

THE EVOLUTION OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW IN THE 21ST CENTURY: A COMPREHENSIVE RESEARCH STUDY ON GLOBAL JUSTICE, CONSTITUTIONALISM, AND THE PROTECTION OF CIVIL LIBERTIES

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Abstract

International human rights law (IHRL) is a collection of norms, institutions, and practices that attempt to protect human dignity and civil rights in international, regional, and national systems. In the twenty-first century, its trajectory has been toward shifting away from the creation of new treaties to interpretive innovation by courts and monitoring bodies. This essay examines the development of IHRL since 2000, its influence on civil liberties, global constitutionalism, and the quest for global justice. The research employs mixed methods, including doctrinal analysis of United Nations reports, domestic and regional case law, and empirical data from measures such as V-Dem, Freedom House, and CIVICUS. The paper highlights how constitutionalizing and judicialization have enshrined protection of privacy, freedom of expression, equality, and the right to assembly, and extended rights to new areas such as digital surveillance and climate action. Yet consistency in compliance gaps suggests that binding commitments sometimes fail to guarantee effective protection, especially in areas where weak institutions and political opposition predominate. European, Latin American, African, and South Asian case studies affirm successful international norm integration alongside chronic enforcement problems. The author concludes that filling the gap between progress in doctrine and tangible compliance is vital if IHRL is to live up to its promise of protecting civil liberties in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: International Human Rights Law, Civil Liberties, Global Constitutionalism, Global Justice, Compliance

1. Introduction

International human rights law (IHRL) refers to international norms, treaties, and practices seeking to acknowledge, protect, and promote the inherent dignity and equal rights of all individuals. IHRL works at global, regional, and local levels (Philip and Goodman, 2013). IHRL is traced back to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and ensuing treaties. It has developed as an intricate system consisting of mechanisms for codification, adjudication, and enforcement. Within the twenty-first century, the system is challenged by authoritarianism, the security-oriented model of governance, and technological developments. Such problems create uncertainty as to the security of civil liberties despite numerous legal instruments at their disposal. Human rights history indicates that they are built and contested, and not naturally acquired. Modern awareness of rights began during the Enlightenment, when ideas of empathy, equality, and dignity turned into universal claims. The idea that rights apply to everyone has remained key to the legitimacy of IHRL, helping it expand across different regions and legal systems (Donnelly, 2013). However, current critiques point out the weaknesses of this system. Some scholars argue that while human rights are powerful in principle, they fall short in tackling structural inequality and economic injustice. Others claim that even with an extensive network of treaties,

reporting processes, and monitoring organizations, actual implementation often varies and tends to be shallow (Freeman, 2022). This gap between the appeal of rights and their practical enforcement is the main challenge facing IHRL today. Recent evaluations highlight this paradox. Global data on democracy show both progress and setbacks. Courts in some democracies are increasingly using international standards to protect freedoms, but civic space is shrinking in many areas. Authoritarian governments are improving their ability to silence dissent (Angiolillo *et al.*, 2024). Electoral processes are common, yet they come with limits on expression, assembly, and association. This indicates that civil liberties are delicate gains rather than guaranteed results, depending on domestic political commitment and international backing. Meanwhile, the decline in civic space has been observed worldwide, illustrating that civil society groups and rights advocates face rising oppression despite international protections. Scholars of international law stress that the development of international human rights law (IHRL) is not a one-time achievement but a continuing effort of creating and interpreting norms. While states are the main players, courts, treaty bodies, and non-state actors increasingly shape and enforce rights. Reasons for delegating authority to human rights systems often cite the need for democratic states to secure commitments against future political setbacks (Moravcsik, 2000). Yet, ironically, the same states that set up these systems sometimes weaken them or misuse rights for geopolitical goals. This situation reveals a significant contradiction in the current international landscape. This contradiction emphasizes the significance of examining IHRL as both a legal framework and a contentious political practice. Within this context, the objectives of this research are:

1. To trace doctrinal changes in IHRL since 2000, with emphasis on developments within international, regional, and domestic judicial bodies.
2. To evaluate the effects of these doctrinal shifts on the protection of civil liberties, particularly freedom of expression, privacy, equality, and assembly in an era of digitalization and securitization.
3. To identify the gaps between formal legal commitments and practical enforcement, highlighting the structural and institutional challenges that shape compliance.

