



POLICE IN THE SPOTLIGHT

TOWARDS POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE AMERICAS

Human Rights Centre



University of Essex



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



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POLICE IN THE SPOTLIGHT: TOWARDS POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE AMERICAS

The [torture and unlawful killing](#) of George Floyd on 25 May 2020 re-ignited global conversations about systemic racism and how to hold the police to account for human rights violations. In Latin America and the Caribbean, like in other parts of the globe, impunity for human rights violations by the police is so common that in some countries it is the norm, and those killed or abused are disproportionately from communities who face structural discrimination.

In January 2021, with support from Open Society Foundations, Amnesty International, the University of Essex Human Rights Centre and the Independent Commission of Investigations (INDECOM) hosted a virtual regional conference attended by almost 100 activists, academics, and public officials to share their experiences of what works to hold the police to account.

This short paper, based on a longer paper compiled in Spanish, summarizes that learning and in turn sets out **five approaches that practitioners from government and civil society alike** should keep at the centre of their efforts to re-imagine and re-construct societies where human rights violations by the police are an outlier rather than a trend.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS BY THE POLICE IN THE AMERICAS

“During the last few years, police violence has killed many, many thousands in fact. What many people around the world do not know about this epidemic, in particular, is that it acts in a similar way to other epidemics: it disproportionately kills poor people, it kills young people, it kills vulnerable people and those who belong to Indigenous and Afro-descendants communities. The epidemic of police violence kills in the name of fighting crime, fighting drugs and fighting terrorism... it is a state behaviour that we find in many countries in the region.”

Agnès Callamard, former UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, speaking at the opening forum of the Police in the Spotlight conference hosted by Amnesty International in January 2021.

Latin America and the Caribbean are often described as the most violent regions in the world. However, overarching figures, such as the rate of homicides, can obscure the complex nature of the violence affecting the daily lives of people in the region. And unlawful use of force by law enforcement officials is an important component of this landscape of violence.

In recent years, Amnesty International has reported unlawful police use of force in public order operations to deter and disperse demonstrators in several countries in the region (for example Chile, [Colombia](#), Honduras and Venezuela); to [enforce restrictions](#) imposed to curb the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic; and in crime control operations. Most of those suspected of criminal responsibility for these human rights violations enjoy almost total impunity. Indeed, in some cities and regions, such as Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, for example, the police are often a law unto themselves, investigating, detaining and “sentencing” people to death. While El Salvador has the distinction of not only having the highest homicide rate in the world, but also the highest rate of killings by police, and rising.

For women the consequences of human rights violations by the police are both indirect and direct. Women may not be the direct targets of the majority of police killings, but it is they who are often left to pick up the pieces when a relative is killed or sustains life-changing injuries. Women are also the direct targets of gender-based violence by police. For example, [in Mexico](#), the police and armed forces frequently subject women to sexual violence in detention and during interrogation. Certain groups of women, such as sex workers, are especially targeted for torture and ill-treatment in a number of countries, including the [Dominican Republic](#).

Other groups are also the particular targets of unlawful police use of force. Indeed, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) has highlighted cycles of violence and excessive police control in the region marked by racism, xenophobia and discrimination against Indigenous and Afro-descendant people, those living in urban low-income neighbourhoods and LGBTIQ+ people.

Human rights violations by the police undermine social cohesion and erode trust in the state and its institutions – if you cannot have confidence in the most visible representatives of the state, then that must call into question the legitimacy of that state and its ability to ensure access to justice. The state is responsible for respecting, protecting and fulfilling human rights and at the heart of realizing this guarantee for everyone is ensuring that where violations are not prevented, they are investigated and all those suspected of criminal responsibility are brought to justice in fair trials before ordinary civilian courts without recourse to death penalty.

OBSTACLES TO HOLDING POLICE TO ACCOUNT

Most states in the region aspire to have police institutions that help create a secure society where police enforce and abide by the law and protect human rights. However, the reality is that in many countries in the region impunity for the unlawful use of force by police persists for several key reasons: investigations into these crimes lack independence, do not meet minimum standards of diligence and do not involve victims, their families and civil society.

Few countries have mechanisms for investigating human rights violations by the police that are truly **independent**, which impacts the effectiveness of investigations. In Brazil, for example, many investigations have been undermined by the fact that forensic and ballistic services are controlled by the police. While in Colombia, the lack of independent investigations has allowed evidence to be manipulated so that unlawful killings are justified as combat casualties (a phenomenon known as “false positives”), many of which are investigated by the military criminal justice system which lacks independence.

