



## STRATEGIC MEETING

### **EMERGING DEMOCRATIC POWERS: CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT IN MULTILATERAL, REGIONAL AND BILATERAL FOREIGN POLICY ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

May 25- 26, 2011  
São Paulo, Brazil

#### **REPORT**



Participants of the Strategic Meeting “Emerging Democratic Powers: Civil society engagement in multilateral, regional and bilateral foreign policy on human rights”  
São Paulo, May 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> 2011

#### **Executive Summary**

Some emerging democratic powers have increased their influence on the global stage. Consequently, their foreign policies have gained more visibility and new alliances are being built at the international level. This applies not only to trade policies, but also to the international protection and promotion of human rights. However, the contributions of these countries to the advance of human rights worldwide could be much more significant than it is today.

Conectas Human Rights, with the support of the Open Society Foundations, organized the meeting “Emerging Democratic Powers: Civil Society Engagement in Multilateral, Regional and Bilateral Foreign Policy on Human Rights” to discuss experiences and possibilities in this area. The event brought together, on May 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, organizations from Argentina, Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and South Africa. Some international organizations and funders also took part of the meeting.

Among the participants were members of Amnesty International (UK), Brookings Institute (US), Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (Egypt), Center for Human Rights – University of Pretoria (South

Africa), Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales - CELS (Argentina), Centro Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez (Mexico), Comisión Mexicana de Defensa y Promoción de los DDHH (Mexico), Comunidade Baha'í - Brasil (Brazil), Conectas Direitos Humanos (Brazil), Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales - CRIES (Argentina), Democracy Coalition Project - DCP (US), Human Rights Watch (Geneva Office), Indonesia's NGO Coalition for International Human Rights Advocacy (Indonesia), Justiça Global (Brazil), Open Society Foundations - OSF (US), Partnership for Justice and Human Rights Agenda (Nigeria), Southern Africa Litigation Center (South Africa) and The Sigrid Rausing Trust (UK). The list of participants and program of the meeting are in **ANNEX 1**.

On its first day, the meeting formed an opportunity for improving the understanding of the foreign policies' priorities and decision making process of the seven countries from the Global South. The participants discussed how human rights have been integrated (or not) into these policies. It was composed by the opening remarks, introduction of participants and program; the panel "Emerging Power's Foreign Policies on Human Rights - opportunities and challenges"; and the open discussion "Understanding the Foreign Policies of Emerging Powers". The second day was dedicated to experience sharing on how civil society organizations have been monitoring and influencing these policies. In the program of the second day, there were a case study on "Human rights in Iran and the Role of Emerging Powers"; the panel "Access to Information and the Involvement of Media in Different Countries"; the open discussion "Participation and Public Scrutiny – Civil Society Coalitions and Formal Mechanisms"; and closing remarks.



"Foreign policy becomes an important tunnel in order to build awareness and express solidarity of human rights movement. It is especially relevant to the Southern human rights movement, which shows the growing advocacy network. I believe, in the future, there will be fewer less boundaries between Africa, Asia and Latin America in sharing and arguing the solidarity for human dignity on earth", **Haris Azhar**, Coordinator of KontraS, Indonesia.

Among the conclusions, there was an assessment that civil society organizations from the Global South could and should do more on foreign policy on human rights of emerging democratic powers. It was also identified that civil society can contribute to increase the importance of human rights in the foreign policy of emerging democratic powers by adopting multiple strategies that include improving access to information, fostering checks and balances mechanisms, working with the media and building advocacy coalitions.

The main issues raised during each session of the meeting are described below. It is important to note that this is not an exhaustive report and it was based in the methodology METAPLAN used during the meeting.

## Opening session

*Camila Asano (Conectas Direitos Humanos)*

*Jerry Fowler (Open Society Foundations)*

In several countries all around the world, there is a sense of disconnection between the government's foreign policy and the nation's internal reality. This gap, although an obvious reason for concern, has become a source of opportunity for the advocacy efforts of many civil society actors. By using their country's international commitments as a benchmark, NGOs around the world are now devising strategies to pressure their governments to meet their international obligations.

However, civil society engagement in a country's foreign policy on human rights is still a relatively new phenomenon. How exactly civil society actors are to incorporate foreign policy tools in their efforts is still a matter for debate. It is important to consider the different context and institutional building, even among democracies in the world. In this sense, there is no formula to engage with the foreign policy. Nonetheless, some strategies have been explored by civil society groups and an effective starting point is to promote an experience sharing process with other actors from different countries to recognize challenges and opportunities as well as formulate or improve strategies. This meeting aimed to facilitate this very engagement of international actors.

It must be noted that many individuals present at the meeting are from countries which have traditionally been targets of international human rights recommendations. Although they have been often the home grounds for human rights violations, these emerging democratic powers should not be silent in the larger international debate on human rights, including country specific situations worldwide.

**Panel 1 - Emerging power's foreign policy on human rights: opportunities and challenges**

Participants from different regions of the world were asked to share their organization views on opportunities and challenges, based on their own experience in engaging with foreign policy of emerging democratic powers.

The presenters of this panel were:

- Lucia Nader, Conectas Human Rights (Brazil)*
- Nicole Fritz, Southern Africa Litigation Center – SALC (South Africa)*
- Yuyun Wahyuningrum, Indonesia's NGO Coalition for Int. HR Advocacy (Indonesia)*
- Ted Piccone, Brookings Institution (US)*

The table below summarizes the presentations that were followed by questions and comments from the group.