From these objectives come the hypotheses that judicialization and constitutionalization improve rights protections by incorporating international human rights law into domestic legal systems. However, compliance gaps remain due to weak institutions, political resistance, and uneven state capacity. This study is important because it aims to highlight both the successes and shortcomings of international human rights law in the new century. It shows how global justice, constitutionalism, and civil liberties connect in both theory and practice.

2. Literature Review

The foundations of international human rights law (IHRL) are based on universal principles of dignity and equality that gained traction after the Second World War. IHRL developed as both a legal and political project. It limits state power while empowering individuals (Cassese, 2005). The United Nations established a framework for drafting treaties and monitoring compliance. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights serves as the foundational text. The subsequent International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights established binding obligations for states. The process of making international law is dynamic; it involves negotiation, interpretation, and practice that continually redefine the scope of rights. The intellectual origins of rights shape their modern form. Enlightenment ideals of empathy and dignity laid the groundwork for universal claims (Hunt, 2007). Human rights are social conceptions that emerge from political and cultural conflict.

This perspective emphasizes their resilience and opposition. Presenting rights as both political ideals and legal norms demonstrates their enduring double identity (Steiner *et al.*, 2008).

Present-day discussions emphasize how IHRL engages with global governance and national systems. This is a sign of its existence within wider institutional contexts (Moeckli *et al.*, 2022). There is more literature linking IHRL with the situation of global constitutionalism. International law, according to this account, is more and more a constitutional order that structures power and legitimizes government beyond the state. Regional courts have been at the forefront of such developments, most notably the European Court of Human Rights. Over time, European human rights law has pushed shared principles into national legal systems. The European Convention on Human Rights has become more or less a constitution: it determines the rights that people have and the process that courts should take to ensure that their rights are upheld. The continuous communication between courts, national and Strasbourg, strengthens this constitutional nature, and gradually harmonizes the standards in the countries. This supranational system is effective since judges are independent, states tend to obey the decisions, and civil society organizations assist in bringing and maintaining cases. Practically, international human rights law does not usually resemble a conventional treaty regime, but rather a constitutional order constructed on a judicial practice.

Its connection to global justice is hotly debated. Cosmopolitan thinkers see international human rights law as expressing equal worth for all and as a cornerstone of global justice (Dunoff & Pollack, 2022). Empirical work suggests that steady scrutiny and activism by cross-border networks can improve compliance with human rights norms. Critics, however, point to limits. Some argue Europe's human rights regimes were crafted less out of altruism than as pragmatic tools for democracies to lock in domestic commitments. Others contend that international law is politicized, serving state interests rather than neutral principles.

The ongoing issues of inequality give these criticisms substance because governments' rhetoric on human rights is prone to disregard deep injustices globally (Moyn, 2018). Critical theories build on such concerns. Third World Approaches to

International Law reveal how IHRL can support hierarchies. Feminist critiques point out the failure to pay regard to gender and care-oriented rights. Postcolonial scholarship challenges the universality of rights by highlighting their Western origins. These perspectives indicate that despite IHRL's purpose to promote justice, its implementation is uneven and restrained by structural factors. Civil rights are the most direct articulation of IHRL, such as freedom of speech, privacy, equality, and assembly. Enlarging the responsibilities of non-state actors has been instrumental in dealing with the influence of corporations and private actors on decision-making for rights (Clapham, 2005). In the digital age, private networks hold essential spaces for expression and association, and corporate accountability is a necessity. The connection of civil and political rights with economic, social, and cultural rights further substantiates that freedom cannot be divorced from more extensive socio-economic rights (Ssenyonjo, 2016). New challenges to rights have appeared due to twenty-first-century problems, including health, environment, and technology. Mental health is becoming more understood as a human rights matter requiring protective legislation (World Health Organization and UN Human Rights, 2023). Climate change is often framed as a human rights challenge, while civic spaces are shrinking around the world, endangering advocacy, assembly, and participation. These changes suggest that civil liberties are broadening but also facing increasing threats.

