



FIACAT

ACTIVITY REPORT



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A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT



2024 was a busy year for FIACAT in terms of advocacy and implementation of joint programmes with ACATs aimed at supporting States in fulfilling their international and regional commitments on the prohibition of torture and the abolition of the death penalty. Many ACATs were supported in their advocacy activities with international and regional human rights bodies, despite sometimes difficult access to visas, particularly for ACAT Burundi activists in exile.

Support for ACATs in their advocacy activities led to two important victories this year: accession of the Republic of Congo to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment on 26 April 2024, and that of Côte d'Ivoire to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, on 3 May 2024.

Furthermore, thanks to FIACAT's advocacy, the Pan-African Parliament adopted a resolution calling on African Union member states to abolish the death penalty and support the adoption of the draft African protocol on the death penalty.

Finally, the 20 participants in the 8th biennial 'Norbert Kenne' Francophone training course for human rights defenders committed to combating torture and ill-treatment in Africa graduated; they now form a new generation of defenders ready to pass on their knowledge and strengthen their respective organisations.

FIACAT's governance has also been significantly renewed this year with the election, on 3 June 2024, of a new International Bureau for a four-year term. This new eight-member International Bureau is composed of three representatives from ACATs in Africa, four representatives from ACATs in Europe and one representative from ACATs in the Americas. It is composed of four women and four men.

With this new International Bureau, FIACAT is preparing to develop and adopt a new strategic plan for the period 2025-2028, a crucial period for all those committed to fundamental rights around the world. This plan will guide the organisation's priorities for action and enable it to continue, with renewed strength and determination, the fight to prohibit torture and eradicate cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, as well as to abolish the death penalty. Strengthening and supporting the ACAT network will be at the heart of this plan, with particular attention paid to the security of members and the provision of the tools and training necessary for the success of their actions. The strategic plan will also take into account the phenomenon of the shrinking civic space, which hinders the work of human rights defenders and threatens the very foundations of their actions.

In order to carry out its projects, FIACAT maintains a wide range of collaborations and partnerships, building on the trust it has earned and the professionalism of its staff.

Christophe D'Aloisio

President of FIACAT

REPRESENTING THE VIEWS OF THE ACATS AT INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL BODIES

To draw the attention of bodies responsible for promoting and protecting human rights and of political decision-makers to the views of local civil societies, statements were issued or parallel events organised in partnership with the Consortium and NGO networks with which FIACAT is associated. This representation forms part of the dialogue with national authorities, aiming to work more closely with them as they seek to fulfil their international and regional commitments.

FIACAT AT THE UNITED NATIONS



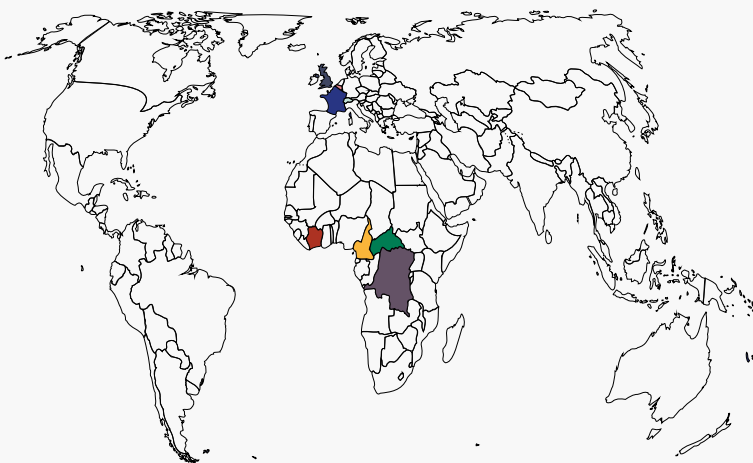
In conjunction with the ACATs of the CAR and the DRC, in April FIACAT organised in Bangui workshops on setting up a national mechanism for the prevention of torture, and similarly

in Kinshasa in December 2024, in partnership with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN experts. These workshops were intended for the authorities, the judiciary and prison administrations as well as civil society, and underlined the importance of such mechanisms and the crucial role of civil society

FIACAT also accompanied the ACATs of Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire and France when these countries were scrutinised by the Committee Against Torture and the Human Rights Committee, and ACAT Madagascar for that country's 4th Universal Periodic Review. Numerous concerns and recommendations raised in the reports and repeated at the advocacy missions in Geneva were taken up by the States and UN experts.

Map of FIACAT missions in 2024

● Belgium ● Cameroon ● France ● Gambia ● Central African Republic
● Democratic Republic of Congo ● Switzerland ● United Kingdom ● Côte d'Ivoire



21

Missions carried out



67

Trips



9

Countries

The joint advocacy missions resulted in genuine advances towards abolition of the death penalty and the eradication of torture. Thus 2024 saw Côte d'Ivoire sign up to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on civil and political rights, which aims to abolish the death penalty, and the Republic of the Congo sign up to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

FIACAT AT THE EUROPEAN UNION

Making it easier for defenders to obtain visas

Along with **ACAT Burundi**, on 9 December 2024 FIACAT attended a key event at the European Parliament in Brussels focusing on human rights defenders and marking the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the EU Guidelines on human rights defenders.

This day provided an opportunity to raise with European decision-makers a topic crucial for the work of ACAT members : obtaining visas for defenders.

Presenting to the COHOM the concerns of the United Against Torture Consortium¹



Alongside its partners the Omega Research Foundation and the OMCT, FIACAT presented the consortium's concerns to the Council of the European Union's Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM). The aim was to help define EU policies towards third countries as regards torture.

Several points were thus tabled for discussion: commitment to victims and survivors of torture, strengthening the capacity of 162 local partner associations, the new challenges arising before and after elections for those combating torture in places of detention and outside, the need to regulate trade in goods used for torture and the emergence of crises highlighting the need for rapid and solid responses.



FIACAT AT THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS

On the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the Guidelines on the Conditions of Arrest, Police Custody and Pre-Trial Detention in Africa (Luanda Guidelines), FIACAT was able to join in some of the main events. **The Committee for the Prevention of Torture in Africa** published an information bulletin on the part played by education and training in the prevention of torture in Africa, to which FIACAT contributed an article on the Norbert Kenne cycle. The ACHPR awarded ACAT Côte d'Ivoire the Med Kaggwa prize for its key role in promoting the Luanda Guidelines in Côte d'Ivoire.

In 2024 FIACAT worked alongside the **Special Rapporteur on prisons and conditions of detention and policing in Africa** to identify the deep-rooted causes of human rights violations in prisons, propose recommendations for reform and bring about a change of paradigm in the management of penal systems in Africa.

In the face of increasing difficulties of access to prisons and despite the vital role played by civil society in terms of monitoring detention conditions, legal or humanitarian assistance and maintaining social links with detainees, FIACAT organised a side event on the importance of civil society access to places of detention. This event was the forum for an exchange of ACAT experience with around 70 participants and highlighted the complementary roles played by national mechanisms for the prevention of torture, the academic world and civil society in monitoring places of confinement.

¹ **The United Against Torture Consortium (UATC)** is an EU-funded project which pools the strengths and expertise of six international organisations campaigning against torture (the OMCT, the IRCT, FIACAT, REDRESS, APT and the Omega Research Foundation), in collaboration with over 200 civil society organisations and other partners in more than 100 countries, in order to strengthen and extend the prevention of torture, protection, rehabilitation and strategic litigation.

SUPPORTING THE ACATS IN JOINT PROGRAMMES



STRENGTHENING THE IMPACT OF CIVIL SOCIETY ON THE PROHIBITION OF TORTURE

The Norbert Kenne training course: boosting the fight against torture in Africa

Since 1997, FIACAT, along with university partners, has been training human rights defenders in Africa in the prevention of and fight against torture. In 2023 and 2024, a training cycle was organised in partnership with the Academy for Peace and Human Rights in Central Africa (APDHAC), the Lyon Institute for Human Rights (IDHL) and the UNESCO Chair “Memory, Cultures and Interculturality”.

