



ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Advancing Civil and Political Rights
in Challenging Times

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MESSAGE

from the **President**
and the **Director**



Reflecting on the past twelve months, it's clear that 2023 posed **significant challenges** for the promotion and protection of the rights enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). From the Sahel to Central America, and in various Asian nations, we observed a consistent rise in various **alarming trends**, such as governments reducing civic space, harassing journalists and activists, and trampling on fundamental freedoms.

This rejection of human rights and democratic values extended to interactions with the UN Human Rights Committee (the Committee) and other Treaty Bodies. Throughout the year, we witnessed **a troubling rate of state disengagement** and a lack of cooperation during the reporting process. Several states, including Sri Lanka, Somalia, and Haiti failed to attend scheduled reviews by the Committee, often cancelling last-minute. We are also increasingly concerned by the increase in **hostility toward the Committee's mandate**. In a notable act of defiance, Burundi withdrew from the Committee's review because Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) were present in the session. Similarly, dialogue during the review of Venezuela was frustrated and tense, marked by a lack of substantive responses, repeated political rhetoric, and criticism directed at Committee members. This was further exacerbated by the participation of state delegates subject to EU sanctions, including Zohreh Elahian from Iran and Tarek William Saab from Venezuela.

These trends have had **a significant impact on human rights defenders**, pushing many to operate in secrecy or exile. For us at the Centre, it is now more crucial than ever to ensure the safety of civil society organizations (CSOs) while supporting them to counter dangerous narratives and spotlight urgent issues. To achieve this, we've ramped up the delivery of training on digital security and established safe channels for CSOs to engage with Committee members and other Treaty Bodies. Where necessary, we've also kept CSOs reports confidential and even stepped in to present findings on their behalf where security concerns prevented them from doing so themselves.

As these challenges persist, establishing a **comprehensive strategic plan to guide** our action for the upcoming four years (2024-2027) is crucial. This entails a meticulous assessment of emerging global challenges and their impact on both the work of HRDs and on the Committee's mission. Exploring innovative methods to engage with CSOs, particularly those less visible within the United Nations system and fostering stronger connections between HRDs and UN human rights protection mechanisms is paramount. Deploying cutting-edge technologies, including **artificial intelligence**, will play a crucial role in ensuring that victims' voices are not only heard but are at the centre of the Committee's work. This approach will also enhance the dissemination of findings made by UN human rights mechanisms to a broader range of in-country stakeholders.

None of this will be possible without the **unwavering support of our donors**, enabling us to continue empowering civil society and other key stakeholders in their daily efforts to promote and safeguard civil and political rights worldwide. This support is more crucial now than ever before.

Victor Rodriguez Rescia

President

Patrick Mutzenberg

Director

WHO WE ARE



Our vision

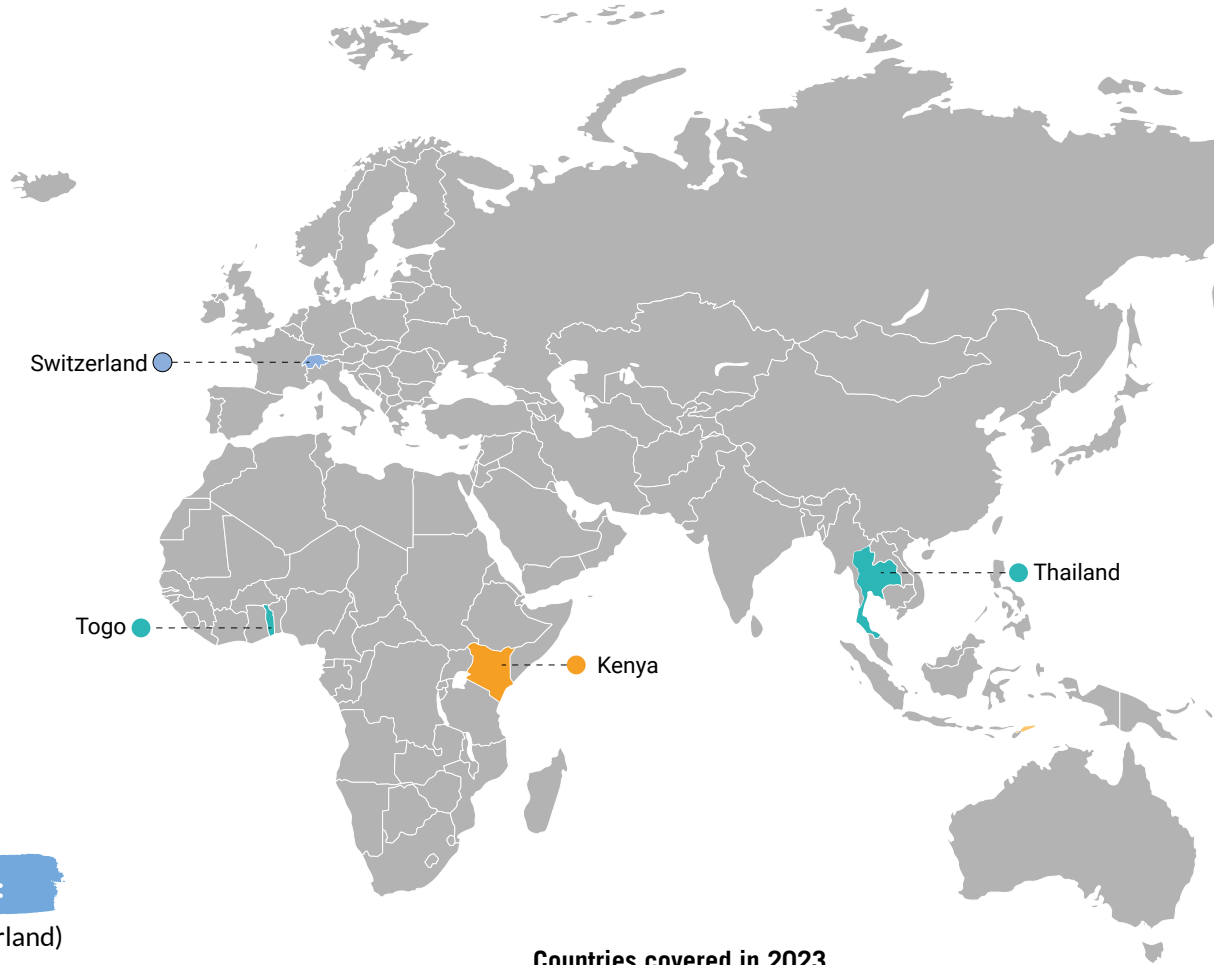
A world where civil and political rights are protected, respected and fulfilled for everyone without discrimination.



Our mission

To contribute to the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) through support to civil society and through connecting key actors engaged to implement the UN Human Rights Committee's recommendations at a national level.