The effectiveness of IHRL in practice remains debated. Signing treaties does not always lead to better human rights practices, as governments may make commitments without genuine implementation (Hathaway, 2001). Evidence shows both positive and negative impacts, with some countries enhancing rights practices while others resist or oppress them. Compliance is often seen not as a simple result of coercion but as a gradual process of persuasion, socialization, and internalization. Data from indices like V-Dem and Freedom House confirm unequal progress, with improvements in some areas offset by setbacks in others. This highlights a persistent gap in compliance, driven by weak institutions, types of regimes, and limited judicial independence. In the end, IHRL has created strong normative frameworks, but it has not removed the structural obstacles to effective protection. Despite substantial progress in research, three major gaps remain. First, few studies connect changes in law with measurable outcomes for civil liberties, creating a disconnect between legal advancements and their actual effects. Second, comparative studies linking UN bodies, regional systems, and national institutions are lacking, which hampers the understanding of interactions across systems. Third, emerging areas, such as artificial intelligence, data protection, corporate accountability, and climate litigation, are insufficiently examined within IHRL frameworks (Tomuschat, 2014; Shelton, 2015). These gaps highlight the need for research integrating legal, empirical, and critical viewpoints to assess the growth of IHRL in the twenty-first century.

3. Methods

This research uses a mixed-methods design, supplementing doctrinal legal analysis with empirical analysis of rights outcomes. This synthesis is needed because international human rights law (IHRL) exists as both a set of norms and a practice with real-world effects. Doctrinal analysis helps us understand how legal standards are articulated and understood, while empirical research demonstrates patterns of compliance and dissent across topics. The time frame from 2000 to 2024 is chosen to capture the twenty-first-century development of IHRL, which is marked by the growth of digital technologies, security issues, climate litigation, and changing geopolitical dynamics.

3.1 Sources of Data

Primary doctrinal sources include international treaties, general comments, and concluding observations from United Nations treaty-monitoring bodies. We analyze Universal Periodic Review reports and thematic outputs from special procedures to identify interpretative trends. Regional sources include case law from the European Court of Human Rights, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. These courts show how supranational adjudication has shaped rights standards. Domestic legal sources come from constitutional and apex court decisions in countries like India, Colombia, Kenya, and South Africa, which have engaged with international norms. The empirical component depends on global indices that measure civil liberties and democratic rights. These indices include the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) dataset, the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index, Freedom House scores, and CIVICUS reports. We use these sources to identify patterns in freedom of expression, privacy, equality, and assembly, and to compare legal commitments with observed practices. By using multiple datasets, we ensure broad coverage and lessen reliance on a single measure.

3.2 Analytical Strategy

The analysis occurs in three stages. First, we look at doctrinal materials thematically to find patterns in areas like privacy, surveillance, freedom of expression, equality, and new fields such as climate and digital rights. We examine references to international law, standards of proportionality, and the types of remedies ordered. Second, we gather empirical indicators to map civil liberties trends on global and regional levels during the study period. This helps us see both the similarities and differences between formal commitments and real-world outcomes. Third, we present case study vignettes to show how IHRL is adopted, resisted, or transformed within domestic legal systems. These qualitative examples enhance our understanding by showing how international norms move through different legal and political contexts.

