

Ensuring Transparent and Independent Elections in the Inter-American System

In a move to support and strengthen human rights in the Americas, a panel of five independent experts will monitor the forthcoming election of new members to the region's human rights commission and court.

The Independent Panel for the Election of Inter-American Commissioners and Judges has been established in advance of this June's election of four new commissioners to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and four judges to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

State members of the Organization of American States (OAS) will fill the eight positions—more than half of all total seats—at their 45th General Assembly, to be held in Washington DC from June 15-16. The outcome will affect both the composition and identity of the Commission and the Court for years to come.

The Panel is composed of five renowned jurists from the human rights community— Marion Bethel (Bahamas), Belisário dos Santos Jr. (Brazil), Cecilia Medina (Chile), Juan Méndez (Argentina), and Naomi-Roht Arriaza (United States). It seeks to increase the transparency and visibility of the elections process, while offering an independent assessment of the 11 candidates standing for the eight open seats. It will also offer recommendations for how both national-level nominations and the election process itself can be improved, in the interest of strengthening the system overall.

Established as an independent entity, the Panel was convened by the Open Society Justice Initiative with the support of a wide range of NGOs, universities, and bar associations throughout the region (see current list of supporters below). While these organizations have diverse opinions about the individual candidates and the selection process that may differ from the Panel's final assessment, they are committed to strengthening the Inter-American human rights system through the principle of fair and transparent elections.

The initiative is modeled on a similar, successful initiative focused on ensuring transparency and independence in the election of judges to the International Criminal Court (ICC). Pioneered by the Coalition for the ICC, the establishment of an Independent Panel on ICC Judicial Elections in 2010 helped fill a significant gap in the elections process by providing competent, fair, and independent assessment of all nominees. The work of the Panel eventually led, in 2012, to the establishment of a formal Advisory Committee on Nominations for the ICC.

The new independent Inter-American Panel will deliver its final report to the OAS Secretary General and the Permanent Council, as well as the general public, at the end of May.

Endorsing organizations

Argentina

Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS)
Facultad de Derecho de la Universidad de Palermo

Bahamas

The Bahamas Crisis Center

Bolivia

Comunidad de Derechos Humanos
Oficina de la Mujer

Brasil

Justiça Global

Chile

Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Universidad Diego Portales
Corporación Humanas - Chile
Observatorio Ciudadano de Chile

Colombia

Corporación Colectivo de Abogados José Alvear Restrepo (CCAJAR)
Corporación Humanas - Colombia
De Justicia

Costa Rica

Asociación Costarricense de la Judicatura
Centro de investigación y Promoción para América Central de Derechos Humanos (CIPACDH)
Centro Internacional para los Derechos Humanos de los Migrantes (CIDEHUM)
Defensa de Niñas y Niños - Internacional (DNI)

Ecuador

Comisión Ecuménica de Derechos Humanos
Corporación Humanas – Ecuador

El Salvador

Agrupación Ciudadana por la Despenalización del Aborto Terapéutico, Ético y Eugénico
Colectiva de Mujeres para el desarrollo Local
Grupo de Monitoreo Independiente de El Salvador (GMIES)
Red Salvadoreña de Defensoras de Derechos Humanos

Guatemala

Asociación para el Estudio y Promoción de la Seguridad en Democracia (SEDEM)
Coalición Centro América Democrática (CAD)
Fundación Myrna Mack
Grupo Guatemalteco de Mujeres (GGM)
Red de la No Violencia contra las mujeres (REDNOVI)

Unidad de Protección a Defensoras y Defensores de Derechos Humanos (UDEFEQUA)

Honduras

Asociación de Jueces por la Democracia (AJD)

Comité de Familiares de Detenidos y Desaparecidos en Honduras (COFADEH)

Equipo de Reflexión Investigación y Comunicación (ERIC-SJ)

Jamaica

Caribbean Vulnerable Communities Coalition (CVC)

México

Centro de Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres (CEDEHM)

Centro de Derechos Humanos Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez AC (Centro Prodh)

Ciudadanos en Apoyo a los Derechos Humanos, A.C. (CADHAC)

Comisión Mexicana de Defensa y Promoción de Derechos Humanos (CMDPDH)

Fundación para la Justicia y el Estado Democrático de Derecho

FUNDAR Centro de Análisis e Investigación

Grupo de Información en Reproducción Elegida (GIRE)

Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas UNAM (IIJ-UNAM)

Nicaragua

Centro Nicaragüense de Derechos Humanos (CENIDH)

Centro por la Justicia y Derechos Humanos de la Costa Atlántica de Nicaragua

IPAS Centroamérica

Movimiento Autónomo de Mujeres (MAM)

Panamá

Alianza Ciudadana Pro Justicia

Perú

Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos (APRODEH)

Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDDHH)

Instituto de Defensa Legal (IDL)

Puerto Rico

Instituto Caribeño de Derechos Humanos (ICADH)

República Dominicana

Participación Ciudadana

Colectiva Mujer y Salud

United States

Center for Human Rights, American University Washington College of Law

The Columbia Law School Human Rights Institute

Santa Clara University, School of Law, International Human Rights Clinic

Uruguay

Instituto de Estudios Legales y Sociales del Uruguay (IELSUR),

Venezuela

Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Universidad Católica Andrés Bello (UCAB)

Comité de Familiares de Víctimas de los Sucesos de Febrero-Marzo de 1989 (COFAVIC)

Programa Venezolano de Educación Acción en Derechos Humanos (PROVEA)

Regional

Amnistía Internacional

Articulación Regional Feminista por los derechos humanos y la justicia de género

Asociación Interamericana para la Defensa del Ambiente (AIDA)

Asociadas por lo Justo (JASS-Mesoamérica)

Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL)

Due Process of Law Foundation (DPLF)

Open Society Justice Initiative (OSJI)

Red Latinoamericana y del Caribe para la Democracia

Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights