inter-American human rights system's activities continues to prevent rigorous analysis of the system. Examples of this may be results of protective measures and friendly settlements. This shortcoming makes it challenging for the Inter-American system to accurately identify and rectify problematic areas of its activities. It also undermines research efforts to assist and analyse such efforts.<sup>39</sup>

### Strengths

#### *Contextualising human rights*

There seems to be consensus amongst human rights actors that the Inter-American human rights system has many advantages compared to the global (UN) system. The human rights organisations in the Americas more frequently access the Inter-American system and mention the following reasons:

- Proximity geographically and language-wise facilitate interaction.
- The quasi-judicial role of the Inter-American Commission allows it to position itself regarding matters of concern.
- The importance of protective measures that the Commission and Court can order in order to prevent increasing human rights violations.

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<sup>39</sup> The Inter-American Human Rights Network 2016. Reflective Report: Strengthening the Impact of the Inter-American Human Rights System Through Scholarly Research: [http://www.academia.edu/24390242/Strengthening\\_the\\_Impact\\_of\\_the\\_Inter-American\\_Human\\_Rights\\_System\\_through\\_Scholarly\\_Research](http://www.academia.edu/24390242/Strengthening_the_Impact_of_the_Inter-American_Human_Rights_System_through_Scholarly_Research).

### System of protection: preventing irreparable harm

Both the Commission and the Court may issue emergency protective measures when an individual or the subject of a complaint is in immediate risk of irreparable harm. In the last 35 years, precautionary measures have been invoked to protect thousands of persons or groups of persons at risk by virtue of their work or affiliation. They include human rights defenders, journalists, trade unionists, vulnerable groups such as women, children, Afro-descendant communities, indigenous peoples, displaced persons, LGBT-communities and persons deprived of their liberty. They have also been used to protect witnesses, officers of the court, persons about to be deported to a state where they might be subjected to torture or other forms of cruel and inhuman treatment, persons sentenced to the death penalty, and others.<sup>40</sup>

Protective measures serve two functions related to the protection of fundamental rights recognised in the provisions of the Inter-American system. They serve a “precautionary” function in the sense that they preserve a legal situation brought to the System’s attention by way of cases or petitions; they also serve a “protective” function in the sense of preserving the exercise of human rights. In practice, the protective function is exercised in order to avoid irreparable harm to the life and personal integrity of the beneficiary as a subject of the international law of human rights. Precautionary measures have, therefore, been ordered for a wide range of situations unrelated to any case pending with the Inter-American human rights system.

The protective measures of the Inter-American system has been one of the most effective mechanisms for saving lives in the region but member states have on occasion acted to undermine or weaken the mechanism. It is therefore important that the Inter-American system encourages states

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<sup>40</sup> The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights: <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/decisions/about-precautionary.asp> [18/12/1017]

to strengthen their own protection systems from a *preventative* perspective rather than *reactive* one. It is also important to include not just physical protection measures but also assessments of risk factors and take into account the uniqueness of each risk and the subsequent design of protective response.

### **Flexibility and preparedness to adapt to new trends and realities**

The Inter-American system has over the years proven itself to be willing and able to adapt to changing situations and contexts. For example, the Commission has now a special unit on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; a special unit on older persons and another unit for people with disabilities. The Court continues to develop standards for the protection of sexual diversity groups and other groups in situation of vulnerability (such as slaves/forced labor, HIV patients, etc.). A recent example is when the Court made a pronouncement on same sex marriage – something that will greatly impact on the national legislation of 20 member states.<sup>41</sup>

Another example of how the Inter-American system is acting in order to meet changes relates to the rise in violence by non-state actors and the influence of past atrocities on present day politics. Many member states are still trying to advance measures that ensure victims' rights to justice, truth and reparations for crimes committed during authoritarian regimes – Brazil being the only state with an active amnesty law. Criminal procedures in these cases experience progress and setbacks and require close monitoring by the Inter-American system, civil society and others. As a response, the Commission announced on May 24th 2017 the creation of a special unit on Memory, Truth and Justice.

