



“Scaling up the fight for human rights in the context of Covid-19”

This report is dedicated to human rights lawyer Professor Christof Heyns who suddenly passed away on 28 March 2021. Professor Heyns was an incredibly skilled human rights professional, with a true passion for his work, a strong supporter of civil society and a close friend of the Centre. He truly believed that civil society organisations play a key role in the protection of human rights worldwide and worked intensively to support their work at national and international levels. His passion, knowledge, enthusiasm and kindness will be truly missed. We will make sure we uphold his legacy by continuing to strengthen the efforts of civil society organisations and human rights defenders worldwide.

Rest in peace, Christof



Christof Heyns

Member of the UN Human Rights Committee 2017-2020

*Do not stand at my grave and weep
I am not there. I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond glints on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn rain.
When you awaken in the morning's hush
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not stand at my grave and cry;
I am not there. I did not die*

By Mary Elizabeth Frye



Table of contents

Message from the President and the Director	5
Who we are	7
Our vision.....	7
Our mission.....	7
Where we work	8
Our strategy – Adapting our 2019–2023 Strategic plan to the COVID-19 pandemic.	10
Our achievements – 2020 progress on strategic objectives	12
Year 2020 timeline	17
A year in figures	22
Our online presence	23
An overview of key trends, activities and achievements per region	24
Asia – Pacific.....	24
The state of human rights in the region	25
Our approach and key achievements	25
Country in focus: Viet Nam – Facilitating the implementation of the HR Committee’s recommendations	26
Country in focus: Myanmar – Strengthening civil society advocacy efforts for the earliest ratification of the ICCPR.....	27
Your rights, your voice	29
What’s Next.....	32
Central Asia.....	33
The state of human rights in the region	34
Our approach and key achievements	34
Country in focus: Kazakhstan – Legal analysis on the draft law on peaceful assemblies	35
Country in focus: Tajikistan – Supporting a civil society advocacy plan for monitoring HR Committee’s recommendations	36

Your rights, your voice	37
What's Next	39
Latin America	40
The state of human rights in the region	41
Our approach and key achievements	41
Activity in focus: Using virtuality to reduce distances between Human Rights experts and civil society	42
Country in focus: Honduras - Offering technical support to CSOs	43
Your rights, your voice	44
What's Next.....	47
Africa	48
Our approach and key achievements	49
Country in focus: Gabon, Congo Brazzaville and Guinea Bissau - A first successful partnership with civil society organisations.....	50
Country in focus: Niger - The successful challenge of a multi-actor synergy between civil society, the government and the parliament	52
Your rights, your voice	53
What's Next	55
An overview of the Centre's thematic work.....	56
Thematic focus 1: Clarifying the link between corruption and human rights ..	57
Thematic focus 2: Covid-19 Related ICCPR violations	60
Thematic focus 3 - ICCPR Art. 25 on participation in public affairs	62
Your rights, your voice	64
What's next	65
Our supporters and partners	66
Financial statements	67
Our team	69
Glossary	70



Message from the President and the Director

Last year was challenging to say the least, as the **COVID-19 pandemic** profoundly transformed the world and affected all aspects of our personal and professional life.

In many regions, the devastating social and economic consequences of the pandemic added to already complex human rights situations on the ground. In some cases, States' measures to counter the pandemic were used as a **pretext to further shrink fundamental freedoms** and civil liberties such as freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly. In addition, the almost exclusive focus on COVID-19 meant that other human rights violations were overlooked. Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) faced increased barriers to their fundamental work, in a time where international support was also limited by travel bans and health restrictions.

When considering how best to respond to the new normal in 2020, we believed the answer was to continue to **stay true to the core values** of proximity, inclusiveness, sustainability and innovation that had driven our action since the foundation of the Centre. What we did not know at that time was that the pandemic would have encouraged us to broaden the definition of these values and to push them even further.

Health restrictions made physical interaction impossible, showing us the real meaning of **proximity**, which is to understand each others', share common objectives and support each other's work. Listening to HRDs on the ground, addressing their concerns, acting as a bridge between them and international human rights mechanisms were at the heart of our approach. To this end, the Centre **embraced virtuality**, boosted its online strategy and developed user-friendly tools – publications, guidelines, manuals, flashcards, ad hoc websites – to assist civil society on a number of priority topics.

By reducing barriers to participation such as travel costs and visa formalities, virtuality also allowed us to increase the **inclusiveness** of our activities, as shown by the largest ever attendance of civil society organisations (CSOs) at the briefings. The pandemic also increased uncertainty about the future, including on funding and travelling opportunities. To ensure a real impact on the ground, we paid particular attention to the **sustainability** of our activities by focusing on building the capacities of civil society and State authorities.

The global nature of the pandemic encouraged us to **think beyond borders**, to join efforts and link national, regional and international players with the aim of sharing experiences and finding solutions to common problems. Thanks to the generous support and flexibility of our donors, we were able to **reinforce our regional approaches** in Asia Pacific, Central Asia, Africa and Latin America and to **step up our thematic work**.

Like any moment of crisis, Covid-19 proved a **turning point**, for it led us to reflect on our approach, our work, the direction in which we are going and the one we would like to take in the future. But it also became an opportunity for the Centre, as it proved the values which underpin our work are now even more needed and that we can put them into practice in different ways and to an extent that we would not have considered prior to the pandemic.

In 2021, we plan to continue applying what this difficult year has taught us, by using virtual means as ways to overcome barriers and increase the inclusiveness of our activities and by reinforcing a proximity based on common vision and long-term support.



Victor Rodriguez Rescia
President



Patrick Mutzenberg
Director



Who we are



Our vision

A world where the 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 the civil society and connecting key actors engaged to implement the UN Human Rights Committee's recommendations at the national level.

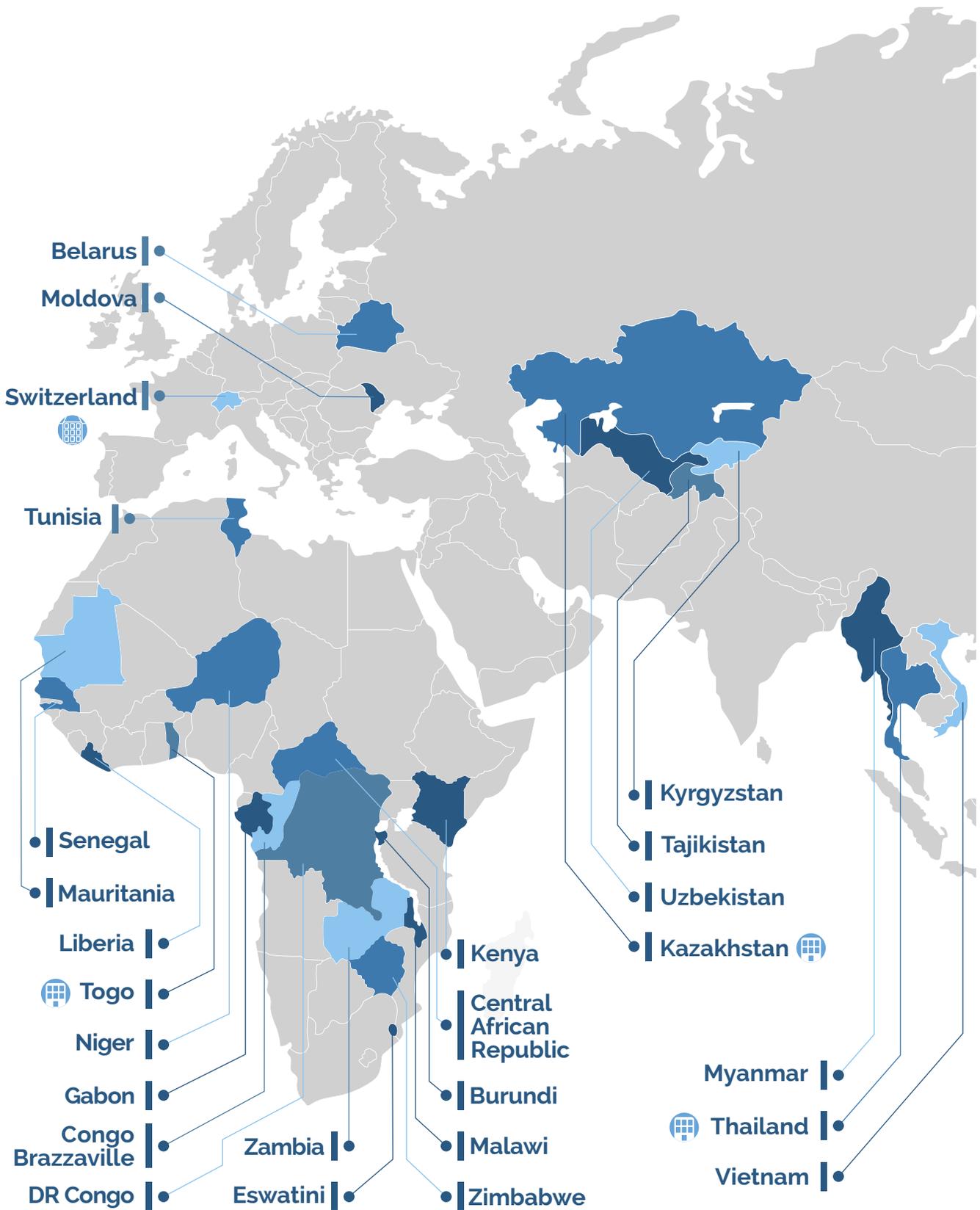


128th session of the UN Human Rights Committee - March 2020



Where we work







Our strategy – Adapting our 2019–2023 strategic plan to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2020, the Centre continued the implementation of its [2019-2023 Strategic Plan's general objectives](#) with the aim to:

1

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

2

Increase ratification and enhance implementation of the ICCPR and

3

Contribute to the strengthening of the HR Committee's work.

Amid the unprecedented health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centre had to adapt to the new situation and find alternative and innovative ways to continue its activities worldwide. To this end, the Centre made an increased use of **new technologies and digital channels** to fill the operational gap caused by travel restrictions, reduce physical distances and encourage collaboration during the global pandemic.

Embracing **virtuality**, the Centre thus managed to maintain the activities that have always been at the core of its missions – CSOs national consultations, follow-up missions and reports, CSOs trainings on ICCPR and reporting mechanisms etc. Virtual briefings replaced physical briefings, webinars were organised instead of physical conferences and meetings, interactive digital tools and publications replaced ad hoc trainings.

The Centre organised **national consultations** on a range of different topics - ICCPR and State reviews, follow-up of HR Committee's recommendations, thematic consultations on specific ICCPR articles etc. - developed **online training modules** to train civil society on specific ICCPR provisions and reporting mechanisms, and **remotely supported** civil society coalitions in the drafting of alternative reports to the HR Committee.

Regular HR Committee's sessions were moved online, but this did not prevent us from seeking and encouraging the active participation of HRDs in the work of the Committee. Formal and informal briefings in Geneva were replaced by **online briefings** putting civil society organisations from across the world in touch with members of the Committee.

Despite the initial scepticism, this online format proved to be very effective: by reducing barriers to participation such as travel costs and visa formalities, this format managed to increase the inclusiveness of the process, as shown by the largest number ever of CSOs attending the briefings.

The travel restrictions in place meant CSOs around the world found themselves isolated and cut off from physical support from international organisations. To mitigate this, the Centre turned to **virtuality, to make sure proximity with civil society** – one of the pillars of the Centre's work – **was maintained and reinforced**. To this end, the Centre reinforced its online strategy and developed user-friendly tools – publications, guidelines, manuals, flashcards, ad hoc websites – to assist CSOs on a number of priority topics. To increase the effectiveness and outreach of these tools, when possible, the Centre **translated them into local languages** to facilitate utilisation by national human rights defenders.

During what was a challenging year for UN Human Rights Mechanisms, the Centre also **reinforced its support** to the **UN Treaty Bodies** in a number of ways.

First of all, the Centre continued its efforts to make the work and findings of the HR Committee more accessible to the general public, and especially for civil society actors involved in the promotion and protection of civil and political rights. To achieve this, the Centre **increased its social media presence** and published its seventh edition of **"The Human Rights Committee – A Year in Review"** providing a comprehensive analysis of the main areas of concern and findings of the HR Committee throughout 2019. We also facilitated **formal and informal exchanges** between Committee's members and civil society worldwide, through the organisation of webinars and trainings on specific issues related to the respect and promotion of civil and political rights. Last but not least, the Centre **stepped up its thematic work** on three themes, namely 1. COVID-19 related violations; 2. Art. 25 on participation in public affairs and 3. Human rights and Corruption.

