

THE NEXT SECRETARY EXECUTIVE OF THE “IACHR”: HUMAN RIGHTS OF CRIME VICTIMS - “ONE VOICE. ONE CAUSE”

Democratic societies have an obligation to alleviate the effects of crime, including the adverse consequences of victimisation. Founded on victims' fundamental needs, American countries should ensure the effective recognition of, and respect for, the rights of victims especially their human rights. They should in particular respect the security, dignity, private and family life of victims and recognise the negative effects of crime on victims.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) announced the opening of the call for competition to select the person who will occupy the position of head of its Executive Secretariat. The person who holds the Executive Secretary is an official of the General Secretariat of the OAS (GS / OAS) selected by the Commission and appointed by the Secretary General of the Organization. On December 5, 2020, the names and resumes of the candidates selected as finalists for the position will be published on the IACHR's website in order to receive comments from the OAS Member States and Civil Society. about the candidates. The IACHR will select the most qualified candidate and send his name to the Secretary General, proposing his appointment for a period of four years.

The Americas have become a zone of peace, development, and opportunities, where Latin America and the Caribbean have succeeded in becoming the first nuclear weapons-free zone in the world, an example that has been emulated in other parts of the globe.

This progress notwithstanding, the region also faces challenges; it records the highest homicide rates in the world, with evidence of even a growing trend in some regions: countries in the Americas reported 173,000 victims of intentional homicide – 37 per cent of the global total in a region that accounts for only 13 per cent of the world's population. The homicide rate of 17.2 victims per 100,000 population in the Americas was the highest recorded in the region since reliable records began in 1990: *Latin America Is the Murder Capital of the World*. Riven by drugs, gangs, weak institutions and lawlessness, the region is facing a crisis. Citizens of American countries continue to face serious crimes on a daily basis from human trafficking, to domestic violence, extortion, corruption, kidnapping, burglary and more. Online crime and other new forms of crime are also rapidly expanded.

Crime will not be stopped overnight, but the impacts of it can be mitigated. Supporting victims, building resilience in individuals and communities, ensuring that victims are treated with respect by law enforcement and justice authorities will make a fundamental difference. It will reduce the suffering of victims and directly benefit our societies and economies.

Properly understanding and addressing these issues means also addressing such priorities as poverty, equality, and the rule of law. Efforts to ensure the effectiveness of our laws requires that citizens trust the Justice system, will report crimes and are safe to participate in proceedings. These efforts are foundational to successful societies.

Consequently, the Organization of American States (OAS) has stepped up efforts to tackle and resolve this situation, working in coordination with its member states, but also with the support of regional, international, and civil society organizations.

Therefore we recommend and exhort that the best profile for the next Executive Secretary will correspond to whoever promotes and defends basic and the human rights of crime victims; one who promotes an Inter-American Convention on the Human Rights of Victims to establish minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime: right to respect and recognition, right to be heard, right to information, right to reimbursement of expenses, right to protection, right to support, right to compensation, right to interact with trained professionals and right to cross-border assistance.

Victim Support Europe (VSE)

Asociación Civil Usina de Justicia