In 2024, several local action plans were designed and implemented by the participants, some by a consortium in Guinea and in the DRC. Rolled out in 11 countries (DRC, Guinea, Chad, Cameroon, Niger, Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, the Republic of the Congo and Burundi), three of these projects received €30 000 of funding whilst others received funding from embassies. Some participants set up an ACAT in Guinea or founded their own NGO in Niger. Others successfully completed a programme organised by the French government. These initiatives testify to the impact the training has on increasing the capacities of human rights defenders and creating lasting alliances against torture in Africa.

In August 2024, the participants and the teaching staff were in Yaoundé, Cameroon, for a session to review and capitalise on projects, concluding with the presentation of diplomas. Building on their experience and the lessons learned from their training, the 20 graduates are now forming a new generation of defenders ready to pass on their knowledge and strengthen their respective structures.

By training and bringing together these actors for change, the Norbert Kenne course is playing its part in building a stronger civil society and promoting a culture of human rights in Africa.

A united front against torture and ill-treatment in connection with demonstrations



**UNITED
AGAINST
TORTURE**

Faced with numerous violations of the right not to be tortured in connection with demonstrations, the United Against Torture

Consortium is launching a joint initiative, the “United Front”, for a concerted, strategic response to the problems of maintaining order in conflict situations

To reinforce action strategies and policies, the Consortium has set up a Working Group on torture and ill-treatment in the context of demonstrations. Comprising civil society organisations from the Global South and experts, this group will pinpoint the Consortium’s priorities and guide its joint actions.

This Working Group will tackle gaps in protection against torture before, during and after demonstrations, including during the first hours of detention. It will advise the Consortium on advocacy, litigation and campaign strategies, to provide a better response to systematic violence against demonstrators and promote access to justice and compensation.



INITIATIVE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

In 2024, FIACAT continued its commitment to protecting human rights defenders by means of the dedicated programme which aims to strengthen the recognition and protection of these essential actors.

ACAT Madagascar continues its advocacy work alongside a network of civil society organisations to get the bill on human rights defenders adopted. For its part, ACAT Côte d'Ivoire is preparing to join the programme to draft a report on the situation of defenders in Côte d'Ivoire, which will be a powerful tool for advocacy with the national authorities.

In April 2024, the winners of the “Marianne Initiative” – a French government programme geared to human rights defenders – visited the FIACAT team. This meeting was an opportunity for them to find out about FIACAT’s work in headquarters and to explore possibilities for cooperation to strengthen the protection of defenders at international level.



The Democratic Republic of Congo threatens human rights defenders who have criticised the lifting of the moratorium on the death penalty

2024 saw a setback as regards the death penalty in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where the moratorium on executions which had been in force since 2003 was lifted on 9 February 2024. This backward step was accompanied by the repression of defenders who publicly opposed this decision with, in particular, death threats and acts of physical violence, arbitrary arrests and detention, false accusations and trumped-up charges, violations of property rights and free movement and the harassment of their collaborators, families and friends. Having helped several defenders to be better protected and monitored the situation daily, FIACAT published a report on 10 October 2024 documenting the violations to which these defenders had been subjected in several provinces, giving details of the authors of these violations and their *modi operandi*. The report also highlights the considerable impact that the criminalisation of defenders has on their living conditions and those of their families and friends.

The growing phenomenon of repression must be seen in the wider context of restrictions of the civic space in the DRC, exacerbated by the intensifying armed conflict in the East of the country.

PREVENTING TORTURE IN PLACES OF DETENTION

10 years of fighting against abusive pre-trial detention!

Since 2014, FIACAT and the ACATs in this programme have been working to improve detention conditions. By talking with those who have been confined and providing them with legal support until they obtain a judicial decision, by promoting collaboration between civil society and the national authorities in drafting public policies as well as training prison and judicial administrations, the abusive pre-trial detention programme fights the causes of prison overcrowding as well as its repercussions on detainees and their families and friends. As a result of the commitment of FIACAT and the ACATs in Côte d'Ivoire, the Republic of Congo and Madagascar, the programme has been extended to Cameroon since 2024.