41 Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos: [http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/comunicados/cp\\_01\\_18.pdf](http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/comunicados/cp_01_18.pdf) [18/12 2017]

### **Mobilising for change**

#### *Civil society organisations in the regional human rights systems*

Civil society organisations (or non-governmental organisations) are one of the important motors in the Inter-American human rights system, both in their role as users of the mechanisms and in their advocacy actions to strengthen rule of law nationally as well as monitoring and critiquing the mechanisms and processes in order to improve them.

NGO's engagement with regional mechanisms include a set of interventions, including:

- i) Providing legal services to empower victims and human rights defenders;
- ii) Engaging in litigation aiming at affecting public policies and structural changes that could benefit large numbers of people,
- iii) Elaborating, consolidating and disseminating information regarding regional and international mechanisms' tools as well as country or regional reports,
- iv) Engaging in negotiations with government representatives,
- v) Contributing with standard setting and,
- vi) Working jointly with social movements, the media, local NGOs and the empowered victims on advocacy strategies in order to either dissuade states from violations or to persuade them to move forward with compliance. In this regard, NGOs working with regional mechanisms become a key actor when it comes to the enforcement and compliance of the mechanisms' decisions. Without them, these mechanisms would be toothless. However engaging in the process of litigation before the Inter-American system involves very lengthy proceedings that imply a significant drain on already limited resources for NGOs that pursue litigations.<sup>42</sup>

42 The Inter-American Human Rights Network 2016. Reflective Report: Strengthening the Impact of the Inter-American Human Rights System Through Scholarly Research: [http://www.academia.edu/24390242/Strengthening\\_the\\_Impact\\_of\\_the\\_Inter-American\\_Human\\_Rights\\_System\\_through\\_Scholarly\\_Research](http://www.academia.edu/24390242/Strengthening_the_Impact_of_the_Inter-American_Human_Rights_System_through_Scholarly_Research).

## Academic institutions

In general academic institutions have greatly contributed to spreading and developing case law, procedural rules and processes of the Inter-American system on national levels. They also inspire a broader debate and understanding of human rights to a younger generation through activities such as moot competitions and exchange programmes.

## State level actors

At the state level, tribunals such as Constitutional Courts have strengthened the obligatory status of decisions deriving from the Inter-American system. They have reinforced governmental agencies who bear responsibility to comply with international rulings. Another entity which often plays a significant role is the General Attorney's Office (Fiscalía General de la Nación in Spanish). In particular regarding the non-repetition aspect of human rights the General Attorney plays a significant role as they have an obligation to investigate human rights violations. If done properly, there is no reason to activate the regional or international system.

## Media's role

Media is becoming increasingly important for the promotion of human rights at the local, regional and international level, by aiding in denouncing human rights violations or explaining basic human rights concepts to broader audiences. In countries where democratic institutions are fragile and there is a lack of independence of the judiciary, media might become the last resort for denouncing and raising awareness. In cases where the Court issues a decision, or the Commission issues a report or a recommendation, during the Commission's thematic hearings or during its in situ visits to countries, media frequently plays an important role.

The extent of traditional and social media coverage generated by the Inter-American human rights system activities has a significant influence on

the domestic impact of the system. Media attention helps raise awareness of particular rights issues, and has often increased pressure on authorities to comply with the Inter-American system decisions, or to rectify human rights problems at both the individual and structural level.<sup>43</sup> Many actors mention that one of media's strengths is that they can highlight the victims' situation, their legitimate right to access regional mechanisms.

## Concluding analysis

The Inter-American human rights system has proved to be more effective than the universal human rights system in many situations, due to for example geographical proximity, understanding of local contexts, legal systems, specific patterns of human rights violations, language. In some exceptional situations – such as that in Venezuela after it denounced the American Convention of Human Rights in 2013 – the universal mechanism might however be more effective. There is also an increased effort to act joining efforts between regional and global systems. This is illustrated by the joint press releases of the special rapporteurs on freedom of expression, human rights defenders, women's rights and others.

