

COLLOQUIUM ON CORRUPTION AND HUMAN RIGHTS

18 and 19 September 2025

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Theme and background:

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 (Kofi Annan, Foreword to the United Nations Convention against Corruption).

The destructive effects of corruption have been widely recognised. Various strategies have been formulated and implemented to curb corruption in its many forms. These include criminalising conduct that constitutes corruption, adopting legal frameworks that outline accountability and monitoring mechanisms, promoting the principles of good governance, establishing anti-corruption agencies, and conducting anti-corruption awareness and educational campaigns. However, corruption continues to be rampant in countries across the globe.

The threat that corruption poses to human rights has also attracted increasing recognition. It is acknowledged that corruption impedes the ability of governments to meet their human rights obligations and ensure accountability in the implementation of human rights as outlined in international and regional treaties and domestic law. Corruption can negatively impact all categories of human rights. For example, the right to health care (if a person is required to pay a bribe to access a health care facility), the right to a fair trial (if a judge is bribed to decide a case in a specific manner), labour rights (where appointment processes are tainted by favouritism or nepotism), and the right to education (if funds for school resources are mismanaged or embezzled). It is accordingly argued that corruption can impact the enjoyment of human rights, while in some instances, corruption can be seen as a direct or indirect violation of human rights.

Moreover, due to their dependency on public services (where grand and petty corruption tend to thrive), the poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged carry a disproportionate brunt of the costs of corruption, perpetuating inequality and social injustices.



It is posited that when corruption is viewed as a violation of human rights, it creates new opportunities for combatting it. Moreover, a human rights-based approach, defined as integrating human rights and principles into plans, policies and strategies to combat corruption, has been proposed to overcome some of the deficits of traditional anti-corruption approaches.

Former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, has stated that [c]orruption violates the core human rights principles of transparency, accountability, non-discrimination, and meaningful participation in every aspect of the life of the community. Conversely, these principles, when upheld and implemented, are the most effective means to fight corruption.

The colloquium seeks to explore and unpack the relationship between corruption and human rights, and organisers invite the submission of abstracts of papers engaging with this topic.

Contributors are encouraged to submit abstracts related to the following key areas, although abstracts related to other relevant areas are also welcome:

- The impact of corruption on human rights protection
- Corruption and access to justice
- Corruption in law enforcement: a threat to human rights
- The role of whistleblowers in combating corruption and protecting human rights
- Corruption and economic inequality: a human rights perspective
- Corruption and electoral integrity: undermining democracy and political rights
- Corporate corruption and human rights violations
- Corruption in humanitarian aid and development projects
- International legal frameworks for fighting corruption and protecting human rights
- Corruption, democracy, the rule of law and human rights



Publication Opportunities

Selected papers may be considered for publication in a special issue of a relevant academic journal.

Important dates

5 May 2025

Submission of abstracts (300 - 400 words, setting out the anticipated findings, conclusions or insights)

30 May 2025

Inform selected participants

18-19 September 2025

Colloquium in Bloemfontein, South Africa

30 November 2025

Submission of final papers

Submission guidelines

Submissions must be original, previously unpublished work and not under consideration by any journal or other publication outlets.

Submit via the link: <https://forms.office.com/r/x3dr5TVaV3>

Travel and accommodation expenses

There are no registration fees for the colloquium. Participants are expected to attend the colloquium in person. Participants are responsible for their own travel and accommodation expenses. However, the Free State Centre for Human Rights is prepared to assist participants facing financial constraints. If you wish to apply for funding, please indicate accordingly on the submission form.

Further information

For any questions or queries, please contact Dr Annelie de Man at DeManA@ufs.ac.za