WHERE WE WORK



Headquarters:

Geneva (Switzerland)

Regional Offices:

Africa (Togo)

Asia-Pacific (Thailand)

Latin America (Costa Rica)

National coordinators (2023):

Kenya

Countries covered in 2023



ASIA

Myanmar

Vietnam

Uzbekistan



Costa Rica



AFRICA

Burundi	Madagascar
DR Congo	Senegal
Côte d'Ivoire	Togo
Kenya	Uganda
Lesotho	Zambia



LATIN AMERICA

Bolivia	Honduras
Cuba	Nicaragua
El Salvador	Peru
Guatemala	Venezuela



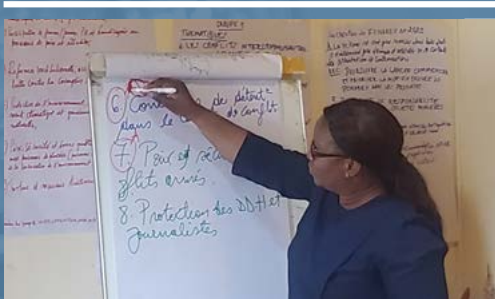
Training and Capacity Building for civil society

More than
200
HRDs

participated in 14 training sessions organised by the Centre in 12 countries of the Global South

- ▶ Burundi
- ▶ DRC (x3)
- ▶ El Salvador
- ▶ Guatemala
- ▶ Honduras
- ▶ Lesotho
- ▶ Namibia
- ▶ Peru
- ▶ Somalia
- ▶ Uganda
- ▶ Venezuela
- ▶ Zambia

Support to Civil Society Organisation (CSOs) Advocacy



15
CSOs
reports

on Civil and Political Rights to the UN (Human Rights Committee/ Other Treaty Bodies or the Universal Periodic Review (UPR))

Engagement with the Human Rights Committee



334
HRDs

participated either in person or online in 24 CSOs briefings

Engagement with National Authorities



7
Follow-up
missions

(inc. training sessions conducted with state party authorities) with members of the Committee or Experts

Raising awareness on ICCPR provisions

Thematic Studies, Guidelines and online tools

- Worksheets for monitoring the protection of the right to Freedom of Religion (FORB)
- **The UN Human Rights Committee - A Year in Review 2022**
- ICCPR Follow-up Worlds Maps
- Booklets on the role of the Parliamentarians in the implementation of the recommendations of the UN human rights mechanisms, **in Guatemala and El Salvador.**
- **Honduras: Guide for the participation in the ICCPR review**
- **Factsheets on** state party reactions to the human rights situation in Myanmar published on our interactive database
- **Our analysis of the findings of the Human Rights Council 54th Session (HRC54) relating to the human rights situation in Myanmar**



What are countries saying about at the UN Human Rights Council MYANMAR ?

ABOUT THE CCPR PROJECT

The human rights situation in Myanmar has been worsening since the military coup in February 2021. The Regime junta has been committing the grave violations of human rights, crimes against humanity and war crimes, creating multi-dimensional human rights, humanitarian, political and economic crisis.

Decisive action is required from the international community to save the lives and protect human rights of the people of Myanmar for stateholders to develop and carry out effective advocacy for such actions, it is useful to understand what countries are saying about Myanmar at the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), which are more vocal, and which are not.

For this purpose, the Centre for Civil and Political Rights (CCPR Centre) has been analyzing statements presented by countries during the HRC 20th Special Session in February 2022 and during interactive Dialogues and Panel Discussions focusing on Myanmar at every Regular Session since then. Data collected are put into a database and results of the data analysis are presented in **maps, infographics and papers**, which are available on the CCPR Centre [website](#). To learn more about the methodology used, please also read our [background paper](#).

Results - interactive maps, infographics and papers

Results of the data analysis are visualized through two maps and various infographics. Each map and infographic have different focuses and features, and what they present, how they can be interpreted and used for advocacy are explained in the [infographic](#).

Condemnation and Concerning: The first map shows the degree of condemnation and concern expressed by countries at the HRC towards the actions of the Myanmar military and the situation in the country.

- **CONCERN** - Countries that express condemnation and concern
- **CONCERNING** - Countries that do NOT express condemnation/ concern, expressed to discuss, support or legitimize the actions of the Myanmar military.
- **NON-CCPR** - Other countries (countries that never presented statements).

Two interactive graphics complement the information shown in the first map, one highlighting frequently raised issues by theme and country and another showing 12 most frequently raised overall.

Publication in focus



Interactive database on Myanmar: Stepping up advocacy with UN Member States to keep the country high on the UN agenda

In the wake of the military coup in February 2021, Myanmar has plunged into a devastating cycle of violence, with the military junta perpetrating severe human rights abuses against civilians. Despite widespread international condemnation, the situation continues to worsen and Myanmar's representation at the United Nations remains unresolved, leaving a critical gap in addressing the crisis. To ensure Myanmar remains a priority on the global stage and to monitor developments at different levels closely, the Centre has created an interactive database analysing all statements made by UN Member States on Myanmar since the Council's 29th special session.

This database includes two main maps: one illustrating the degree of condemnation or concern expressed by Member States, and the other depicting their calls for action. It enables the tracking of Member States' engagement with the Myanmar issue over time. Regularly updated, the database and its accompanying findings are shared with Permanent Missions in Geneva and the diplomatic community to inform their advocacy efforts.



"This database can help to increase awareness of Member States interest and engagement on the crisis in Myanmar and thereby help advocates to focus their efforts to advance human rights."

Thomas Andrews,
UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights
situation in Myanmar

Social Media



X IN ENGLISH

6'728

Followers

162k

Impressions



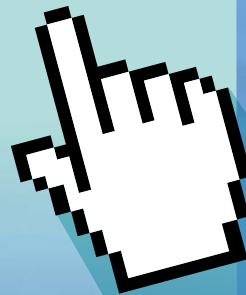
FACEBOOK

5'430

Followers

19'681

People reached



NEWSLETTERS

3'635

Contacts on our database

4

Newsletters

A YEAR IN REVIEW

Jan.

- Zambia: [CSOs consultation](#) ahead of the ICCPR review
- El Salvador: CSOs Coalition Meeting on Litigation
- Bolivia: [Follow-up mission](#) with the Committee member H el ene Tigroudja

Feb.

- Peru: Online CSOs consultations ahead of the ICCPR review
- Launch of [new tools](#) for monitoring the protection of the Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB)
- HRC52: The Centre engaged in advocacy on behalf of various HRDs during the Interactive Dialogue on [Nicaragua](#), [El Salvador](#), [Guatemala](#), [Venezuela](#), and [Myanmar](#)

Mar.

- [137th session of the Committee](#). The Centre facilitated briefings for CSOs from Egypt, Turkmenistan, Zambia, Peru, Sri Lanka, and Panama.
- El Salvador: [Follow-up mission](#) with Ludovic Hennebel, member of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)
- [Myanmar](#): Advocacy at HRC52

Apr.

- Venezuela: CSOs online consultations ahead of the ICCPR review
- Lesotho: [CSOs online consultations](#) ahead of the ICCPR review
- Somalia: [CSOs online consultations](#) ahead of the ICCPR review

May.