CCPR Centre representatives attend the 128th Session of the UN HR Committee - March 2020





Our achievements

2020 Progress on strategic objectives



General Objective 1:

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

Specific Objective 1:

Increase the capacity of civil society in effective reporting to the HR Committee

- ◆ We organised **national CSOs consultations** on the ICCPR review and on elections in Tunisia, on the HR Committee's General Comment No.37 (GC37) - rights of peaceful assembly in Thailand, on ICCPR and the review cycle in Malawi, and on the upcoming ICCPR review in Kenya.
- ◆ In Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville, Guinea-Bissau and Togo, we worked in close partnership with national CSOs to support them in the **drafting of CSOs reports** to the HR Committee.
- ◆ We produced and translated several **publications** to help civil society understand the rights included in the ICCPR and the procedure for reporting to the HR Committee. In Asia, we facilitated translation of the General Comment on Peaceful Assembly into Thai, Myanmar and Vietnamese.
- ◆ In Senegal, Niger, DR Congo, Tunisia, Tajikistan and the southern Africa region we organised a series of webinars with CSOs to help them draft and implement a national **action plan for the follow-up of recommendations**.

Specific Objective 2:

Facilitate direct interaction between civil society and the HR Committee

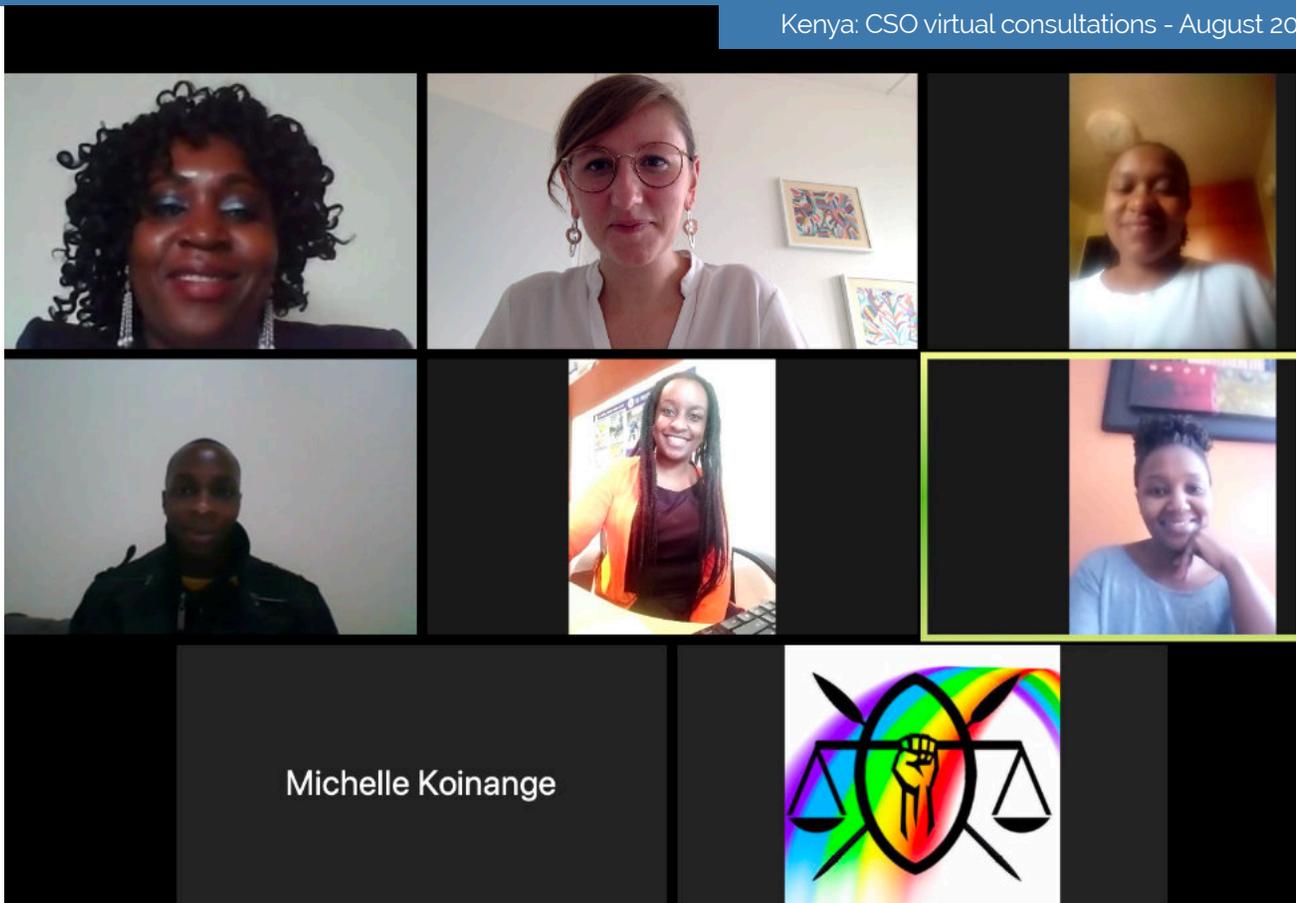
- ◆ We organized **10 virtual briefings for HRDs** from Tunisia, Uzbekistan, Central African Republic, Kyrgyzstan, Hong Kong and Macau, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Guinea-Bissau, Portugal and Dominica.

Specific objective 3:

Develop more holistic utilisation of UN Human Rights Mechanisms by civil society

- ◆ We provided **Universal Periodic Review (UPR)** trainings to CSOs in Myanmar, Mauritania, Malawi and Eswatini and supported submission of their reports to UPR on civil and political rights.
- ◆ We facilitated the participation of HRDs from Burundi to the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council.
- ◆ In Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, we provided **online courses** to CSOs on how to effectively use the existing UN Human Rights Mechanisms.
- ◆ We also organised webinars to help CSOs **follow up on recommendations related to civil and political rights and issued by other Treaty Bodies**, such as the Committee Against Torture (CAT) in DR Congo, in Senegal and Niger and the Committee on Elimination of Discriminations against Women (CEDAW) in Kazakhstan.

Kenya: CSO virtual consultations - August 2020





General objective 2:

Increase ratification and enhance implementation of ICCPR

Specific objective 1:

Contribute to the ratification of ICCPR and its two Optional Protocols

- ◆ In Myanmar, we organised a **workshop to support civil society** in their advocacy efforts for ICCPR ratification.

Specific objective 2:

Increase the visibility of HR Committee's recommendations at the national and international level

- ◆ In Liberia, Senegal and Niger, we developed **posters** illustrated by local artists to facilitate the dissemination of the HR Committee's recommendations at the national level. These posters were distributed to members of parliament, government officials (ministers in charge of human rights, justice, women and children), national human rights mechanism, media, civil society activists, and diplomatic missions. In Liberia for example, a special opportunity was seized in the celebration of the international justice day (17 July 2020) to launch the posters in presence of many stakeholders such as representatives from the Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Justice and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Liberia.
- ◆ In Niger and DRC, we published a **training manual** on the role of members of parliament in the implementation of HR Committee's recommendations.
- ◆ In [Viet Nam](#), [Tajikistan](#), [DRC](#) and [Belarus](#), we developed **online tools to track recommendations** issued by UN Human Rights Mechanisms to make it easier for CSOs worldwide to follow the state of recommendations related to their respective countries.
- ◆ In Viet Nam, we have published "[Recommended Actions from UN Human Rights Mechanisms on Civil and Political Rights](#)" in English and Vietnamese.

Specific objective 3:

Create a space for national dialogue

- ◆ We carried out **follow-up missions** in Kazakhstan (virtual), Niger and Senegal with members of the HR Committee.
- ◆ In Myanmar, we published a "[Visual Guide on the National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up \(NMRF\)](#)" as well as a tool for "[Protecting Civil and Political Rights through Economic, Social and Cultural Rights \(ESCR\)](#)".



General objective 3:

Contribute to the strengthening of the HR Committee's work

Specific objective 2:

Reinforce meaningful civil society participation in the work of the HR Committee

- ◆ Over the year, we sent out **6 newsletters** to a database of 3'385 contacts. Three of them provided a comprehensive overview of the HR Committee's regular session, while the other three focused on thematic issues such as ICCPR Art.25, Human Rights and Corruption and the Committee's follow-up procedure.
- ◆ We **increased our online presence**, in particular on social media, in order to further increase the outreach of the work of the HR Committee.
- ◆ We continued to update our **database on cases decided** by the HR Committee, which features all the cases since the beginning of the work of the Committee, fully indexed and searchable by keywords, dates, countries and session.
- ◆ We produced the **7th edition of the "UN Human Right Committee – A Year in Review"** providing a comprehensive analysis of the main areas of concern and findings of the HR Committee throughout 2019. In addition, and in collaboration with the Treaty Bodies Network (TB-NET), we produced our **UN Treaty Bodies' yearbook**, which summarises and analyses the main trends of jurisprudence.

Specific objective 3:

Contribute to the enrichment of the HR Committee's findings on thematic issues

- ◆ The Centre continued its long-term engagement on the issue of **corruption** and how this is addressed by the UN Treaty Bodies. To this end, the Centre published an **updated version (English and French)** of its **"Improving the Human Rights Dimension of the fight against corruption – How do UN Treaty Bodies address the issue of corruption"**, including data from 2018 and 2019. The Centre also organized with the Geneva Human Rights Platform an **expert meeting** on human rights and corruption intended to the members of the UN Treaty Bodies. In addition, we contributed to the preliminary meeting in preparation to **UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on Corruption**, to be held in June 2021. In Moldova, the Centre supported the development of a thematic study on Human Rights and Corruption in the country.
- ◆ Amid the unprecedented public health crisis caused by **the COVID-19 pandemic**, the Centre launched a **series of tools** – **guidelines and flashcards** – to help stakeholders monitor and assess the negative impact on the enjoyment of civil and political rights caused by measures taken by states

in the context of COVID-19. In Asia and Latin America, regional webinars with HR Committee's members were organised to promote the launch. In Viet Nam and Myanmar, the Centre also supported a pilot study on the risks of ICCPR violations in the time of COVID-19.

- ◆ In the framework of its thematic work to support to HR Committee, the Centre also developed [guidelines](#) for civil society on **Art.25 of ICCPR** focusing on the right to participate in public affairs, in order to encourage HRDs and lawyers to better contribute on this topic in the context of the State reporting procedure. We also organised **4 regional webinars** on the same issue for CSOs' of Benin, Bolivia, Burundi, El Salvador, Ecuador, Guatemala, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Peru, Philippines, RDC, Russia, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, Venezuela, Zambia. The first two webinars aimed at gathering CSOs' feedback on the first draft of the guidelines, which was integrated in the final version. During the two remaining webinars, participants explored individual cases that could be submitted on Art.25 to the HR Committee. In Kenya and in Tunisia, the Centre also supported CSOs in the drafting of a thematic report on participation in public life.



128th Session of the UN HR Committee
NGO Briefing - March 2020



Year 2020 timeline

JANUARY

- ▶ **Kazakhstan:** Follow-up mission (virtual)
- ▶ **Myanmar:** Visual Guide on National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up (NMRF)

FEBRUARY

- ▶ **Tunisia:** CSO consultations
- ▶ **Niger:** Follow-up mission
- ▶ **Senegal:** Follow-up mission
- ▶ **Myanmar:** CSO workshop on ICCPR ratification
- ▶ **Myanmar:** Launch of tool to protect civil and political rights through ESCR
- ▶ **Thailand:** Participation in the Regional consultation on CG37
- ▶ **Thailand:** Submission of joint civil society inputs to the HR Committee on GC37
- ▶ **France:** Study visit with members of the UN Treaty Bodies to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg
- ▶ **Nicaragua:** Support to Nicaraguan CSOs to prepare reports and to participate at the upcoming HR Committee's session
- ▶ **Guatemala and Honduras:** Workshop with women HRDs from Guatemala and Honduras on the HR Committee's recommendations.

