

Independent Expert Panel Will Again Assess Candidates to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON DC—An Independent Expert Panel will assess the nominees standing this June for election to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, in a continuing effort by civil society groups to promote a more transparent selection process for the influential regional human rights body.

This year, four new commissioners will be chosen from six candidates during the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS), which will be held in Medellin, Colombia, from June 26 to 28. The Commission has seven members who serve four-year terms and may be reelected once.

The candidates are:

- Margarete May Macaulay (Jamaica)
- Esmeralda Arosemena de Troitiño (Panama)
- Edgar Stuardo Ralón Orellana (Guatemala)
- Eduardo Rodríguez Veltzé (Bolivia)
- Everth Bustamante García (Colombia)
- Julissa Mantilla Falcón (Peru)

The review by the Independent Expert Panel is part of an effort, first launched in 2015, to shed more light on a selection process that continues to lack transparency, while offering an independent assessment of the candidates standing for election.

The 2019 Independent Expert Panel is composed of five renowned jurists and academics from the regional human rights community: Mariclaire Acosta, Carlos Ayala, Catalina Botero, Juan Mendez, and Judith Schönsteiner.

For the second consecutive year, the Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law of the American University's Washington College of Law has been designated to serve as the secretariat for the Panel.

The Panel's deliberations, analysis, and conclusions—which are independent from the convening and endorsing organizations—will be included in a report to be released at the end of May.

Although the OAS has passed resolutions calling for the public presentation of candidates to the Commission and Court, the process can still be improved in order to provide a competent, fair, and independent assessments of all nominees. Independent advisory committees, for example, exist to monitor selection processes to other leading international courts, including the European Court of Human Rights and the International Criminal Court.

Established in 1959, the Inter-American Commission has played a fundamental -and in many cases pioneering- role for the protection and promotion of the human rights of people in the Americas. By visiting countries, issuing thematic and country reports, holding public hearings, receiving individual petitions and granting precautionary measures, the IACHR has occupied an essential space in the development of international human rights law in the region. Together with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, both bodies have become spaces where victims of human rights violations have found justice and reparation.

This year's Independent Expert Panel has again been convened by the Open Society Justice Initiative, the Due Process of Law Foundation, and the Center for Justice and International Law.

Since 2015, this initiative has been endorsed by NGOs, universities, and bar associations throughout the region, which share a commitment to strengthening the Inter American human rights system, through the principle of fair, transparent, and inclusive elections, and through the nomination of qualified and independent candidates.