- Burundi: [CSOs consultations](#) ahead of the ICCPR review
- DRC: Online [consultation](#) with CSOs and authorities to launch [indicators](#) to monitor civil and political rights
- Burundi: Launch of our [interactive map](#) highlighting human rights violations
- Uganda: [CSOs consultation](#) ahead of the ICCPR review
- Honduras: Submission of a [CSO joint report for the Committee's List of Issues \(LOI\)](#)

Jun.

- Launch of [ICCPR Follow-up World Maps](#)
- El Salvador / Guatemala / Honduras: [CSOs advocacy visit](#) & [side event](#) at HRC53 with SR on Freedom of Assembly
- HRC53: The Centre engaged in advocacy on behalf of various HRDs during the Interactive Dialogue on [Myanmar](#) and [Guatemala](#)
- [138th session of the Committee](#). The Centre facilitated briefings for CSOs from Brazil, Burundi, Colombia, Cyprus, Lesotho, the State of Palestine, and Uganda

Zambia: [Follow-up mission](#) ●
Launch of the 2022 Yearbook on the jurisprudence of the Human Rights Committee - [A Year In Review 2022](#) ●
Nicaragua: CSOs coalition meeting with the Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua (GHREN) ●

July.

Aug.

- El Salvador / Guatemala: [Training for public officials](#) on the follow-up of UN recommendations
- Guatemala: [CSOs training](#) on UN human rights mechanisms
- Vietnam: Advocacy for the review of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)

DRC: Training on the establishment of a National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) with the CNDH, in cooperation with OHCHR and the APT ●
Uganda: [CSOs online training](#) on follow-up ●
Venezuela: Submission of a joint CSOs report for the ICCPR review ●

Sep.

Oct.

- [139th session of the Committee](#). The Centre facilitated briefings for CSOs from Iran, Kuwait, the Republic of Korea, Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela.
- Côte d'Ivoire: [Training for Parliamentarians](#) on UN human rights mechanisms
- Vietnam: Submission of a joint CSOs report for UPR
- El Salvador: CSOs training on UN human rights mechanisms

Honduras: [CSOs consultations](#) ahead of the ICCPR review ●
Honduras: [Training for Public Officials](#) on UN human rights mechanisms ●
DRC: [CSOs consultations](#) in eastern provinces to draft a joint report for UPR ●
HRC54: The Centre engaged in advocacy on behalf of various HRDs during the Interactive Dialogue on [Myanmar](#), [Nicaragua](#), [Cuba](#) and [Burundi](#) ●

Nov.

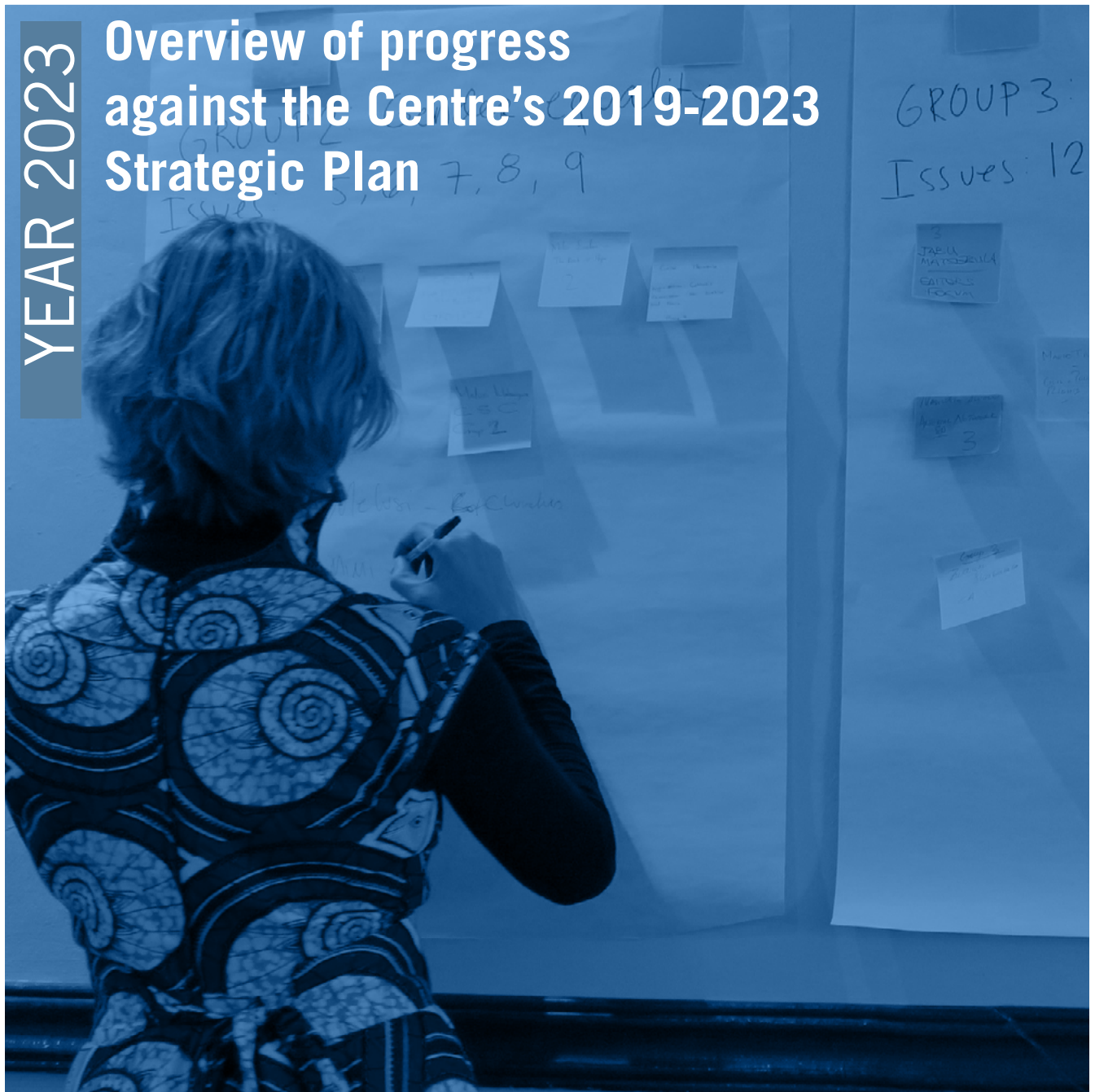
Dec.