<p><b>Lucia Nader</b> Conectas (Brazil)</p>	<p>Brazil is currently seeking a more proactive role at the international stage and to be positioned as “a leader of the south”. However, very often, an ideological approach prevails over human rights principles.</p> <p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>HR violations:</i> Given the past and present history of human rights violations in the country, it is often very difficult to believe that Brazil will play a progressive role in advancing human rights in their foreign policy.</li> <li>• <i>Peculiarity:</i> Foreign policy is not considered public policy in Brazil, such as education and health for example, and, often times, is not considered open for debate and accountable due to the fact it is seeing as a national security/interest issue.</li> <li>• <i>Lack of culture:</i> There is a lack of culture for foreign policy in Brazil. There is a widespread belief that the matter was too sophisticated to meddle in.</li> <li>• <i>Old players:</i> Dealing with States that have been traditionally active involved in the multilateral forum, such as European countries, is an ongoing challenge.</li> </ul> <p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Increase diversity:</i> Try to bring more diversity to the international level as that would bring a variety of new issues and perspectives to the table.</li> <li>• <i>Combat selectivity:</i> There is an opportunity to break the chain of selectivity by drawing attention to issues that are not part of the agenda of traditional players.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Flexibility:</i> There is no concrete formula for working with foreign policy and human rights, which can be seen as an opportunity, since NGOs have the flexibility to devise their own strategies.</li> <li>• <i>Make HR a global fight:</i> Given the chance to communicate and engage with more countries, the fight for human rights can be elevated to a global level.</li> </ul> <p><b>Strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Information:</i> It is important to facilitate greater access to information.</li> <li>• <i>Work with Congress:</i> Work with check and balances by bringing issues to the attention of Congress at least once a year (by mean of public hearings, for example).</li> <li>• <i>Media:</i> Utilizing the media is very important as it allows for greater visibility and thus awareness.</li> <li>• <i>Collaboration:</i> It is important to build coalitions with committees and other NGOs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Nicole Fritz</b> SALC (South Africa)</p> <p><b>Exhibition of the film “People Power: How Civil Society Blocked an Arms Shipment to Zimbabwe”<sup>1</sup></b></p>	<p>South Africa is seen as a regional power that plays a dual role - maintaining power within the continent and forming alliances with other countries in the global south.</p> <p><b>Action</b></p> <p>After hearing news reports announcing an arms shipment originating from China and destined for Zimbabwe, a number of civil society actors, including SALC, launched a campaign to prevent it from arriving.</p> <p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Location:</i> The greatest challenge was actually locating the vessel.</li> <li>• <i>Relationship with traditional powers:</i> A key ongoing problem is with regards to dealing with traditional powers. For instance, the US was highly instrumental to ensure the ship did not unload. However, for political reasons, it is difficult to say that this was a collaborative effort between the US and African civil society.</li> <li>• <i>Lack of cooperation from the Chinese government:</i> When Chinese officials were contacted in the aftermath, they responded by saying that the matter was between private companies and thus they had no right to interfere.</li> <li>• <i>Need for tangible goal:</i> There were a number of initiatives taken by civil society after the ship incident in order to change the standing of South Africa with respect to Zimbabwe. However, because there was not again a tangible object to rally the citizens, the effectiveness of the campaign was hard to be duplicated.</li> </ul> <p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Solidarity:</i> There was widespread solidarity among civil society from different countries. This was definitely an opportunity for NGOs as they could easily gather mass support for their campaign.</li> </ul> <p><b>Strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Use of international bodies:</i> It was important to use international bodies such as the Global Transporting Union since they were ultimately able to provide the whereabouts of the vessel.</li> <li>• <i>Different tools:</i> A wide variety of strategy tools such as advocacy networks, petitions, and trade worker unions were involved.</li> <li>• <i>Build on solidarity:</i> It was very important to maximize on the existing solidarity among civil society.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Available at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sBHe84I2p\\_s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sBHe84I2p_s)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Media:</i> The media was accessed to portray the disconnection between the wants of civil society and the position of the South African government with respect to Zimbabwe.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Yuyun Wahyuningrum</b> Indonesia's NGO Coalition for Int. HR Advocacy (Indonesia)</p>	<p>Indonesia seeks to adopt an independent and active strategy.</p> <p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Lack of interest:</i> There is a lack of interest in foreign policy issues among the general population.</li> <li>• <i>Unclear priorities:</i> it is difficult to determine whether human rights are actually in the government's priorities in foreign policy.</li> </ul> <p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Openness:</i> Civil society has been presented a number of opportunities to meet with the government to discuss human rights priorities at both the national and international level.</li> </ul> <p><b>Strategies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Specific pledges:</i> It is necessary to encourage Indonesia to be more specific in their pledges pertaining to human rights issues.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ted Piccone</b> Brookings Institution (US)<sup>2</sup></p>	<p>An analysis of the foreign policy of emerging democratic powers were presented.</p> <p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Principle of non-interference:</i> There is an overriding principle of non-interference within nations. This is held out to be the most important principle when thinking about human rights. Often times, human rights problems are considered internal matters with which outside actors should not interfere. This principle is a great challenge for the advancement of international human rights, which can only be advanced with international pressure.</li> <li>• <i>Regional dynamics:</i> Countries play regional roles and usually have agendas that have them behave in a conflicting manner. South Africa, for instance, is seen as a mediator and Turkey wants to make friends with those in the neighborhood.</li> <li>• <i>Disconnection in policies:</i> There is often a disconnection between the internal and external policies.</li> <li>• <i>Local sentiment:</i> Although it is important for NGOs to determine the sentiment of the local population and align it with foreign policy concerns, it is sometimes difficult and even dangerous to determine what the public sentiment is.</li> </ul> <p><b>Strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Better understanding of internal affairs:</i> In order to affect the outside game, the inside game must first be mastered. The focus must thus be first on internal affairs. This game is a hard one. It is about getting the right information at the right time. Think tanks and Universities that can be partners.</li> </ul>

