

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

Organization of American States



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Background of the Organization of American States (OAS)

While the OAS was not formally chartered until 1948, American states have been meeting formally to promote international security and cooperation since the late nineteenth century. The first conference, called the International Conference of American States, took place in 1889 in Washington, D.C., and featured 18 countries throughout the Americas. At that first conference, the nations officially recognized this new body as the International Union of American Republics. Later, it was renamed the Pan-American Union, and in 1948 it was renamed once again to be the Organization of American States.

When the OAS was first chartered, it had 21 member states (the United States and 20 Latin American countries). Today, there are 35 member states, including Canada, Belize, and many states in the Caribbean. Additionally, since the OAS was first chartered, it has created many bodies which focus on specific areas. Along with the General Assembly, other OAS bodies include the Inter-American Judicial Committee, the General Secretariat, various specialized committees and organizations, and this committee, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR).

Broadly, the OAS is concerned with promoting diplomacy and international cooperation throughout the Americas. It seeks to find solutions to economic and social problems on a larger level. The IACHR specifically, and the OAS generally, are concerned with these tasks from a human rights perspective.

Primary Topic: Human rights

The history of the human rights regime is largely believed to have begun in 1948, when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The UDHR's 30 Articles lay out fundamental social, political, and economic rights, and it has served as the foundational text of international human rights since its adoption.

While expansive, the UDHR arguably forgets more human rights than it includes, and it lacks a degree of nuance that later rights documents have provided. Since 1948, many UN conventions have created documents which focus on specific rights, or the rights of specific people. For example, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, as made clear by their names, are concerned with different realms of the broader human rights regime. Additionally, there are documents focused on the rights of women, children, indigenous peoples, language communities, and more. To be clear: the UDHR is only the starting point when it comes to human rights documentation.

Topics that this committee will address will vary widely. Delegates should expect to interact with human rights abuses that are economic, political, cultural, environmental, linguistic, and more. The committee will approach human rights as they pertain to people across races, genders, sexualities, origins, religions, languages, and much more. For some resources on human rights documents, delegates should use the links below, keeping in mind that these sources are only a starting point. The best delegates will mine these sources and use them as a springboard for their own research.

<http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

<http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx>

http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/inter_american_treaties_A-41_charter_OAS.asp

https://www.oas.org/dil/treaties_b-32_american_convention_on_human_rights.pdf

<http://listverse.com/2009/07/11/10-cases-of-american-intervention-in-latin-america/>

http://www.eycb.coe.int/compass/en/pdf/6_4.pdf

Secondary Topic: Migration in Central America and the United States

In the US and much of Central America, the topic of migration—on domestic and international levels—has become extremely pertinent in the last few decades. Migrants from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras have attempted to go to the US for uncountable reasons. Some of the more common reasons cited for migration from these countries include: to escape from violence (sometimes perpetrated by drug cartels, gangs, corrupt government officials, or other groups) and to pursue financial security in areas that lack economic opportunity.

Regardless of delegates' opinions on migration at this time, it remains crucial to discuss the current experiences migrants have when going to the US from these countries, including before, during, and after the migratory journey. This committee, in keeping with its focus on human rights, will approach migration from a rights perspective, which requires asking some tough questions: Who does and does not migrate, and why? Who *can* migrate, and why? Where, exactly, do they migrate, and how? For those who make it to the US, if that is their destination, how are they treated by the US government, US citizens, and the international community? These questions, and the topic of migration, are crucial aspects of the modern human rights

movement in the Americas, and must be addressed by the IACHR. Delegates should consult the links below as a starting point for the committee's discussion on migration. It is a good idea to skim these sources and use them as a foundation for further research.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4638184/>

<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/south-american-immigrants-united-states>

[https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2011/8/16/1007496/-](https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2011/8/16/1007496/)

<https://www.npr.org/2013/12/26/257255787/wave-of-illegal-immigrants-gains-speed-after-nafta>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/18/weekinreview/18uchitelle.html>

Structure of the committee

Traditionally, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) has only seven delegates who are chosen by the General Assembly. However, given the importance of promoting human rights throughout the Americas to the greatest extent possible, the IACHR will now operate as a specialized committee of the OAS, where all active members of the OAS may vote once for resolutions and other matters.



Map of Latin America

References

<http://www.nti.org/learn/treaties-and-regimes/organization-american-states-oas/>

http://www.oas.org/en/about/our_history.asp

<http://www.oas.org/en/>

<http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/>

<http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

<http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx>

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