



INTER - AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
COMISION INTERAMERICANA DE DERECHOS HUMANOS  
COMISSÃO INTERAMERICANA DE DIREITOS HUMANOS  
COMMISSION INTERAMÉRICAINÉ DES DROITS DE L'HOMME



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## ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006 U.S.A.

September 27, 2013

**RE: Freedom of expression and communications surveillance by the United States  
Hearing – 149<sup>th</sup> ordinary period of sessions**

Dear Petitioner:

I am pleased to address you concerning your note of August 16, 2013, in which you express your interest in attending a hearing before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights during its 149<sup>th</sup> ordinary period of sessions to address matters relating to the general situation of freedom of expression and communications surveillance by the United States.

In this respect, I am pleased to inform you that the Commission has decided to convene a hearing on October 28, 2013, from 10:15 a.m. to 11:15 a.m., in the Ruben Dario room at the GSB Building of the Organization of American States, situated at the following address:

1889 F St. N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20006

The persons attending the hearing must be properly accredited. For this purpose, I hereby request that you submit, as soon as possible, a list of persons who you wish to include as members of your delegation, together with confirmation of your attendance on the date and at the time indicated above. If any of the aforementioned persons require a written communication from this Executive Secretariat in order to request travel documents to the United States, you are hereby requested to inform us accordingly within the next 48 hours and provide the following information for each interested person:

Steven M. Watt  
Human Rights Program  
American Civil Liberties Union Foundation (ACLU)  
swat@aclu.org

- Full name
- Date of birth
- Nationality
- Passport number
- Country and city in which visa will be requested
- Organization
- Contact information (including fax number)

Also in the interests of facilitating the documentary procedures applicable to all interested persons, and in consideration of the terms of Article XV, section 1(a) of the Headquarters Agreement between the Organization of American States and the Government of the United States of America signed on May 14, 1992, we wish to bring to your attention that the Commission has prepared for submission to the Permanent Mission of each country before the OAS the list of persons who will be requesting a visa for entry to the United States with the purpose of attending the Commission's hearings. Therefore, if there are any participants who you do not wish to be included on this list, we hereby request that you inform us within the time limit stated in the previous paragraph.

I would like to ask that you submit to the Commission, within 20 days of transmission of this communication, a written document with a summary of the main points of your presentation, as well as any documents that you consider necessary for the hearing.

I have also enclosed as an attachment a copy of a document entitled "Rules of Procedure for Hearings of a General Nature," and request that you follow the guidelines provided therein. In that sense, I respectfully request that you arrive at the specified location 15 minutes prior to the hearing time.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Abi-Mershed  
Assistant Executive Secretary

Enclosure



# ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

## INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

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### CHAPTER VI HEARINGS BEFORE THE COMMISSION

#### Article 61. Initiative

The Commission may decide to hold hearings on its own initiative or at the request of an interested party. The decision to convoke the hearings shall be made by the President of the Commission, at the proposal of the Executive Secretary.

#### Article 62. Purpose

The hearings may have the purpose of receiving information from the parties with respect to a petition or case being processed before the Commission, follow-up to recommendations, precautionary measures, or general or particular information related to human rights in one or more Members States of the OAS.

#### Article 63. Guarantees

The State in question shall grant the necessary guarantees to all the persons who attend a hearing or who in the course of a hearing provide information, testimony or evidence of any type to the Commission. That State may not prosecute the witnesses or experts, or carry out reprisals against them or their family members because of their statements or expert opinions given before the Commission.

#### Article 66. Hearings of a General Nature

1. Persons who are interested in presenting testimony or information to the Commission on the human rights situation in one or more States, or on matters of general interest, shall direct a written request for a hearing to the Executive Secretariat at least 50 days prior to the beginning of the respective session of the Commission.

2. Persons making such a request shall indicate the purpose of their appearance, a summary of the information they will furnish, the approximate time required for that purpose, and the identity of the participants.

3. If the Commission accedes to a request for a hearing on the situation of human rights in a State, it shall convene the State concerned, unless the Commission decides to hold a private hearing pursuant to Article 68.

4. Should the Commission deem it appropriate, it may also request the participation of other interested parties in the hearings on the human rights situation in one or more States, or on matters of general interest.

5. The Executive Secretariat shall inform the party or parties as to the date, place, and time of the hearing at least one month in advance. However, under exceptional circumstances, that time period may be reduced.

### **Article 67. Participation of the Commission Members**

The President of the Commission may form working groups to participate in the program of hearings.

### **Article 68. Public Nature of Hearings**

Hearings shall be public. When warranted by exceptional circumstances, the Commission, at its own initiative or at the request of an interested party, may hold private hearings and shall decide who may attend them. This decision pertains exclusively to the Commission, which shall notify the parties in this regard prior to the beginning of the hearing, either orally or in writing. Even in these cases, the minutes shall be prepared in the terms set forth in Article 70 of these Rules of Procedure.