Many national systems **fall far short of minimum standards** for effective investigations of human rights violations by the police. Delays in investigations and evidence tampering have been documented in a range of countries, including [Brazil](#), [Jamaica](#) and [Nicaragua](#). And finally, in many countries, **victims and their families** face numerous obstacles in accessing information about the progress of investigations into police unlawful use of force, let alone participating in the process.

The following sections look at five key elements for effective police monitoring and accountability and look at a few specific examples of how these have been realized in the region. They focus on addressing the three main obstacles to effective criminal investigations mentioned earlier by looking at independent mechanisms for police supervision and accountability; the crucial role of civil society organizations and victims’ groups; key international standards for effective investigations of possible unlawful police use of force; systems that can help uncover patterns of police misconduct; and finally, command responsibility.

1. EFFECTIVE INDEPENDENT MONITORING SYSTEMS

Monitoring systems that are external to and independent of the police are crucial. Generally, these are specialist bodies and, whichever model is adopted, experiences in the region indicate that it should have six key features:

- Have political and operational independence
- Have sufficient resources, including available expertise and adequate funding
- Be established by law with a clearly defined mandate, including the power to obtain an obligatory and motivated reaction on findings and recommendations by the concerned authorities (if necessary, with the option for a judicial review).
- Have the power to access crucial information
- Have the power to take proactive action and review patterns of abuses
- Have high levels of transparency and accountability

The [Independent Commission of Investigations in Jamaica \(INDECOM\)](#) is one of the relatively few examples of an effective independent monitoring mechanism in the region.

It was established in 2010 after a Jamaican NGO took a case to the IACHR which instructed Jamaica to improve investigations into police killings. Its mandate, set out in law, is “to undertake investigations concerning actions by members of the Security Forces and other Agents of the State, that result in death or injury to persons, or the abuse of the rights of persons; and for connected matters.” As a Commission of Parliament, INDECOM must provide regular reports.

During the three years prior to the operation of INDECOM (2007-2009), 759 deaths were registered as a result of police shootings in Jamaica. In the three years after INDECOM was operational (2011-2013), there was a substantial reduction in such deaths registered (687) and in the next three-year period (2014-2016) the number more than halved.

In part, this success is due to INDECOM's ability to conduct independent investigations, drawing on its own forensic and ballistic analysis, and sustained political and donor support for its mandate.

Nevertheless, challenges remain. There is concern that the fall in the number of deaths at the hands of the police is due to the dissuasive effect of the investigations initiated by INDECOM rather than a real change in the internal structures of the police. There has also been resistance from the police and groups representing the police who have challenged INDECOM's powers before the courts, something that Parliament as originator of INDECOM's powers must clarify in law to ensure that the body retains powers to act effectively.

For more information, see INDECOM: www.indecom.gov.jm and Amnesty International, [Waiting in vain. Jamaica: Unlawful police killings and relatives' long struggle for justice](#)

2. MEANINGFUL INVOLVEMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND VICTIMS' ORGANIZATIONS

Civil society in the region has vast experience of demanding that police conduct conforms to the law and international human rights standards and this can be built on in a number of ways to enhance police monitoring and accountability, including, for example, by:

- a. creating links between civil society and independent monitoring mechanisms;
- b. strengthening the technical expertise of civil society organizations;
- c. engaging in strategic litigation where the voices and demands of victims are central;
- d. using new technologies to document and monitor police conduct; and
- e. advocating for a change in the public narrative around issues of policing, such as promoting legal reforms or awareness raising campaigns.

Civil society organizations are an important source of independent research on the police use of force. The information they gather has been used in a number of ways, including raising public awareness of a violation or concern, pursuing collective cases through the courts and providing information to human rights organizations and commissions of inquiry. It has also enabled cases to be brought to the attention of international human rights mechanisms, such as the Universal Period Review of the UN or the monitoring mechanisms of the IACHR.

Strategic litigation is one of the strategies that civil society has historically used not only to demand justice in individual cases of human rights violations, but also to expose systematic patterns of abuse and structural problems. Cases brought before the IACHR and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (Inter-American Court) over the last two decades have helped consolidate jurisprudence and establish standards on addressing structural problems of police abuses in the region.



