

Submission to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

UNITE FOR RIGHTS



51st Session of the Universal Periodic Review

Sao Tome and Principe

17 July 2025

Purpose of Submission

Unite for Rights is a global movement dedicated to uniting individuals, nonprofits, businesses, and governments to revive and implement the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). While the UDHR is unenforceable in courts, regional courts have taken the “first steps” to make rights enforceable in courts. Unite focuses on making rights enforceable in courts, including the drafting of an International Bill of Rights that can make human rights enforceable in the courts of all countries.

At a time when human rights and the rule of law are under threat, and democratic institutions are increasingly challenged by authoritarian trends, our mission is clear: to revive, uphold, and enforce the UDHR, the closest humanity has ever come to reaching an agreement to live together based upon a set of fundamental, enforceable, rights for all people in all countries.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) provides a valuable opportunity to interact with states and question them about their support for making rights enforceable in courts, particularly regional courts. At Unite for Rights, we believe that the UPR can, and should, go beyond monitoring and **serve as a driver for making rights enforceable in courts.**

Our focus in this submission is to:

- Promote the establishment and strengthening of regional human rights courts
- Urge states to join with people, nonprofits and businesses on a globe to show support for the revival and implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Advocate for national-level education on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

We recognize that treaty bodies and optional protocols play a vital role in promoting state accountability. However, **enforcement remains a persistent gap in the global human rights system.** Regional human rights courts have proven effective in safeguarding democracy and upholding rule of law, and we urge greater international collaboration to expand these mechanisms to underserved regions.

This submission highlights three key areas where we believe the Government of Sao Tome and Principe has both the opportunity and responsibility to lead in order to promote and protect human rights within its borders and across the African region as part of an international movement to make human rights enforceable in the courts of all countries.

Key Recommendations & Questions for Sao Tome and Principe

1. Support for Regional Human Rights Courts

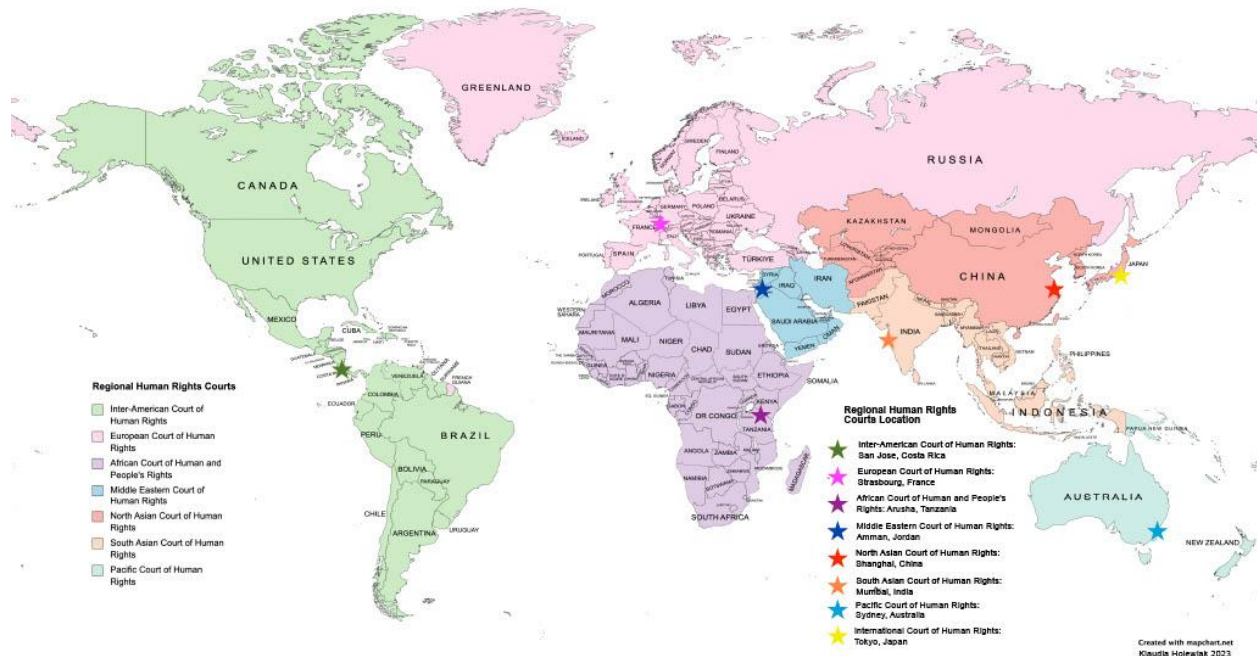
Having not ratified the African Protocol, it is time for Sao Tome and Principe to do so. Ratification would be a significant act of leadership for Africa. Through this leadership, Sao Tome and Principe is uniquely positioned to strengthen the African Court on Human and People's Rights and support the improvement of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights so that they have physical infrastructure and administrative support comparable with the European Court of Human Rights. Given the success of the African Court, Sao Tome and Principe can also support the creation of regional courts where no regional human rights court currently exists.