- Regional LAC: CSOs meeting and [advocacy](#) with UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD)
- Togo: [Follow-up mission](#)
- Namibia: [CSOs consultations](#) ahead of the ICCPR review



YEAR 2023

Overview of progress against the Centre's 2019-2023 Strategic Plan



Strategic Objective 1

Strengthen and assist the efforts of civil society for the protection of civil and political rights





Examples of key results

- Consultations organized in Zambia were **inclusive**, with eight out of the 10 country provinces represented during CSOs workshops ahead of ICCPR review
- In Burundi, we established an informal platform for CSOs in-country and HRDs in exile ahead of the country's state party review
- We facilitated direct engagement between HRDs and the Committee during a CSOs visit ahead of the adoption of the LOI for Honduras
- We facilitated CSOs from Uganda participating in the Committee's review in person in Geneva
- We provided HRDs from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador a platform to bring their **regional perspective** to UN protection mechanisms during a visit to Geneva
- We enabled CSOs in Central America to develop engagement strategies to leverage all available international human rights protection mechanisms
- The Centre delivered CSOs concerns over the human rights situation in Vietnam through simultaneous engagement with various protection mechanisms
- We provided 20 CSOs from eastern DRC provinces with their first training on UN human rights mechanisms and established a platform for civil society to engage.



Our tactics and what we achieved

1. Increase the capacity of civil society to report effectively to the Human Rights Committee

Over the past decade, the Centre has developed a robust framework for engaging with HRDs. We assist them in advocating for full respect of all civil and political rights at the national level and create capacity for **meaningful engagement** with the international level through various **UN human rights bodies**, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 5 and 17.6.

The key pillars of this framework are **inclusivity, dialogue and capacity-building**. Through a series of national consultations and capacity-building initiatives, we seek to align civil society's concerns and equip HRDs with the knowledge and technical skill sets required to document and report information to the Committee.

In 2023, the Centre organized various **training and consultation sessions**, as well as assisted HRDs in the **drafting of reports** relating to Zambia, Lesotho, Somalia, Burundi, Uganda, Peru, Venezuela and Honduras as part of their state party review process. The modalities of each activity were tailored to the unique context and security settings relevant to the country of intervention. From Zambia to Venezuela, our work equipped HRDs with the tools, resources, and knowledge needed to engage with the Committee effectively and advocate for meaningful change on the ground.

Impact story

ZAMBIA

Reaching grassroots CSOs outside of Lusaka.

The Centre used hybrid workshops to engage CSOs and community-based organizations from different areas of Zambia, connecting with actors from eight out of the 10 national provinces. With the Committee and the UPR both planning to review Zambia in 2023, the Centre focussed its training sessions on ensuring CSOs had the technical skillsets required to establish comprehensive strategies to engage across all UN human rights mechanisms on the promotion and protection of civil and political rights.



2. Facilitate direct interaction between civil society and the Human Rights Committee

At the Centre, we firmly believe in the power of **direct engagement** between civil society and Committee members. It's not just important; it's transformative. Direct engagement ensures that CSOs concerns are heard and taken into account during review, and also allows Committee members to obtain answers to questions that would otherwise remain unanswered.



We facilitate this direct interaction in several ways:

1. **Formal Civil Society Briefings:** We believe the Centre should not just stand by; but stand with. CCPR Centre staff often accompany HRDs during **formal civil society briefings** organized by the Committee, offering support in the preparation of their statements, as well as stepping in to deliver them on their behalf where logistical or security concerns prevent them to do so;
2. **Informal Closed-Door Briefings:** Sometimes, the most impactful conversations happen behind closed doors. That's why we organize **informal briefings** where HRDs can freely express their concerns, and Committee members can obtain further information on specific human rights issues. Our informal briefings are now all held in a hybrid format in order to include CSOs that cannot travel to participate in direct exchanges with the Committee members.

In 2023, the Center organized **24 informal briefings** for civil society, allowing **334 defenders** to interact directly with Committee members, either virtually or in person. But we don't stop there. Through our sponsorship programs, we also facilitate travel for HRDs to engage in person with Committee members. Last year, we **facilitated travel for 17 HRDs to Geneva**, offering them the important opportunity to engage not only with Committee members but also with other UN mechanisms, including other Treaty Bodies, the UPR, and Special Procedures.

Impact story

UGANDA

Engaging with key CSOs and facilitating their access to the UN

In 2023, the Centre worked with the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders in Uganda, an existing coalition of human rights defenders. As CSOs were already familiar with network engagement and aligning on key issues, the Centre worked to provide **technical expertise** and practical skills to navigate the various UN human rights protection mechanisms. We also assisted in the drafting of a CSOs joint report ahead of the Committee's review.

In our work with the Coalition, we emphasized the importance of including HRDs from all provinces within the country and identified consistent themes present in the previous LOI that remained unanswered. In our day-to-day work with CSOs in Uganda, we used the success of this collaboration to inspire others and encourage smaller CSOs to work together to submit **joint reports** to various UN human rights protection mechanisms.

Due to financial and logistical barriers, no HRD from Uganda had originally planned to attend the Committee's review in Geneva. With our support, two HRDs were able to visit Geneva and engage directly with Committee members during formal and informal briefings.





HONDURAS

Side by side with HRDs from the early stages of the ICCPR reporting cycle

In Honduras, we supported various CSOs through the ICCPR reporting cycle in 2023. To ensure key concerns and priorities were included in the Committee's LOI, the Centre coordinated a report with the *Plataforma Internacional contra la Impunidad* highlighting the development of several concerning trends in the country. These included the protection of human rights defenders, the rights of minorities and indigenous communities and the status of the National Institution of Human Rights and the National Protection Mechanisms. To allow CSOs to engage directly with the Committee ahead of the adoption of the LOI, the Centre also facilitated the travel for a HRD from Honduras to Geneva in June 2023.

Later in the year, the Centre's regional coordinator Mariel Merayo visited Honduras to conduct a workshop with CSOs aimed at strengthening the technical capabilities of human rights defenders to participate in the upcoming review by the Committee, scheduled for July 2024. The workshop was attended by 30 HRDs from different regions of the country.

3. Enable more holistic utilization of UN human rights mechanisms by civil society

In our training sessions with CSOs, we consistently promote the utilization of all human rights protection mechanisms. We urge representatives to engage each mechanism strategically and to consider engaging **multiple channels for heightened protection.**

The Centre conducted more than 20 training sessions in Africa, Asia, and Latin America in 2023. These sessions combined both theory and practical exercises, equipping HRDs with the tools to engage effectively with various UN Treaty Bodies, UPR, and Special Procedures. In Latin America, we also stressed the importance of greater interaction and alignment between the Universal Human Rights System and the Inter-American Human Rights system.

Impact story

VIETNAM

Key CSOs' concerns made visible through holistic engagement with different UN human rights mechanisms including CERD and UPR

Vietnam has been subject to **state party reviews by several UN human rights mechanisms** over the past two years. In 2022, the Human Rights Committee evaluated Vietnam's progress toward the implementation of three select recommendations relating to the use of the death penalty, freedom of expression, and protection of human rights defenders. In November 2023, the CERD also scrutinized the state party's progress toward data collection, legal framework for combating racial discrimination and use of the death penalty. Vietnam is also scheduled to undergo its 4th UPR in May 2024.

