

Did you know that in 2020 the IACHR will designate a new Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression?

In 1997 the members of the IACHR unanimously decided to create the Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression for the purpose of protecting, guaranteeing, and promoting the right to freedom of thought and expression. Since its creation, the Office of the Special Rapporteur has been the backbone for the promotion and protection of freedom of expression in the Americas.

The Office of the Special Rapporteur has been essential in developing Inter-American policies, standards, and jurisprudence regarding freedom of expression. Likewise, it has played a vital role in defending and protecting individuals, particularly journalists, whose freedom of thought and expression, and whose lives or ways of life, have been threatened or impacted.

The Office of the Special Rapporteur has also played a fundamental role in national-level legislative reforms and the adaptation of legislation to meet the standards of the Inter-American Human Rights System. Also, it has pioneered the promotion of special mechanisms to protect at-risk journalists and has contributed to the implementation of access to public information laws and the dismantling of “insult laws,” as well as amendments to laws criminalizing the expression of opinions on topics of public interest.

SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS	
Edison Lanza,	2014 – 2020
Catalina Botero,	2008 – 2014
Ignacio Álvarez,	2006 – 2008
Eduardo Bertoni,	2002 – 2005
Santiago Cantón,	1998 – 2001

This all provides evidence of the importance of the Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression and the need to designate a suitable rapporteur to carry on with the institutional and jurisprudence improvements that have been achieved, and to confront new challenges to the protection, promotion, and defence of the right to freedom of thought and expression in the Americas.

Minimum requirements

The minimum requirements established in the 2006, 2008, 2013 and 2020 calls for candidates to the position of Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression are quite detailed and demonstrate a requirement for individuals with a high degree of integrity and expertise.



Nationality

Citizen of an OAS member state.



Education

Hold a university degree in law, journalism or another relevant branch of the social sciences.



Experience

Have at least 15 years of professional experience at the national or international level, including, among others, interactions with high-level government officials and inter-governmental or non-government organisations. Alternatively, candidates with a postgraduate degree must have at least 10 years of experience.



Languages

Proficient in at least two of the OAS's official languages (Spanish, French, English and Portuguese).



Independence and high moral character

The Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression must have a flawless record, demonstrating impeccable behaviour and independence from their national government and/or other groups that could compromise their independence or impartiality.



Experience and human rights trajectory

Professional experience and proven knowledge of the application of the IACHR's procedures and legal precedents and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights' jurisprudence, as well as demonstrated competence and experience regarding freedom of expression and human rights issues in the Americas.



Communications and relationship management

Excellent analytical and interpretive skills, and expertise in both oral and written communication.



Resource procurement, management and administration

A demonstrated ability to manage personnel, and experience in supervising projects and seeking financing.

The IACHR must take geographic representation into consideration, as well as gender equity and equality.

Ideal profile of a Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression

For the relevance of this position and for the proper functioning of the rapporteurship, the ideal profile for the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression brings together a set of skills, abilities and personal qualities. From civil society we consider that the suitability of the candidates must be evaluated based on their fulfilment of the requirements of the position and a deep examination of their temperament, in other words, their ability to respond and react to the pressures inherent in the position, where victims, civil society and governments converge, but not always with similar perspectives. The individual occupying the position is also expected to be familiar with new technologies and forms of communication and the ways in which they intersect with the rights that fall within the scope of the Office of the Special Rapporteur.

How is the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression selected?

In accordance with Article 15 of the IACHR's Rules of Procedure, Resolution 04/06, and the criteria laid out in the 2020 call of candidates, the process should involve the following steps:

1

CALL FOR CANDIDATES

Once it knows the Special Rapporteur's position will become vacant, the IACHR issues an open and public notice of vacancy. The notice outlines the procedures and criteria that will be used when evaluating candidates, as well as deadlines. **(The deadline for submission of curriculum vitae is 13 March 2020.)**

SELECTION OF FINALISTS

The IACHR selects finalists for the position and their curriculum vitae are published on the IACHR's website for a time period sufficient to allow for submission of observations regarding the candidates. The list of finalists will be published on 30 April 2020, and comments from member states and civil society will be accepted until 15 June.

The candidates selected as finalists should submit a short video, no more than five minutes in length, for publication on the IACHR's website, outlining their strategies should they be designated to the position of Special Rapporteur.

3

INTERVIEWS AND ELECTION

Once the comment period is over, the IACHR will interview the finalists, then proceed to the election, which requires an absolute majority of the Commission members—i.e. four commissioners. The election shall be secret, unless an alternate procedure is established via unanimous agreement of the Commission's members. The selection process will end between 14 and 15 September 2020, and **the IACHR will publish the criteria used in its decision.**

BEGINNING OF TERM

The new Special Rapporteur will take office on 6 October 2020.

IMPORTANT! From April 30, 2020 to June 15, 2020, Member States and Civil Society may send information and observations on the finalists to the IACHR office of the Special Rapporteur. For more information about the call and the selection process visit <http://www.oas.org/es/cidh/empleos/docs/2020-call-candidates-rapporteur-freedom-expression.pdf>