In Mexico, in May 2006, 2,000 municipal, state and federal police officers were deployed in the towns of Texcoco and San Salvador **Atenco**, State of Mexico, to respond to protests there. Among those detained in the context of this operation were 47 women, most of whom reported that they were subjected to sexual violence by state security officials. When investigations by the domestic system failed to deliver justice, 11 of the women decided to take their cases to the IACHR, which subsequently sent the case to the Inter-American Court.

On 28 November 2018, the Inter-American Court issued its judgment, declaring that Mexico was responsible for committing sexual violence, rape and torture against the 11 women and ordering the state, among other things, to investigate and punish all those responsible at all levels and ensure reparations for survivors. The Court also ordered structural measures, such as the creation an independent body to oversee police forces at the federal level and in the State of Mexico.

The case was supported by the collaborative work of a range of organizations which worked together to ensure that the voices and testimonies of the women survivors were heard. Indeed, it was from this case that the [Rompiendo el Silencio](#) (Breaking the silence) network emerged, which continues to document and denounce cases of sexual torture.

For more information, see [Centro de Derechos Humanos Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez](#) and CEJIL, [A 14 años y pese a sentencia de la Corte Interamericana, persiste la impunidad en el caso Atenco](#).

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in its [Handbook on police accountability, oversight and integrity](#) has stated that, although police reform may seem easier to introduce from “above”, effective change is more likely if citizens are involved and non-governmental and civil society organizations have an important role play in agenda-setting when advocating for police reform. Changing police practices and ensuring the security forces are subject to supervision and accountability mechanisms requires a strong civil society and one that has the expertise to enable it to promote the transformation of the public narrative around policing.

The [Institute for Security and Democracy \(Instituto para la Seguridad y la Democracia, Insyde\)](#), based in Mexico, is a civil society organization composed of independent inter-disciplinary specialists. It works to strengthen democracy and accountability in the institutions of justice and security by developing and applying adapted national and international tools.

For example, Insyde has developed standards to improve the internal disciplinary procedures of the Mexican municipal police, working with municipal police officers to define standards of conduct. It also undertakes external and independent reviews of cases subject to internal disciplinary processes.

Insyde has created a team specialized in standards of police conduct, the handling of disciplinary processes in police forces and the development of protocols. This expertise has facilitated dialogue with the police by emphasizing the aim of improving procedures. The main challenge, and success, identified by Insyde is convincing the police that a good disciplinary process that is less discretionary and more transparent can improve their own work and increase public trust.

During 2020, the Colombian NGO Temblores launched the web platform [GRITA](#) to facilitate the reporting of human rights violations by the police, with the ultimate goal of eradicating it. The platform allows those who have been victims or witnesses of police abuse to register cases and receive legal advice.

The information collected has allowed Temblores to develop a database on human rights violations by the police, information that has been made available to government authorities and the Colombian National Police. This database has made it possible to draw up a map of police violence in the country and break down alleged human rights violations by location, victims’ gender and the police force involved. The information collected has also informed human rights reports, the most recent of which, [Bolílo, Dios y Patria](#), documented police violence in recent years and highlighted the impact on different sections of society such as the LGBTQ+ community, among others.

For more information: Results of the working groups of the second day of regional dialogues “Policía bajo la lupa” (19 de enero de 2021); Web platform GRITA (<https://www.temblores.org/grita>); and, “Bolílo, Dios y Patria” (<https://www.temblores.org/bolillo-dios-y-patria>).

The [Crisis Evidence Lab](#), a program of Amnesty International and is led by experts in digital research. It gathers evidence from images, videos and other information recorded by anyone other than an official human rights investigator. Usually, it is information shared publicly through social networks such as Twitter, Facebook or YouTube.

The digital verification carried out by this team was key to preparing the report [Eyes on Chile: Police violence and command responsibility during the period of social unrest](#).

For this report, Amnesty International’s expert teams on weapons and ammunition and the Digital Verification Corps studied more than 200 audiovisual and photographic pieces of information, analysing the types of weapon, ammunition and vehicles used by the police and how they were used in order to construct a picture of the human rights violations committed. A similar systematic analysis and verification of more than 500 videos enabled Amnesty International to draw up a global map of the unlawful and indiscriminate use of tear gas by police.