The Centre employed **various strategies to amplify the voices of HRDs** at these UN mechanisms. In 2022, we assisted a coalition of CSOs to engage in the follow-up procedure of the Committee. In the lead up to the CERD and UPR reviews, we also assisted the same coalition to utilize all available platforms to deliver their voices, by also reinforcing the Human Rights Committee's Concluding Observations. By doing so, particular attention was paid to the security concerns of those on the ground. Issues and concerns raised through our work were largely reflected in the CERD's Concluding Observations.



Case study 1: Burundi: Shrinking civic space and violation of the reporting obligations



Burundi: Bringing together a diverse range of CSOs in a difficult context

Due to increasing **restrictions on civic space** in Burundi, only government-sponsored “civil society organizations” were allowed to participate in the Committee’s review. In order to promote a narrative more reflective of the situation on the ground, the Centre supported the submission of two joint reports by CSOs: one representing a coalition within the country and another representing exiled CSOs. The Centre also identified and convened 28 credible and independent CSOs in coordination with the UN in-country presence and convened a workshop in Bujumbura. The aim was to **encourage coalition-building** and engage with the Committee on critical issues, such as shrinking civic space and restrictions on fundamental freedoms. Additionally, the Centre **facilitated communication between in-country and exiled CSOs** through an ad hoc informal secured platform for discussing priorities and concerns to be raised with the Committee.

A dangerous precedent: Burundi State delegation refuses to participate in the Committee’s review because of the presence of civil society in the room

[Burundi’s 3rd Periodic Report](#) on implementing the ICCPR was scheduled for examination by the Committee in Geneva on July 3 and 4, 2023. Unfortunately, moments before the public dialogue between the Committee’s experts and the State delegation was set to commence, Burundi shared a list of names with the Committee and noted that it was “out of the question for the delegation to present its report in the presence of certain people who claim to be from civil society working outside the country and who in reality are criminals who have been convicted by the Burundian justice system”. Among them was Armel Niyongere, an activist who was one of 12 human rights defenders

and journalists convicted in absentia for involvement in a coup attempt in May 2015. Their trial was deemed a sham, lacking legal representation and due process.

The Committee followed its rules of procedure and informed the delegation that accredited individuals couldn't be excluded from a public meeting, and gave them time to reconsider. The **delegation chose to withdraw** and declined to provide written answers to the Committee's questions within 48 hours. Consequently, under Rule 68, the Committee examined the report without the delegation.

The Committee had followed Rule 68 in the state party reviews of Russia and Nicaragua, whose reports were examined in the absence of the delegation. However, the case of Burundi is an **unprecedented incident**: never before had a State refused to enter into dialogue with the Committee on the pretext that human rights defenders were present. Since the crisis began, Burundi has increasingly avoided engaging with UN human rights mechanisms, including refusing to attend a special session by the UN Committee Against Torture in 2016, closing the UN human rights office in the country and refusing to cooperate with the UN Special Rapporteur on Burundi.

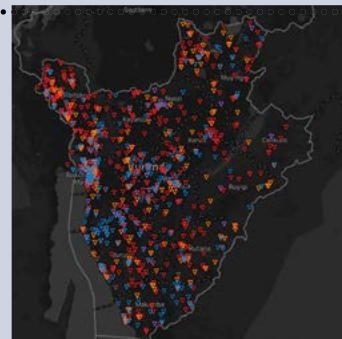


"There's a trend and it's becoming a real problem. Before, states were convinced this was important, but there's been a recent degradation in cooperation with the UN Treaty Bodies."

Patrick Mutzenberg,
Director of the Centre for Civil and Political Rights

Burundi: Supporting HRDs in mapping human rights violations across the country

Monitoring human rights violations has become increasingly difficult for HRDs in Burundi. To support this crucial process, the Centre has been assisting **SOS Torture**, a Burundian civil society organization in exile, and its network of monitors within the country. The Centre has trained these monitors to **report human rights violations** securely, and in 2023, we launched an innovative project: an [interactive online map](#) highlighting the types and location of different reports in order to allow for the identification of trends over time. The next phase of the project involves integrating data from other civil society organizations in Burundi—ACAT Burundi, APRODH, and Ligue Iteka—and presenting key trends through interactive graphics and factsheets.



Case Study 2: Working with CSOs in Central America to develop strategies to maximise the potential of international human rights protection mechanisms



In 2023, the Centre sought to promote the use of all available human rights mechanisms in training sessions with HRDs in Central America. Throughout these sessions, we encouraged civil society representatives to consider how to engage with mechanisms relevant to their particular concern through multiple channels. This could include working strategically to obtain greater alignment between the Universal Human Rights System and the Inter-American Human Rights system, where we reiterated how these systems can mutually reinforce each other, and highlight the importance of aligning recommendations across both systems.

In 2023, the Centre conducted comprehensive training sessions for HRDs in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua (the latter held in Costa Rica for security reasons). These sessions included practical exercises, allowing participants to gain hands-on experience in filing submissions to UN Special Procedures and sending individual communications to the Committee.

Upon noticing a lack of upcoming reviews for Central American countries on the Committee's calendar, the Centre decided to ramp up its engagement with the UN Human Rights Council. We aimed to continue the promotion of civil and political rights in these countries without waiting for the next Committee's reporting cycle and also the strengthen the work of the Committee by conducting follow-up work to its Concluding Observations through other channels.

For instance, the Centre collaborated with the *Plataforma Internacional contra la Impunidad* to organize a joint advocacy trip for three HRDs from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador to Geneva in June 2023. Our objective was to ensure that the human rights situation in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador was considered at the 53rd session of the Human Rights Council (HRC53), and to establish a dialogue between the CSOs stakeholders and their respective permanent bodies and missions of the United Nations in Geneva. We found this to be a unique opportunity to build bridges between HRDs from three Central American countries, which face similar challenges. The Centre also co-organized a side event at HRC53 with Clément Voule, the Rapporteur on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association, to further explore the situation of freedom of association from a regional point of view.

During their visit, the HRDs also met with various UN Special Procedures, including Margaret Satterthwaite, the Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, and Ian Fry, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change. A notable outcome of the visit was the issuance of a special communication by Margaret Satterthwaite, highlighting the concerning levels of criminal persecution against judges and prosecutors in Guatemala.

Strategic Objective 2

Increase ratification and enhance implementation of the ICCPR





Examples of key results

- More than 200 HRDs around the world provided with training on existing human rights protection mechanisms and procedures for engaging with them
- National authorities trained on their key role in the implementation of UN mechanisms' recommendations in 12 countries
- Seven in-country missions with experts to follow-up on the implementation of key recommendations from UN mechanisms

Our tactics and what we achieved

1. Contribute to the ratification of the ICCPR and its two Optional Protocols

As of 31 December 2023, **174 State parties have ratified the Covenant** and are bound to protect and respect the rights enshrined within. However, **18 UN Member States remain on the sidelines** and have taken no action towards ratification. While it is a State-driven process, the Centre continues to advocate for the ratification of the Covenant and assists national efforts to ratify (or accede to) the ICCPR where possible. Throughout 2023, we maintained a dialogue with Myanmar's National Unity Government (NUG), where we encouraged them to strengthen their commitment to ratify the ICCPR. We also raised our voice at the UN Human Rights Council, urging Cuba to swiftly ratify the treaty.