Questions:

1. What steps will Sao Tome and Principe take to strengthen the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights?
2. Will Sao Tome and Principe initiate or support dialogue on improving the African and Inter-American Courts so that they are comparable to the European Court in physical infrastructure and administration?
3. Does Sao Tome and Principe support the expansion of regional courts in regions where there are none?

Recommendations:

1. In its UPR, Sao Tome and Principe should reaffirm its support for the African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights and ratify the African Protocol.
2. Sao Tome and Principe should state its support for the improvement of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights so that they have physical infrastructure and administrative support comparable with the European Court.
3. Sao Tome and Principe should state its support for the creation of regional courts where no regional human rights court currently exists, including the funding and administrative support needed for these new regional courts. This map can be used for discussion of an international judicial architecture of a regional court.



2. Commemorating the UDHR

2028 will mark the 80th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Questions:

1. What plans does the Government of Sao Tome and Principe have to commemorate the UDHR's 80th anniversary in 2028?
2. Will the government of Sao Tome and Principe join now with people, nonprofits, businesses and governments as a light on a globe www.uniteforrights.org showing support for the UDHR and be part of a groundswell of support for the revival and implementation of the UDHR for its 80th anniversary?

Recommendations:

1. Sao Tome and Principe should now join with people, nonprofits, businesses and governments on a spinning globe provided by Unite for Rights on its website, www.uniteforrights.org to help build a broad base of support for the revival and implementation of the UDHR for its 80th anniversary.

3. Advancing Education on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Education about the UDHR is essential for students to learn that they have rights and there is a plan to make their rights enforceable in court.

Questions:

1. How is human rights education, specifically the UDHR, integrated into Sao Tome and Principe's national school curriculum?
2. What efforts has Sao Tome and Principe made to promote public awareness of the UDHR particularly among youth, Indigenous peoples, and marginalized communities?
3. What partnerships does Sao Tome and Principe have with civil society to provide education about the UDHR?

Recommendations:

1. Sao Tome and Principe should ensure that the legacy of the UDHR, including its plan for human rights to be enforceable in the courts of all countries, is systematically embedded in national education standards, including national curriculum, particularly in civics, history, and social studies, and updated to reflect contemporary issues within Sao Tome and Principe.
 2. Sao Tome and Principe should expand targeted outreach programs and culturally relevant materials to raise awareness about the UDHR among Indigenous peoples, youth, and marginalized groups, in partnership with local leaders and communities to discuss human rights abuses, and how having the rights in UDHR enforceable in regional courts could help reduce these abuses.
 3. Sao Tome and Principe should increase funding and long-term support for civil society organizations specifically dedicated to delivering human rights education on the UDHR, especially those working with vulnerable populations and in remote areas.
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About Unite for Rights

The mission of Unite for Rights, in alignment with the original intent of the UDHR, is to make human rights enforceable in the domestic courts of all countries, with regional courts to review the domestic courts to ensure that rights are truly enforceable. With a global team headquartered in San Francisco, California, and staff located around the world, we work to unite diverse actors, including people, nonprofits, businesses and governments around a shared commitment to the revival and implementation of Universal Declaration of Human Rights in all countries.

Our work includes:

- Facilitating an international social movement of people, nonprofits, businesses and governments to join together on a globe and show support for the UDHR
- Supporting the strengthening and expansion of regional human rights courts
- Drafting an International Bill of Rights to make rights enforceable in the courts of all countries, in accordance with Article 28 of the UDHR
- Promoting global education regarding the UDHR

We are proud to be reviving and implementing an international movement, the UDHR, that transcends borders, politics, and generations.

Our Team:

- **John Kirk Boyd**, CEO & Founder
- **Shannon Landheer**, Program Director
- **Joshua Cooper**, UN Director
- **Keyvan Hajiani**, Marketing & Branding Director
- **Maya Forté**, Social Media Director
- **Chengguang Hu**, Intern
- **Tess Gilmore**, Intern
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For more information, visit: www.uniteforrights.org

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For inquiries regarding Unite's work with the UN or the UPR, please email Shannon at shannon@uniteforrights.org.