49 prison visits

by volunteers from the ACATs of Cameroon, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire and Madagascar in order to talk with detainees

357

detainees interviewed

324 persons identified as being in abusive pre-trial detention

291 judicial decisions obtained

11 workshops between civil society organisations and judicial and prison administrations

317 actors in the penal chain and members of civil society trained in respect for judicial guarantees, access to justice and the rights of detainees

55 advocacy meetings with national authorities and partners to improve detention conditions



Dialogue between peers and sharing good practice

Whereas the intervention of civil society organisations is crucial for the independent monitoring of detention conditions, to prevent torture and ill-treatment and to promote respect for the rights of detainees, the ACATs are confronted with administrative obstacles, arbitrary refusal of access or restrictions which limit their ability to visit prisons. In the margins of the 81st ordinary session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, FIACAT organised a capitalisation workshop, to learn from the experiences of the ACATs in Cameroon, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Niger and Chad in the monitoring of prisons. This event was a unique opportunity for the ACATs to share their good practices for surmounting the obstacles encountered when attempting to access prisons and to strengthen collaboration with national mechanisms for the prevention of torture.

Prisons under the microscope: advocacy with understanding

Conscious that academic research is a genuine asset when it comes to advocacy work, FIACAT decided to analyse the penal system in greater depth by launching in 2024 a study of **informal practices for the management and governance of prisons**, an aspect which, despite being frequently pushed out of sight and neglected, is nonetheless crucial. Inherited from the colonial era and perpetuated owing to overcrowding and lack of resources, these practices have a direct effect on detention conditions. This study follows on from the previous work by FIACAT and ACAT Côte d'Ivoire in proposing an approach adapted to national realities, to provide a better basis for penal reform.

CAMPAIGNS



40 YEARS OF THE CONVENTION AGAINST TORTURE

As every year, on 26 June FIACAT celebrated the International Day in support of the victims of torture. But in 2024 this date was particularly important in that it also marked the 40th anniversary of the Convention against torture, celebrated on 10 December. On this occasion, the **United Against Torture Consortium** launched a communications campaign entitled “Voices for Human Dignity”, which ran from 26 June to 10 December. This initiative highlighted the testimonies and viewpoints of experts in the struggle against torture, survivors and human rights defenders, stressing their resilience, commitment and unrelenting work to prevent torture throughout the world.

In all, 15 videos were produced, including interviews with:

- Dr Alice Edwards, United Nations special Rapporteur on torture,
- Olof Skoog, European Union special Representative for human rights,
- Wenceslas Assohou, member of FIACAT’s International Bureau.

Eight of these videos were the testimonies of victims, each illustrating a specific article of the Convention against Torture.

This campaign has had a noticeable impact, a reminder that the struggle against torture is far from over. It has drawn attention to the continuing challenges such as impunity, shortcomings in reparation cases and the emergence of new forms of torture.



WORLD DAY AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY

10 October 2024 saw worldwide celebration of the World Day Against the Death Penalty, instituted by the **World Coalition against the death penalty**. This year, the theme was the challenge to the **misconception that the death penalty can make people and communities safer**.

Studies have shown that jurisdictions which have done away with the death penalty frequently have criminality rates below those of jurisdictions which have retained it. Examples suggest that it is not an efficient way of preventing criminality but perpetuates cycles of violence. Some authorities even use the death penalty as a weapon to repress political opponents and to consolidate military control. Public prosecutors and courts often apply it arbitrarily, affecting marginalised groups disproportionately.

FIACAT celebrated this world day with its members to make public opinion aware of the futility of the death penalty.

RUNNING A NETWORK OF 26 ACATS

FIACAT RENEWS ITS GOVERNING STRUCTURE

At its International Council on 3 June 2024, FIACAT elected its new International Bureau for a four-year mandate. The eight members elected reflect the diversity and wealth of talent of the ACAT network: the Bureau thus comprises three representatives of the African ACATs, four of the European ACATs and one of the American ACATs. It consists of four men and four women.

The whole ACAT network is grateful to the outgoing members of the FIACAT Bureau for their tireless and loyal commitment. Thank you, Paul Angaman, Claire Doran, Jean-Bernard Marie, Benoît Théry, Jean-Daniel Vigny!

