



International Network for Economic, Social & Cultural Rights
Red Internacional para los Derechos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales
Réseau international pour les droits économiques, sociaux et culturels
الشبكة العالمية للحقوق الاقتصادية والاجتماعية والثقافية

TO:

CC:

Mr. Luis Almagro Lemes, OAS Secretary General

Board

Cathy Albisa
National Economic and
Social Rights Initiative,
USA

Ruth Aura Odhiambo
Federation of Women
Lawyers, Kenya

Saeed Baloch
Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum,
Pakistan

Hasan Barghouthi
Democracy and Workers'
Rights Center, Palestine

Herman Kumara
National Fisheries
Solidarity Movement,
Sri Lanka

Sandra Ratjen
International Commission
of Jurists, Switzerland

Francisco Rocaël
Consejo de Pueblos
Wuxhtaj, Guatemala

3 June 2016

Your Excellency,

SEVERE FINANCIAL CRISIS FACING THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

The International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR-Net) is the largest global network of organizations and activists devoted to achieving economic, social and environmental justice through human rights, consisting of over 270 organizational and individual members in 70 countries.

We write to express our deep concern regarding the substantial financial cuts facing the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). [According to the Commission](#), on 31 July 2016 the contracts of 40 per cent of its personnel will expire and it does not currently have the funds – or the expectation of receiving the funds – to be in a position to renew them. Additionally, the Commission reports that it will be forced to suspend its 159th and 160th sessions, which had been scheduled for July and October, as well as planned visits for this year. The collective concern of ESCR-Net members echoes that of other groups, as demonstrated through, among others, the [letter](#) from the Coalition for Human Rights in the Americas to Member States of the Organization of American States (OAS), the [statement](#) of AIDA, APRODEH and Justicia Global on the Financial Crisis Affecting the IACHR, and the [letter](#) from Mexican civil society organizations to Mexico.”

This crisis represents a drastic undermining of the Commission’s ability to function as a regional human rights mechanism, with direct impact on access to justice for human rights violations, and serious consequences for the region’s political and economic stability and security.

Human rights obligations guaranteed by [country]

We respectfully remind Your Excellency that, as a Member State of the OAS and as a party to the American Convention on Human Rights and to the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (‘Protocol of San Salvador’), [country] has committed to uphold human rights and freedoms on behalf all persons in its jurisdiction, including through the maintenance of an effective inter-American human rights system.

tion of such rights and freedoms can only take place in connection with a robust stem, consisting of complementary national and regional mechanisms which offer

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coherence and stability across a region. In this regard, the IACHR is at the heart of this framework of protection, offering constructive engagement informed by an overarching perspective on issues facing the Member States of OAS.

We also note that states-party to key international human rights treaties including, among others, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and/or the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), have assumed the obligation to guarantee a wide range of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights to persons under its jurisdiction, through all appropriate measures, and through appropriate access to remedy.¹ Adherence to these existing obligations, including through national and regional implementation, has a direct impact on the international reputation of any State in the context of diplomatic interaction, requests for international support and cooperation, and positive trade negotiations attentive to the realities of different stakeholder interests.

Impact on regional stability and security, and significance in global human rights framework

Further, it is recognised that human rights and regional security, as well as political and economic stability, are inextricably linked. A solid regional system brings stability to the region, assuring that the rule of law prevails not only locally but also in neighboring countries. A strong and freely operating civil society, clear democratic processes, and operational human rights system are all key to supporting sustainable development and providing resilience in the face of both national and regional volatility or uncertainty.

Beyond its importance to the region, it is essential to note the prominent role that the inter-American human rights system plays in connection with other regional systems, as nested within a larger framework of international human rights. As a mechanism with an admirable international reputation, it has long been upheld as an influential model in connection with the development of other regional human rights systems and contributes significantly to the coherence of human rights practice, and consequently transnational peace and security, globally. The IACHR has produced, for instance, precedents that have served as persuasive normative standards for other regional bodies, such as the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, fostering the protection of human rights in other continents. A strong regional system has also legitimized OAS Member States in multilateral discussions beyond the Americas. Three regions of the world have well-established regional systems of human rights and all of them have worked to strengthen those systems over time. A step back, by way of a weakened mechanism, could be politically disastrous for countries in the region.

Requests by ESCR-Net

In light of the gravity of the situation described above, we collectively call on the Government of [country] to:

1. Take urgent steps to engage constructively with the Commission to resolve this crisis and ensure continuity in its functions, including commitment to make an urgent financial contribution, namely immediate delivery of funds or at least a commitment in writing for upcoming donations, **before 15 June 2016**.
2. As Member States of the OAS come together in the OAS General Assembly scheduled for June 2016, and in the longer term, take steps to substantially increase the percentage of the OAS budget that is allocated to the IACHR, to ensure its ability to fulfil its mandate as given by Member States of the OAS.

¹ ICESCR Art 2; ICCPR, Art 2; CEDAW, Art 2; CRC, Art 2; CERD, Art 2; CRPD, Art 4; CAT, Art 14.

Finally, we respectfully request that you keep us informed about further developments in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C. Grove', written on a light-colored rectangular background.

Chris Grove,
Executive Director on behalf of ESCR-Net