



Strategic plan 2020 – 2024

The International Federation of ACATs (Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture), FIACAT, is an international Christian non-governmental human rights organisation, set up in 1987, which works towards an effective ban on torture, ill-treatment, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial executions and the abolition of the death penalty. The Federation brings together some thirty national associations, the ACATs, present in four continents.

FIACAT's objectives are:

- To support, coordinate and strengthen the capacity of ACAT member organisations to achieve effective and concerted action in support of a ban on torture and the worldwide abolition of the death penalty;
- to represent the ACATs at international and regional level, for the respect of human dignity;
- to help establish and develop action within international organisations to bring about an effective ban on torture and ill-treatment, and the abolition of the death penalty;
- to raise awareness within Churches and Christian organisations at international and regional level and encourage them to take action against torture and the death penalty.

FIACAT's action is based on article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that «No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment». It is supported by a collection of binding standards, notably international and regional commitments to promote and protect human rights that states have signed voluntarily, as well as political commitments taken by states to eradicate torture and work towards the abolition of the death penalty worldwide.

Thus, the basis of FIACAT's action is:

- at an international level:
 - the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and its Second Optional Protocol aiming at the abolition of the death penalty;
 - the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT) and its Optional Protocol (OPCAT).
- at a regional level:
 - the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR);
 - the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR) and the Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT).

In addition, its action is based on states' political commitments:

- at an international level, such as the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules – 2015) or the Istanbul Protocol : International Guidelines for the Investigation and Documentation of Torture (United Nations General Assembly resolution no 55/89 of 4 December 2000) ;

- within Africa, such as the Guidelines and Measures for the Prohibition and Prevention of Torture, Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in Africa (the Robben Island Guidelines 2014) or the Guidelines on the Conditions of Arrest, Police Custody and Pretrial Detention in Africa (the Luanda Guidelines – 2014) ;
- at European level, such as the revised Guidelines on EU Policy Towards Third Countries on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, EU Guidelines on the Death Penalty and the European Prison Rules of the Council of Europe.

The fight against and the abolition of the death penalty are also included in several of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which FIACAT endeavours to promote through its activities. In particular:



Conditions in overcrowded prisons do not conform to international standards. They promote the spread of communicable diseases. The fight against pre-trial detention helps to combat prison overcrowding and promote improvements to health and hygiene for persons in detention. The effects of death row syndrome on physical and mental health in prisoners sentenced to death is akin to torture or cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment. Abolishing the death penalty would help to combat this phenomenon.



FIACAT knows the importance of human rights-related education and training in the prevention of human rights violations. For this reason, FIACAT includes training and/or awareness-raising sessions on the subject of human rights in each of its actions.



In all the countries where it operates, FIACAT pays close attention to equal gender representation at workshops, during the recruitment of coordinators and consultants and in the appointment of volunteers for project teams.



Social and economic inequality means that access to justice is restricted for persons in detention and, in particular, for those sentenced to death. FIACAT ensures that the rules surrounding preventive detention are strictly applied to all persons without discrimination. Moreover, the abolition of the death penalty promotes the fight against unequal access to rights.



The aim of FIACAT's actions is to improve judicial systems through enhanced cooperation between the authorities, judicial and prison administrations and civil society in order to prevent, control and obtain compensation for acts of torture ; and to seek the abolition of the death penalty.



At the heart of the programme to abolish abusive pre-trial detention, prevent torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in detention, and to facilitate the work of all parties, is collaboration between the judicial and prison administrations and civil society. Traditional and religious leaders, the media, parliamentarians, government representatives and civil society organisations are key actors in the abolition of the death penalty and are involved in FIACAT's work.

The objective of the present four-year strategic plan is to enable FIACAT to accomplish the tasks assigned to it by the national ACATs. To this end, the organisation's strategic priorities for the next four years will centre around three areas of action:

I. Fighting against torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; and contributing to the abolition of the death penalty

II. Building capacity within and strengthening cooperation between the ACATs

III. Ensuring the sustainability of FIACAT's activities

This is FIACAT's strategic plan for the period 2020 – 2024. It will be implemented with respect for with the autonomy and freedom of action of each of the ACATS and in accordance with the ACATs' own priorities and their respective strategic plans. In order to ensure its effective implementation, the plan will be developed into an annual plan of action to be adopted by FIACAT's International Bureau.

I. Fighting against torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; and to contributing to the abolition of the death penalty

The prohibition of torture and the abolition of the death penalty form the basis of FIACAT's and the ACATs' actions, and our organisation has unparalleled expertise in this field. In spite of the ban on torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment under international law, these practices still occur frequently today. Authoritarian regimes are not the sole culprits; certain democratic states also persist with these practices. FIACAT acts against all forms of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Included in this area of action are the following specific objectives:

➤ *Prevent acts of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in detention facilities*

Any person deprived of his or her liberty is vulnerable owing to the imbalance of power which is inherent within detention. FIACAT will join ACATs in their actions aimed at reporting acts of torture and ill treatment of people in detention. There will be a special focus on those who are particularly vulnerable on grounds of origin, whether they belong to a minority group, their age, gender or social status.