For more information see, Amnesty International, [Tear gas: an investigation](#) and the and the Omega Research Foundation, [Visual Glossary](#)

3. APPROPRIATE PROTOCOLS FOR INVESTIGATING POLICE ABUSES

Respect for human rights depends to a large extent on the state's capacity to diligently investigate when rights are violated. Torture and unlawful killing are clearly serious human rights violations, but so is not investigating them properly. Throughout the region, investigations of unlawful use of force by police face significant challenges. In order to address them and prevent future such violations, there is a need to ensure there are specialized bodies that can conduct investigations, *ex officio* where necessary, that are prompt, independent, impartial and thorough and in which victims and their families can participate. This requires resourcing for, among other things, capacity building for specialized bodies to conduct investigations effectively and infrastructure to enable such investigations to be carried out.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has drawn up two particularly important protocols to assist states in ensuring proper investigations into unlawful police violence: the Minnesota and Istanbul Protocols.

[The Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death \(2016\): The Revised United Nations Manual on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions](#) provides practical and comprehensive guidelines, based on the accumulated experience of a range of experts, on how to ensure prompt, effective and thorough investigations into suspicious deaths; transparency; and the participation of victims' families.

The [Istanbul Protocol or Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#), adopted in 2000, is a guide to the proper investigation and documentation of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Both protocols are important for improving the standard of investigation of police violence that threaten people's physical or mental integrity and their right to life. However, this document highlights the importance of the Minnesota Protocol because it deals with investigations of one of the most serious problems in Latin America and the Caribbean: unlawful killings by the police.

Importantly, the Minnesota Protocol allows us to go from a rhetoric of criticizing the way in which investigations are carried out to a practical guide of what should be done and what it is possible to do.

MINNESOTA PROTOCOL ELEMENTS AND PRINCIPLES OF INVESTIGATIONS

INVESTIGATIONS MUST BE PROMPT

Authorities must conduct an investigation as soon as possible and proceed without unreasonable delays.

INVESTIGATIONS MUST BE EFFECTIVE AND THOROUGH

They must be capable of ensuring accountability for unlawful deaths; of leading to the identification and, if justified by the evidence and seriousness of the case, the prosecution in fair trials before ordinary civilian courts and punishment of all those responsible; and of preventing future unlawful deaths.

Investigations must, for example, take all reasonable steps to: identify the victim(s); recover and preserve all probative material; identify possible witnesses; and determine the cause, manner, place and time of death. It will almost always be the case that these aims will be materially assisted in some way by an autopsy. A decision not to undertake an autopsy should be justified in writing and should be subject to judicial review.

INVESTIGATIONS MUST BE TRANSPARENT AND INVOLVE VICTIMS' FAMILIES

States should, at a minimum, be transparent about the existence of an investigation, the procedures to be followed in an investigation and an investigation's findings, including their factual and legal basis.

Any limitations on transparency must be strictly necessary for a legitimate purpose, such as protecting the privacy and safety of affected individuals, ensuring the integrity of ongoing investigations, or securing sensitive information about intelligence sources or military or police operations. In no circumstances may a state restrict transparency in a way that would conceal the fate or whereabouts of any victim of an enforced disappearance or unlawful killing, or would result in impunity for those suspected of criminal responsibility.

The Protocol sets out specific measures to ensure the participation of victims' families, who must be:

- kept informed of the progress of the investigation and granted legal standing;
- able to make suggestions about what investigative steps are necessary;
- able to provide evidence and assert their interests;
- informed of, and have access to, any hearing relevant to the investigation and where necessary the authorities should provide funding for a lawyer to represent them; and
- protected from any ill-treatment, intimidation or sanction as a result of their participation.

When the identity of a deceased person has been determined, family members should be informed immediately and human remains should be returned to family members who must be able to dispose of them according to their beliefs.

In addition to significantly improving the position of victims and their families in investigative processes, the Minnesota Protocol also serves as the basis for legitimizing civil society claims for structural changes in investigative systems. It also states that investigations "must seek to identify not only direct perpetrators but also all others who were responsible for the death, including, for example, officials in the chain of command who were complicit in the death" as well as "systemic failures that may have contributed to a death, and identify patterns where they exist." (para. 26)



Although not binding on states, the **Minnesota Protocol** has been increasingly influential in practice with national courts and international mechanisms. For example, in Mexico in September 2018, a federal court ruled that a special commission be created, based on the Minnesota Protocol, to investigate the enforced disappearance of 43 students from Ayotzinapa, Mexico, four years earlier.