The Inter-American system has significantly contributed to establishing and consolidating democracies in the region.<sup>44</sup> In the last two decades it has prioritised structural or endemic violations and has become perhaps the most important actor in the protection of the rights of the citizens of the continent. In turn, it has sought reparations for thousands of victims and has influenced the development of public policies in accordance with Inter-American human rights treaties. It has developed standards on states' obligations to comply with both civil and political, economic, social, and cultural rights. The achievements of the Inter-American system have been shown both in times of authoritarian governments and in democracy. In many occasions it has acted as the last resort for justice in the hemisphere, and has also functioned as a tool to intervene in ongoing processes,

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> The Economist 2012. Human Rights in the Americas, Chipping at the Foundations: <http://www.economist.com/node/21556599> [19/12 2017]



allowing dialogue and, at times, timely control of human rights violations. In short, the regional system has changed the course of important historical processes in the Americas in favour of human rights solutions.

The continent is experiencing new challenges. Violence by state and non-state actors is still extremely high - the region includes some of the most violent countries in the world. Violations committed by organised crime groups, illegal and legal development projects – such as mining, trafficking and various human rights violations associated with migration movements are on the rise. The Inter-American system therefore needs to adapt to these new realities in order to continue promoting and protecting human rights in the hemisphere.

Most of our closest partners are either co-litigators of cases or frequent users of the System. Nevertheless, we believe that even when access to the Inter-American human rights system has grown exponentially within the last 20 years, there is still much that could be done in order to close the gap between the Inter-American system and many local human rights organizations, social movements, students, journalists, members of the academia and even members of the judiciary.

## Chapter 4. How can regional human rights systems be supported?

The previous chapters outline the scope and possibilities of the regional human rights systems in Africa and in the Americas without shying away from the challenges that remain. Much can be done to meet these challenges. This chapter will therefore focus on what international state and non-state actors within the development sector can do to support the development of the African and Inter-American regional human rights systems, by way of some examples.

### 1. Awareness and understanding of the systems

This publication is just a starting point. Find out more by using the links included, talk to your partners, attend meetings or take part in discussions related to regional human rights systems.

### 2. Cooperation with key actors within the systems

Identify your relevant counterpart and initiate a dialogue with them to gauge their specific needs. Are they CSOs/human rights organisations; civil servants and other actors within the system such as commissioners, judges, special rapporteurs; a member state, or others? Choose your arena or entry point within the human rights system.

Once identified, how can you support that representative or that function? Some suggestions:

#### CSOs/human rights organisations

- Financial support for their work, including domestic preparations as well as costs related to lodging a complaint and representing victims throughout the litigation process – which can be long and drawn out. Support for human rights advocacy related to the case.

- Protection through awareness raising. Human rights defenders and those they represent are often under threat and exposed to different levels of harassment or pressure. Support them by attending key activities as an observer, undertake information campaigns to visibilise them and support their legitimate human rights work as they are often labelled as traitors or opposition acting to destabilise someone in power, promote this in different media outlets – social and others. Enable them to take part in safety trainings. Invite them to different arenas so that they can explain what they are doing and why.
- Support for the preventative human rights work that CSOs undertake nationally through trainings aimed at vulnerable communities/groups, publications and reports.
- Support advocacy work and publications on specific areas of human rights that are commonly violated, or areas that are extra sensitive.
- Strengthen the access of rural and grass roots organisations to regional mechanisms.
- Support organisations that work to improve the general effectiveness and technical functioning of the systems.
- There are a wide range of tools of the systems available but they need to be made known to broader audiences and larger groups of people, including Academia.

In the Americas actions that could be implemented by local and regional NGOs and supported by the international community include:

- Intelligent databases, such as the Inter-American System Caselaw Analyzer (<https://cejil.uwazi.io/page/dicxg0oagy3xgr7ixef80k9>).
- Innovative communication strategies aiming at reaching new audien-

ces, generating a more visual and interactive content, storytelling, etc. (<http://amazonteam.org/maps/sarayaku-en/>)

- Capacity building with interactive platforms.