➤ *Make full use of international and regional instruments in fighting torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and the death penalty*

FIACAT makes maximum use of both international and regional instruments to combat all forms of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and the death penalty. The right to life and to physical and mental integrity are among the human rights covered within the scope of FIACAT's work; extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and enforced disappearances are violations of these rights. The latter two phenomena also fall within the scope of FIACAT's actions in accordance with its Statutes.

➤ *Guarantee the protection of human rights in the fight against terrorism and migration control.*

The justification of torture or ill treatment in the fight against terrorism, regardless of the gravity of the situation, constitutes a considerable weakening of the outright ban on these practices. The same applies in cases where states implement measures designed to control the flow of migrants. FIACAT will ensure respect for the prohibition of torture in all circumstances.

➤ *Develop the ACATs' national advocacy strategies*

To improve the implementation of states' obligations and commitments, FIACAT will ensure that both its actions and its international and regional advocacy contribute to the ACATs' national advocacy.

➤ *Increase states' duties and commitments in support of the abolition of the death penalty*

As part of its contribution to the worldwide abolition of the death penalty, FIACAT will encourage states to agree to duties and commitments in support of the abolition of the death penalty on a national, regional and international scale.

➤ *Strengthen inter-religious dialogue relating to torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and the death penalty.*

FIACAT will intensify its efforts to raise awareness among religious leaders and increase dialogue between them, with the aim of securing the ban on torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and encouraging states to abolish the death penalty.

II. Building capacity within and strengthening cooperation between the ACATs

FIACAT's task is to manage the ACAT network. To strengthen the network's capacities, the Federation supports its activities, encouraging synergies between its members; provides it with the tools it needs; and ensures the protection of members whose activities as human rights defenders place them in danger.

Specific objectives relating to the strengthening of the ACATs are as follows:

- ***Strengthen training relating to the prevention and control of acts of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and relating to compensation for such acts, as covered by the relevant national, regional and international instruments***

FIACAT and the ACATs regularly report their concerns to both international and regional mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights. In order to improve the effectiveness of civil society actions within these mechanisms, FIACAT will ensure that its members have both the knowledge and the skills they need relating to instruments and related supervisory bodies for combating torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the abolition of the death penalty.

- ***Ensure the monitoring and implementation of recommendations made by international and regional mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights***

For more than 30 years, FIACAT and ACAT members have been working within international and regional mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights to combat the human rights violations which fall within their remit. To ensure the effective observance of these rights and the commitments that states have made, FIACAT will strengthen its members' capacity to assist national authorities and ensure that the application of the law is monitored.

- ***Ensure the security of ACAT members***

ACAT members sometimes come under threat as a result of their actions as human rights defenders and because of the information in their possession. FIACAT will ensure that they are protected. To do this, FIACAT will allow ACAT members to carry out their activities freely in their own countries and will assist with their protection when they are threatened or in danger. In the event of an emergency, FIACAT will ensure that members no longer able to continue their work for reasons of security are protected and relocated. FIACAT will solicit help from the network and other partners to provide support to the ACAT member.

- ***Strengthen national and regional dialogue and cooperation between ACATs, civil society organisations and the authorities***

The strengthening of ACATs' abilities will for some mean their revitalisation and for others consolidation. This work will take place in particular through the sharing of information and good practice which lie at the heart of the network, as well as through supporting network members to increase the impact of some activities. FIACAT's international and regional activities rely above all on the ACATs' activities and the impact they can achieve at national level. FIACAT will promote collaboration between ACATs and will develop regional synergies, to enable the strengthening of the network's capabilities.

III. Ensuring the sustainability of FIACAT's activities

FIACAT will use all means at its disposal to continue developing its operations and scope of action through the following strategic priorities:

➤ *Supporting the development of ACATs' resources for their own activities*

Capacity-building for the ACATs will be supported through reinforcing skills in management and fundraising. ACATs will be strengthened, thus, they will not be at risk of closure once a FIACAT programme ends.

➤ *Raising FIACAT's profile*

FIACAT receives a high level of recognition among international and regional human rights organisations and civil society organisations in countries where an ACAT is present. In order to strengthen its image and raise awareness of its actions and interventions, FIACAT needs to improve its communications. It will develop a communication strategy. It will draw up a communication policy that can be adapted by each ACAT and play an advisory role on the subject within the network.

➤ *Securing FIACAT's resources*

In spite of a significant increase in its actions following the implementation of the 2016-19 strategic plan, FIACAT's financial resources remain limited. FIACAT will continue to do everything possible to increase its budget and to identify new, committed supporters to ensure the implementation of its strategic objectives. It will use a variety of new financial resources from resource mobilisation mechanisms in keeping with its ethical principles.