## Open discussion: Understanding the foreign policies of emerging democratic powers

The following questions guided the discussion among the participants:

<sup>2</sup> Report of the seminar "The Foreign Policies of Emerging-Market Democracies What Role for Human Rights and Democracy?" is available at [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/reports/2011/06\\_human\\_rights\\_piccone/06\\_human\\_rights\\_piccone.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/reports/2011/06_human_rights_piccone/06_human_rights_piccone.pdf)

**Question 1:** How would you describe the identity your country desires/seeks internationally? What are the main goals/priorities of your country's foreign policy?

**Question 2:** How are human rights integrated in your country's foreign policy?

**Question 3:** What are the constraints for a larger role of human rights in this foreign policy?

**Question 4:** What are some mechanisms available for civil society?

<p><b>BRAZIL</b></p>	<p><b>Question 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historically, Brazil has sought to portray itself as a peaceful country which deals with foreign relations in a peaceful manner.</li> <li>• A recurring theme in Brazilian foreign policy is reciprocity and autonomy, which is sometimes a problem because it becomes the government's goal rather than human rights themselves.</li> <li>• Brazil wants to be seen as a good example and a reference for the fight against poverty.</li> <li>• Brazil has difficulty to deal with leadership in the Latin American region. Often the positions taken by Brazil in the international arenas are more aligned with other southern countries than Latin American ones.</li> <li>• Democratization of the international order is one of the priorities of the Brazilian foreign policy.</li> </ul> <p><b>Question 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the Brazilian Constitution, human rights are one of the 10 principles that guide international affairs. However, this principle is not always incorporated into practice.</li> <li>• Brazil has ratified a number of treaties and conventions to illustrate their commitment to upholding human rights. They have also offered a number of invitations to the UN special rapporteurs.</li> <li>• Although human rights are a priority, Brazil often chooses to focus on other issues.</li> <li>• A large focus of Brazil is the fight against poverty.</li> </ul> <p><b>Question 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decisions in Brazil are made on a case-by-case basis—the country lacks the mechanism to carry out processes.</li> <li>• A significant issue is the lack of resources and capacity of civil society groups to engage in the foreign policy.</li> <li>• Human rights are seen by some as an impediment to economic growth and development.</li> </ul> <p><b>Question 4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are a number of coalitions and NGOs.</li> <li>• There have been initial talks on formal mechanisms for civil society originating from the government.</li> <li>• There are a number of initiatives launched by civil society, such as the Brazilian Committee on Human Rights and Foreign Policy, formed by NGOs and State's organs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>ARGENTINA</b></p>	<p><b>Question 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Argentinean foreign policy does not have a clear identity.</li> <li>• Argentina does not have a desire to advance its own world vision upon the world—it is rather focused on its own domestic issues.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The International Convention on Disappearances is one specific initiative Argentina has supported from beginning to end.</li> <li>• There is no mention of foreign policy in the Argentinean Constitution.</li> <li>• It holds an independent position from GRULAC<sup>3</sup>.</li> </ul> <p><b>Question 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For historical and humanitarian reasons, Argentina’s foreign policy has contained a large human rights component since the rise of democracy.</li> <li>• It can be said its human rights component is a comparative advantage of the Argentinean foreign policy.</li> </ul> <p><b>Question 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There exists a lack of strong diplomatic bureaucracy in the country.</li> <li>• Argentina has no desire to be a protagonist. They have been known to shy away from taking a stand on issues that are not on their own agenda. They are often criticized for being too timid.</li> <li>• No ideological component in the Argentinean foreign policy.</li> <li>• There is a lack of resources for NGOs to work with foreign policy.</li> <li>• Small number of human rights organizations engaging in human rights policy making.</li> </ul> <p><b>Question 4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a lack of accountability and an ineffective civil society participation mechanism.</li> </ul>
<p><b>MEXICO</b></p>	<p><b>Question 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Mexican foreign policy is very confusing and contradictory.</li> <li>• Mexico is very concerned with selling itself commercially and gaining a high reputation in the region. As a result, its foreign policy reflects its need to promote itself internationally.</li> <li>• It can be said that Mexico has a good professional diplomacy. They are organized and predictable.</li> </ul> <p><b>Question 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mexico tries to portray a really strong concern for human rights in its foreign policy. For instance, when attending international forums, the government sends high-ranking officials. However, the commitment made internationally is not implemented at the national level. Mexico’s foreign policy is thus contradictory.</li> <li>• For instance, Mexico has gained a reputation within the environmental sphere. Yet, the air pollution in Mexico City is a reason for great concern.</li> <li>• There was an approval this year of a human rights component in the Mexican Constitution. Although this is a commendable advancement, it also fuels the contradiction within Mexican society due to the high record of human rights violations in the country.</li> </ul> <p><b>Question 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the international level, NGOs are often seen as opponents of the Mexican foreign policy because of their access the Inter-American Human Rights System.</li> </ul> <p><b>Question 4</b></p>