The most direct and effective way of applying the Minnesota Protocol, however, is to convert its contents into domestic regulations, for example incorporating the Protocol's guidelines into investigation procedures or using them in police training. In Guatemala, for example, the Minnesota Protocol has been incorporated into national protocols and guidelines for investigations by the Attorney General's Office into violent deaths.

4. ADDRESS UNLAWFUL POLICE VIOLENCE AS A STRUCTURAL ISSUE

Police abuses are routinely dismissed as “isolated incidents” or the result of one or two “bad apples”. However, the scale and persistence of patterns of unlawful police conduct give the lie to such an explanation. The problems clearly go beyond individual misconduct and suggest operational or strategic failures to respect human rights in police forces. Nevertheless, individual cases can contribute to an understanding of patterns of unlawful police violence.

For example, a lot of the work of INDECOM in Jamaica involves investigating individual cases. However, it has also undertaken consistent systematic information gathering and analysis which has enabled it to identify patterns of police abuses. Along with annual and special reports, INDECOM produces [quarterly reports](#) that document general indicators related to the complaints received and include analysis of patterns that are of concern. Among the issues that have been addressed in the quarterly reports are abuses during police searches, the misuse of less lethal weapons and the planting of evidence by police.

The work documenting systematic police abuses carried out by civil society can also inform monitoring by international bodies for the protection and promotion of human rights. For example, the IACHR regularly receives information from civil society organizations which enable an overarching analysis of patterns of misconduct to emerge.

Another example of the successful combination of individual case work and systematic information gathering is the report [Eyes on Chile: Police violence and command responsibility during the period of social unrest](#) published by Amnesty International in 2020. This examined the use of less lethal weapons during social unrest in Chile in October 2019. The report drew on detailed research into specific individual cases – which included interviews with victims, relatives, medical personnel, police authorities, government authorities and human rights defenders; public information requests; and digital verification of audiovisual material – to build a picture of the pattern of violations. Combining an analysis of patterns of misconduct with the detailed study of specific investigations was key to creating a robust report.

5. THE ROLE OF COMMANDING OFFICERS AND OTHER SUPERIORS

The role of commanding officers is often overlooked in discussions of human rights violations by the police and how to address them. It is normally assumed that the responsibility for human rights violations by the police lies exclusively with those who directly commit them and the notion of command responsibility is more usually invoked in relation to investigations of crimes under international law, such as crimes against humanity or war crimes.

However, police operations are generally governed by the decisions of commanding officers at various levels, both strategic and operational. The way in which commanding officers exercise their role can be decisive. It is they who determine the objectives of any given operation and what officials, tactics and tools are to be deployed in pursuit of that objective. Police commanders, therefore, are responsible for determining operational frameworks beforehand, supervising the conduct of their subordinates during an operation and ensuring accountability afterwards.

Clearly, a commanding officer will be responsible if they commit or assist in a human rights violation. However, commanding officers who do not take direct part in the events may bear responsibility if their decisions in the planning and preparation of operations significantly impact the unlawful use of police force. The command responsibility becomes relevant when commanders issue orders to their subordinates that lead to human rights violations or when, knowing about violations by their subordinates, they fail to fulfil their duty to prevent and punish such conduct.



In mid-October 2019, a wave of protests throughout **Chile** saw millions of people take to the streets to demand equality and social and economic rights. President Sebastian Piñera responded by declaring a state of emergency and deploying the army and police to suppress the, mostly peaceful, protests.

Although there was considerable property damage, as well as injuries to police officers, the police response was disproportionate. Images repeatedly showed consistent unnecessary and disproportionate use of force by police, supporting the notion that the violence was the result of a high-level strategy from commanders rather than being solely the responsibility of individual officers.

There were multiple sources by which commanders knew or should have known that human rights violations were repeatedly occurring. Strategic commanders had access to information about operations through various channels and technologies and operational commanders were able to monitor the progress of operations in real time even more closely.

Amnesty International's research confirmed that commanders within police (the Carabineros de Chile) maintained effective control over units and fulfilled the three key criteria in international standards regarding command responsibility for human rights violations:

- Commanders knew about the violence;
- Commanders had the capacity to prevent abuses; and
- Commanders failed to take sufficient measures to prevent abuses.

Their failure to act with due diligence within the framework of their responsibilities, taking all necessary measures to prevent human rights violations, resulted in immense suffering and life-changing injuries for hundreds of people exercising their right to peaceful protest.