MARCH

- ▶ **COVID-19:** Launch of tracking tool related to states of emergencies
- ▶ **128th Session of the HR Committee** - participation of HRDs from Tunisia, Uzbekistan and Central African Republic.
- ▶ **Southern Africa:** Webinar on HR Committee's follow-up recommendations related to LGBTI
- ▶ **43rd session of the Human Rights Council** - participation of HRDs from Burundi
- ▶ **Uzbekistan:** CSO informal briefing

APRIL

- ▶ **Nicaragua:** online course on how to use the UN human rights mechanisms
- ▶ **Gabon:** CSO webinar on the preparation of the report prior to the List of Issues (LOI)
- ▶ **Congo Brazzaville:** CSO webinars on the preparation of the report before the LOI
- ▶ **Uzbekistan:** CSO informal briefing

MAY

- ▶ **DRC:** CSO webinars on the action plan for the follow-up of recommendations and follow-up reports to the HR Committee.
- ▶ **Kazakhstan:** Joint statement to urge Kazakh authorities to halt the consideration of the Draft law on peaceful assemblies.

JUNE

- ▶ **Viet Nam:** Publication "Recommended Actions from UN Human Rights Mechanisms on Civil and Political Rights in Viet Nam"
- ▶ **Viet Nam, Tajikistan, DRC & Belarus:** development of online tools to track recommendations by the UN HR Mechanisms
- ▶ **Senegal:** CSO webinars on the action plan for the follow-up of recommendations
- ▶ **Niger:** CSO webinars on the action plan for the follow-up of recommendations

JULY

- ▶ **Malawi:** Training on individual communications and the ICCPR First Optional Protocol for LGBTI organisations
- ▶ **Myanmar:** Submission of 2 joint reports to UPR
- ▶ **Human Rights & Corruption:** Hybrid expert meeting in Geneva and online 129th Session of the HR Committee - Virtual
- ▶ **Gabon:** Support to CSOs for the draft of an alternative report
- ▶ **Congo Brazzaville:** Support to CSOs for the draft of an alternative report
- ▶ **Hong Kong and Macau:** Virtual CSO briefings for the adoption of the List of Issues Prior to reporting (LOIPR)
- ▶ **Zimbabwe:** Support to CSOs for the draft of an alternative report for the LOIPR, focused on LGBTI people
- ▶ **Guinea Bissau:** CSO webinar on the preparation of the report for the LOIPR
- ▶ **Liberia:** Production of visual tools to disseminate HR Committee's recommendations

AUGUST

- ▶ **Kenya:** CSO consultation in preparation of the review
- ▶ **Mauritania:** Support to CSOs for a UPR submission
- ▶ **Tunisia:** 2 CSO webinars on the follow-up of the review
- ▶ **Guinea Bissau:** Submission of the report for the LOIPR to the HR Committee

SEPTEMBER

- ▶ **Human Rights & Corruption:** Preliminary meeting in preparation to UNGASS Special Session on Corruption
- ▶ **Thailand:** Informal translation of the HR Committee's GC37 in Thai
- ▶ **Guatemala/Honduras/El Salvador:** online course on how to use the UN Human Rights Mechanisms
- ▶ **Viet Nam/Myanmar:** Pilot study on ICCPR violations in time of COVID-19
- ▶ **Malawi/Eswatini:** UPR training for CSOs
- ▶ **Malawi:** Legal clinic for LGBTI organisations

OCTOBER

- ▶ **Latin America:** Launch of tools to monitor ICCPR violations during COVID-19
- ▶ **Myanmar/Viet Nam:** Translation of the GC37 into Thai, Myanmar and Vietnamese
- ▶ **DRC:** CSO webinar on the follow-up of the recommendations of the CAT
- ▶ **Geneva:** Participation to Human Rights Platform's Annual Conference
- ▶ **Online CSOs consultation** on the strengthening process of the UN Treaty Bodies (UNTBs)
- ▶ **130th Session of the HR Committee** – Virtual
- ▶ **Zambia/Kyrgyzstan/Guinea-Bissau/Zimbabwe:** support to CSOs in the preparation of their reports for the LOIPR

- ▶ **Niger:** Publication of a training manual on the role of members of parliament in the implementation of the HR Committee's recommendations
- ▶ **Guatemala:** Training to Guatemalan students from the Universidad de San Carlos on the procedure to present individual cases and request provisional measures to the HR Committee.

NOVEMBER

- ▶ **Malawi:** Training on ICCPR and the review cycle for LGBTI organisations
- ▶ **Niger:** Follow-up mission and training on role of members of parliament in the follow up of the recommendations of the HR Committee
- ▶ **Kazakhstan:** Brief on Kazakhstan's activities on CEDAW follow-up recommendations
- ▶ **Human Rights & Corruption:** Publication of the Updated Research (English & French)
- ▶ **Moldova:** Study on Human Rights and Corruption
- ▶ Launch of the publication "**UNTBs - A Year in Review**"
- ▶ **Honduras:** Participation in a space for dialogue with civil society for the follow-up of the UPR Honduras 2020.

- ▶ **Tajikistan:** CSOs meeting on the development of an action plan for the follow-up of HR Committee's recommendations
- ▶ **Kenya:** Thematic report on participation in public life (Art. 25)
- ▶ **Art. 25:** Publication of "Guidelines for CSOs on how to address Art. 25 issues to the HR Committee"
- ▶ Organisation of 4 **webinars on Art. 25 ICCPR** for HRDs and lawyers
- ▶ **Togo:** Support to CSOs for the finalisation of the report for the HR Committee
- ▶ **Mauritania:** Support of CSOs to participate in the UPR pre-session
- ▶ **Kazakhstan:** Presentation of "Kazakhstan: tracking the implementation of CEDAW follow-up recommendations" to civil society
- ▶ **Latin America:** Webinars to strengthen the interconnectivity between the Inter-American System and the Universal System

DECEMBER



A year in figures

1 HQ

4 Regional Offices

Costa Rica Kazakhstan
Thailand Togo

2 National Coordinators

Kazakhstan Honduras

8 Training and consultations on ICCPR

Congo Brazzaville Myanmar Gabon Kenya
Malawai Thailand Tunisia Zimbabwe

4 Follow-up Missions

Kazakhstan (Virtual)
Niger (2) Senegal

10 CSO Briefings

Central African Republic Dominica
GuineaBissau Hong Kong & Macau
Kyrgyzstan Portugal Tunisia
Uzbekistan Zambia Zimbabwe

15 Reports Submitted to HR Committee

Burundi Congo Brazzaville DRC (CAT) Gabon
GuineaBissau (2) Kazakhstan Kyrgyzstan
Southern Africa Tajikistan Tunisia (CEDAW)
Uzbekistan Zambia Zimbabwe (2)

2 Training and reports before UPR on civil and political rights

Myanmar Mauritania

Support to physical participation of 3 HRDs to the review at the 128th session

Central African Republic: 1 Uzbekistan: 2

6 Visual tools

To disseminate follow-up recommendations

Senegal Liberia

+4 Dedicated websites on UN Human Rights Mechanisms

Belarus DRC Tajikistan Viet Nam

5 Guidelines and Tools translated to local languages

Translation of the GC37
Myanmar
Thailand
Viet Nam

Covid-19 tools translated to Spanish

4 Thematic Publications

- ▶ Covid-19 flash cards and guidelines
- ▶ Guidelines on art-25
- ▶ Thematic Research on corruption
- ▶ HR Committee Year in Review

7 Thematic reports at the national level

Human Rights & corruption in Moldova, Participation in public life in Kenya & Tunisia

Corruption and human rights in Uzbekistan

Covid-19 related violations in Viet Nam and Myanmar

Joint CSOs written comment for the adoption of GC37 from Thailand

Our online presence



4'642 followers
+466 new followers
78'971 people reached
4'084 reactions, comments & shares



5'557 followers
+605 new followers
1984 likes+retweets
5474 profile visits



3'385 contacts on our database
3 Newsletters on HR Committee's sessions
3 Thematic Newsletters



An overview of key trends, activities and achievements per region

ASIA Pacific



Myanmar

Thailand

Vietnam

Written by Asia-Pacific regional coordinator *Daisuke Shirane*

CSO workshop on effective advocacy for the ratification of ICCPR by Myanmar - February 2020



The state of human rights in the region

While the exact issues at stake differ in each country, protection of civil and political rights has been particularly challenging in most countries in the Asia-Pacific region during 2020. The **space for civil society** has been **drastically shrinking**, freedom of peaceful assembly has come under increasing threat and HRDs face various kinds of reprisals offline and online. The situation was significantly **exacerbated by** the **COVID-19** pandemic in many ways, including countermeasures taken by State authorities which often involved restrictions imposed on fundamental freedoms and basic rights of individuals, in some cases in violation of international human rights law.

Our approach and key achievements

The Centre responded to the increasing needs of HRDs on the ground by carrying out activities aimed at **strengthening the capacity** of national civil society and other stakeholders to protect civil and political rights in accordance with the ICCPR in Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam.

In **Myanmar**, the Centre continued its engagement designed to enhance the earliest ratification of the ICCPR and the establishment of the National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up (NMRF). In **Thailand**, our activities have primarily focused on the topic of the **freedom of peaceful assembly**, which has been one of the crucial challenges in the country. Efforts were made to assist national civil society's

To overcome remaining challenges towards ICCPR ratification (and for implementation in a longer-term)

- Deepen understanding, clarify confusion and misunderstandings about ICCPR and HR Committee (and other UN / int'l mechanisms)
- Provide practical information on the utilisation of the initial review of Myanmar by CESCR for ICCPR ratification and protection of civil and political rights
- (Re-)Develop effective strategy and cooperation plan for the ICCPR ratification by Myanmar

CSO workshop on effective advocacy for the ratification of ICCPR by Myanmar - February 2020

26th February 2020

involvement in the drafting process of the HR Committee's newest General Comment (No. 37) as well as its dissemination after the adoption in July 2020. Responding to the additional challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centre, together with its national partners, was able to explore an alternative approach for the follow-up to the review of **Viet Nam** by the HR Committee.

The Centre has also developed **thematic work** on two key issues in the region, namely, the right of peaceful assembly and the protection of civil and political rights in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In doing so, the Centre has produced various online and printed tools to make international standards and mechanisms more accessible and practical for those on the ground. To know more about these initiatives, go to page **60** of this report.

Country in focus: Viet Nam – Facilitating the implementation of the HR Committee's recommendations

In March 2019, Viet Nam went through its 3rd review by the HR Committee on the implementation of the ICCPR, more than 16 years after the 2nd review due to the significant delay in the submission of the State report.

Since 2018, the Centre has been working to increase the effectiveness and impact of the review process. In 2020, the Centre focused on enhancing of the implementation of the HR Committee's recommendations, in particular those selected for the **Committee's follow-up procedure** such as those relating to security and protection of HRDs, the death penalty and freedom of expression.

With COVID-19 making it difficult to organise physical meetings in each country, the Centre opted for a different approach and worked primarily on the **development of tools** for national stakeholders and facilitation of the monitoring and documentation by our national partners.

In particular, the Centre produced an **online tool** and a **publication** - in English and Vietnamese - to track recommendations issued by different UN Human Rights Mechanisms to Viet Nam, with the aim of increasing their visibility and accessibility for stakeholders. These tools categorised recommendations given by HR Committee, CAT, CEDAW and UPR by mechanisms by theme and provided information about the reporting and review schedule of Viet Nam by those mechanisms.

In parallel, the Centre assisted with the monitoring activities of our national partners including collection of relevant information as well as drafting of **civil society follow-up report** to be submitted to the HR Committee. Through this process, a joint civil society follow-up report was being prepared, which is planned to be finalised and submitted to the HR Committee in early 2021.

Country in focus: Myanmar – Strengthening civil society advocacy efforts for the earliest ratification of the ICCPR

The Centre has been working in Myanmar since 2016. The initial objective of our engagement was to assist the efforts of national stakeholders and enhance domestic processes for the earliest ratification of the ICCPR. Since 2018, we have expanded our activities to building the capacity of key stakeholders, in particular State actors in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Myanmar, to constructively engage in the review process of other UN Treaty Bodies as well as to develop their own NMRF.

