

Panel 1: The effectiveness of international law: institutions and processes

International human rights law has long been the subject of criticism, with many initiatives having been proposed to strengthen the human rights treaty body system itself. Challenges relate not only to non-compliance with reporting obligations, but also to significant backlogs in the consideration of States Parties' reports and individual complaints. In other fields of law, such as international criminal law, effectiveness has also been a contested issue, with calls for an oversight mechanism and recommendations to improve the functioning of the International Criminal Court. In view of this, one must pose serious questions as to whether the institutions and processes at the international level are capable of real reform or whether the reforms already proposed would lead to further challenges and ineffective functioning of the system? Are there reforms that have not been put forward that could act as a panacea to this (in)effectiveness dilemma? One can also ask whether similar challenges are evident in non-legal domains and what we can learn cross-domain?

Panel 2: The effectiveness of human rights monitoring and implementation at the domestic level

Without effective enforcement at the domestic level, human rights are meaningless. Domestic courts, national human rights institutions (NHRIs), Ombudspersons Offices and other bodies, are essential partners in the protection and promotion of human rights at the national level. However, in a similar vein to the challenges faced at the international level, the effectiveness of the domestic institutions and processes has been called into question. Does the ratification of human rights treaties have a real effect on state behaviour? Do the domestic mechanisms adequately take into account the recommendations of human rights treaty bodies and the findings of international courts, and to what extent do domestic courts interpret human rights consistently with the international level? What about human rights effectiveness in 'illiberal' democracies. Moreover, does the study of effectiveness in non-legal domains teach us anything about potential reforms?

Panel 3 (plenary): Human rights at the individual level: individual experiences and key actors

Even if international and national mechanisms and processes implement human rights, this does not mean that individuals or groups of individuals, especially victims of human rights violations, benefit from the normative guarantees contained in human rights law. Several issues prevent the realisation of human rights in practice and the enjoyment of substantive rights. This panel seeks to explore individual experiences and to analyse to what extent individuals or groups of individuals can contribute to the satisfaction of their own human rights. Moreover, how can key actors, such as grassroots organisations, human rights defenders and human rights NGOs potentially contribute to ensuring the satisfaction of human rights, or is their role diminished by institutional structures?

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