3.3 Case Selection and Scope

Case studies are carefully chosen to show differences in institutional design and rights outcomes. Europe is explored through the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights, which has become key to the legal enforcement of rights and the growth of the proportionality doctrine. Latin America is examined through decisions from the Inter-American Court that have promoted protections for freedom of expression and equality, especially during political disputes. Africa is included to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of regional courts, focusing on the African Court’s growing but limited power. South Asia is studied through national constitutional decisions, especially India’s important privacy and equality cases, along with examples from Kenya and South Africa that illustrate transformative constitutionalism. This broad regional approach offers a comparative view that shows both similarities and differences in international human rights law.

4. Results

4.1 Doctrinal Developments

The period 2000–2024 reveals that doctrinal growth in international human rights law (IHRL) has primarily occurred through interpretation rather than the adoption of new treaties. United Nations treaty-monitoring bodies expanded the scope of existing covenants via general comments and concluding observations. The Human Rights Committee clarified protections for privacy, freedom of expression, and the right to life in contexts shaped by digital surveillance, counter-terrorism frameworks, and climate emergencies. The Universal Periodic Review further institutionalized peer assessment, requiring states to justify practices and demonstrate reforms, although compliance varied significantly (Table 1).

Table 1. UN Treaty-Body Doctrinal Developments, 2000–2024

Year/Period	Doctrinal Focus	Key Bodies
2000–2005	Strengthening of due process and fair trial guarantees	Human Rights Committee, CEDAW
2006–2010	Expansion of equality and non-discrimination jurisprudence	CESCR, CRC, CERD
2011–2015	Digital privacy and surveillance concerns	Human Rights Committee, Special Rapporteur on Privacy
2016–2020	Climate change and right to life interpretations	Human Rights Committee, Special Rapporteur on Environment
2021–2024	AI, digital governance, and environmental rights integration	OHCHR, Human Rights Council Special Procedures

Special procedures of the Human Rights Council provided additional doctrinal contributions. Reports from mandate-holders on expression, assembly, and privacy generated influential soft-law norms that informed both regional and domestic jurisprudence. This doctrinal expansion indicates a shift from norm creation to norm interpretation, with greater emphasis on adapting existing frameworks to emerging threats. Regional courts consolidated their authority during this period. The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) advanced proportionality analysis as the dominant balancing method, particularly in cases of privacy and surveillance. Landmark judgments on data retention and online expression established limits on state power in digital governance (see Figure 1). The Inter-American Court of Human Rights expanded the doctrine on equality and non-discrimination, issuing important rulings on gender rights, indigenous peoples’ rights, and freedom of expression under fragile democracies. The African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights, though less entrenched, produced significant precedents such as recognition of indigenous land rights and rulings on freedom of assembly.