<sup>3</sup> GRULAC - Group of Latin American and Caribbean countries.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no formal mechanism for civil society participation on foreign policy available.</li> <li>• There is also a lack of civil society engagement in foreign policy.</li> </ul>
<b>NIGERIA</b>	<p><b>Question 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is very little monitoring of the country’s foreign policy and its focus is largely on Africa.</li> <li>• There is a mention of foreign policy in the Constitution but since it was drafted by the military regime, it reflects military rule and the need to preserve the dictatorship.</li> <li>• ECOWAS<sup>4</sup> was a way to regain leadership in Africa. The country wants to be seen as a leader within the region.</li> <li>• The Executive Branch is very powerful in the conduction of foreign policy.</li> </ul> <p><b>Question 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The only mention of human rights in the Constitution pertains to respecting international law and treaty obligations.</li> </ul> <p><b>Question 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The lack of review and monitoring of the country’s foreign policy is a large constraint.</li> <li>• There is a lack of guidelines for the actual definition of the foreign policy. The result of this is a personally driven foreign policy that reflects the goal of the minister at the time.</li> <li>• Getting a hold of these ministers is very tough.</li> </ul> <p><b>Question 4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is believed that NGOs have no place in the formation of the foreign policy.</li> <li>• The former president of the Human Rights Council, the Nigerian Ambassador Martin I. Uhumoibi, is serving now in Nigeria and is planning meetings with civil society about the Nigerian positions internationally on human rights. This is been seen as an opportunity for civil society engagement.</li> </ul>
<b>SOUTH AFRICA</b>	<p><b>Question 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The country strives to be a leader for a fairer global order. It aligned itself with those in the Global South and embarked the liberation project. Because of this insistence, South Africa sometimes aligned itself with entities that were not for human rights. For instance, the country stood with Gaddafi.</li> <li>• Nonetheless, South Africa is seen as a regional power that plays a dual role—maintaining power within the continent and forming alliances with other countries in the Global South.</li> <li>• It seeks greater south-south cooperation, particularly in Africa.</li> <li>• On the other hand, South Africa wants to secure relationships with traditional powers.</li> <li>• The Judiciary Branch is available to review foreign policy.</li> <li>• South Africa is very selective when it comes to offering their support internationally.</li> </ul> <p><b>Question 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some of the country’s commitments to human rights have been criticized</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> ECOWAS - *Economic Community Of West African States*

	<p>since in recent years it has been seen as playing a “spoiler” role at the UN Human Rights Council.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Also, although the country initially played a major part in introducing the International Criminal Court, it has now done a complete “flip” and is one of the major players behind trying to remove support from it.</li> </ul> <p><b>Question 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessing necessary information is often very difficult.</li> <li>• Civil society is not organized for a systematic monitoring of the foreign policy.</li> <li>• There is a lack of willingness from civil society to engage in discussion and deliberation.</li> <li>• Development concerns have given rise to “strange” relations with some countries.</li> <li>• Since the Judiciary is willing to play such an active role in the formulation of foreign policy, they are often targeted.</li> </ul> <p><b>Question 4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a vibrant civil society in South Africa which advocates for foreign policy more consistent with human rights principles. Individuals are taking leadership in the country but the government itself is falling behind.</li> </ul>
<p><b>EGYPT</b></p>	<p><b>Question 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to the revolution, it is really hard to decipher what Egypt’s foreign policy identity now.</li> <li>• Prior to the revolution, Egypt’s identity was South/Pan-Arabism and Islam. Unless the revolution is successful, there will likely not be very much change and Egypt will continue to be portrayed the same way.</li> <li>• National security is a large component of the nation’s foreign policy. Another important goal is to maximize visibility in the region. Egypt wants to see itself as a major contributor to international politics.</li> </ul> <p><b>Question 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human rights have not been incorporated into the country’s foreign policy. Egypt has been very destructive. However, due to the revolution the door can be considered slightly open for the integration of human rights into the country’s foreign policy.</li> <li>• Egypt has improved its performance slightly with respect to human rights issues. For instance, the foreign minister suggested ratifying the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court – ICC and Egypt’s performance at the special session on Syria displayed an improvement from the past.</li> </ul> <p><b>Question 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the extremists win the revolution, they will continue to play the leading and destructive role in the country.</li> <li>• There continues to exist a dominant negative trend among blocks (for example, the OIC and the Arab League)</li> </ul> <p><b>Question 4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of openness by the State and lack of interest by civil society.</li> </ul>
<p><b>INDONESIA</b></p>	<p><b>Question 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In terms of ideology, Indonesia has taken a very neutral position. Its foreign</li> </ul>

policy is thus very pragmatic.

- After General Hadji Mohamed Suharto, Indonesia has been neither considered east nor west.
- Indonesia has been less active in foreign policy. For instance, the country did not take any initiative or assume any role in the case of Burma.
- Although the country has been trying to establish itself as a consensus builder, it is more correctly defined as a problem solver.
- It is a leader in ASEAN<sup>5</sup>.
- Indonesia's foreign policy has been in a difficult position with respect to East Timor.

