



## SPOTLIGHT ON KEY HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS

This Spotlight presents some of the key organisations working on human rights in the Latin America region. These organisations are playing a significant role in advancing human rights by providing innovative mechanisms to promote and guarantee human rights, and carrying out advocacy, research and capacity building initiatives. These organisations are divided into [Latin American organisations](#) working at the regional level, and [national civil society organisations \(CSOs\)](#) focusing on advocacy and research in their own countries.

To learn more about organisations working specifically on issues related to the region's National Human Rights Institutions, also known as Public Defenders, Ombudsman Offices, Human Rights Commissions or Human Rights Attorneys, see the [ELLA Spotlight on Key Organisations: Supporting and Strengthening National Human Rights Institutions in Latin America](#).

### LATIN AMERICAN ORGANISATIONS

#### ► Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

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

**Areas of Expertise:** Human rights in Latin America, protection of rights, advancement of human rights

**Key Activities:** Individual petition system, monitoring of human rights in the region, focus on the development of thematic areas of human rights

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights is one of the two main organisations of the Inter-American Human Rights System, established to promote and protect human rights in the region. The Commission is based in Washington, DC, and is led by seven people, each elected to a four-year term and with one possible re-election. The main function of the Inter-American Commission is to support the advancement of human rights in the region and provide specialised opinions on human rights issues to the [Organization of American States](#). The Commission has also played a key role in supporting individual petitions related to gross human rights violations inflicted by member states, as well as by bringing cases before the [Inter-American Court of Human Rights](#).



## ► Inter-American Court of Human Rights

Link: <http://www.corteidh.or.cr/index.cfm?&CFID=1673287&CFTOKEN=93622501>

**Areas of Expertise:** Resolutions, jurisprudence, advisory opinions on human rights

**Key Activities:** Interpretation and implementation of the American Convention on Human Rights, ruling on cases, developing advisory opinions

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights is the judiciary organ of the Inter-American System of Human Rights. It is based in San José, Costa Rica, and is comprised of seven judges, each with recognised expertise in the field of human rights who serve for two years. The role played by the Inter-American Court in solving emblematic cases has been key in setting important standards for human rights, which are binding for countries under its jurisdiction.

## ► Inter-American Institute of Human Rights

Link: <http://www.iidh.ed.cr/multic/defaultIIDHEn.aspx?Portal=IIDHEn>

**Areas of Expertise:** Academic research, advocacy, education on human rights

**Key Activities:** Promotion of human rights, research on specific issues, education and training in human rights

The Inter-American Institute of Human Rights was created as part of the Inter-American System to reinforce human rights education and promote high-quality human rights research in Latin America. This academically-focused organisation collaborates with local organisations and public institutions from the region to disseminate human rights knowledge. Most importantly, the Institute has developed a multi-disciplinary and regional approach to human rights, helping to build local responses to human rights challenges.

## ► Regional Alliance for the Freedom of Expression and Information

Link: <http://www.alianzaregional.net/>

**Areas of Expertise:** Anti-corruption and human rights, transparency and access to information, freedom of expression

**Key Activities:** Monitoring public institutions, strategic litigation, advocacy, building capacities in promoting the right to information

The Regional Alliance for the Freedom of Expression and Information, formed by 23 CSOs, is the most important network focused on the right to information and freedom of expression in Latin America. The Alliance has been working closely with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to promote the right to information all over the region, in addition to working to support and strengthen organisations in individual countries. It provides useful regional [publications](#) (in Spanish) on human rights, transparency, access to information and freedom of expression.



## ► Special Rapporteurship of the Rights of Migrants

Link: <http://www.cidh.oas.org/Migrantes/defaultmigrantes.htm>

**Areas of Expertise:** Immigration, asylum, refugees, victims of human trafficking, internally displaced persons

**Key Activities:** Protection of the rights of migrants and their families, recommendations to member states, special reports on the rights of migrants

The Special Rapporteurship of the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families was created in 1997 by the [Inter-American Commission on Human Rights](#). One of the Commission's seven Commissioners is appointed as Special Rapporteur with a four-year mandate to monitor all measures taken by states to protect and guarantee the rights of migrants and their families. Its work is focused on highlighting states' compliance with the rights of migrants and displaced peoples by organising visits to member states and submitting a complete report to the Inter-American Commission outlining the current situation of migrant worker rights in the region.

## ► Centre for Justice and International Law (CEJIL)

Link: <http://cejil.org/en>

**Areas of Expertise:** Justice in the Inter-American System, human rights

**Key Activities:** Strategic litigation, empowering human rights defenders, strengthening the Inter-American System

The Centre for Justice and International Law (CEJIL) is a regional-level civil society organisation that focuses on ensuring the effective use of the Inter-American System to guarantee the exercise of human rights. In addition to bringing litigation before the Inter-American System, CEJIL also provides education and training to human rights defenders, conducts and publicises human rights research, and promotes advocacy to strengthen the Inter-American System.