In Africa similarly, visit the African Human Rights Case Law Analyzer (<http://caselaw.ibrda.org/>). Try to find cases within your specific thematic area and be inspired.

- Strengthening networks and coalitions working within regional mechanisms and on specific issues or to make them more accessible. The NGO Forum before the African Commission is one such example.

### Civil servants/other actors or functions within the system

- These actors carry out the work according to the particular system's strategic and work plans. Which thematic area of their work is best supported? Which are the needs and focus areas that have been identified in the strategic plans? External funding for secretariats, particular field visits, reports, thematic units, and specific sessions is often needed, in particular for those areas of less interest of individual member states for whom the issue may be sensitive.

One example of this is the EUs financing of consultants in the Commission and the Court in the African human rights system or when the organisation Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit in 2016 provided support for 3 human rights experts to help the African Commission to clear case backloads. A further example is the Swedish international Development Agency (Sida) which funds a fellowship with the Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission.

- Collaboration with other regional systems or the UN system is im-

portant but costly and time consuming and needs financial and political support.

## Member states

- Human rights protection and promotion need to be strengthened at the national level as the regional systems act as a last resort when all other remedies have been exhausted.
- Support increased human rights awareness and practice amongst duty bearers and the judiciary, especially on issues relating to individuals or groups perceived as marginalized and at greater risk.
- Maintain dialogues with representatives of the member state on the rights of victims' access to justice, the need for protection of those representing them so that they can pursue their legitimate work.
- Once a decision or ruling has been made on the regional level regarding a case of human rights violations, encourage the member state to respect the decision and undertake appropriate actions for implementation. The member states must commit themselves to financially support the regional mechanism and take responsibility for the human rights instruments they have inaugurated. Monitor the implementation process and pursue a dialogue should the process encounter obstacles.
- Encourage and support member states to adhere to regionally decided undertakings, ratify regional conventions, and push for implementation. What is needed on the national level to make this happen and what can you do to facilitate this?
- Enable trainings to relevant stakeholders so that they are better equipped to prevent human rights violations.
- Provide training workshops and seminars with key senior government

officials as well as the judiciary to raise awareness of the existing human rights instruments and mechanisms at sub regional (in Africa), regional and international levels. This shows the importance of how respect for human rights leads to sustainable and just development.

