



PRESS RELEASE
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Centre presents first course on rights of indigenous people in Africa

Amidst increasing awareness about the particular needs and the precarious position of many indigenous peoples in Africa, the Centre for Human Rights this week for the first time presents a week-long training course on the rights of indigenous peoples in Africa to government officials, members of civil society, representatives of indigenous communities and academics from across Africa. It is the first course of this kind presented by an academic institution in Africa. In South Africa, it is generally accepted that the Khoi and San are 'indigenous'; in Namibia, various San groups; and in Botswana the San/Basarwa. In central Africa, the Batwa ('pygmies'), and in the Sahel region, the Tuaregs ('Amazigh') also fall in this category. In East Africa, the Masaai are considered indigenous. These groups have in common their close ties to and dependence on the land and resources, they live a lifestyle distinct from the majority of the population, are severely marginalised, and identify as 'indigenous'.

The one-week course is the product of a collaboration between the Centre for Human Rights, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (specifically its Working Group on Indigenous Populations).

Participants from all across Africa attend the course, with South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Kenya, the DRC, Cameroon, Nigeria and Ghana represented. Experienced lecturers from the ILO, representatives of indigenous communities, civil society organisations and universities across the continent teach on the course.

This course is a first of its kind and is expected to be held on a regular basis with the view to creating greater awareness and informed policy-making and legislative action on indigenous peoples' issues in African states. It follows upon research conducted by the Centre, the ILO and the African Commission on the legal situation of indigenous peoples in 24 African countries. This research is available on the Centre's website at <http://www.chr.up.ac.za/index.php/indigenous-publications.html>

The International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) also supported the endeavour by providing scholarships for participants.

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