

Abstracts

Many countries have ratified the core UN human rights treaties, and some have ratified additional optional protocols to the treaties that introduced individual complaints and inquiry procedures, or, in the case of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT), required the creation of domestic institutions, National Prevention Mechanisms (NPMs). NPMs conduct monitoring visits to places of detention and report on human rights compliance; however, little research has assessed which countries create NPMs and how governments' NPM design choices impact countries' human rights standards in detention. Building on previous scholarship on the role of domestic audiences in enhancing treaty compliance, this project assesses which types of NPMs can enhance human rights standards in detention. I hypothesize that an NPM's empowerment, as well as its subsequent monitoring frequency and reporting depth, represents their government's design choices and significantly affects whether countries implement reforms in detention conditions to improve their human rights compliance. By utilizing the NPMs' annual visit reports to the Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture (SPT), this project provides novel insight into NPM design choices and the frequency and severity of human rights violations in detention in OPCAT-ratifying countries. This research introduces a fine-grained measure of human rights violations in detention, contributing to an improved understanding of the interplay between international human rights treaty compliance and domestic human rights institutions in enhancing human rights compliance in OPCAT ratifying countries.