Impact story

CUBA

Promoting ICCPR Ratification through the UPR

Cuba signed the ICCPR in 2008 but has not yet ratified it. That makes Cuba the only State of the American continent that has not ratified the Covenant, along with Saint Kitts and Nevis and Saint Lucia. While 32 states recommended that Cuba ratify the Covenant during the last UPR cycle, Cuba unfortunately noted these recommendations without supporting them. In April 2023, ahead of Cuba's upcoming UPR review, the Centre supported the submission of a [joint CSOs report](#) by a coalition of 26 international and Cuban CSOs which emphasized the need for Cuba to ratify the ICCPR.



Further advocacy was undertaken during the UPR pre-sessions in August 2023 in Geneva. The Centre produced [factsheets](#), available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#), to assist readers in advocating for Cuba's ratification of the ICCPR and its Optional Protocols. These factsheets were widely disseminated to State delegates during the UPR pre-sessions and at a meeting organized by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). During the UPR review, the Centre **facilitated the attendance of two Cuban HRDs** in collaboration with the International Institute on Race, Equality and Human Rights. Additionally, together with other Cuban and international organizations, we issued a [public statement](#) highlighting the systematic nature of human rights violations in Cuba. We also made a series of concrete recommendations to Cuba, including ratifying the ICCPR and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

2. Create a space for national dialogue

For countries that have recently been reviewed by the Committee, we focussed our efforts on **ensuring the effective implementation of recommendations** made. We believe that engaging in constructive dialogue with State authorities, raising awareness with key domestic stakeholders and building a shared understanding are essential steps for achieving this goal, in alignment with SDG 16, and Targets 17.16 and 17.17.

In 2023, we organized **seven high-level country visits with Committee members** in Bolivia, DRC (x2), El Salvador, Honduras, Togo and Zambia. These visits were designed to engage a wide range of stakeholders, including CSOs, national authorities, parliamentarians, government officials, and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs). Our objective was to build consensus and facilitate the effective implementation of key recommendations at the domestic level.



Impact story

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Engaging parliamentarians to drive domestic implementation of UN recommendations

In Côte d'Ivoire, the Centre collaborated with the National Commission for Human Rights (CNDH-CI) and UPR Info to host an orientation session for parliamentarians. Our intention was to engage parliamentarians on their crucial role in implementing recommendations from UN human rights protection mechanisms. Actionable steps that parliamentarians took away from the session included:

1. How to translate recommendations into national law;
2. How to ensure that state budgeting includes adequate resourcing to implement recommendations; and
3. The importance of monitoring government actions related to implementation.

The session provided a unique opportunity for parliamentarians to ask questions, engage in constructive dialogue and exchange ideas on how to strengthen their commitment to human rights.

3. Increase the visibility of the Committee's recommendations at both the international and domestic level

Increasing awareness of the Committee's Concluding Observations (COBs) is a crucial first step towards their effective implementation at the domestic level. However, often these recommendations are inaccessible to the wider public, written primarily in legal jargon and available only on the OHCHR website. The Centre works to address this, by assisting civil society in our countries of intervention by simplifying the Committee's recommendations, and making them accessible for national authorities and the general public.

We frequently collaborate with local artists to visually **illustrate** key recommendations and translate them into local languages for **broader dissemination**. We also publish booklets and guides compiling recommendations from different Treaty Bodies and UN mechanisms by theme, both to assist civil society with their advocacy and also parliamentarians and government officials to understand that recommendations are consistent from various UN mechanisms.

Further, we frequently organize meetings with various national stakeholders, including the media, to ensure that the content of these recommendations is well understood and disseminated widely throughout the country.

Impact story

BOLIVIA

Rallying stakeholders for effective implementation of the Committee's recommendations

The Centre facilitated a visit by Human Rights Committee member and expert, H el ene Tigroudja, and our coordinator for Latin America, Mariel Merayo, to Bolivia in February 2023. Our aim was to **initiate a constructive dialogue with key national stakeholders**, including state authorities, civil society members, and journalists, and to challenge them on the implementation of the Committee's recommendations to Bolivia.

During the visit, the Committee expert held meetings in La Paz and Sucre with various stakeholders, such as the Office of the Ombudsman, the Minister of Justice, government officials, parliamentarians, members of the Attorney-General's office, and advisors to the Supreme Court. We reiterated Bolivia's **obligation to submit a follow-up report** in these discussions, in particular on the implementation of three key priority recommendations: addressing violence against women, combating human trafficking and forced labor, and improving the administration of justice. The **importance of an ongoing dialogue between state institutions and civil society** was emphasized, and state authorities expressed a commitment to implement the recommendations. We also discussed recent positive developments, such as the creation of an Inter-Institutional Commission in October 2022 to follow-up on recommendations from international organizations. The Committee's recommendations were also shared with Bolivian journalists for wider dissemination.



Case study 1: Central America - Turning public officials into strong allies for the implementation of Treaty Bodies' recommendations at the national level



Engaging with national authorities is vital to ensure the effective implementation of UN Treaty Bodies' recommendations at the national level. For years, the Centre has conducted follow-up missions to Central American States, but recent challenges have emerged. Political dynamics have made it increasingly difficult to engage with public officials on human rights, and there are significant knowledge gaps among officials regarding human rights standards and UN protection mechanisms.

In response, we've intensified our efforts to develop a comprehensive regional strategy. Our goal is to **empower public officials to become strong allies in implementing Treaty Bodies' recommendations nationally**. Leveraging our established networks and recognized expertise in human rights training, we've tailored our approach to suit the unique contexts of each country in order to keep pace with their evolving political climates.

In 2023, we conducted **targeted workshops in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras**. The workshops in El Salvador and Guatemala aimed to equip state officials with theoretical knowledge and practical skills for implementing and monitoring recommendations from key UN human rights bodies, with a focus on those from the Committee and the Committee against Torture (CAT). These sessions provided a valuable opportunity to analyze the latest recommendations and develop effective strategies for their implementation at the national level. In Honduras, we strengthened our collaboration with public officials in anticipation of the Committee's review.

Moving forward, we remain committed to maintaining dialogue with public officials across Central America, though our efforts are subject to the evolving political landscapes. While uncertainties persist, **recent developments offer**

glimmers of hope: In El Salvador, a promising collaboration with the Prosecutor's Office emerged in 2023, though its continuity remains uncertain. In Honduras, we have built a steady relationship with public officials, particularly with the Attorney-General's Office. We hope to continue this close relationship during the upcoming follow-up process after the review by the Committee. In Guatemala, there are also encouraging signs of increased willingness among public officials to engage from some state institutions given the recent change of government.