## NATIONAL CSOs

### ► CONECTAS

Link: <http://www.conectas.org/en>

**Areas of Expertise:** Human rights education and research, networking, regional and international human rights mechanisms

**Key Activities:** Advocacy, strategic and public litigation, participation in public national and international debates

CONECTAS is a Brazilian organisation working to promote human rights not only in Latin America, but also in Africa and Asia. Its work has been key in fostering human rights capacities of CSOs through advocacy and strategic litigation before national, regional and international courts, in particular to prevent gross human rights violations. CONECTAS has successfully developed a programme aiming to improve and change abuses within the Brazilian justice system. Another important part of their work is monitoring public debates around human rights issues, and since it has both a consultative status with the UN ECOSOC and observer status with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, its opinions are highly regarded within international and regional institutions. Finally, CONECTAS also publishes the [Sur Journal](#), a peer-reviewed journal in English, Spanish and Portuguese, that explores human rights issues through the perspective of the Global South.



## ► Centre for Legal and Social Studies (*Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales – CELS*)

Link: <http://www.cels.org.ar/cels/?ids=5&lang=en>

**Areas of Expertise:** Defence of human rights, monitoring public institutions, dialogue with public actors

**Key Activities:** Strategic litigation, public advocacy, CSO networking, human rights training, dialogue with state agencies

The Centre for Legal and Social Studies (CELS) is an Argentinian CSO working to defend human rights principally through strategic litigation as an advocacy tool within national and regional courts. CELS is litigating over 100 cases before Argentinian courts and more than 30 cases before international human rights courts. They have achieved important successes in emblematic cases, such as pushing the Argentinian state to recognise rights of excluded groups. The organisation has also developed strategies to monitor public agencies aiming to reform or implement any initiative or policy that might cause an impact in the effective realisation of human rights. By doing so, CELS seeks to strengthen relationships with key public sector actors in order to influence the design of public policies towards a greater protection of human rights.

## ► De Justicia

Link: <http://www.dejusticia.org/index.php?x=0&lang=en>

**Areas of Expertise:** Monitoring of the Judiciary, building citizen capacities, legal studies, rule of law, social rights, anti-discrimination

**Key Activities:** Applied research, strategic litigation, human rights education, monitoring and oversight of laws, institutions and public policies

*De Justicia* is a Colombian centre for the study of law that seeks to influence public opinion, academic debates and public policies. The organisation, founded by a group of Colombian professors, has adopted different tools such as strategic litigation, applied research and monitoring public institutions, as strategies to enforce human rights in Colombia as well as in the Latin America region. Their work is divided into five thematic areas: anti-discrimination; social rights; the judicial system; transitional justice; and rule of law and legal culture.

## ► Mexican Institute for Human Rights and Democracy (*Instituto Mexicano de Derechos Humanos y Democracia - IMDHD*)

Link: [http://imdhd.org/?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=129](http://imdhd.org/?option=com_content&view=article&id=129)

**Areas of Expertise:** Building citizen capacities, applied research, social participation, legal reforms related to human rights

**Key Activities:** Human rights training for CSOs, strengthening capacities of excluded groups, monitoring of citizen security initiatives, advocacy, research

The *Instituto Mexicano de Derechos Humanos y Democracia* is a Mexican CSO focused on promoting human rights and democracy. The organisation has also undertaken [national research](#) (in Spanish) analysing the development of human rights in three main areas: equality and non-discrimination; citizen security; and democracy and citizen participation.



## ► Andean Network of Community Justice and Peace (*Red Andina de Justicia de Paz y Comunitaria*)

Link: <http://www.justiciaenlosandes.org/>

**Areas of Expertise:** Monitoring the judiciary, access to justice, collective rights, intercultural justice

**Key Activities:** Building citizen capacities, public debates on human rights and collective rights

The *Red Andina de Justicia de Paz y Comunitaria* is a network of CSOs that aims to monitor the performance, progress and setbacks in access to justice in the Andean region – focusing on Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru – in particular through judicial monitoring. They organise the *Observatorio de Acceso a la Justicia* (Access to Justice Observatory), an initiative that documents and disseminates information related to existing mechanisms for accessing justice as well as monitoring the Judiciary in terms of human rights work in the Andean region.

## ► Tlachinollan

Link: <http://www.tlachinollan.org/>

**Areas of Expertise:** Collective rights, citizen security, economic and social rights, intercultural public policies

**Key Activities:** Advocacy, supporting human rights defenders and victims, capacity building, monitoring of citizen security institutions

*Tlachinollan* is a CSO from the state of Guerrero, in southern Mexico, that works to promote and defend indigenous rights by working closely with indigenous communities, providing education in human rights and supporting victims whose rights have been violated. They have also developed an innovative project called the 'Observatory of the Armed Forces and the Police' (MOCIPOL in Spanish), that documents abuses by security forces and monitors the functioning of the police in the region of Guerrero.

### CONTACT [FUNDAR](#)

To learn more about these and other organisations working on human rights in Latin America, contact the author, Cecilia Toledo, ELLA Project Researcher, and an expert in human rights studies, at [cecilia@fundar.org.mx](mailto:cecilia@fundar.org.mx).

### FIND OUT MORE FROM [ELLA](#)

To learn more about human rights in Latin America, read the [ELLA Guide](#), which has a full list of the knowledge materials on this theme. To learn more about other ELLA development issues, browse other [ELLA Themes](#).

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