In addition, the authorities failed to exercise adequate control over police, particularly given the magnitude of the reports of possible human rights violations, which were made public.

For more information see Amnesty International's report, [Eyes on Chile: Police violence and command responsibility during the period of social unrest](#)

There are a number of operational elements that can help prevent human rights violations by the police. For example, appropriate guidelines or internal protocols on acceptable conduct and the use of weapons, appropriate equipment and adequate training for different types of interventions. Commanding officers have a duty to ensure that such guidance, training and equipment are in place and to adopt corrective measures if they are not complied with.

Ultimately, commanding officers can shape the culture of their subordinates by actively exercising a supervisory role that promotes accountability. To do so effectively, they have to communicate, clearly and through concrete actions that the misuse of police authority against members of the public will not be tolerated.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Human rights violations by the police and the weakness of police monitoring and accountability mechanisms have multiple and complex causes that go beyond police institutions and security policies. And just as the causes are complex, so are the possible solutions. There are no magic recipes or institutional arrangements that can be transplanted from one context to another to bring about change in the short term.

The five key elements set out in this document point to the direction of travel, in broad terms, that would help address the regional epidemic of human rights violations by the police: independent mechanisms for police supervision and accountability; acknowledgement of the crucial role of civil society organizations and victims' groups; adherence to the Minnesota Protocol; monitoring and accountability systems that analyse general patterns of police abuse; and command responsibility.

None of the five key elements provide an instant fix. None can be effective in isolation. But in combination and with the wealth of determination and experience that exists in the region, and which was very much to the fore at the Police in the Spotlight conference, they do provide a solid roadmap out of the current crisis and towards accountable, effective policing that protects the human rights of everyone in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

TO GOVERNMENTS:

- Ensure that there are effective police internal and external monitoring and accountability mechanisms in place and consider creating truly independent police oversight mechanisms that have adequate funding, institutional legitimacy and powers to access information and proactively review patterns of misconduct by police officers as well as to obtain an obligatory and motivated reaction by the concerned authorities to any findings, conclusions and recommendations (if necessary with the option for a judicial review).
- Ensure that investigations to clarify possible unlawful deaths at the hands of the police are conducted in accordance with the Minnesota Protocol so that they are prompt, effective, thorough and transparent; are carried out by properly resourced and trained officials; and enable victims' families to participate.
- Set out clearly in laws and regulations the responsibility of commanding officers and other superiors for unlawful police violence.