Case study 2: Developing indicators to monitor implementation of the Human Rights Committee's recommendations in the DRC

Part of the Centre's core mandate is supporting national authorities to implement recommendations made by the Committee. Working in close collaboration with CSOs, we regularly monitor the actions taken by authorities and advocates for the comprehensive implementation of such recommendations. However, we have recently observed that CSOs encounter **difficulties in undertaking monitoring due to a lack of universally accepted indicators grounded** in objective criteria.

To address this, the Centre initiated a groundbreaking project in the DRC. Working with national CSOs and the Carter Center, we developed a framework to measure the progress made by the Government of the DRC in implementing recommendations issued by the Committee in October 2017. The framework includes both **qualitative and quantitative indicators** for each of the 25 recommendations, along with specific measures, verification methods, and potential sources.

We consulted with various stakeholders between July and December 2023 to arrive on these indicators. This required collaborating with various human rights organisations throughout the country, including South Kivu, East Kasai, Kinshasa, and other regions. National authorities responsible for UN reporting also provided feedback, and a validation session was convened to ensure consensus between authorities and CSOs on the indicators and necessary measures for implementation.

Formally adopted and made public in May 2023, the **indicators** will play a crucial role in supporting reports for the upcoming UPR and ICCPR reviews in 2024 and 2025. This initiative will also serve as a model to be replicated in other countries over the coming years.



Strategic Objective 3

Contribute to strengthening the work of the Human Rights Committee





Examples of key results

- The Centre supported both written and oral contributions by national CSOs to the Committee's reviews of Lesotho and Somalia
- Broader and more inclusive CSOs participation in the state party review process for Venezuela was made possible by a special online briefing with Committee members organized by the Centre
- Our first ever geographical mapping of follow-up recommendations provides stakeholders with a view of the implementation of the Committee's recommendations worldwide
- The publication of our Yearbook on the Committee's jurisprudence continues to provide important analysis of emerging trends and themes arising from the Committee's work

Our tactics and what we achieved

1.

Improve the scrutiny and transparency of the elections of the Committee members

The **next round of elections** for the appointment of Committee members will take place in June 2024. To prepare, the Centre has been proactively engaging with both national and international CSOs **to encourage nominations from civil society**. The Centre has also provided support to candidates from civil society organizations for other UN Treaty Bodies, notably the CAT, which held its elections in October 2023.



2. Reinforce meaningful civil society participation in the work of the Human Rights Committee

The Centre continues to play a crucial role in **ensuring the active participation of civil society in the Committee's state party review process**. We work to identify states where participation from CSOs is minimal or inconsistent and proactively seek to ensure HRDs are engaged, either in Geneva or online.

Impact story

LESOTHO & SOMALIA

No national CSOs report or advocacy visit would have been possible without the support of the Centre.

In the lead up of the Committee's summer session, we worked closely with CSOs from **Somalia** and **Lesotho** to ensure they could participate in the reviews. Through a series of webinars, we equipped civil society with essential information about the upcoming review process, encouraged report submissions, and provided guidance on engaging with the Committee. **CSOs coalitions from both countries submitted comprehensive reports** to the Committee as a result of this work, addressing nearly all questions in the List of Issues Prior to Reporting (LOIPR). Additionally, the Centre provided financial and logistical support to facilitate HRDs from Lesotho attending the Geneva session in person, enabling **direct interaction** with the Committee and other UN protection mechanisms. Only international CSOs had submitted written contributions and registered for formal briefings with the Committee prior to our engagement. This work is crucial as national CSOs provide **vital on-the-ground insights** into the Committee's review process.

3. Contribute to deeper insights in the Human Rights Committee's findings on thematic issues

In 2023, the Centre focused its efforts on **developing tools to enhance the accessibility of findings and recommendations made by the Committee**. In particular, we developed maps detailing human rights violations ([Burundi](#)) and highlighting the implementation of the ICCPR (see below). We also continue to publish our annual Yearbook, providing analysis on trends and themes identified within the Committee's jurisprudence.

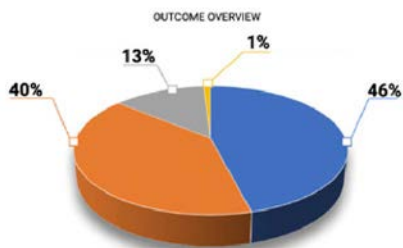
Impact story

Detecting trends in the Committee's jurisprudence

In collaboration with the Law Clinic of the LL.M. in International Law at the Graduate Institute of Geneva, the Centre published an **overview of the Committee's jurisprudence in 2022**. Since 2014, this initiative tracks the development of jurisprudence of the Committee, and students involved in the research throughout 2023 had the unique opportunity to meet with Committee members and present their findings. The research aims to make the Committee's jurisprudence more visible, to promote and protect civil and political rights, and to provide guidance for HRDs in engaging in advocacy.

Key figures for 2022 show that the Committee considered a total of **175 individual communications**, with 95 decided on merits, 21 declared inadmissible, and 59 discontinued. Belarus received the highest number of views, followed by Algeria, Sweden, and the Russian Federation. Among the 68 communications that found a violation of the Covenant, the most common themes were violations of the **right to freedom of assembly, freedom of opinion and expression, and torture and ill-treatment**. An important development was the Committee's [decision](#) on the **impact of climate change on human rights**, particularly regarding Indigenous Peoples in regions vulnerable to flooding and erosion.