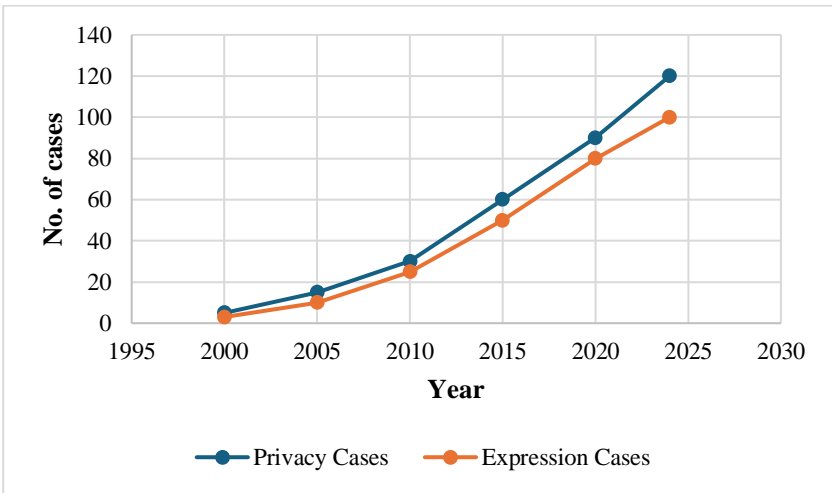


Figure 1. Trends in ECtHR Jurisprudence on Privacy and Expression

Domestic apex courts incorporated international jurisprudence into constitutional interpretation. In India, the recognition of privacy as a fundamental right in *K.S. Puttaswamy* reflected reliance on international and regional standards. The Constitutional Court of Colombia drew on IHRL to strengthen equality guarantees through structural remedies. In South Africa and Kenya, transformative constitutionalism encouraged reliance on supranational jurisprudence, particularly in cases combining socio-economic rights with civil liberties. These developments confirm that doctrinal growth in this era has been less about new treaty law and more about judicial and quasi-judicial interpretation, reinforcing the judicialization of IHRL across systems.

4.2 Civil Liberties Trends

Empirical indicators from 2000 to 2024 reveal mixed trends in civil liberties. Global indices such as V-Dem, Freedom House, and CIVICUS document overall expansion of formal legal protections, but also significant instances of regression. Freedom of expression has seen marked improvements in some regions, particularly in Latin America, where rights litigation has advanced press freedom and protection of human rights defenders. However, digital repression and restrictions on civic space have intensified in authoritarian and hybrid regimes (see Figure 2). Freedom House data show that since 2013, more countries have recorded declines than gains in civil liberties.

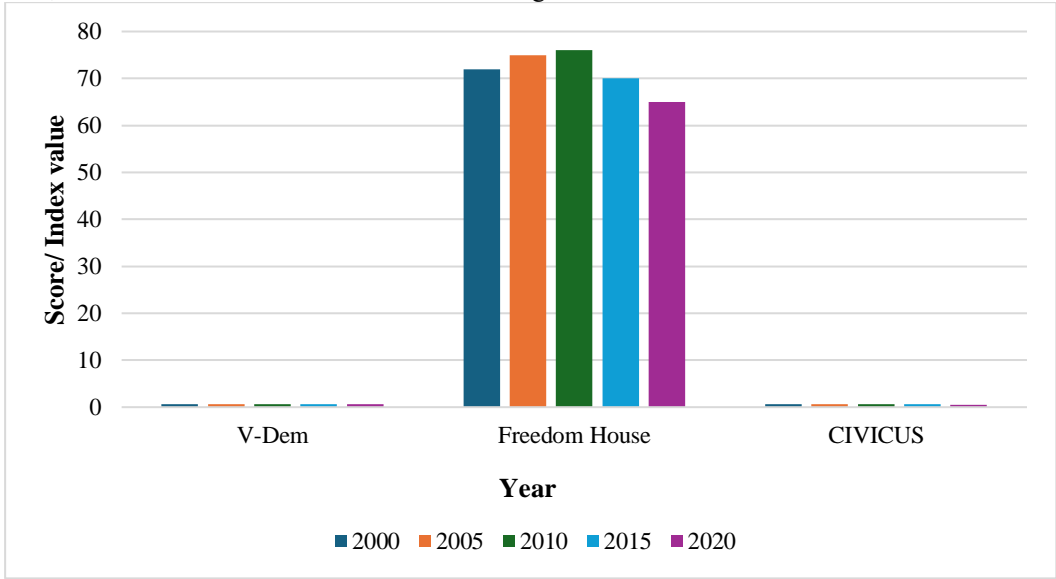


Figure 2. Global Civil Liberties Index, 2000–2024 (V-Dem, Freedom House, CIVICUS)

Privacy has become a central concern due to rapid technological advances and widespread surveillance. European jurisprudence has constrained state surveillance powers through proportionality analysis, yet empirical data show an increase in digital monitoring globally. This disjuncture between doctrine and practice highlights the compliance gap (see Table 2). Equality protections have expanded in many domestic jurisdictions through recognition of LGBTQ+ rights, gender equality, and indigenous rights, but enforcement remains inconsistent. Assembly and association rights have been among the most vulnerable, with CIVICUS reporting that civic space is “narrowed” or “repressed” in more than half of all countries by 2023.