#### **Question 2**

- There is a new chapter for human rights in the Constitution after the constitutional reform. The same cannot be said for foreign policy.
- With respect to human rights issues, Indonesia has tried to assume the role of mediator between countries in the region.

#### **Question 3**

- There is a lack of substantial communication with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA).
- Although the director of human rights in the Indonesian government is well aware of the issues in the country and is open for discussion, he is very cautious of the police and military. As a result, government bodies often place the burden of implementation on other divisions. As a result, inter-departmental blaming is a common occurrence.
- Lack of coordination among government bodies.
- Consensus is required in ASEAN decision making process and there are members there not interested in an active role of the body in human rights issues.
- There is a growing concern over the Sharia influence in the country. A large number of Ahmadiyya followers are persecuted in the country.

#### **Question 4**

- There is a mechanism for submitting complaints by NGOs, even though the process has yet to be institutionalized.
- With regards to accountability, the government has not yet agreed on how to hold its foreign policy accountable. Also, NGOs have noted the government's reluctance to report back with progress reports.
- The police and military have a lot of political power in Indonesia. For instance, the Attorney General, regardless of his/her sympathy, cannot do much without the backing of the military which lacks a specific ideology.
- A strong mechanism for participation and communication is lacking in the country.

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<sup>5</sup> ASEAN - Association of Southeast Asian Nations

## Case study: Human rights situation in Iran and the role of emerging democratic powers

*Iradj Eghbari, Comunidade Baha'í do Brasil (Brazil)*  
*Dokhi Fassibian, Democracy Coalition Project (US)*

### Overview of situation and of the international mobilization:

- Iran has a history of human rights violations. The year of 2009 was particularly difficult due to the election when the government decided to violently crack down on civil society which led to a severe human rights crisis—something the international community was not prepared to respond to.
- For a number of reasons, such as the new Obama Administration, the hostile relationship between the US and Iran and the nuclear agenda, there was initially no significant actions taken by the international community.
- Finally, between 2009 and 2011, there were a number of advocacy campaigns launched by a large number of human rights organizations. The campaign organized members and attempted to gain support from all over the world, including allies of the United States. It was crucial for the campaign not to focus on political disputes, but rather on the widespread human rights violations in the country. In order to get the UN Human Rights Council and the world to respond favorably to the situation, it was important to separate the human rights concerns from any political problems involved. For instance, one key goal of the campaign was to get Russia to speak out against the human rights violations in the country.
- The campaigns were able to place significant pressure on the US, the UN Human Rights Council and other influential actors. The Human Rights Council finally established a Special Rapporteur dedicated specifically to the situation in Iran in March 2011.

### Brazil's take on the situation:

- Over the past ten years (except 2003), the Brazilian government has abstained on human rights resolutions in Iran at the UN General Assembly and was very timid to condemn at the international level the systematic violations in the country and to call Iranian authorities to respect the international human rights standards.
- The newly elected President Dilma Rousseff raised the issue of how Brazil voted in an interview to the Washington Post. She said that she do not agree with the way Brazil voted<sup>6</sup>, which ultimately triggered the media and the matter drew more and more attention. As a consequence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was being questioned with regards to which position the Brazilian government would take on resolution of the Human Rights Council establishing a UN Special Rapporteur to the Iranian human rights situation.

### Advocacy efforts promoted by civil society organizations in Brazil:

#### *Strategies used:*

- Comunidade Baha'í Brazil had been monitoring the Brazilian votes at the General Assembly, so there was a tracking record of Brazil's position and explanations of vote.
- It has also been engaging various civil society actors in the campaign to raise public awareness and exert pressure on the government.
- Involving the Legislative Branch of the country in the matter. A public hearing at the House of Commons was convened to discuss the Iranian situation and the position to be taken by Brazil at the Human Rights Council. Officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were present in the

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<sup>6</sup> Interview available at [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/12/03/AR2010120303241.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/12/03/AR2010120303241.html)

public hearing. Working with the government and the opposition was a very effective strategy for the campaign.

- Using connections in the Labor Party (the ruling party) in order to pressure the government to change its vote with respect to Iran.
- The good relationship with the media was a key factor. Conectas has good relations with the leading newspaper in São Paulo, which is also distributed nationally. An interview with and an op-ed by Iranian defenders were published and gave visibility to the situation in Iran and to the expectation for the Brazilian vote at the Human Rights Council.
- There was a mission to Brazil, promoted by Conectas, of Iranian defenders with the purpose to encourage the Brazilian government to adopt a more assertive position against abuses in Iran during the UN Human Rights Council session. Accompanied by representatives from Conectas, the Iranian defenders met with high-level Brazilian officials on foreign policy, as well as with other relevant Brazilian stakeholders to raise awareness of the situation in Iran and to foster solidarity actions. Conectas also launched a public online petition for the Brazilian public to express its support for the cause by urging Brazil to vote in favor of the resolution.

Brazil voted in favor the Special Rapporteur for Iran during 16<sup>th</sup> Human Rights Council Session in March 2011.

**Open discussions: Tools and strategies for civil society engagement with foreign policy**

**ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND THE MEDIA**

The participants were invited to respond the following questions:

- How does the government provide information on foreign policy and its priorities and orientation?
- How can access to information be increased?
- How do the local and international media cover the foreign policy of your country?
- How can the visibility of foreign policy be increased?

