

## **Open Letter to the President of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and to the Heads of States in in the Americas**

Mr. James Cavallaro  
President  
Inter-American Commission on Human Rights  
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Re: Funding the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

28 September, 2016.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We, the undersigned organizations, are well aware of the political and financial crisis that has engulfed the work of the Inter-American Commission and Court of Human Rights. This crisis puts at risk the only human rights mechanisms in the region which are binding on governments in the promotion and protection of human rights.

We also recognize the enormous relevance of the work carried out by the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, as well as by the Inter-American Court of Human rights, for the guarantee of human rights of the peoples in the Americas.

While we welcome an open, participatory and democratic discussion on how to strengthen the sustainability, independence and effectiveness of the working of both the commission and the court, we categorically reject any initiatives that hold the Inter-American Human Rights System hostage of whatever political intentions. The promotion and protection of the human rights of the peoples of the region must be placed above specific interests of specific countries, no matter who they are.

The acute financial crisis of the Commission announced last May, is mainly the result of decisions of OAS member states. The Inter-American System at its highest point counted with a budget of 8 million dollars, inferior to that of the African System (13 million) and the European system (100 million). It is unacceptable that OAS Member States allow this financial situation reach a point in which the Commission has to consider firing 40% of its staff, cancel meetings and hearings. These are flagrant violations of the Member States human rights obligations. We WILL NOT ACCEPT THIS.

This situation also makes the Commission and the court vulnerable to corporate capture and loss of their independence,. We alert the OAS and the Inter-American Human Rights System against any plans to seek or accept private, corporate or foundational funding for the System. We consider such plans a betrayal of human rights. In fact, the use of private funding by public institutions in charge of public policies and governance has shown not just the undue influence that specific powerful private sectors have in public decisions, but has captured democratic spaces and derogated people's sovereignty. Plans for private funding of the Inter-American Human Rights System are steps towards the institutional corruption and hence destruction of the System.

We would like to recall that all States, including those in the Americas, are legitimate to the extent that they are created by their populations and that their powers are instructed and limited by human rights. While human rights systems have to be constantly reformed in order to better perform their

functions, any corruption and destruction of human rights systems is a step back to autocratic rule of national and international oppressors. State funding for human rights systems is therefore an essential part of funding legitimate States and legitimate communities of States.

For this matter, we, the undersigned organizations, call upon the American States to secure the operation of the Human Rights Commission with public funds from various States.

Moreover we call upon the Human Rights Commission to reject any temptation or pressure to accept corporate, foundational or other private funding.

Yours sincerely

**Undersigned organizations**

FIAN International (global)

Transnational Institute -TNI (global)

Corporate Accountability International (global)

Society for International Development – SID (global)

Friends of the Earth Latin America and Caribbean – ATALC (regional)

Public Services International Latin America – ISP Latin America (regional)

Kuna Youth Movement (Panamá)

Movimento Atingidos por Barragens –MAB – (Brasil)

Justiça Global - (Brasil)

Plataforma Brasileira de Direitos Humanos Econômicos, culturais, Sociais e Ambientais – Plataforma DHESCA Brasil. (Brasil)

FIAN Brasil (Brasil)

FIAN Honduras (Honduras)

FIAN México (México)

c/c Secretariat of the Inter American Commission of Human Rights

OAS and OAS member States