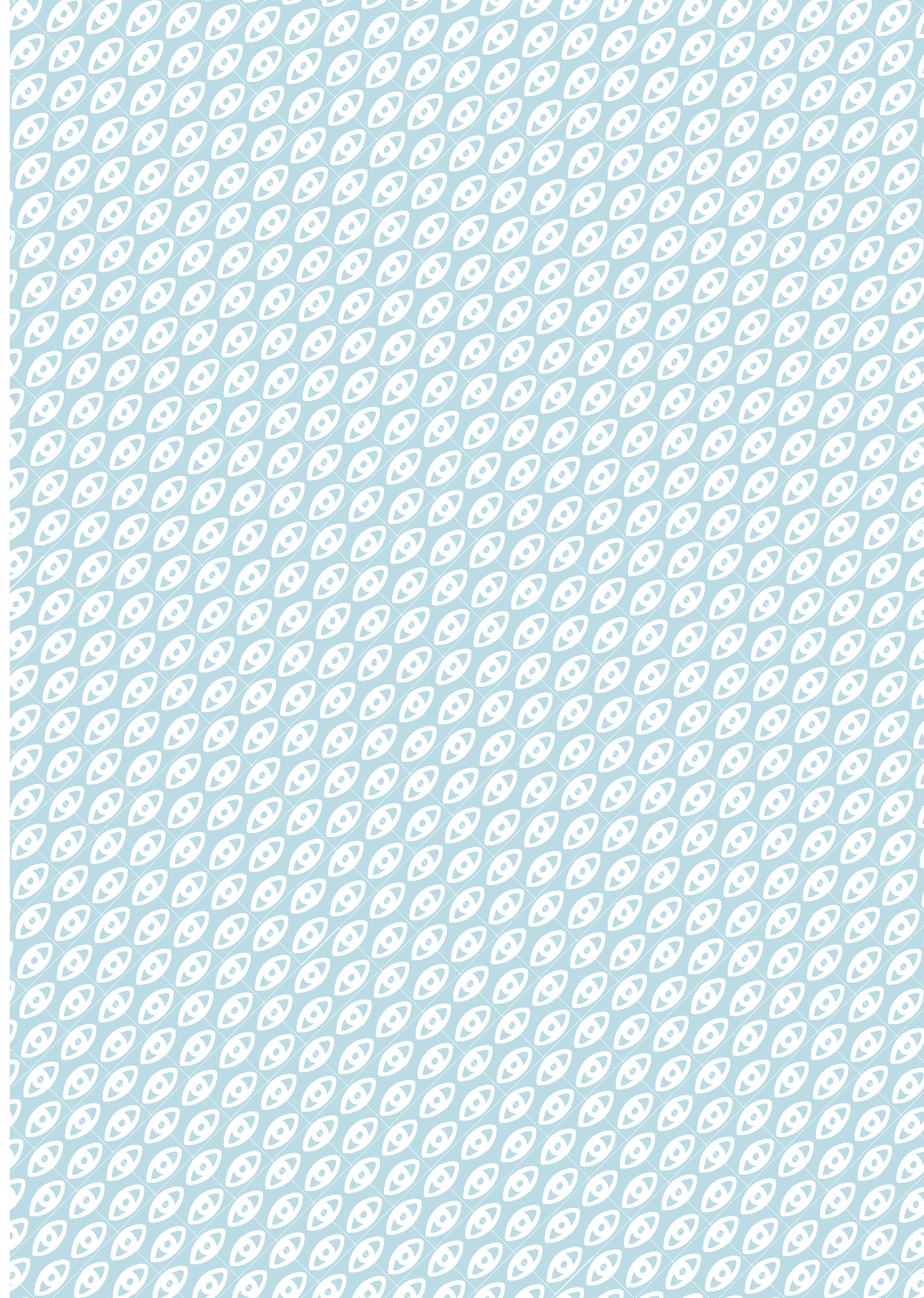
## 3. Analyse your choice of actions

- Ask yourself what you can do as a state or non-state actor to really facilitate human rights protection and promotion.
- What policies, frameworks and strategies do you adopt as government minister, ambassador, civil servant, international cooperation organisation, faith based organisation?
- Will your decision lead to the most efficient means to achieve increased respect for human rights for the intended recipient? Is the most efficient means to direct your action to the local, national, regional or global level?
- Will your action have short or long term consequences?
- What consequences will your decision have for the structural and trans border human rights challenges that face people today?
- Have you analysed your action from a human rights based approach<sup>45</sup>? In short, is it based on these principles:
  - Non-discrimination
  - Participation
  - Transparency
  - Accountability

45 The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency: <https://www.sida.se/English/partners/resources-for-all-partners/methodological-materials/human-rights-based-approach-at-sida/> [20/12 2017]

**And finally...**

We hope this publications has inspired you to learn more about regional human rights systems. Feel free to contact us with any comments or questions at: [info@humanrights.se](mailto:info@humanrights.se)



**The Swedish Foundation for Human Rights** (SFHR) has been working together with partner organisations in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean since the beginning of the 1990s. Over the years we have become increasingly aware of the importance of regional human rights systems for the protection and promotion of human rights - as our partners have opted to increasingly use these systems to get redress for human rights violations which they could not get redress for nationally.

Regional human rights systems offer the advantage such that they cater for human rights specifics. The systems are designed to bring justice and accountability closer to the countries where human rights violations occur. In 2017 we initiated a campaign to raise awareness of what regional human rights systems in Africa and the Americas have to offer the citizens of these regions. As part of that campaign we have put together this booklet with the aim to highlight some challenges and strengths within the African respective the Inter-American human rights systems and put forward some recommendations on how we in the international community can support their partners that are a part of the systems. We hope this will be useful for both state and non-state actors.

SFHR is a non-profit foundation founded in 1991, with the objective to promote human rights through human rights education, advocacy and international development cooperation.



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