In 2020, we also organised a workshop with civil society actors, in cooperation with Equality Myanmar (EQMM), ICCPR Action Group - a coalition of national CSOs working for the ICCPR ratification - and the Democracy Reporting International (DRI) to strengthen the joint advocacy and strategy

of national civil society for the **earliest ratification of the ICCPR** in Myanmar. Reflecting on the results of this workshop, progress made so far and the Centre's overall strategic plans 2019-2023, the Centre has also developed its **3-year strategic plan for Myanmar** with 3 key strategic objectives, namely:

- 1) Strengthen and assist efforts of national civil society in Myanmar to utilise different UN Human Rights mechanisms for the protection of civil and political rights.
- 2) Assist and enhance efforts of national stakeholders for the earliest ratification of ICCPR by Myanmar.
- 3) Increase the capacity of State actors of Myanmar for the effective implementation of international human rights.



The Centre, together with other civil society actors in Myanmar, also submitted two **joint reports for the 3rd UPR** of Myanmar, one focusing on the need for ICCPR ratification (together with ICCPR Action Group) and another relating to the election (with DRI and Carter Center). As international travel and organisation of larger scale gathering became constrained due to the COVID-19 related restrictions, the Centre placed more focus on the production of practical tools for stakeholders, such as a **visual guide on NMRF**; a tool for stakeholders to protect

civil and political rights through economic, social and cultural rights (in **English** and Burmese); an informal translation of the General Comment of the HR Committee on peaceful assembly into Burmese; as well as easy to read guide (**flash cards**) to monitor ICCPR violations in the context of COVID-19 pandemic in Burmese, Kachin, Rakhine and Shan languages. It has also carried out a pilot study on the risks of civil and political rights violations through measures taken by State authorities throughout the pandemic.

A visual guide on the National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up (NMRF)
outcome summary of a workshop in Myanmar



A visual guide on the National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up (NMRF)
- outcome summary of a workshop in Myanmar

By Centre for Civil and Political Rights (CCPR Centre)

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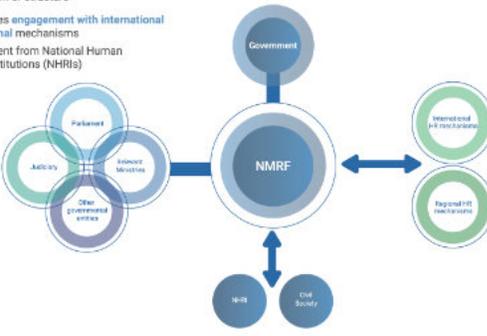
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© A visual guide on the National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up (NMRF),
Centre for Civil and Political Rights
(CCPR Centre)
December 2019

4
WHAT IS NMRF?

What is NMRF?

- ▶ It is a national / governmental mechanism or structure
- ▶ It facilitates engagement with international and regional mechanisms
- ▶ It is different from National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)



A visual guide on NMRF



Your rights, your voice

Interview with Aung Myo Min,
Executive Director of Equality Myanmar

Aung Myo Min is the Executive Director of Equality Myanmar, a non-governmental organization focused on human rights education and advocacy. In this interview, he shares his view of the human rights situation in the country and his hopes for the future.

Why did you decide to become a Human Right Defender?

I became a Human Rights Defender in 1988, after witnessing the violence of a military crackdown that killed thousands of people in my country, Myanmar. The

military killed men, raped women, destroyed villages. Thousands of people had to flee the country. That kind of human rights violations was the trigger, the reason that made me determined to fight for human rights. I strongly believe defending human rights is one of the best strategies to protect from abuses and fight against military dictatorship. This is why, more than 30 years later, I am still very determined to work for justice and rule of law.

What is Equality Myanmar?

I founded my organisation Equality Myanmar in 2000 with the goal of empowering the people of Myanmar through human rights education to engage in social transformation and promote a culture of human rights.

Another important aspect of our work is advocating for legal reforms. The organization envisions a peaceful, tolerant and democratic society built on respect for dignity and human rights for all.

What were the organisation's main priorities in 2020?

Myanmar is a country with many forms of human rights violations. You name it, we have it. But in 2020, we decided to give priority to two burning issues in the country, meaning **freedom of expression** and **freedom of religion and belief**.

In Myanmar, there are so many laws that restrict the freedom of expression both online and offline. The lack of freedom of expression affects many aspects of civil life, restricting access to information,

“The knowledge and the experience of the Centre helps us to link the real situation in our country with international standards”

threatening the role of media in reporting cases of human rights violations, and preventing people from participating in peaceful demonstrations and assemblies.

When it comes to freedom of religion and belief, there is a state-sponsored communal violence against religious minorities such as – but not exclusively – the Rohingyas. These communities are subject to restriction of their religious activities, with many being forced to leave their communities and seek refuge in other countries. Human rights respect the diversity. But military-backed hate speech and propaganda against ethnic minorities like the Rohingyas or LGBTI communities is widespread and tell people that rights are linked to religion and ethnicity. That's why we also made freedom of religion and belief a priority in 2020.

How did you know about the Centre and how can you describe this partnership?

We started partnering with the CCPR Centre two years ago. At that time, both Equality Myanmar and CCPR Centre were working to promote the ratification of ICCPR by the State of Myanmar. Since then, we have been working together on a variety of issues including on launching campaigns for ratification of ICCPR by the State, explaining and promotion of articles of the ICCPR, engaging with the UN Treaty Bodies and reporting ICCPR violations in time of Covid-19.

The partnership with the CCPR Centre has an added value for us: they are experts on ICCPR and have experience engaging with the UN system. We, the people of Myanmar, have experienced different kind of human rights violations, particularly of civil and political rights, but we don't necessarily understand how these kinds of violations relate to international covenants such as the ICCPR. So, **the knowledge and the experience of the Centre helps us to link the real situation in our country with international standards.** This really enlightened us on how to use international covenants and the UN reporting mechanisms to protect human rights at local community level. The Centre also helped us create linkages with the members of the UN Treaty Bodies and create a space for a constructive exchange of views on how to interpret articles and contextualize them to the situation on the ground. This is such a great opportunity for us to create linkages between civil society and human rights defenders at local level and international bodies.

What does the situation look like right now in Myanmar?

The military announced the military coup on February 1st 2021 and suddenly the country took a step away from democracy. We have witnessed several waves of arrests and now the military and the riot police are targeting and killing peaceful demonstrators who took the streets calling for a change. We, as human rights defenders, are of course also a target. The passing of anti-democratic laws against human rights and against international standards is also really worrying.

Unfortunately, I don't see the situation getting better anytime soon. There is a lot of potential for more demonstrations across the country and for more violence against demonstrators by the military. But the people of Myanmar don't give up, they continue, as much as they can, to show their commitment and desire to bring back democracy to their country. Many, including young generations, are sacrificing their lives, daily, on the street, challenging arrest, torture and detention to fight for human rights. But we also need international action in order to stop the current military dictatorship. We need people to raise their voice and show solidarity in support to the people who are sacrificing their lives on the street of Myanmar. **Justice is a must. Accountability is a must.**

What's Next

In **Asia**, the Centre plans to continue its engagement in **Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam** as well as its thematic work on the peaceful assembly and protection of civil and political rights during the COVID-19 pandemic, while seeking possibilities of cooperation with stakeholders in **Cambodia, Hong Kong and Macau, Indonesia, Japan, Nepal, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka** for the coming reviews by the HR Committee.

Concerning **Myanmar**, the Centre is developing urgent actions to restore the rule of law and respect for human rights in reaction to the coup on 1st February 2021 and following crisis. Our actions will primarily be composed of documentation of human rights abuses, reporting of incidents to the UN Human Rights Bodies and provision of needs oriented assistance to the HRDs on the ground.



Central ASIA

Kazakhstan

Tajikistan

Kyrgyzstan

Uzbekistan

Written by Central Asia regional coordinator *Rustam Kypshakbayev*



The state of human rights in the region

The **COVID-19 pandemic** acutely intensified the challenging human rights situation in Central Asia, a region already characterised by a restricted civic space. While situations varied by national context, across the region, human rights defenders, journalists and activists reported cases of persecution and obstacles to their work, **banning of peaceful assemblies** under the pretext of the pandemic, **restriction** and denial of access to important **information** and restriction of **movement**. The pandemic also reduced the opportunity for national human rights communities to engage with government, advocate for legal improvement and protect rights.

In Tajikistan, authorities blocked websites and targeted journalists reporting on COVID-19. Reporting on the pandemic was also extremely difficult in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, with law enforcement accusing people of “disseminating false information”. In Uzbekistan, people who shared information on social media about COVID-19 also faced prosecution.

The year 2020 also saw **elections** in several countries within the region, namely Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. All elections in 2020 were marked by reports and allegations of administrative control, unfair conditions and election fraud. Independent observation of elections was restricted due to the pandemic. In Kyrgyzstan, the post-election protest led to the overthrow of government.

Our approach and key achievements

In 2020, the Centre implemented the last phase of the project **“Implementation of ICCPR in the CIS: Towards an effective engagement of the CSOs at the national and international level”**, with a special focus on Kazakhstan and Tajikistan.

This project was aimed at contributing to the implementation of the ICCPR in the region in two ways. Firstly, the regional project aimed at **strengthening national CSOs’ capacity to develop strategic advocacy plans** to ensure that their main concerns regarding civil and political rights in their countries are adequately taken into consideration by the HR Committee and subsequently by other relevant UN mechanisms, such as the UPR and the CAT.

However, to have a real impact on the ground, the recommendations adopted by the UN Human Rights Mechanisms – UPR and UNTBs – need to be followed-up at the national level. This is the reason behind the project’s second main objective: to **raise awareness of the recommendations** and **monitor their implementation** by involving key stakeholders and **promoting a space for dialogue**.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centre had to **adapt its working modalities**, such as online meetings instead of physical gatherings, and using funding to produce documents and guidelines in local languages to support civil society in these difficult times. Our main activities included

online briefings between CSOs and HR Committee members, as well as support to CSOs and HRDs for the drafting of alternative reports to UN mechanisms.

In terms of **impact**, the project **strengthened the presence of the Centre at the regional level**. Among its main achievements, the Centre managed to increase the knowledge of key actors on UN

Human Rights mechanisms and reporting procedures and to create a **platform for dialogue between the authorities and civil society** on the implementation of the recommendations issued by UNTBs. The measurable impact of the Centre's activities also becomes clear when looking at the number of **human rights defenders – more than 100 – that were trained** over the course of the project.

Country in focus: Kazakhstan – Legal analysis on the draft law on peaceful assemblies

Kazakhstan introduced a **new draft law on peaceful assemblies** amidst the pandemic, reducing opportunities for HRDs to participate in the processes of drafting and adoption. In this context, the Centre supported Kazakhstan's civil

society by releasing the **Joint Opinion on Compliance of the Draft Law on the Procedure for Organising and Holding Peaceful Assemblies with the Republic of Kazakhstan's Human Rights Obligations**.



Advocacy work with the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law (KBHRL) ahead of the UPR-Review of Kazakhstan

The Statement, authored by Professor Sarah H. Cleveland, former vice-chair of HR Committee and co-signed together with the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute and the International Commission of Jurists, called the government "to seek guidance from the OSCE/ODIHR Panel of Experts on Freedom of Assembly and Association, the Office of UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, and/or the Venice Commission."

Among its efforts to **facilitate the follow-up of UN Treaty Bodies' recommendations** at the national level, the Centre drafted and

presented a brief report titled "Kazakhstan: tracking the implementation of **CEDAW** follow-up recommendations" to civil society, outlining the progress made by Kazakh authorities in implementing CEDAW's views, thus supporting civil society in launching and strengthening civil society's advocacy for implementation of CEDAW and CEDAW recommendations. This activity also had the effect of creating an ad-hoc group of HRDs and civil society activists who discuss the possibility of establishing a running platform for work on CEDAW views' implementation.

Country in focus: Tajikistan – Supporting a civil society advocacy plan for monitoring HR Committee's recommendations

The HR Committee reviewed Tajikistan in July 2019. After the review and the adoption of Concluding Observations, several online meetings were organized in 2020 that cumulated in a CSO meeting on the development of a CSO strategic advocacy plan for monitoring the UN HR Committee's recommendations (December 2020). Due to COVID-19-related restrictions, the meeting took place in a hybrid offline-online format: participants in Dushanbe gathered in a conference room, while other participants from Dushanbe, Geneva, Ljubljana, Nur-Sultan (former Astana) and Almaty connected online. The purpose of the meeting was to support civil society in developing a strategic advocacy plan for the implementation of the HR Committee's recommendations,

with emphasis on the three follow-up recommendations pertaining to surveillance, freedom of expression and the participation in public affairs.

