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[DPLF and Central American partners participate in a hearing before the IACHR](#)



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DPLF and Central American partners participate in a hearing before the IACHR to address the transparent and meritocratic selection of Supreme Court judges and judicial independence in Central America.

On Thursday, November 1st, the [Due Process of Law Foundation](#) (DPLF), along with six other Central American organizations, participated in a **thematic hearing** before the [Inter-American Commission on Human Rights](#) (IACHR), an autonomous body of the Organization of American States (OAS) responsible for the promotion and protection of human rights in the western hemisphere. Participating institutions included: [The Myrna Mack Foundation](#), the Association of Non-Governmental Organizations of Honduras ([ASONOG](#)), Foundation Studies for the Application of Law of El Salvador ([FESPAD](#)), the Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights ([CENIDH](#)), the Permanent Commission of Human Rights of Nicaragua ([CPDH](#)), and [Citizens Alliance for Justice of Panama](#).

The hearing addressed the **issue of judicial independence and rule of law in Central America**, and aimed to inform the IACHR on major structural problems Central American countries are facing in their judicial systems. Ultimately, judicial officers are in charge of protecting the rights of the people, and if they do not do their job properly or do not do it at all, it is the citizens who suffer the consequences.

At the hearing before the IACHR, organizations brought attention to the issue of the **selection process of Supreme Court judges**. This issue deserves special attention due to the Supreme Courts' importance in the direction and management of the judiciary, generally because having magistrate "allies" has become one of the main forms of institutional control by executive powers and other political forces.

De izquierda a derecha: Ramón Benjamín – Alianza Ciudadana Pro Justicia (Panamá), Lissette Vásquez - Fundación Myrna Mack (Guatemala), Mauro Ampié – CENIDH (Nicaragua), [Lionor Artega](#) – DPLF (en representación de FESPAD, El Salvador), [Mirte Postema](#) – DPLF, Elizabeth Abi-Mershed, Secretaria Ejecutiva Adjunta – CIDH y Rosa María Ortiz, Comisionada de la CIDH.



The Supreme Court plays a key role: not only does it have the last word on the **application of law**, but it is also responsible for the **internal administration** of the judiciary. As such, it often decides on the appointment and promotion of judges and disciplinary actions, and exerts some control over the careers of all lower courts. It is therefore essential that Supreme Courts are incorporated only by qualified and capable professionals.

Nonetheless, the selection processes for magistrates in Central America leave much to be desired: the judges are usually appointed due to their **personal or political proximity to those in power**. The aforementioned organizations denounced these practices by giving concrete examples of the negative impact on judicial independence and rule of law in Central America.

Participants presented proposals for how to improve these selection processes, so that they may be truly transparent – at all stages – and for there to be a true evaluation of candidate merits. The [Guidelines for a transparent and merit-based system for the appointment of Supreme Court justices](#) developed by DPLF define the necessary elements for the proper selection of judges.

Read the [document](#) presented at the hearing on the selection of judges and judicial independence in Central America, and click [here](#) to watch a video of the hearing.

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