« FIACAT's strength resides in the ACATs themselves, who are the multiple centres of gravity of our common commitment against torture and ill-treatment. The members of the new International Bureau will have to consider their presence as a mission of service to the whole network and, through it, to every vulnerable human being. In this, we will be guided by the considerable work accomplished by our predecessors and will ensure that we follow in their footsteps »



Christophe D'Aloisio,
new president of FIACAT

THE ACAT CAFÉS: A FORUM FOR DISCUSSION AND COMMITMENT

The ACAT cafés, which are symbolic moments in the life of the ACAT network, continued throughout 2024.

But what is an **ACAT Café** exactly?



It is a monthly gathering in which the ACAT members meet in a videoconference on a particular theme to debate, discuss and act jointly for the protection of human rights.

The topics discussed this year include:

- an ACAT Café on the resolution for a universal moratorium on the death penalty,
- the "Stand Up for Human Rights" initiative of ACAT Luxembourg,
- a discussion with ACAT CAR on monitoring human rights violations,
- a discussion with ACAT Chad on prison overcrowding.

This year, there has been a major innovation: interpretation into French and English to make these opportunities for discussion accessible to the whole ACAT network and promote wider participation.



The ACAT Cafés thus continue to be a dynamic forum for learning, sharing and collective mobilisation for human rights.



FIACAT'S FINANCES

IN 2024



In 2024 FIACAT registered a surplus of € 111 198, bringing FIACAT's own funds without right of recovery to € 205 506.

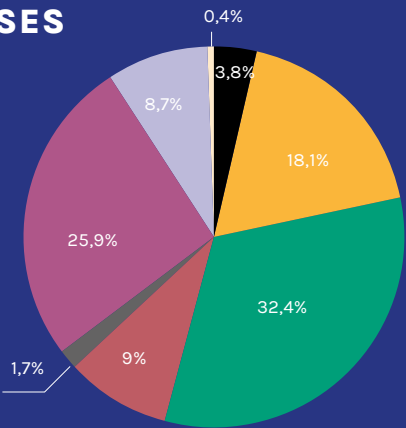
The financial situation at the end of 2024 is positive, following a two-year period of recovery from a situation that had become critical and required considerable effort by the ACATs and the international secretariat as well as expert management.

A feature of this situation is the large number of programmes under way, with public and private funding, involving all of FIACAT's activity. The extent of these activities and their geographical and thematic diversity are essential factors in ensuring FIACAT's credibility.

However, three points require particular attention when a new multi-annual strategic plan is drawn up. Firstly, donors' multi-annual commitments are for fairly short periods (generally two to three years) and several current projects are due for completion by the end of 2026. Geopolitical developments give grounds for caution with regard to FIACAT's ability to obtain the renewal of donors' support at present levels for the areas in which it is active. Moreover, income from member ACATs and donors has been in steady decline for several years and covers only a fraction of expenditure, making FIACAT all the more exposed to changes in public funding. Finally, some years ago, as a result of the low level of own resources and the difficult financial situation, all human resources were assigned to activities funded by donors, to the detriment of internal tasks such as running the ACAT network and advocacy outside Africa and the United Nations.

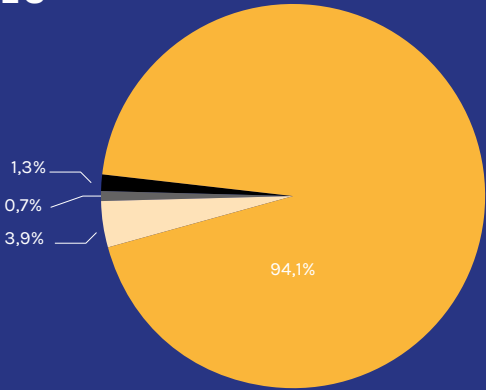
Thomas Petitguyot
FIACAT treasurer

EXPENSES



● ACAT advocacy before the United Nations	48 298,97€
● Network Coordination	231 912,00 €
● Program to Combat Abusive Pre-trial Detention	414 182,00 €
● Program for the Abolition of the Death Penalty in Africa	114 693,00 €
● Human Rights Defenders Program	21 412,12 €
● Consortium United Against Torture (UATC)	331 625,00 €
● FIACAT's Operating Expenditure	111 573,19 €
● Financial and Exceptional Items	4 725,71 €
Total Expenditure	1 278 421,99 €

