



Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Briefing

An International Anti-Corruption Court (IACC) to Mitigate Grand Corruption and Human Rights Abuses

Thursday, November 13, 2014

1:30 PM -2:30 PM

H-137 U.S. Capitol Building

Opening Remarks

In October 2003, when the *Convention Against Corruption* (UNCAC) was adopted by the U.N. General Assembly, then-Secretary-General Kofi A. Annan stated that corruption is “an insidious plague that has a wide range of corrosive effects on societies. It undermines democracy and the rule of law, leads to violations of human rights, distorts markets, erodes the quality of life and allows organized crime, terrorism and other threats to human security to flourish.”

That sentiment expressed over a decade ago is only more present today. The direct relationship between foreign corruption and human rights abuses is clear. Corruption is widely acknowledged to be a potential obstacle to human rights. Corruption can reduce the political will of a government to respect, protect, and fulfill human rights obligations as well as the financial capacity of a government to provide basic services and welfare to its citizens. It can facilitate the continued deprivation of human rights by weakening government accountability and transparency and allowing human rights violations to go unpunished. Advocates point to the value of human rights promotion as a means to prevent and deter corruption; conversely, some point to anti-corruption efforts as a means to strengthen and invigorate human rights.

Today’s briefing seeks to foster an understanding that human rights and anti-corruption efforts are inseparable. Currently, there is a lack of reference to human rights in international anti-corruption commitments and, conversely, the lack of reference to corruption in international human rights instruments. The panelists will explore the potential of one option to address this gap in international law: the establishment of a specialized international court to criminally prosecute corrupt leaders.

Our first panelist is a leading advocate for this International Anti-Corruption Court and has made the case for an IACC to numerous stakeholders across the US government and at the international stage:

Judge Mark L. Wolf is a Senior United States District Judge for the District of Massachusetts and is the author of “ The Case for an International Anti-Corruption Court, published by the Brookings Institute on July 23, 2014, and the related Op-Ed piece published by The Washington Post. The pieces explain how an International Anti-Corruption Court could erode the culture of impunity on which grand corruption depends and the linkages between grand corruption and violations of human rights. He developed the pieces after presenting the concept at the [2014 World Forum on Governance](#), convened by the Brookings Institution and Czech nonprofit Zaostřeno in Prague, Czech Republic.

He formerly served with the Department of Justice (DOJ) as a Special Assistant to the Attorney General of the United States (1975-77) and as the chief federal public corruption prosecutor in Massachusetts (1981-85), where the unit he led achieved more than 40 consecutive convictions in public corruption cases. As a Judge, he presided at the trial of the former Speaker of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, Salvatore DiMasi, who was convicted of extortion. He also discovered and described the corrupt relationship between the FBI and its informant James “Whitey” Bulger.