Outcomes of the Communications

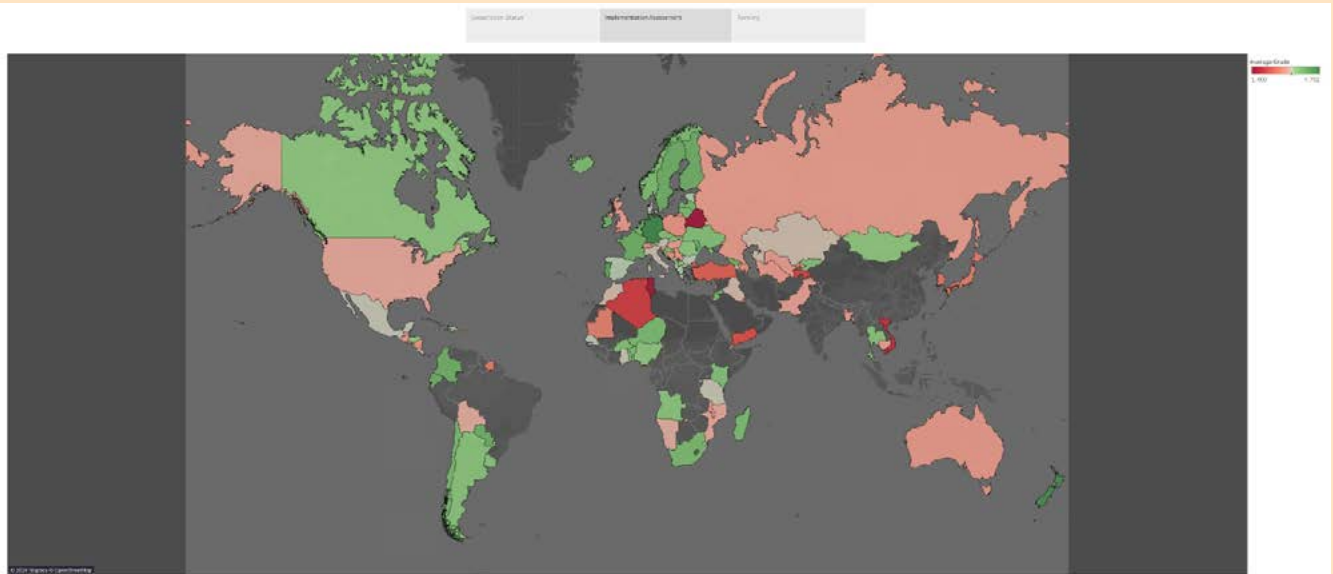


- Merits violations
- Discontinues
- Inadmissible
- Merit no violations

Ruling	Quantity
Merits violations	68
Discontinued	60
Inadmissible	19
Merits No Violations	2
Grand Total	149

Case study 1

First ever World Map on ICCPR Implementation highlights recommendations selected for the follow-up procedure



To **increase the visibility of the Committee's Concluding Observations and their implementation status**, the Centre has developed the first-ever [ICCPR Follow-up World Maps](#). This interactive tool complements our existing efforts to facilitate the follow-up of recommendations made, including follow-up missions with national authorities, campaigns to disseminate recommendations, and drafting civil society follow-up reports aimed at assessing state progress.

During the review of each state, the Committee considers violations of international obligations and issues concluding observations containing recommendations to the state party. The Committee typically identifies three urgent recommendations that require immediate attention, and mandates that follow up information be provided on measures taken to address the recommendations within three years. **CSOs play a role in this process** by submitting monitoring reports, and the Committee evaluates all submitted information and assigns a grade to each recommendation based on progress made.

The Centre has launched **three interactive maps** to make these findings more accessible. The first illustrates the extent to which state parties cooperated with the Committee in the follow-up procedure, distinguishing between those that have submitted follow-up information and those that have not responded. The second highlights the extent to which recommendations have been implemented. The third map provides a ranking of the implementation assessment for all states. States are ranked according to the grades that have been assigned by the Committee.

Case Study 2 Venezuela : CSOs' engagement crucial in a review marked by lack of concrete responses and attacks against Members of the Committee

In October 2023, the Committee conducted its review of Venezuela's fifth periodic report, marking the country's first appearance before the Committee since 2015. The dialogue was notably tense, characterized by a lack of substantive responses from the State delegation, frequent repetition of Venezuela's political rhetoric, and criticism directed towards Committee members.

From the outset, the delegation attributed the deterioration of human rights in Venezuela to the impact of unilateral coercive measures imposed by the United States or the European Union. The delegation also repeatedly questioned the independence, impartiality, and professionalism of Committee members, as well as the credibility of the independent international fact-finding mission on Venezuela.

One of the Committee's primary concerns was the ongoing attacks and **threats targeting members of Venezuelan civil society**, including NGOs, HRDs, and journalists. The presence of Attorney-General Tarek William Saab, who is currently sanctioned by the European Union for "publicly supporting actions against government opponents," further frustrated the dialogue with the state delegation. This dynamic showed a clear disregard for the work of HRDs that attended the Committee's session in Geneva. Venezuelan CSOs also expressed concerns about facing persecution upon returning home following the session.

Despite the risk of reprisal, **CSOs showed a remarkable turnout** in the review of Venezuela. The Centre determined it was crucial to support HRDs in countering the State narrative while minimizing security risks, and we conducted extensive collaboration with Venezuelan civil society in facilitating this support, including working closely with grassroots organizations from the Amazonian region and HRDs in exile.

Coalition-building among CSOs was driven through online meetings, as well as support for drafting and submitting a joint report to the Committee. Acknowledging the limitations on in-person attendance in Geneva, the Centre organized an additional online briefing session for CSOs, on top of our usual hybrid session for all countries under review, allowing 35 representatives to address pressing issues affecting Venezuela. The Centre also sponsored two Venezuelan HRDs to attend the review in person. Their active participation in both formal and informal briefings with the Committee helped to provide crucial insight into **Venezuela's deteriorating civic space** and the targeting of HRDs, particularly in the lead up to elections.



"The review of Venezuela was marked by a lack of concrete answers from the delegation, repetition of the current government's political discourse, and disparaging remarks to Committee members. The engagement of civil society was pivotal in counterbalancing the State narrative and shedding light on pressing human rights issues in the country ahead of national elections scheduled for July 2024."

Marcia V. Kran, Member of the UN Human Rights Committee

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**People
in Need**

(1st January – 31st December, in CHF)

This is an extract of the audited financial statements for 2023. A full version is available upon request at info@ccprcentre.org.

In 2023, the Centre reported a total income of 671'480.- CHF and expenses of 714'475.- CHF, ending the year with a small deficit of 837.- CHF. The total income is slightly below that of 2022, mainly due to some projects starting on 1st January 2024, which will be included in next year's annual report.

As in previous years, the Centre incurred most of its expenses in connection with supporting the work of Human Rights Defenders (Objective 1). Expenses related to our work with national authorities (Objective 2) and our thematic work (Objective 3) remained at the same level as in 2022.



Income	2023	2022
Revenue		
Governments	462 445 CHF	606 273 CHF
Foundations	187 572 CHF	162 619 CHF
UN Agencies and related	12 668 CHF	14 793 CHF
Other revenues	8 795 CHF	9 026 CHF
Total	671 480 CHF	792 712 CHF
Costs		
	2023	2022
Obj.1: HRDs support for ICCPR implementation	399 524 CHF	470 770 CHF
Obj. 2: ICCPR ratification and implementation	80 949 CHF	103 508 CHF
Obj. 3: Support to the HR Cttee and thematic work	94 206 CHF	81 254 CHF
Administration, Finance, Communication & Fund-raising	147 055 CHF	134 113 CHF
Governance and strategy	5 277 CHF	11 751 CHF
Net movement in funds	-54 464 CHF	12 691 CHF
Total costs	672 547 CHF	814 085 CHF
Income (deficit) for the year (inc. reserve fund)	-1 067 CHF	-21 373 CHF
Assets		
	2023	2022
Cash and equivalents Debtors	197 050 CHF	252 337 CHF
Debtors	0 CHF	0 CHF
Transitory assets Total	0 CHF	0 CHF
Total	197 050 CHF	252 337 CHF
Liabilities and reserves		
	2023	2022
Short term liabilities	32 482 CHF	32 469 CHF
Deferred grants	-49 787 CHF	4 678 CHF
Free capital and reserve funds Total	214 354 CHF	215 190 CHF
Total	197 050 CHF	252 337 CHF

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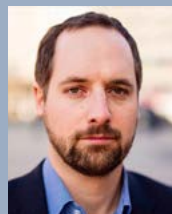
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