In addition, the Centre supported a representative of civil society from the Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law in preparing a CSO report for Tajikistan's implementation of follow-up recommendations of the HR Committee. With the same purpose of increasing the visibility of Treaty Bodies recommendations at national level, the Centre also launched an interactive website on tracking recommendations issued for Tajikistan by UN treaty bodies and UPR. This was shared with CSOs, diplomats and other relevant stakeholders.



Your rights, your voice

Interview with Yevgeniy Zhovtis,
Director of Kazakhstan International
Bureau for Human Rights and the
Rule of Law (KIBHR)

What is the “Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law”?

KIBHR is a national non-governmental human rights organization focused on the promotion and protection of **political rights and civil liberties in Kazakhstan**. KIBHR implements a number of programs and projects in the four following areas: 1) monitoring, reporting and advocacy; 2) legislation analysis and development of alternative draft laws through institutionalized dialogue with the authorities; 3) cooperation with international human rights systems; 4) human rights education.

What pushed you to become a Human Rights Defender?

I turned to political activities in the late eighties after Gorbachev declared “perestroika”. My origins surely influenced this choice. I belong to a family of a Soviet

dissidents, my grandfather died in Stalin’s camp. My goal was to assist the transition of Kazakhstan from a Soviet totalitarian state to a democratic state. I started with joining efforts to create the first oppositional political party in Kazakhstan, then I was involved in development of independent trade unions and ended up establishing this human rights organization, KIBHR, in 1993.

Kazakhstan is a post-Soviet authoritarian state and HRDs are not welcomed, especially those who monitor and promote political rights and civil freedoms. However, after the Second World War the modern world is developing the concept of priority of natural human rights. And it is obvious that individuals who promote this concept and values are of **crucial importance for the stability and development** of the world. That’s why I wanted to be part of this movement.

Why is it important for your organization to partner with an organization like CCPR Centre?

We met with the Director of the CCPR Centre more than a decade ago at one of the human rights events and found common grounds in the promotion of political rights and civil liberties. In the mid-90s, KIBHR started getting involved in human rights advocacy at the international level, including links with UN Treaty Bodies. The Centre is present in Geneva and has very good contacts with the UN human rights system, that's why we decided to collaborate. **Their technical support is key and helps us improve our advocacy efforts and strengthen our relations with UN Treaty Bodies.**

What's the current state of human rights in Kazakhstan? Have you seen any progress over the past years?

The assessment of the human rights situation in the country is very controversial. In some areas, the respect of political rights and civil liberties is obviously declining. But we also see some progress in other areas. Kazakhstan finally ratified the Second Optional Protocol to ICCPR, juvenile justice is developing, the number of prisoners dropped by three times, the dialogue between the government and human rights organizations is becoming more regular and intensive. So, **there is hope for a better future.**

“The Centre’s technical support is key and helps us improve our advocacy efforts and strengthen our relations with UN Treaty Bodies”

What's Next

For 2021, the Centre plans to continue its support for national civil societies, with a focus on **Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan** and **Uzbekistan**. The Centre will do so by providing advice on the ICCPR as well as on UN Treaty Bodies' reporting mechanisms and supporting CSOs' engagement at national levels.

The core activities of the Centre relate to supporting national CSOs in their interactions with the HR Committee and promoting the Committee's work. Support to national partners will not only be given in the context of the "Implementation of ICCPR in the CIS" project, but also on a long-term basis through the regular activities of the Centre. It is expected that civil society will continue to make good use of the available mechanisms, so that their concerns are more effectively and systematically addressed at the national level. Civil society participated actively in the review of Tajikistan before the HR Committee in July 2019 and Kazakhstan during the UPR in October 2019. Beyond these reviews, the Centre will continue to cooperate with its partners for the follow-up procedure, to ensure that State authorities are aware of the recommendations and that they can work towards their implementation.

LATIN *America*



Bolivia

Cuba

Guatemala

Haiti

Honduras

Nicaragua

Peru

El Salvador

Venezuela

Written by Latin America regional coordinator *Elisabeth Jimenez*

Follow-up mission in Honduras



The state of human rights in the region

Throughout 2020, Latin America faced a series of challenges. On occasion, measures by governments to combat **COVID-19** resulted in human rights abuses and contravened civil and political rights contained in the ICCPR, adding to the already dire consequences of the pandemic. Across the region, many people took to the streets in **mass demonstrations** in order to protest these abuses.

Amongst the rights that have been of concern to human rights defenders in 2020 were the **right to due process** and proper conditions of **detention**, the right to freedom of expression and data management. Lack of **security for HRDs** and barriers to their work were also important issues in the region. In addition, new government **elections** have either taken place or are about to take place in several countries, with human rights defenders concerned about the transparency of the processes.

Our approach and key achievements

Each of the above-mentioned factors have made the work of HRDs in the region more complex. This is the reason why, in 2020, the Centre decided to place an increased focus on working **hand-in-hand with civil society** organizations and human rights defenders, trying to understand their concerns with the ultimate aim of **strengthening their capacity** for the effective protection of human rights in the region.

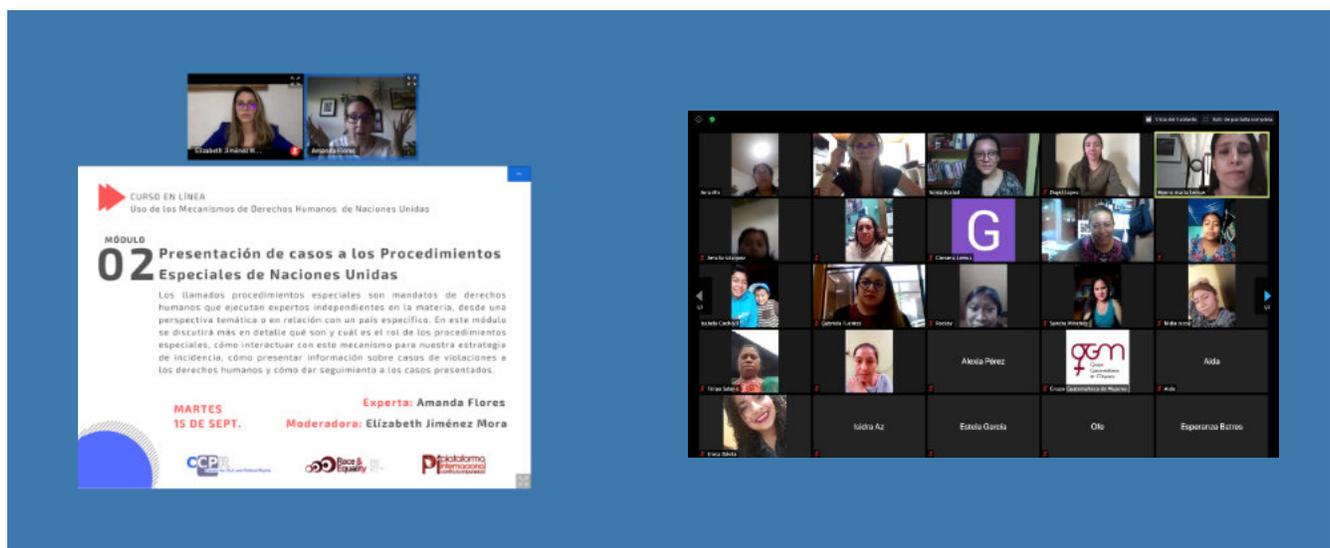
We worked toward this goal in several ways. First of all, we focused on organising **trainings and capacity building activities** for civil society in order to increase awareness of the existing regional and international human rights mechanisms they can use to improve the protection of human rights in the region.

Second, we focused on **improving the follow-up of UN Treaty Bodies recommendations** in the region through several activities. To this aim, the Centre supported civil society organisations and human rights defenders in the **drafting of action plans** for the follow-up of the recommendations of the UPR and the HR Committee, and organised several **meetings with State authorities** in the region to learn more about the challenge they face in the implementation of the recommendations of UN Treaty Bodies.

Activity in focus: Using virtuality to reduce distances between Human Rights experts and civil society

In 2020, the Centre used **virtuality to reduce distances between Human Rights experts and civil society**. For example, in **Guatemala**, the Centre – in partnership with Red de No Violencia contra las Mujeres (REDNOVI) and Grupo Guatemalteco de Mujeres - organized a **3-module webinar on the HR Committee and the ICCPR** for predominantly female HRDs and indigenous leaders. The Centre also targeted CSOs from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador through a workshop on the use of UN human rights mechanisms. This was an opportunity for people in the region to better familiarise themselves with the United Nations human rights system and to interface with experts from the same institutions. It was also an opportunity for civil society in general, and in particular for women in Guatemala, to know more about tools to defend their rights.

A special focus was put on **strengthening the complementarity and interconnectivity between** human rights systems, namely **the Inter-American System and the Universal System**, through a series of webinars bringing together representatives from civil society as well as experts from the two systems with the ultimate aim of improving the fulfilment and respect of human rights in the Americas. Civil society was represented by the Centro por la Justicia y el Derecho Internacional (CEJIL). The two webinars - focused on the issue of **reparations** and the **right to peaceful assembly** - offered an important space for dialogue, allowing users to share experiences and opened the door for CEJIL to also use the Universal system. Moreover, the participation of civil society organisations through CEJIL provided experts with visibility of impacts, as well as an appreciation of the importance of their decisions for the victims.



Country in focus: Honduras – Offering technical support to CSOs

Written by Heidy Alachan, National Coordinator for Honduras

The human rights situation in Honduras is going through **one of the most serious crises** in the country's recent history, due to the structural crises stemming from the 2009 coup d'état. Eleven years after the coup, many factors still contribute to the human rights situation, such as the absence of electoral reforms, the lack of judicial independence and the concentration of power in the executive. These factors have contributed to a deeply militarised country focused on order and security, with an alarmingly increasing inequality gap and a **lack of focus on human rights**.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the country faced a series of restrictions, including **undue restrictions on human rights work**. These accumulating crises have demonstrated the absolute fragility of Honduran institutions.

In this scenario, the work of the Centre focused mainly on three activities:

- ▶ Technical support to the Honduran civil society for the elaboration and presentation of a CSO report to the HR Committee in the framework of the review of Honduras in 2020.
- ▶ Technical support and coordination for national and international advocacy in the framework of the UPR of Honduras.
- ▶ Training and capacity building for Honduran civil society in the functioning and use of the universal human rights system.

The Centre also focused on monitoring violations of ICCPR provisions in the context of COVID-19.



Your rights, your voice

Interview with Sonia Acabal from
"Red de No Violencia contra las Mujeres"

Sonia Acabal is member of the NGO "Red de No Violencia contra las Mujeres" in Guatemala. A well-known human rights defender, a social worker and a university teacher, Sonia fights for the rights of women in her country. Read her powerful interview to know more about the importance of upholding women rights in the Americas and worldwide.

How and when was your organisation created? What is its main objective?

The NGO "Red de No Violencia contra las Mujeres" was created on the 29th of April 1991 after a very regrettable and violent incident in which the life of a colleague, activist and human right defender Dinora Perez, was violently taken. On that day, several women decided to form this

network to fight any form of violence against women. Today, the NGO includes representatives of several organisations fighting for different rights who come together and coordinate in La Red with the common goal of fighting all forms of discrimination, oppression and violence against women. This has been the slogan that has united us since 1991. And this year the Red will celebrate **30 years of activity.**

How is the situation of human rights in Guatemala? Do you see violations of the ICCPR and other international treaties?

Unfortunately, the human rights situation in Guatemala is very serious. Over the last few years, we have seen how a **regressive, anti-rights agenda** has been planted in the structures of the state. The situation is complex, whatever right you choose to defend - the right to work, to food, to health, to sexual and reproductive rights, to water or any other right - you will see that the situation is precarious.

Your rights, your voice

And the **pandemic has worsened an already complex situation**. If you take the ICCPR, for example, there are so many rights that are now being violated in my country: the right to life, the right to a fair trial, the freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, the right against torture and other inhuman treatments etc. These are just a few examples.