<b>BRAZIL</b>	<p><b>Access to Information</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no law on access to public information yet, a bill is in the Senate.</li> <li>• Access to information is not proactive—information has to be requested. Therefore, access to information often relies on the relationships with ministry officials.</li> <li>• Ministry of Foreign Affairs publishes notes to the press. However, there is no “blue-book” where the Brazilian government presents its guidelines and priorities on foreign policy.</li> <li>• Some tools available, such as the request of information by the Congress to any State organ, are rarely used for foreign policy matters.</li> <li>• <b>Strategies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organize public hearing at the National Congress when the MFA and the Human Rights Ministry presents their progress at the international level and their priority agenda regarding foreign policy on human rights for the coming months.</li> <li>- Conectas currently publishes the yearbook “Human rights: Brazil at the UN”, which contains information on the Brazilian performance at the UN human rights bodies, including its voting records. The distribution of this resource permits easy access to information and thus raises</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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	<p>awareness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A coalition called the Brazilian Committee on Human Rights and Foreign Policy was created by NGOs, as well as some organs of the Legislative and the Executive Branches (i.e. Minister of Health) where matters such as access to information are discussed.</li> <li>- Advocacy work for the approval of the access to public information law.</li> </ul> <p><b>Media</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is more of a focus on international issues than Brazil’s position on the international stage.</li> <li>• Interest limited to major newspapers.</li> <li>• <b>Strategies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Try to make news pertaining to foreign policy more appealing to the general public. Make it “attractive” so that the media will want to publish it.</li> <li>- Build trust and relationships with journalists and provide them with technical information.</li> <li>- Establish more contacts around the world that can be given to Brazilian journalists as sources. By doing that, the local media would be more interested in pursuing a story.</li> <li>- Reach international press agencies. International NGOs could help to put organizations from emerging democratic powers in contact with them.</li> <li>- In Brazil, journalists do not need journalism degree in order to work as a journalist. This is an opportunity because NGOs can reach individuals that have a background in international relations, and thus have some interest in foreign policy matters.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>MEXICO</b></p>	<p><b>Access to Information</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A major problem is that there are no clear criteria in the country for what information is public and private.</li> <li>• There was a law introduced in 2002, and reformed in 2008, outlining what information ought to be kept private due to security concerns. Yet, the criterion is still unclear.</li> <li>• Website of the MFA has very basic information. When information is requested, the MFA’s usual reply is that the information is private for 12 years for security reasons.</li> <li>• In sum, a lot of information is kept from the public.</li> <li>• <b>Strategies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The starting point is to push for a clearer criterion for public/private information. This criterion must reflect human rights concerns.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Media</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media generally only advertises issues pertaining to foreign affairs and economic relations and pays very little attention to human rights concerns.</li> <li>• There are a few media companies in the country that own majority of the newspapers and television channels. The government exercises a lot of control over these companies.</li> <li>• With respect to diversity of topics, the media is very selective. They care more about some issues, such as local ones, that have a direct impact on Mexico.</li> </ul>

	<p>Global issues are usually not tracked.</p> <p><b>Strategies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- One of the biggest problems in Mexico is that journalists are constantly being threatened by local authorities. In order to improve the breadth of coverage, journalists need to be protected.</li> <li>- Newspapers and television other than the internet need to be used to distribute news since a large portion of the public does not have access to it.</li> </ul>
<p><b>ARGENTINA</b></p>	<p><b>Access to Information</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no formal mechanism in place for requesting information.</li> <li>• Access to information often relies on personal relationships.</li> <li>• There are a number of meetings that do not produce any documents at all. There is thus a lack of a data collection mechanism. The information from such meetings can only be extracted informally.</li> <li>• Discovering the time, place and specific agendas of meetings is often a difficult task.</li> </ul> <p><b>Strategies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Try to change culture and promote a standard mechanism for collecting and distributing information.</li> <li>- Also, try to promote regular meetings.</li> </ul> <p><b>Media</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The media is heavily subject to political polarization. As a result, the news is often not neutral and unbiased. Media is often used to support/criticize the government/opponents.</li> <li>• Newspapers are very selective with regards to issues they wish to cover. There is not a lot of coverage of foreign policy matters.</li> <li>• Argentinean MFA does not announce important news on its website.</li> </ul> <p><b>Strategies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There are advisory press releases in some newspapers suggested by NGOs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>SOUTH AFRICA</b></p>	<p><b>Access to Information</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is an access to information law. However, information has to be extracted informally since there is no formal mechanism in place.</li> <li>• The Executive Branch is very reluctant to provide information on matters pertaining to foreign policy.</li> <li>• Legal opinions are now being published.</li> </ul> <p><b>Strategies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It would be helpful to seek the assistance of courts. However, better cases will have to be built.</li> <li>- It would be helpful to launch educational campaigns informing civil society of their entitlement to information pertaining to their country's foreign policy. The campaign should also highlight the government's accountability for its foreign policy.</li> </ul> <p><b>Media</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• South Africa has experienced a major contraction of journalists. There is thus a</li> </ul>

