



European Center for
Not-for-Profit Law



International Service
for Human Rights

What support can civil society provide to the Committee in developing a General Comment on ICCPR Article 22 (right to freedom of association)?

Civil society partners¹ can assist and support the Human Rights Committee in a variety of ways in any process to develop a new General Comment on the right to freedom of association, including:

- Developing resources and analyses to compile and assess sources of law relevant to freedom of association. Depending on the interests and needs of the Committee, these resources can focus on sources from the Committee itself; from other UN bodies and special procedures; or from other regional and multilateral human rights bodies. Complementary analyses could, if helpful, note gaps and ambiguities in existing sources of law, along with opportunities for progressive development of norms on association.
- Establishing online repositories to collect and make available sources of law relevant to freedom of association, along with secondary sources as appropriate.
- Organizing consultations with local and international civil society partners and with other stakeholders, on a regional, global, or thematic basis, to discuss norms, good practices and challenges relating to freedom of association and priority issues to be addressed in a General Comment on association; or to provide feedback on draft text of a General Comment.
- Organizing expert meetings on particular topics, especially those relating to novel or developing issues and practices relevant to freedom of association, to convene thought leaders working on these issues in order to note challenges, pitfalls, implications, and possible approaches to addressing these issues in a General Comment on association.
- Suggesting and/or supporting the participation of relevant experts or representatives of regional and multilateral human rights bodies in any Committee retreats or gatherings aimed at developing, discussing, and refining a General Comment on association.
- Engaging in public messaging and awareness-raising to encourage understanding amongst civil society partners and other stakeholders of the process of developing a General Comment on the right to freedom of association, and participation as appropriate in this process.
- Mobilizing local and international civil society partners to provide inputs into the process of developing a General Comment on the right to freedom of association, through attendance at Committee-convened consultations and meetings, and development of written and oral/recorded comments and feedback to inform drafts of a General Comment.

We would be eager, as well, to hear any other suggestions or recommendations from Committee members regarding forms of support that would be helpful in developing a General Comment on the right to freedom of association. In structuring this support, we can draw on successful modes of collaboration established during the development of General Comment No. 37 on freedom of peaceful assembly, when civil society partners provided the Committee with each of the forms of support described above.² If a General Comment on the right to freedom of association is developed, we envision as well a robust role for civil society in disseminating, popularizing, and advancing practical deployment of the General Comment to foster the protection and exercise of associational rights.

¹ These partners include, but are not limited to: Amnesty International; Civicus; the European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL); the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL); and the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR).

² For more information on support provided by civil society in the development of General Comment No. 37, please see: ECNL, [Towards a General Comment 37 on Article 21 of ICCPR](#) (2019); ECNL, [The Path towards General Comment No. 37 on Article 21, ICCPR](#) (2020); ICNL, [“General Comment 37: Landmark Guidance on the Right of Peaceful Assembly”](#).