

Inter-American Court of Human Rights



The Inter-American Court of Human Rights is a regional human rights judicial body charged with protecting human rights in the Organization of American States (OAS) Member States under its jurisdiction and interpreting regional standards, including the [American Convention on Human Rights](#) and its [protocols](#). The Inter-American Court serves a complementary role to that of the [Inter-American Commission on Human Rights](#) (IACHR), which oversees human rights conditions in all OAS Member States and serves as an advisory body of the OAS on human rights issues.

The Inter-American Court is based in San Jose, Costa Rica, where it holds as many ordinary sessions as necessary to exercise its functions, although the Court may also meet in different States. The President or a majority of judges may also convene extraordinary sessions. Civil society organizations may participate in public sessions and hearings.

The Court may only issue judgements against States that have accepted its contentious jurisdiction, and only in certain circumstances when the State has failed to comply with the IACHR's recommendations. The Court also has advisory jurisdiction that allows it to provide detailed interpretation of a specific human rights obligation or treaty provision when requested by a State or an organ of the OAS.

States Parties to the Inter-American Court:

Twenty-three of the 35 OAS Member States have ratified the American Convention on Human Rights. Twenty of those States have accepted the Court's contentious jurisdiction. Those are: Argentina, Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, and Uruguay.

The Court's Activities:

- Issue [judgments](#) in contentious cases referred to it by the IACHR
- Hold public [hearings](#) to hear arguments and evidence in contentious cases
- Issue [advisory opinions](#) on international treaties relevant to human rights in an OAS Member State
- Direct States to prevent imminent, irreparable harm to an individual or group via "[provisional measures](#)"
- Publish [annual reports and other publications](#)

Basic Instruments:

The following is a list of core instruments relevant to the Inter-American Court's work, not including [other](#) continental human rights agreements, guidelines, and interpretations:

- American Convention on Human Rights ([text](#))
- Charter of the Organization of American States "Protocol of Buenos Aires" ([text](#))
- Rules of Procedure of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ([text](#))
- Statute of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ([text](#))

To learn more about the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and human rights in the Americas, visit IJRC's resources on the [Inter-American Human Rights System](#), [Research Aids](#), and [Country Factsheets](#).