Moreover, on top of this disrespect for universally recognised human rights, we face now an increased **criminalisation of all actors who tries to uphold these rights**. We have reached a situation in which defending human rights seems to be a crime, to the point that anyone who defends human rights puts their life at risk.

What about women's rights?

When it comes to women's rights, we are faced with even greater challenges. Over the past few years, we have seen a **setback in the advances** that had been made to prevent and punish violence against women as well as tentative to weaken and dismantle the basic national mechanism for women's protection. In this government, women are not a priority, we are not seen as a fundamental part of the country's development. In Guatemala, there is a patriarchal structure that continues to promote the idea that women are not subjects of rights. On top of physical violence, women face a more subtle form of violence that treat them as they were not important, limiting women's access to education, health and other basic services.

What are the main activities of your organisation?

Our NGO carries out a series of activities, focusing mainly on **advocacy at national and international levels** and on communication and awareness-raising campaigns. We try to sensitise people to the problem of violence against women, we transfer our knowledge to other organisations to make sure other women can be informed about the protection mechanisms that exist at the international level and how these can be used to protect women in our country. We also contribute to the work of these human rights mechanisms, providing them with information about the situation of women in Guatemala. We know that **if we don't speak up, no one else will**.

How and why did you contact the CCPR Centre? What was your hope in contacting the centre? What have you learned from the collaboration with the CCPR centre?

We first had contact with the CCPR Centre while working with the international platform against impunity. In getting in contact with the Centre, we hoped to receive more information on how to follow up on recommendations made by the HR Committee. **We needed a strategic ally close to a Committee that for us is physically distant** and difficult to access in terms of language. This collaboration gave us a light and a path has opened up. We know that, now that we collaborate

with the CCPR Centre, we have an ally who can bring our voice to the Committee, someone we can exchange information with, someone who can support us with concrete actions and trainings.

For instance, the CCPR together with the Red and the "Grupo Guatemalteco de Mujeres" organised a virtual training on how civil society organisations can access the UN Human Rights mechanism. The training was very important for us and for other human rights defenders in my country, giving us an insight on how to use these mechanisms and what procedures we need to follow. We were then able to transfer some of this knowledge in a webinar with students at the public university of Guatemala who were interested in knowing explicitly how to present cases before the Committee.

What motivates you to continue doing your work and to fight for women's rights in your country?

What motivates me to continue doing what I do, defending women's rights, defending the right to defend rights, is that **this country desperately needs it**. It is important to continue defending women's rights and human rights in general because there is an attack against each of these rights every day in this country. I myself am a survivor of these violations and I know that it is necessary that the voice of women continues to expand and to be heard. That's why we will not stop, we will continue to defend human rights and document the situation.

Every time we manage to talk to women from another country, we see with great concern how everything that has been achieved 30 years ago is now in danger. **We can't allow regressions**, we need to defend what has been built, in the name of many women who suffered and died worldwide to fight for rights. Today more than ever it is important to be united in order to continue this fight together, to continue promoting our integral development as women subjects of rights.

What are your hopes for the future of women, in Guatemala and worldwide?

I hope that the advances we have made in the last 30 years in the fight for women's rights will continue. What I hope for in the future is that the women of the world will live in peace, free from all violence, all discrimination, all racism, all exclusion.

I hope that we women can exercise our rights, that we can express ourselves, organise ourselves, access services. I hope that all women in this country do not die of preventable causes. I hope that we women can develop ourselves and that our ways of thinking will not be criminalised. I hope that we as human rights defenders can continue to defend our rights without thinking that at any moment we could be persecuted for our work.

"We needed a strategic ally close to a Committee that for us is physically distant and difficult to access in terms of language. This collaboration gave us a light and a path has opened up."

What's Next

In 2021, the Centre's strategy in **Latin America** will continue focusing on strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations and facilitating dialogue between civil society and national authorities. In particular, in **El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala** and **Honduras**, the Centre will support civil society in the follow-up of the HR Committee's recommendations. In **Nicaragua**, the Centre will help CSOs coordinate an advocacy strategy towards the review of **Nicaragua** by the HR Committee. In **Venezuela, Peru, Haiti** and **Bolivia**, the Centre will focus on 1. supporting the preparation of an NGO coalition report in response to the HR Committee's **list of issues**; 2. Strengthening the NGO platform and developing an advocacy strategy on key issues of concern to human rights defenders; 3. Identifying NGO priority issues and develop an action plan; 4. Drafting a document analysing the level of implementation of UN recommendations. In **Honduras**, the Centre will continue its work focusing on three categories of activities, namely 1. Support for the consolidation of an alternative mechanism for Honduran civil

society to follow-up on international recommendations; 2. Training and capacity building activities for civil society and academic actors in the field of human rights and 3. Strengthening the capacity for dialogue between civil society and the authorities on the structural issues of the human rights crisis in the country.

The Centre will also focus on projects on a regional level. These will include 1. A series of conferences on the complaints procedure of the UN treaty body system and regional human rights system; 2. The drafting of booklets with the international standards and key jurisprudence adopted by the UN treaty bodies and the Inter-American system on key thematic issues including corruption, freedom of peaceful assembly and 3. Training with journalists, HRDs, authorities and other key actors on human rights and human rights mechanisms. Last but not least, the Centre will also help civil society from several countries – **Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, Bolivia, Peru** and **Haiti** – develop websites summarizing country-specific recommendations of the UN human rights mechanisms.

AFRICA



Burundi Central African Republic Congo Brazzaville DR Congo Eswatini Gabon
Kenya Liberia Malawi Mauritania Niger Senegal Tunisia Togo Zambia Zimbabwe

Written by Africa regional coordinator *André Afanou*

Follow-up mission in Senegal - February 2020



The state of human rights in the region

Two main factors have impacted the overall human rights situation in the region and civil and political rights in particular. Firstly, the security crisis caused by the **terrorist threat in the Sahel region**, and secondly, the health crisis due to the global **COVID-19** pandemic.

Because of the terrorist threat and the attacks that have occurred against civilian populations and military bases in several countries such as Mali, Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso and Nigeria, most States have taken counter measures, some of which have had a negative impact on civil and political rights. There have been arrests and significant **restrictions of human rights defenders**, journalists and blogging activists, all in the name of the fight against terrorism.

These restrictions were then reinforced by the need to respond to the **COVID-19 related health crisis**. In West and Central Africa, particularly in Senegal, Mali, Niger, Togo, Cote d'Ivoire, Burundi and Guinea serious violations of rights protecting civic space have been observed. Several cases including limitations or denial of freedom of demonstration, freedom of expression and assembly, as well as arbitrary arrests and physical violence have been reported.

On a **positive note**, a few States in the region have adopted legislation prohibiting torture, acts of torture or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. But the situation in places of **detention** remains a concern almost everywhere in the region. Another situation that is noticed is the **lack of free and fair electoral processes** in many countries that have held elections especially in Togo, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire and Burundi.

Our approach and key achievements

In 2020 the Centre continued to **support and accompany civil society organisations and State institutions** with the overall aim of promoting respect for ICCPR provisions in the region. A special focus was put on seven African countries that have recently been reviewed by the HR Committee or will soon be reviewed, namely: Burundi, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritania, Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal and Tunisia.

As for the other countries in the region, our two-pronged approach aimed at: **1. Strengthening the capacities of civil society and supporting its advocacy and reporting efforts**, including the drafting of alternative reports to be submitted to the HR Committee; **2. Facilitating the follow-up of the Committee's recommendations** at the national level. To this end, the Centre produced visual tools to increase the visibility of recommendations and interacted with State authorities to better understand their concerns and support them in the follow-up including national visits with members of the HR Committee.

The Centre also supported CSOs with the development of action plans and follow-up reports to monitor the implementation of recommendations in DRC, where, thanks to online modalities of working, partners from remote regions such as Kivu or Kasai could participate and provide first-hand information to the HR Committee.

In Burundi, the national coalition of HRDs (mostly in exile) continued to work closely with the Centre, documenting human rights violations which were fed into various reports and statements submitted to the HR Committee and the Human Rights Council.

Country in focus: Gabon, Congo Brazzaville and Guinea Bissau – A first successful partnership with civil society organisations

Several CSOs from Congo Brazzaville, Gabon and Guinea received support from the Centre in the preparation and submission of their **reports for the adoption of the list of issues prior to the review** of their respective countries. In the context of the Covid-19 health crisis, nineteen in-person meetings were replaced by online webinars. The new methodology worked out well, receiving positive feedback from CSOs.

Congo-Brazzaville: The report, finalised in June 2020, took stock of the civil and political rights environment in the country on various points, from the prohibition of discrimination to the rights of persons belonging to minorities, including the constitutional and legal framework for the implementation of the Covenant. For the first time, the Centre succeeded in establishing a partnership with five local

NGOs that signed the report under the coordination of the Observatoire Congolais des Droits de l'Homme (OCDH). The CSOs appreciated this partnership and agreed to make it a lasting one for the next stages of monitoring the implementation of the ICCPR in the country.

Gabon: In response to the List of Issues Prior to Reporting adopted by the Committee to Gabon in 2020 for its review, eight CSOs, with the support of the Centre, prepared and sent to the HR Committee a report highlighting the challenges in all aspects of civil and political rights in the country. These include violations of the right to life, the lack of independence of the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) and the practice of torture and ill-treatment. At the end of the preparation of the report to be sent to the HR Committee,

Mrs. Nathalie Zemo-Efoua, President of the NGO Femme Lève-Toi, expressed her satisfaction in these terms: "Despite the global context marked by an unprecedented health crisis making physical contacts and face-to-face training workshops impossible, the CCPR Centre was able to find the appropriate methodology to enable us to take ownership of the process of the State's submission to the HR Committee and above all to better understand the importance for us, as civil society actors, to contribute effectively".

Guinea-Bissau: Guinea-Bissau ratified the ICCPR in 2010. While the country was expected to submit its initial report to the Committee, CSOs in the country, with the support of the Centre, prepared an alternative report in advance of the List of Issues. The report on the situation of civil and political rights in the country was intended to serve as a working basis for the HR Committee's experts in formulating the List of Issues, which was finally sent to the State in January 2021. The civil society representatives expressed their satisfaction with this first collaboration with the Centre and hope it will last.



Mrs. Nathalie Zemo-Efoua

President of NGO
Femme Lève-Toi
DR Congo

"Despite the global context marked by an unprecedented health crisis making physical contacts and face-to-face training workshops impossible, the CCPR Centre was able to find the appropriate methodology to enable us to take ownership of the process of the State's submission to the HR Committee and above all to better understand the importance for us, as civil society actors, to contribute effectively".

Country in focus: Niger – The successful challenge of a multi-actor synergy between civil society, the government and the parliament

Niger was reviewed by the HR Committee in March 2019. On this occasion, **three priority recommendations** were made concerning the fight against corruption and **transparency in the extractive industries**, the situation in places of **detention** and the **protection of civic space** with the vote of a law on defenders. In this context, the CCPR Centre carried out two missions to the country in February and November 2020. The meetings and activities carried out during these two missions made it possible to create a **synergy between** three categories of actors; they involved **(1) civil society** grouped within the Collectif des Organisations de Défense des Droits de l'Homme et de la Démocratie (CODDHD), **(2) the Ministry of Justice** in charge of human rights and the **(3) Parliament** through the Commission des Affaires Générales et Institutionnelles. In contrast to other countries in the African region where the Centre has intervened, this was the first time that such a strategy has been adopted. It is based on three objectives:

1. Building dialogue with the government to adopt an action plan and take steps to implement the recommendations.

2. Parliamentarians to take ownership of the recommendations and identify where they should either monitor government action or vote for legislative reforms themselves.

3. Strengthen civil society so that it popularises the recommendations and monitors their implementation through advocacy and other meetings.

The success of this three-pronged strategy has been evident; alongside the government, which has its own plan for implementing the recommendations, civil society has also drawn up an action plan and the Parliament has identified the main lines of its roadmap for following up the recommendations. During a workshop held in November 2020 in Niamey, each entity was able to appropriate the action plans of the others in order to draw on them for **common action**. The Centre also supported key stakeholders involved in the project by producing and disseminating **awareness-raising tools** such as posters popularising the recommendations and a teaching guide for parliamentarians on the follow-up to the recommendations of the HR Committee.