	<p>lack of in-depth reporting. However, when alerted by civil society of particular issues, the journalists do step up.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Threats have been issued to the media thus making its work very difficult. Civil society in South Africa is working hard to fight against this suppression.</li> <li>• Lack of resources serve as a huge hurdle for the media.</li> <li>• In some cases, issues are so complex and technical that it is hard for journalists to properly document them.</li> <li>• To some extent, there is a limited appetite for some forums closer to home. Some events do not attract media interest, even though they are of great importance. This is largely due to the journalists' lack of knowledge.</li> <li>• <b>Strategies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hard to devise a solution. It might be helpful to assist journalists in their attempt to access the international forum. Also, help them fund-raise.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>EGYPT</b></p>	<p><b>Access to Information</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The MFA actually plays a very modest role in the formulation of the country's foreign policy. It is constructed by the President and unknown, thus unaccountable, actors. As a result, the MFA is left with minor issues. Even though the MFA has a website that releases information, it is not very useful since the information is not of great substance.</li> <li>• Therefore, most information pertaining to how the country's foreign policy is established is hidden—even from many members of the parliament. So, civil society actors have a hard time figuring out who to contact.</li> <li>• Given the revolution, it is difficult to determine what the state of the nation's foreign policy will be in the future.</li> <li>• <b>Strategies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use the window of opportunity of the revolution to foster the principle of access to information in the foreign policy</li> <li>- It would be helpful to have a dynamic foreign minister.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Media</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In general, despite the anti-west attitude, Egyptian media pays a lot of attention to what is going on in the international media.</li> <li>• They are generally open to publishing controversial issues.</li> <li>• However, media is currently suffering and is largely focused on local issues.</li> </ul>
<p><b>NIGERIA</b></p>	<p><b>Access to Information</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freedom of information bill was struck by parliament for the past 10 years. It has finally been enacted.</li> <li>• It is very difficult to track down someone who will respond favorably with regards to foreign policy question.</li> <li>• <b>Strategies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Partnership with parliamentarians is important.</li> <li>- Need to maintain regular contact with relevant players on the issue.</li> <li>- It is much easier to access information from the media. As a result, having strong relationships with the media is very important.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Media</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is coverage of issues pertaining to foreign policy and human rights in the media. However, journalists sometimes need to be educated on the topic so</li> </ul>

	<p>that they can present the news in a correct and easy to read fashion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are regular columns in the newspaper about foreign policy. However, the articles do not always engage in the relationship between foreign policy and human rights.</li> <li>• <b>Strategies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide timely information to the media.</li> <li>- Training program for media partners would be helpful.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>INDONESIA</b></p>	<p><b>Access to Information</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is an access to information law.</li> <li>• There is a lack of criteria for what is public/private information.</li> <li>• Recently legislation has been passed requiring each institution requesting information to elect one official representative. However, there is a mismatch between the supply and demand of information. The ministry lacks capacity to provide all the requested information.</li> <li>• Half of the embassies are foreign intelligence. Therefore, the MFA also deals with state secrecy which is why they are often so cautious about disclosing information.</li> <li>• NGOs can access information in an informal fashion. However, there is no guarantee the information will be accurate.</li> </ul> <p><b>Media</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simplify the vocabulary.</li> <li>• Create other means to disseminate information.</li> </ul>

## CIVIL SOCIETY COALITIONS

An oral open discussion was carried out based on the following questions:

- *How is civil society currently involved in foreign policy making?*
  - *How successful advocacy coalitions and formal mechanisms of civil society participation be built?*
- Participants stated that funds are essential for the actions developed by civil society and as a result coalitions and cooperation among various organizations is crucial for the performance of civil society organizations.
  - It is important to discuss among the coalition whether specific projects should be carried out as a group or individually.
  - Participants used to work in coalitions when it comes to foreign policy, but such mechanisms can often be very costly, both in terms of financial resources and time. However, for the sake of survival, it is important for NGOs to stick together.
  - Coalitions are also very useful when designing a particular campaign. To be effective, it is necessary for a campaign to be tailored to the dynamics of the specific region. Coalitions could be a good place to gather the information necessary for such tailoring.
  - Networks can be a useful tool that does not require consensus and serves as a good coordinating platform.
  - It is also a great learning space since it allows NGOs to share knowledge about their respective countries.

## Closing remarks

The closing session started with a round of comments from participants about the meeting and their future perspectives in working with foreign policy and human rights. One of the recurring points in the interventions was that the meeting took place at an opportune time, when the role of emerging democratic powers in the world has been increasingly discussed.

Many participants also brought to light that their organizations have expressed interest in working more systematically with the foreign policy and the exchange of experiences and lessons learned during the meeting was an important step in that direction.

It was also raised that the work on foreign policy and human rights is not restricted to monitoring and influencing bodies or decisions directly related to human rights, such as the UN Human Rights Council. This is important, but there is also a need to engage with other subjects (e.g. trade agreements) or/and other fora (e.g. WTO, WHO, etc) that can impact human rights.

Another assessment was that it might be helpful to create a dialogue with relevant stakeholders other than those working directly with human rights issues.

Finally, it was seen as necessary the continuous dialogue between organizations interested in working with foreign policy and human rights. It has been suggested, for example, that regular meetings could be held at different the emerging democratic powers.