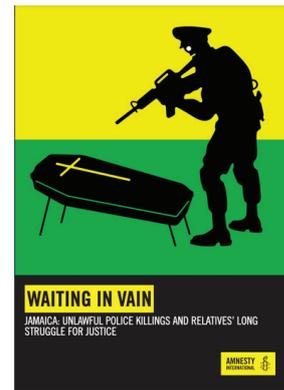
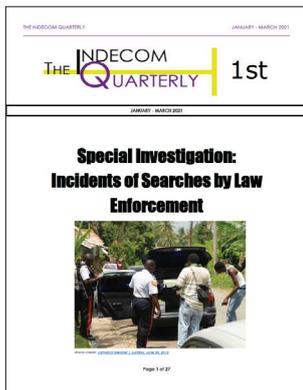
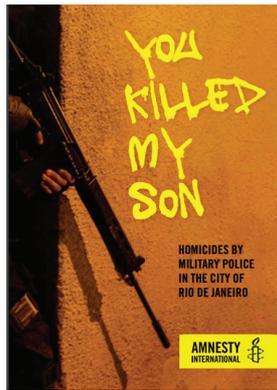
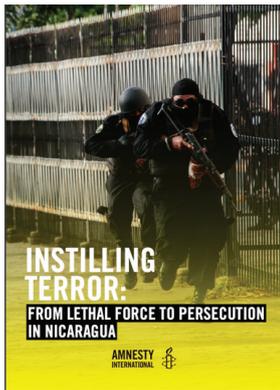
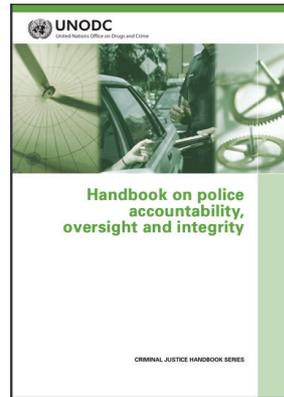
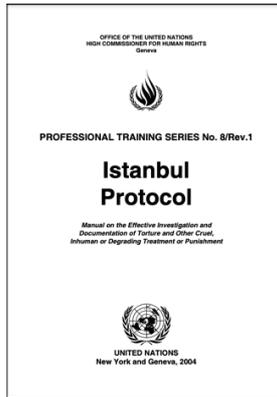
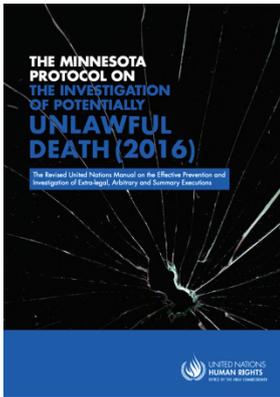
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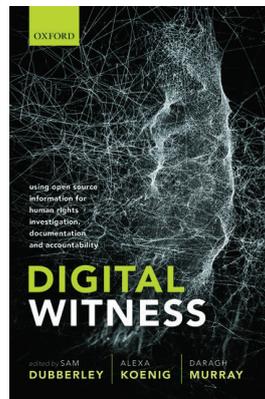
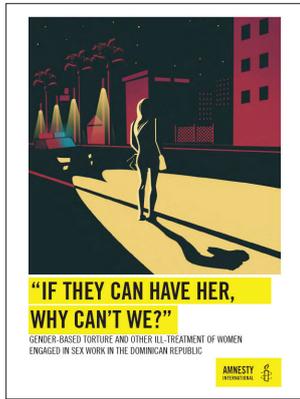
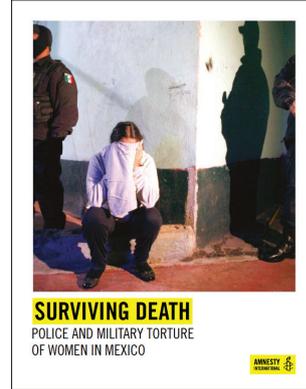
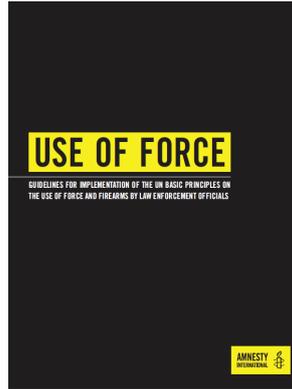
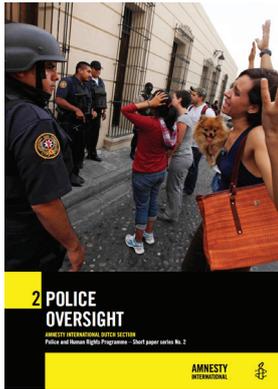
- Strengthen the role of civil society in police monitoring and accountability systems, for example by establishing networks with other organizations and relevant institutions; enhancing technical expertise; and using new technology to document police conduct.
- Promote strategic litigation at the domestic and international levels to achieve justice for individual victims, to expose structural patterns of police abuse, and to mandate states to change them.
- Develop advocacy strategies aimed at transforming the narrative around policing and security.

TO DONORS:

- Prioritize investment in projects that promote good practices in police monitoring and accountability, in particular bringing regulations and practices into line with the Minnesota Protocol.
- Support civil society organizations that document police misconduct, lodge complaints and undertake actions aimed at improving police accountability.
- Support training processes aimed at transforming the leadership within police institutions and promoting a culture of responsibility at all levels.

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Colombia: Violent repression, paramilitarism, illegal detention and torture of peaceful protesters in Cali



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POLICE IN THE SPOTLIGHT

TOWARDS POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE AMERICAS



This report summarizes the findings of a virtual regional conference organized by Amnesty International, the University of Essex Human Rights Centre and the Independent Commission of Investigations (INDECOM), with the support of Open Society Foundations and attended by almost 100 activists, academics, and public officials in January 2021.

It sets out five key recommendations for states to address human rights violations by police across the region: to introduce independent and effective mechanisms for police supervision and accountability; to acknowledge and strengthen the crucial role of civil society organizations and victims' groups in police monitoring and accountability systems; to ensure that investigations into possible unlawful deaths at the hands of police are conducted in accordance with the Minnesota Protocol; to address unlawful police violence as a structural issue; and to set out clearly in laws and regulations the responsibility of commanding officers and other superiors for unlawful police violence.

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