Table 2. Global Privacy and Surveillance Indicators, 2000–2024.

Year	Countries with Mass Surveillance Laws	ECtHR/Regional Privacy Judgments	Compliance Rate (%)
2000	20	5	80
2005	35	15	70
2010	55	30	65
2015	75	60	55
2020	95	90	50
2024	110	120	45

Regional contrasts are evident. Europe and Latin America show gradual improvement or resilience, supported by strong regional adjudication. In contrast, authoritarian states in Asia and Africa exhibit persistent suppression despite formal commitments. These variations suggest that institutional design and judicial independence remain key determinants of outcomes. Overall, civil liberties have expanded in scope, particularly in relation to digital and environmental issues, but remain precarious in practice.

4.3 Case Studies

The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) established robust standards limiting bulk surveillance and data retention, most notably in *Big Brother Watch v. United Kingdom* (2018), where the Court found that indiscriminate collection of data violated Article 8 of the European Convention (Schabas, 2015). Despite these rulings, surveillance practices expanded in several states, demonstrating the gap between doctrine and practice (Figure 3). In Latin America, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights reinforced protections for journalists and workers' expression through judgments such as *Lagos del Campo v. Peru* (2017), which affirmed workplace freedom of expression (Risse *et al.*, 2013). Empirical data from V-Dem show improvements in press freedom in parts of the region, although violence against journalists remains widespread, particularly in Mexico and Central America (Hafner-Burton, 2014). Climate change litigation has also emerged as a new frontier for rights protection. The Dutch Supreme Court in *Urgenda Foundation v. Netherlands* (2019) ordered the government to reduce emissions, grounding its decision in human rights obligations (Boyle and Chinkin, 2007). Similarly, the Colombian Supreme Court in *Future Generations v. Ministry of Environment* (2018) recognized the Amazon as a rights-bearing entity, linking environmental protection to intergenerational justice (Koskenniemi, 2017). These cases illustrate how IHRL is being adapted to confront ecological challenges. In Africa, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights in *African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights v. Kenya (Ogiek case)* (2017) affirmed indigenous land rights and protections for assembly (Mutua, 2018) (Table 3). Nevertheless, implementation has been inconsistent, with several states resisting compliance, and CIVICUS data confirm that repression of civic space remains widespread across the continent (Tiwana and Belalba Barreto, 2023).

Table 3. Case Studies in the Evolution of Civil Liberties and Climate Rights

Case	Court	Right Recognized / Contribution	Year
Big Brother Watch v. United Kingdom	European Court of Human Rights	Privacy rights; limits on bulk surveillance and data retention	2018
Lagos del Campo v. Peru	Inter-American Court of Human Rights	Workplace freedom of expression	2017
Urgenda Foundation v. Netherlands	Dutch Supreme Court	State duty to reduce emissions as a human rights obligation	2019
Future Generations v. Ministry of Environment	Colombian Supreme Court	The rights of children and the recognition of Amazon as rights-bearing	2018
African Commission v. Kenya (Ogiek case)	African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights	Indigenous land and cultural rights, protections for assembly	2017