RESOURCES



● Program Subsidies mobilised	1 307 970,78 €
● ACAT Contributions	54 359,81 €
● Private Donations	9250 €
● Other Resources	18 039,16 €
Total Income	1 389 619,75 €
TOTAL RESOURCES MANAGED DIRECTLY BY ACATS	466 375,11 €

L'ÉQUIPE

INTERNATIONAL BUREAU



Wenceslas ASSOHO WANGA (Côte d'Ivoire)



Christophe D'ALOISIO (Belgium)
President



Anitha GATERETSE (Burundi)



Laïla FAIVRE (Canada)



Michel KALEMBA (DRC)



Natacha KAZATCHKINE (Belgium)



Thomas PETITGUYOT (France)
Treasurer



Gabriela SIERCK (Germany)

Interns and volunteers

FIACAT warmly thanks its interns **Nathan Madjoulba** and **Ivana Cancarevic** and its volunteers – in particular **Pierre Lévêque**, FIACAT's accountant, and **Rober Zuber**, representative at the United Nations in New York – who have worked with FIACAT for many years and are crucial in the success of its missions.



Camille AUBINAIS
Responsible for the "Campaign against abusive preventive detention"



Guillaume COLIN
Executive director



Luisa FENU
Coordinator for network management and communication (11/23 – 05/24)



Lionel GRASSY
Advocacy director



Francis KONÉ
Administrative and financial officer



Xavière PRUGNARD
Representative at the African Union



Emeline SWIDERSKI
Representative at the United Nations



Lauren THIEBAUT
Administrative and financial director



Esteban TRUJILLO
Administrative and logistics coordinator



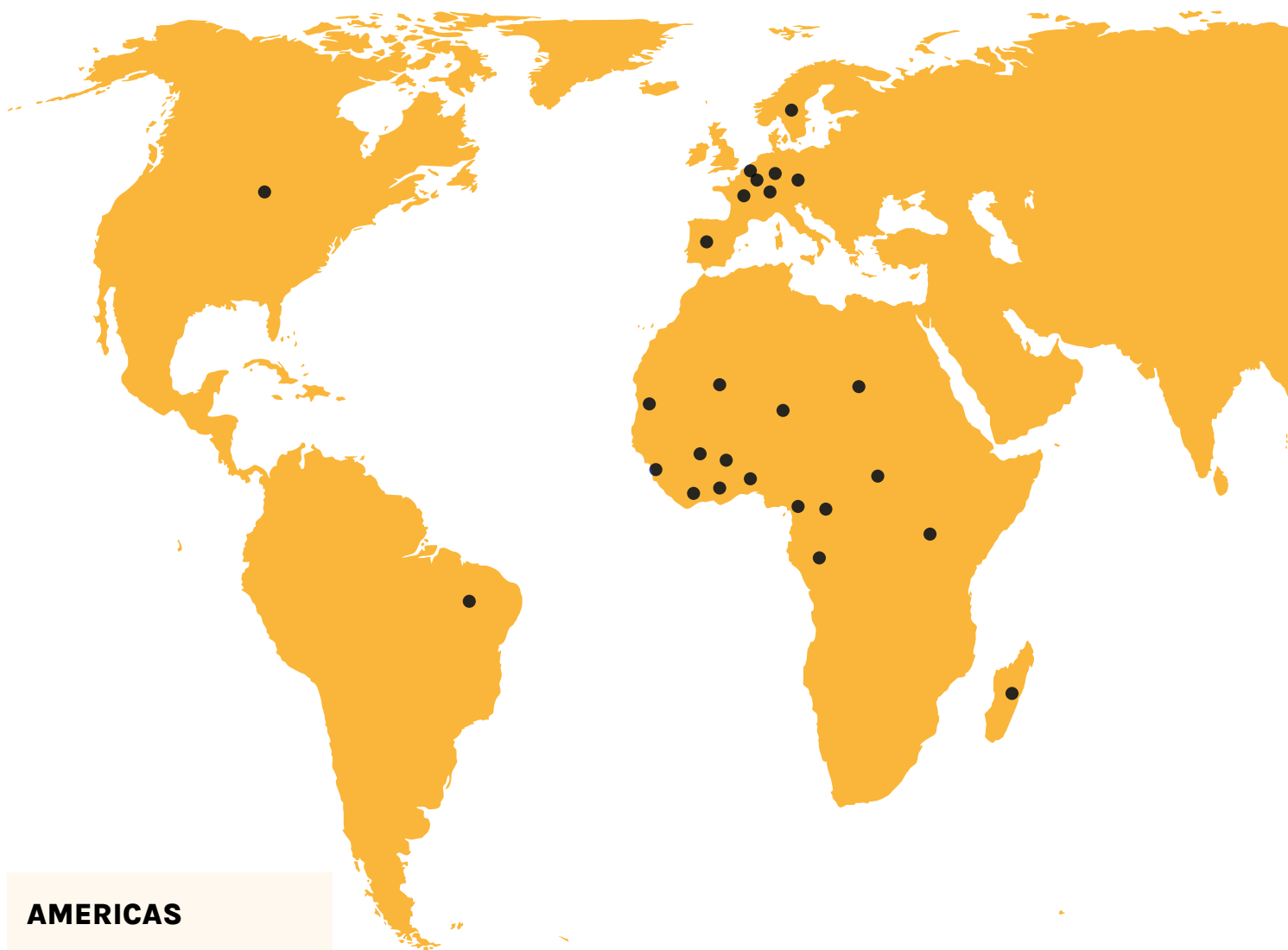
Marion VALERAY
Coordinator for network management and communication since 05/24