“As emerging powers become more important players on the international stage and look to remake a fairer world order, much of the success of that project will depend on their ability to protect and promote human rights. Co-ordinated civil society efforts within the Global South, such as those initiated by Conectas, are vital to ensuring that a fairer, more humane world order isn’t only realised as between states but that actual tangible benefits in terms of quality of life and protection of human rights are delivered to citizens in the Global South.” **Nicole Fritz**, Executive Director, Southern Africa Litigation Centre

An online survey to evaluate the meeting was sent to the participants.

## ANNEX 1 – Program of the meeting and list of participants (below)



## Emerging Democratic Powers: Civil Society Engagement in Multilateral, Regional and Bilateral Foreign Policy on Human Rights

**Date and venue:** May 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011/ São Paulo  
Tryp Higienópolis, Rua Maranhão 371, Higienópolis

(For urgent matters call: +5511 9898-3226 – Camila or +5511 9323-7516 – Tatiana)

### DRAFT AGENDA

Day 1 – May 25<sup>th</sup>

#### EMERGING POWER'S FOREIGN POLICIES ON HUMAN RIGHTS

9am-12.30pm

- **Welcome - opening remarks, introduction of participants and program**
  - Camila Asano, Conectas Human Rights (Brazil)
  - Jerry Fowler, Open Society Foundations (US)
- **Panel: Emerging power's foreign policies on human rights - opportunities and challenges**
  - Lucia Nader, Conectas Human Rights (Brazil)
  - Nicole Fritz, Southern Africa Litigation Center (South Africa)
  - Ted Piccone, Brookings Institution (US)
  - Yuyun Wahyuningrum, Indonesia's NGO Coalition for Int. HR Advocacy (Indonesia)

12.30-2pm

- **Lunch**

2-6pm

- **Open discussion: Understanding the foreign policies of emerging powers**  
*Considering the foreign policy of the country where you are based or work with...*
  - How would you describe the identity your country desires/seeks internationally?
  - What are the main goals/priorities of your country's foreign policy?
  - How are human rights integrated in your country's foreign policy?
  - What are the constraints for a larger role of human rights in this foreign policy?

- **Summary of the day**

8pm

- **Welcome Dinner**

9am-10.30am

- **Case Study: human rights in Iran and the role of emerging powers**
  - Iradj Eghrari, Comunidade Baha'i do Brasil (Brazil)
  - Dokhi Fassihian, Democracy Coalition Project (US)

10.45-12.30pm

- **Transparency and Accountability – Access to Information**
  - *How does the government provide information on foreign policy and its priorities and orientation?*
  - *How can access to information be increased?*

12.30-2pm

- **Lunch**

2-3.30pm

- **Transparency and Accountability – Decision-making and Checks and Balances**
  - *What is the foreign policy decision-making process in your country (ex: what are the roles of Legislative, Executive, and Judicial branches)*
  - *How can greater check and balances among the Executive, Legislative and Judiciary on foreign policy be fostered?*
- **Participation and Public Scrutiny – Media**
  - *How do the local and international media cover the foreign policy of your country?*
  - *How can the visibility of foreign policy be increased?*

3.30-6pm

- **Participation and Public Scrutiny – Civil Society Coalitions and Formal Mechanisms**
  - *How is civil society currently involved in foreign policy making?*
  - *How successful advocacy coalitions and formal mechanisms of civil society participation be built?*
- **Way forward and closing remarks**

### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

1. Andrés Serbin	CRIES - Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales (Argentina)
2. Andressa Caldas	Justiça Global (Brazil)
3. Bahey el-din Hassan	Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (Egypt)
4. Camila Asano	Conectas Direitos Humanos (Brazil)
5. Cassio França	FES - Fundação Friedrich Ebert (Brazil)
6. Denise Dora	FordFoundation (Brazil) - tbc
7. Dokhi Fassihian	Democracy Coalition Project (US)
8. Gastón Chillier	CELS – Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (Argentina)
9. Giyouun Kim	Forum Asia (Switzerland) - tbc
10. Haris Azhar	Kontras (Indonesia)
11. Heloisa Griggs	OSF - Open Society Foundations (US)
12. Iradj Eghrari	Comunidade Baha'í - Brasil (Brazil)
13. Itoro Eze-Anaba	Partnership for Justice and Human Rights Agenda (Nigeria)
14. Jerry Fowler	OSF - Open Society Foundations (US)
15. José René Paz	Centro Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez (Mexico)
16. Juana Kweitel	Conectas Direitos Humanos (Brazil)
17. Julie Broome	The Sigrid Rausing Trust (UK)
18. Julie de Rivero	Human Rights Watch (Switzerland)
19. Louise De Bruin	Center for Human Rights – Univ. of Pretoria (South Africa)
20. Lucia Nader	Conectas Direitos Humanos (Brazil)
21. Malak Poppovic	Conectas Direitos Humanos (Brazil)
22. Nicole Fritz	Southern Africa Litigation Center (South Africa)
23. Oscar Vilhena Vieira	Conectas Direitos Humanos (Brazil)
24. Russell Pickard	Open Society Foundations (UK)
25. Steve Crawshaw	Amnesty International (UK)
26. Silvano Cantú	Com. Mexicana de Defensa y Promoción de los DDHH (Mexico)
27. Ted Piccone	Brookings Institute (US)
28. Yuyun Wahyuningrum	Indonesia's NGO Coalition for Int. HR Advocacy (Indonesia)

tbc – to be confirmed

**The meeting has the support of Open Society Foundations.**