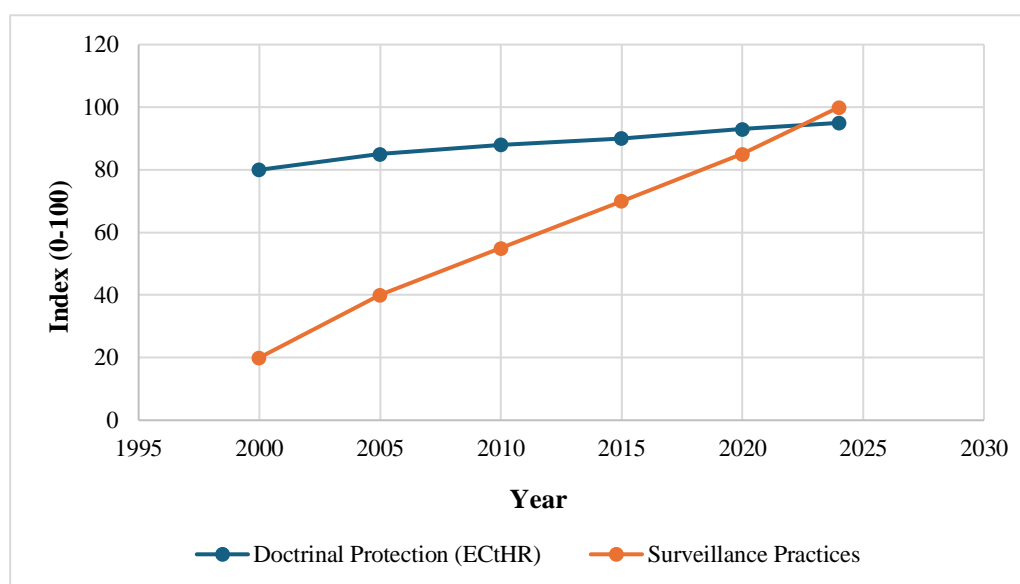


Figure 3. Gap Between Doctrinal Rulings and Surveillance Practices in Europe

5. Discussion

The results of this study show that the development of international human rights law (IHRL) in the twenty-first century has been shaped more by the interpretative activities of courts and monitoring bodies than by the adoption of new treaties. Doctrinal innovation, rather than the broadening of treaties, is presently the defining feature of the international human rights enterprise. This confirms the fact that the main driving forces of IHRL in practice today are constitutionalization and judicialization (Besson, 2009). The United Nations treaty bodies, regional courts, and constitutional national courts have been at the forefront in broadening the concept of rights to include issues that have not been discussed for decades,

most notably cases of digital privacy, surveillance, and climate. These tendencies are towards IHRL as a living law order where norms are reinterpreted to respond to emerging issues.

The European Court of Human Rights has shown that the proportionality analysis is a balancing mechanism of competing rights in the constitution. The methodology has been applied in many cases of right to privacy and freedom of expression, which set strict limits to the authority of the state to spy and keep information. In the meantime, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights has solidly guaranteed equality and non-discrimination protections in weak democracies, and has won judicial battles on gender rights, rights of indigenous peoples, and freedom of expression. These developments indicate that national courts are becoming more and more inclined to use international norms, which is the reason why national constitutions do not oppose the development of international law. The cross-citation process and judicial rhetoric affirm that IHRL is increasingly becoming a constitutional order between states (Keller and Sweet, 2008). The trend of constitutionalism is evident in the constitutional decisions in domestic laws that dictate supranational court decisions, as witnessed in India, Colombia, and South Africa. However, the fact that such judicial reforms have been unequally effective proves that the international human rights system is still defective. The rights of the indigenous peoples to the land and protection of assembly are powerful decisions made by the African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights. States have largely refused to comply. Lack of binding compliance measures and the obstinacy of governments to comply highlight the futility of supranational adjudication in the absence of political goodwill. This is a pointer that human rights courts cannot operate without good domestic institutions and a good political environment. The experience of the wide gap between theory and practice is a pointer to the historical distance between commitment and compliance, even in a well-grounded legal institution setting.