Your rights, your voice

Interview with Henri Wemboula from the NGO Alliance pour l'Universalité des Droits Fondamentaux (AUDF) Democratic Republic of Congo



Henri Wemboula is a lawyer at the Bar of Kinshasa and the President of the NGO Alliance pour l'Universalité des Droits Fondamentaux (AUDF-RDC). He is also the author of several books on Human Rights published by l'Harmattan. In this interview, he explains the work of his NGO and the collaboration with the CCPR Centre.

What is the human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)?

I would describe the human rights situation in the country at the beginning of 2021 as **volatile**. The United Nations Joint Human Rights Office (UN JHRO) reports showed a decrease in human rights violations two years ago, but a resurgence is now noted with the deterioration of the security situation of human rights defenders.

54 cases of HRDs threatened or arrested were reported in 2020. The **security situation** in the east of the DRC and the **difficult economic situation** are also major preoccupations for the Congolese, especially in the middle of the current **political crisis**.

What are the main activities carried out by AUDF?

The Alliance pour l'Universalité des Droits Fondamentaux or AUDF was created in 2007. The NGO works on human rights education and for the protection of human rights such as the fight against torture, assistance to HRDs at risk, assistance to victims of serious crimes and people in arbitrary detention. It also advocates for laws for the protection of HRDs, the respect of public freedoms and fair treatment of vulnerable groups according to international standards. The NGO also advocates for the independence of the judiciary and the correct implementation of the recommendations of the UNTBS and UPR.

In 2020, our work focused on the **follow-up to the recommendations** of the HR Committee and the CAT on **advocacy for the protection of HRDs**, on the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act**, the situation of detainees in the context of Covid-19 and monitoring of human rights **violations in the context of Covid-19**.

How has the CCPR centre supported you?

We started working with the CCPR Centre in 2019 on the submission of an alternative report for the UPR. In July 2020, we worked again together on the Follow-up Report to the Concluding Observations of the HR Committee.

The CCPR Centre also helped us by producing the "Guide for the Democratic Republic of Congo for the implementation of civil and political and political rights", an important document that we shared with political authorities and parliamentarians.

"Working with the CCPR Centre has taught me to rely on everyone's participation and capitalise on opportunities to achieve goals even in difficult times of Covid-19. Civil society has a crucial role to play in the protection of human rights in the DRC. And the support of CCPR is indispensable to strengthen the capacities of our civil society."

Working with the CCPR Centre taught me to rely on everyone's participation and capitalise on opportunities to achieve goals even in difficult times of Covid-19. Civil society has a crucial role to play in the protection of human rights in the DRC. And the support of **CCPR is indispensable to strengthen the capacities of our civil society**.

What are your hopes for your country in the future? And what are your plans for the months ahead?

We are confident about the future despite the important challenges. In the coming months, we plan to work on **advocacy for a law to protect HRDs**, on the creation of a **National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture** in line with standards, the **mid-term evaluation of the UPR**, advocacy for the implementation of the National Plan for the Reform of the Judiciary in line with the respect of human rights. There is no lack of work!

What motivates you to continue your work and your struggle for human rights in your country?

The fight for human rights is our vocation and encouragement to build a just society in the DRC. The current socio-economic, political and security crises require that human rights are taken into account by the leaders and the population for a better future for all.

What's Next

In 2021, the Centre will continue its focus on **four main axes** of activities: 1. Increase the awareness of various stakeholders on the role the HR Committee can play in the promotion of civil and political rights in the region; 2. Build capacities of CSOs by supporting their advocacy and reporting efforts; 3. Develop spaces for dialogue between civil society and national authorities on key human rights priorities; and 4. Facilitate the follow-up of recommendations at the national level. Priority will be given to countries that are currently on the agenda of the HR Committee (**Togo, Burundi, Lesotho, Uganda, Zambia**). **Follow-up** activities will continue in **Senegal** and **Mauritania** and will start in **Kenya** after the Committee's review. The Centre will also reinforce its activities with the Parliamentarians in **Niger and in DRC** as well as in **Madagascar**. In addition, in DRC and in Burundi priority will be given to the cooperation with the National Human Rights Commissions with a specific focus on Committee's urgent recommendations such as the establishment of a National Mechanism to prevent Torture.

An overview of the Centre's thematic work



The Human Rights Committee focuses its work on the civil and political rights that are enshrined in the ICCPR, though some issues receive more attention than others. For example, sometimes there is a gap between the concerns of civil society on the ground and the final recommendations that are adopted by the Committee. To address this, the Centre continues to refine its **thematic approach**, focusing on specific issues that require more attention during State reviews. So far, the Centre has focused on three themes: the link between corruption and human rights; participation in public affairs in line with the ICCPR Article 25; and the impact of COVID-19 on the enjoyment of human rights.

Thematic focus 1: Clarifying the link between corruption and human rights

The Centre has been focusing on the link between corruption and human rights for several years now, with activities being designed around two key stakeholders: civil society and the treaty bodies themselves. The Centre supported anti-corruption experts with national and regional consultations, expert meetings and the development of a dedicated website and user-friendly materials. Additionally, the Centre also organised several activities with the involvement of members of several Treaty Bodies. This resulted in an increased awareness among the members about the widespread impact of corruption on the enjoyment of human rights, and growing attention for the issue in country reviews.



Lázarië Eeckeloo is a Human Rights Officer at the Centre, in charge of thematic files. In this interview, she explains the background and the main findings of her research focusing on how the UN Treaty Bodies address the issue of corruption.

What is the link between human rights and corruption?

Corruption hinders the enjoyment of human rights. It is very clear from a lot of studies. When there is widespread corruption in a country, this has an impact on civil and political rights – i.e., law enforcement are more inclined to take bribes, the risk of torture is higher – but also on economic, social and cultural rights, restricting people's access to food, clean water education and so on. And we must not forget that corruption is a widespread phenomenon, present almost universally.

Why did the Centre decide to focus on this issue?

The Centre noticed that there was **a gap in the HR Committee's Concluding Observations**, where corruption was often addressed superficially, and in an inconsistent manner. The Centre initiated this project to ensure that the HR Committee was aware that they needed to incorporate the impact of corruption in their reviews. We also noticed that the HR Committee was not receiving a lot of inputs from CSOs or individuals on issues relating

to corruption, making it very difficult for the Committee to address the issue. That's why the project also focused on building the capacity of CSOs to identify, document and report to the Committee about corruption in their countries.

What are the main results of this research and what is different compared to the previous research done in 2018?

We first published a research on the issue of corruption in 2018, looking at data from 2007 to 2017. The conclusion of that research was that most treaty bodies had no systematic approach to corruption. The issue was mentioned at random depending on whether they received information about it, but most committees didn't look at it systematically when reviewing a country's human rights situation.

To address this, the Centre collaborated with members of different Treaty Bodies, members of civil society and representatives from the OHCHR and developed a guide for civil society to make them able to send information to the treaty bodies. As a result, we saw **a shift in the way**

Treaty Bodies mention corruption. References to corruption are more frequent, consistent and systematic, so we thought it was important to capture this evolution in the data. That's why, in 2020, we decided to **update the research, adding data from 2018 and 2019**. It's very encouraging to see that in 2018/19 almost all Treaty Bodies have increased the frequency, maturity and comprehensiveness of references to corruption: most Treaty Bodies are beginning to look at the intersectionality of the phenomenon, and not just from a surface angles.

How do you assess the impact of the project?

I think it's really difficult to conclude that this project directly resulted in less corruption in some countries. However, I think the biggest impact of the process is that we **built capacities of the civil society** and managed to foster meaningful **connection between the anti-corruption community and the human rights community**, making anti-corruption experts aware of the opportunity of using UN Human rights mechanisms.

In some countries such as Uzbekistan, Burkina Faso and many others, civil society organisations submitted a **thematic report** on corruption, and this helped increase the attention of the HR Committee on the issue. In the case of Uzbekistan, corruption was also chosen as one of priority issues for the follow-up recommendations.

Is there a story that stays with you?

I really admire the work of one of our partners in **Uzbekistan**. A woman – who

doesn't have a legal background – started a Facebook group of people who have been evicted from the country. She has become a super powerful activist who represents these people and fights for their rights. It's very impressive to see how she keeps working every day, despite the risks for her safety and even if the situation can seem hopeless. Just to give you an idea of the size of the problem, her Facebook group counts now more than 10000 members. When I work with people like her, people who risk their life to fight for their rights, I feel honoured to be able to support them, to help them reach the international level, the only hope left for them to seek justice.

The project has now ended. Are you planning to do other activities in the future to follow-up on this matter?

A lot of progress has been made in the UN Treaty Bodies. Members are much more aware of how corruption can impact human rights but of course members change so this is a **continuous effort** we have to make. Also, when we talk about **building capacity of civil society**, this is about building sustainable partnerships, staying in contact with them and alerting them when there is a new reporting opportunity – so it's a continuous piece of work as well.

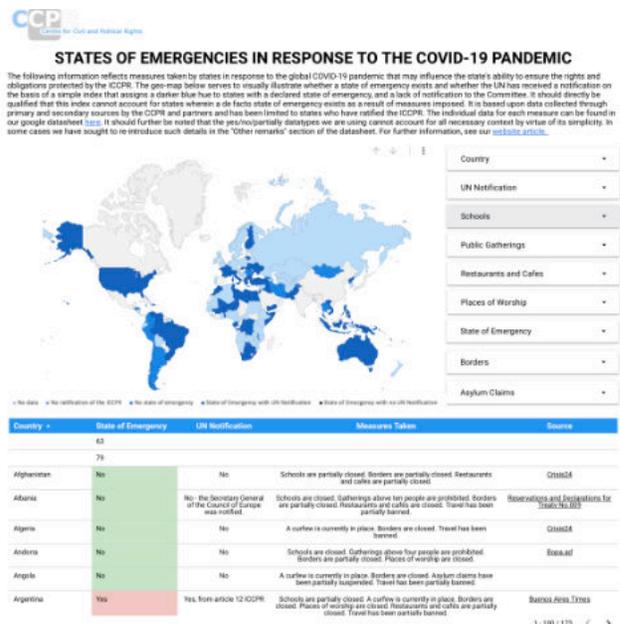
The idea is also to **mainstream this thematic work** that we did **in our regular activities**. For instance, when we organise a national consultation for civil society, we also stress the importance of including information on corruption when they report to the HR Committee and other Treaty Bodies.

Thematic focus 2: Covid-19 Related ICCPR violations

Amid the unprecedented public health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, various measures have been taken by State and local authorities including those restricting rights and freedoms of individuals. In many cases, such restrictions appear necessary to effectively deal with the virus outbreak and protect the rights to life and health of all. Indeed, when facing serious national emergency situations, such as the one caused by the COVID-19 crisis, State parties are permitted to impose restrictions of certain civil and political rights or, on a temporary basis, derogate from some of their obligations under the ICCPR.

Still, concerns have been raised over the extent, impact and duration of some of the measures taken that potentially go beyond the scope of restrictions and derogations permitted under the ICCPR. Allegations have also been made that some State actors have been using the **COVID-19 crisis as a window of opportunity to consolidate authority**, introduce new extraordinary powers, or crack down on CSOs, HRDs or the political opposition. Marginalised groups were also disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, as well as by the negative impact of the measures taken in response to it.

In order to detect such potential violations of the ICCPR in the context of COVID-19 pandemic and help stakeholders effectively monitor and report them, the Centre launched an online **tracking tool on the “Impact of States of emergencies on civil and political rights”** that was regularly updated during the height of the pandemic. The Centre also developed **guidelines** and **flash cards** that provide 1. An overview and simple explanation of ICCPR articles that permits restrictions in particular circumstances; 2. The required procedures and conditions for a legitimate derogation from the ICCPR; and 3. A list of the rights enshrined in the ICCPR from which no derogation is permitted under any circumstance, even in a state of emergency.



Available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#), these tools are now used by national stakeholders for their monitoring and reporting activities, especially in countries which are scheduled to be reviewed by the HR Committee in 2021 and 2022.

The Centre has also conducted pilot studies in Japan, Myanmar and Viet Nam. Although the scale of the study was limited, findings indicate that the freedom of expression, including the right to information, is at the highest risk of violation in many cases. Particular attention should also be paid to the issue of hate speech - and in some cases hate crimes - against marginalised groups. In addition, those groups are also likely to be more severely affected by the pandemic and being left out from the protective and support measures taken by the authorities. These findings are used to increase the effectiveness of the Centre's activity in assisting national stakeholders as well as the HR Committee's work.