Franck YAZI
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(02/24 – 09/24)

OUR NETWORK

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SUPPORTED GROUPS

**ACAT Czech Republic, ACAT
Guinea, ACAT Angola, ACAT
Gambia**



The International Federation of ACATs (FIACAT) is an international non-governmental Christian organisation for the defence of human rights, set up in 1987. Its aim is the abolition of torture and the death penalty. It comprises some 30 national associations, the ACATs, on three continents.

FIACAT's strength resides above all in its network, which links the ACATs both to one another and to other national NGOs. Its local roots are recognised as the bedrock of its legitimacy and the relevance of the action pursued by the federation and its network.

FIACAT represents its members in international and regional bodies

It enjoys consultative status at the United Nations (UN), participatory status at the Council of Europe and observer status at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR). FIACAT is also accredited to the bodies which make up the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF).

By passing on to regional and international bodies the concerns of its members on the ground, FIACAT aims to have pertinent recommendations adopted and implemented by governments. It plays a part in the application of regional and international human rights conventions, in the prevention of acts of torture in prisons and detention centres, and in combating enforced disappearances and impunity. It also contributes to the fight against the death penalty, in particular by persuading countries to remove this inhuman punishment from their legislation and putting the case for abolition to opinion formers and religious and traditional leaders.

FIACAT is a founding member of various collective action groups, more especially the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty (WCADP), the United Against Torture Consortium (UATC), the French Human Rights Platform (PDH) and the International Coalition against Enforced Disappearances (ICAED). It is also a member of F3E and the Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN). Along with other members of the PDH, it participates in the Marianne Initiative for human rights defenders.

FIACAT strengthens the capacities of its network of thirty ACATs.

FIACAT helps in the organisation of its member associations. It supports the process which makes the ACATs influential actors in civil society, able to raise public awareness and have an impact on the authorities in their countries.

It helps to dynamise the network by promoting exchanges, proposing regional or international training and joint intervention initiatives. Thus, it supports the ACATs' actions and acts as a link at international level.

FIACAT, an independent Christian-based network united in its work for the abolition of torture and the death penalty

One of FIACAT's missions is to make the Churches and Christian organisations more aware of torture and the death penalty, in order to persuade them to work towards abolition and eradication.

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