The fact that the gaps have survived substantiates the long-held suspicions that the international human rights law (IHRL) is massively vulnerable to the political environment. The law provides rhetoric of rights but does not ensure it unless it is backed by the assistance of the state and the mobilization of civil society. This adds to cynical interpretations that state that IHRL is politically created and influenced by the prevailing power relations instead of being neutral or pan-round efficient. The policies of European espionage, suppression of African civic space, and assaults on Latin American journalists are all indications that even powerful judicial precedents are ideal where political opposition is robust. A shameful failure to enforce in general seems to be beaten by the IHRL constitutionalist approach. However, the capacity of IHRL to reorganize itself to suit the new challenges is the most effective sign of its strength as a political and legal project. The extension of human rights arguments to digital rights and climate justice implies how the institutions of oversight and courts can re-read the law to resolve the issues of the twenty-first century. The case of the Colombian Amazon and the Dutch Urgenda case hints at the way environmental protection is being re-invented as a human right, and the case of privacy decisions hints at the way traditional rights can be brought to cyberspace. Based on these advances, one may argue that IHRL is a developing document, which evolves in the logic of the judiciary and the discourse of the international community. But, unless there are strict enforcement provisions, such advances are subject to the danger of making the gap between abstraction in law and social practice even greater.

The contradiction between feeble enforcement and doctrinal change is the logical result of policy conclusions. It is important to make sure that national institutions of human rights are in such a way that they are consolidated and international standards are a practicality at the domestic level. The judicial system should be entrenched to an extent that the courts are not politicized. Better follow-up and integration into regional and national systems should be used to strengthen international decisions. In addition, new challenges like digital surveillance and artificial intelligence require unanimous international legislation that would create a balance between security and freedom. Business and human rights systems are also required to be put in place, as corporations are gaining more and more control over the civic space and digital communication. The example of climate litigation demonstrates that rights-based enforcement can be effective, yet further political and institutional changes are required to assist the judicial work. The findings also confirm that IHRL shares many characteristics of a global constitutional order. The spread of proportionality, judicial borrowing, and constitutional integration indicates that international and national courts engage in a form of transnational constitutional dialogue. However, the limits of compliance show that sovereignty-based and critical perspectives remain relevant. The effectiveness of international adjudication relies heavily on judicial independence, the capacity of civil society, and state cooperation. Where these components are absent, judgments can fail to be enforced, perpetuating the weakness of IHRL. Thus, though constitutionalism is a useful prism for viewing the legal framework of IHRL, it is not a guarantee of rights protection.

In general, the discussion reveals a complex reality. The international human rights laws have expanded in line with contemporary issues to attain constitutional order. This development is, however, thwarted by frequent enforcement issues and political resistance, which do not allow it to achieve its full potential. The possibility or impossibility of attaining gains in the interpretive advances with additional compliance measures, institutional support, and political commitment will determine the future of IHRL. Only by bridging the gap between the legal and the practical that IHRL be in a position to realize its potential as a guarantee of civil rights in the twenty-first century.

6. Conclusion

It is not only such a monumental accomplishment that is characteristic of the international human rights law in the twenty-first century, but also a symptom of enduring ills. This paper concludes that rights expansion has been done in the form

of interpretive action by supranational and national courts rather than through the ratification of additional treaties. The forces that are slowly becoming important are constitutionalization and judicialization. Through these processes, international standards are codified into constitutions and protect such issues as cyberprivacy, equality, and climate justice. Such a trend can be used to explain the existence of human rights law as a living law that is evolving to meet the needs of the modern world. The historical failures of compliance are a testament to the inadequacy of legal evolution in the lack of political will and powerful institutions. Surveillance, reduction of the civic space, and non-observation of the decisions of the local courts all testify to the fact that the protection of rights is problematic, especially in the institutions of weak jurisdiction of enforcement. These findings demonstrate an irony of the international human rights law: the international human rights law has become more doctrinally refined, symbolically robust, but its impact in practice is skewed and controversial. The next step in the development of the international human rights law is the elimination of the gap between norm-application and norm-making. The steps required are the strengthening of judicial independence, the establishment of supranational bodies, and the establishment of the actual involvement of civil society as a prerequisite. Without taking them, advancement in doctrine can be no more than theoretical. With their help, the international human rights law can remain a source of international justice and a guarantee of civil liberties in the twenty-first century.

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