The infographic is titled "Artículo 12 Libertad de movimiento" (Article 12 Freedom of movement). It features a central illustration of a woman with a backpack and a smartphone, with a plane flying in the background. The text explains that Article 12 of the ICCPR allows for restrictions on the right to freedom of circulation, provided they are necessary for national security, public order, public health, or public morals, and are based on law. It lists five categories of permissible restrictions: I. National security, II. Public order, III. Public health, IV. Public morals, and V. The rights and freedoms of others. It also states that restrictions for other reasons are not permitted. A section titled "LAS RESTRICCIONES DEBEN SER:" (Restrictions must be:) lists three criteria: 1. They must be provided in law using precise criteria, not discretionary. 2. They must be in conformity with the principle of proportionality. 3. They must be compatible with the fundamental principles of equality and non-discrimination. A final section notes that if any restriction is imposed on Article 12, States must provide information to the Human Rights Committee in their periodic reports, particularly regarding: 1. The legal norms on which the restrictions are based, 2. The available remedies for the restriction, and 3. If foreigners receive different treatment, the circumstances of that treatment and its justification. At the bottom, it provides a link to a control list for monitoring violations of ICCPR articles in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Artículo 12
Libertad de movimiento

El artículo 12 del PIDCP permite restricciones al derecho a la libertad de circulación, de elegir su propia residencia y de salir de cualquier país, si están previstas por la ley y son necesarias para

- I La seguridad nacional.
- II El orden público (orden public).
- III La salud pública.
- IV La moral pública.
- V Los derechos y libertades de los demás.

No se permiten restricciones por motivos distintos de los enumerados anteriormente.

LAS RESTRICCIONES DEBEN SER:

- Previstas en la ley utilizando criterios precisos, no discrecionales.
- De conformidad con el principio de proporcionalidad.
- Compatible con los principios fundamentales de igualdad y no discriminación.

Si se impone alguna restricción al artículo 12 del PIDCP, los Estados Partes deben proporcionar toda la información pertinente en sus informes periódicos al Comité de Derechos Humanos, en particular sobre:

- Las normas jurídicas en que se basan las restricciones.
- Los recursos disponibles para la restricción.
- Si los extranjeros reciben un trato diferente, las circunstancias de ese trato diferente y su justificación.

Vinculo
Lista de control para monitorear las violaciones a los artículos del PIDCP en el contexto de la pandemia de COVID-19

3/10

Thematic focus 3 – ICCPR Art. 25 on participation in public affairs



Art. 25 of the ICCPR guarantees the **right to participate in public affairs**. This includes of course the right to vote, that should be guaranteed to everyone, but also other related rights such as the right to be elected and the right to have access to public service. Art. 25 has also an indirect impact on many other important rights included in the ICCPR: the right of peaceful assembly, the prohibition of discrimination, the equality of women and men etc.

Despite its pivotal importance, **many countries still do not fully comply with this article**. In many contexts, post-elections violence remains common. There are also many examples where vulnerable groups such as people with

disabilities or indigenous peoples do not have access to or cannot put in practice the right to vote. Women's participation also remains a problem in many countries, with boundaries preventing women from participating effectively in public affairs.

The Centre observed that **some of these issues were not addressed** by the HR Committee in the Concluding Observations. Moreover, not many individual cases of the Committee deal directly with art. 25. In order to respond in part to this problem, the Centre decided to work actively on this issue with the ultimate aim of improving the visibility of this article in the work of the HR Committee.

In particular, the Centre **worked with civil society organisations** on how to report violations linked to Art.25 to the HR Committee. For this aim, the Centre produced a document entitled "The right to participate in public affairs: how to bring the issue to the attention of the HR Committee". The **guidelines, available in French, English and Spanish**, explain the scope of Art.25 and give guidance to civil society on how to engage with the HR Committee on this issue, covering written submissions, procedures for individual complaints and other alternative mechanisms for engagement.

The document also contains research outlining the aspects of the article that are frequently covered by the Committee – such as, for example, women's participation

in public affairs – and the ones that are sometimes overlooked. This can help civil society to identify gaps in the reporting procedure.

As part of this project, the Centre also organised several webinars with lawyers and litigators from several countries. The aim of these webinars was to introduce them to the guidelines, and to raise awareness about the individual communications procedure with the HR Committee.

The Centre also organised several trainings for civil society on how to submit thematic reports focusing on public affairs, and as a result, thematic reports were submitted for Kenya, Tunisia and Zambia.

"In general, civil society organisations welcome the activities with a lot of enthusiasm and motivation", said Lâzarie Eeckeloo, Human Rights Officer in charge of thematic work at the Centre. "The knowledge people have of the existing reporting mechanisms depends on country to country but is generally extremely limited. And even if they might know about the mechanisms, civil society organisations often don't know how to access them or how to comply with all the procedural requirements when submitting a case. This is where the Centre can fill a gap, assisting them in the submission of specific cases", continued Eeckeloo.

"The equal right to participate in the affairs of the State and to fair elections makes it possible to create fairer conditions for the effective and progressive management of the resources of countries by their own people"

**Alnur Ilyashev,
Human Rights Activist
in Kazakhstan**



Your rights, your voice

Interview with Alnur Ilyashev,
human rights activist in Kazakhstan

"When the Centre organized the webinar on individual cases, one of the participants said he wanted to submit his own case. A well-known human rights activist in his country, Alnur decided to candidate in local elections in Kazakhstan. As a consequence, he received threats and was detained. Now, free again, and having tried all available mechanisms at national level, Alnur would like to present his case before the HR Committee. Hearing him sharing his story made me realize the concrete impact of our work, the real difference this can make in someone's life."

Quote from Lázarie Eeckeloo,
Human Rights Officer at the Centre.

Mr. Ilyashev, can you tell us more about your story?

My name is Alnur Ilyashev. I'm 43 years old. I've started my career as lawyer in 1998. Since 2018, I am more known as a civil activist, working on violations of constitutional and basic human rights in Kazakhstan.

As a result, Kazakh authorities sentenced me to three years of limited freedom and five years of suspension from any political and social activity. My speeches on social media and critical posts about our ruling party "Nur Otan" were their main accusations. All attempts to appeal this verdict did not yield results. The next step in protecting my rights is to file my case **to the HR Committee**, in which I am assisted by a number of international NGOs.

How did you know about the existence of our organisation? What does support from an NGO in Geneva mean for you and your activities in Kazakhstan?

The CCPR's Regional Coordinator for Central Asia, Rustam Kipshakbayev, invited me to take part in an online conference on the topic of Article 25 of the ICCPR.

By participating in this online conference, **I realized that not everything was lost** and that I had the opportunity to contact the UN human rights bodies for the protection of my rights under Article 25 of the ICCPR.

Your rights, your voice

I am interested in the implementation of Kazakhstan's international obligations in the field of human rights, which were accepted by our authorities under the ICCPR. In particular, the political rights of citizens to govern the State, as set out in article 25. I see this as one of the ways for peaceful political transformation in Kazakhstan through the use of the tools of international organizations of which our country is a member.

The support of international NGOs, including yours, allows me and other activists to understand that we are not alone in the process of protecting our rights in Kazakhstan. And the reaction of the democratic world community to human rights violations in Kazakhstan will not be ignored.

In your opinion, why is article 25 so important?

The equal right to participate in the affairs of the State and to fair elections makes it possible to **create fairer conditions** for the effective and progressive management of the resources of countries by their own peoples. Its compliance will allow citizens to seek to reduce the level of corruption and discrimination in any form, and therefore to ensure peace and public harmony in a particular country.

What are you hoping for in the future?

My key motivations are the awareness of responsibility for the present and future of my country and people, as well as the belief in the possibility of positive changes.

I hope that as a result of patient and consistent work, the Kazakh society will be able to build a more effective system of governance of society and the state, based on the principles of democracy and equal rights of all people. Unfortunately, this cannot be said about Kazakhstan today.

What's next

The Centre will **reinforce its work on current topics**. When it comes to **Art.25**, just like with corruption and human rights, we are now in the process of mainstreaming this issue in our regular work. Going forward, we aim to discuss art. 25 and election-related problems in all reports submitted to the HR Committee, and to have experts on the topic present in our briefings with the members. When it comes to the link between human rights and **corruption**, the Centre will continue to work closely with both civil society and members of the HR Committee to make sure the progress made are maintained. We will also **mainstream this thematic** work in our regular activities. The Centre will also continue to monitor COVID-19 - related ICCPR violations worldwide and support civil society actors in their monitoring and advocacy efforts on the same topic.



Our supporters and partners

CHF 100'000+



CHF 50'000 -
CHF 100.000



CHF 15'000 -
CHF 50.000



CHF 2'000 -
CHF 15.000





Financial statements

(1st January – 31st December, in CHF)

This is an extract of the audited financial statements for 2020. A full version is available upon request at info@ccprcentre.org

In 2020, the Centre reported a total income of CHF 785'110.- CHF which represents an important increase compared to the previous year. Given the special context of the COVID-19 situation, this result is extremely encouraging and allowed the Centre to carry out activities in all the regions of the world, including ad hoc projects specifically designed to respond to the needs of HRDs in the context of this worldwide COVID-19 crisis.

The number of donors was similar in 2020 compared to the previous years with several donors providing increased support for multi-year projects.

Regarding the expenses, the Centre carried out most of its activities in connection with the Human Rights Defenders (objective 1) and its thematic work (objective 2). Expenses related to the advocacy work with other stakeholders such as the national authorities were more limited due to the health situation and the related travel ban. Most of these activities were postponed to the second half of 2021.

Income	2020	2019
Governments	436'719.- CHF	339'456.- CHF
Foundations	275'216.- CHF	295'887.- CHF
UN Agencies and related intergovernmental bodies	66'575.- CHF	0.- CHF
Other revenue	6'600.- CHF	32'538.- CHF
Total	785'110.-CHF	667'880.-CHF

Costs	2020	2019
Obj.1: HRDs support for ICCPR implementation	293'649.- CHF	297'293.- CHF
Obj. 2: ICCPR ratification and implementation	38'747.- CHF	171'121.- CHF
Obj. 3: Support to the HRCtee and thematic work	167'197.- CHF	156'184.- CHF
Administration, Finance, Communication Fundraising	166'603.- CHF	109'000.- CHF
Governance and strategy	9'913.- CHF	7'731.- CHF
Net movement in funds	2'699.- CHF	-135'113.-CHF
Total costs	685'498.-CHF	606'216.-CHF

Income (deficit) for the year (inc. reserve fund)	99'612.-CHF	61'665.-CHF
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Assets

Cash and equivalents	359'439.-CHF	270'566.- CHF
Debtors	0.- CHF	0.- CHF
Transitory assets	0.- CHF	0.- CHF
Total	359'439.-CHF	270'566.-CHF

Liabilities and reserves

Short term liabilities	31'532.- CHF	44'971.- CHF
Deferred grants	82'003.- CHF	79'304.- CHF
Free capital and reserve funds	245'903.- CHF	146'291.- CHF
Total	359'438.-CHF	270'566.-CHF



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Glossary

AUDF: Alliance pour l'Universalité des Droits Fondamentaux

CAT: Committee against Torture

CEDAW: Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

CEJIL: Center for Justice and International Law

CODDHD: Collectif des Organisations de Defense des Droits de l'Homme et de la Democratie

CSI: Commonwealth of Independent States

CSO: Civil Society Organization

DRI: Democracy Reporting International

ESCR: Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

EQMM: NGO Equality Myanmar

GC37: General Comment No. 37 on the right of peaceful assembly

HRD: Human Rights Defender

ICCPR: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

KIBHR: Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and the Rule of Law

LGBTI: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex

LOI: List of Issues

LOIPR: List of Issues Prior to the Reporting

NHRI: National Human Rights Institutions

NMRF: National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up

OCDH: Observatoire Congolais des Droits de l'Homme

ODIHR: Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

OHCHR: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

OSCE: Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

REDNOVI: Red de No Violencia contra las Mujeres

UNGASS: United Nations General Assembly Special Session

UN HR Committee: United Nations Human Rights Committee

UNJHRO: United Nations Joint Human Rights Office

UNTBS: United Nations Treaty Bodies

UPR: Universal Periodic Review

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