Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Lisa Reinsberg and I am the executive director of the International Justice Resource Center. At the end of my 15 minutes, I’d like each of you to take away three things: first, at least one additional source for researching international human rights law; second, a new tip or trick for successful database searches; and, third, a standing invitation to you and your staff to seek assistance from my organization in finding or analyzing international human rights standards. IJRC is dedicated to facilitating access to human rights protections, and this includes supporting the very important work of your institutions.

Because there is no centralized database of human rights law, researching jurisprudence and treaty law in this field requires creativity and, oftentimes, using more than one database. And, because the universities and organizations that maintain these databases have limited resources and do not charge a fee, each website or database tends to have its own limitations or gaps. For your future reference, the IJRC website contains a list of research aids that includes most of the resources I will go over.

We’ll start by looking at the standards and case law of the regional and universal human rights systems. If there is time and interest, I can also cover country-level resources.

**Treaty Texts and Ratifications**

In identifying primary sources of law and soft law, there is no one database, but there are several very good databases organized by type of document.

For treaty texts and ratifications of the core human rights instruments, the simplest method of access is through the OHCHR website and the new pages on ratification.

Click on “underlying data” for a spreadsheet with the up-to-date ratifications, including whether the State has accepted the complaints procedure.

For other UN human rights treaties, see the UN Treaty Collection chapter on human rights.

From the UN Treaty Series Online Collection Popular Name Search tab, you can directly access the text of the major regional human rights instruments, as well, by their popular names. Or use the “Title Search” tab to search for any universal or regional human rights treaty by title.

The University of Minnesota has also collected nearly all human rights related treaties in one place in its Human Rights Library.

Each regional human rights body also makes its instruments available on its website. These pages will also include declarations of principles and similar standards, as well as the rules of procedure and statutes for each body.

**Resolutions & Declarations**

To find resolutions from various UN bodies –including the General Assembly and Human Rights Council - use the Charter Body search. You can search by subject, country or other factors.

With UN documents, unfortunately, you may find that some links no longer work. But, if you know the document number, you can often find it again by typing in [www.undocs.org](http://www.undocs.org) followed by the symbol – such as www.undocs.org/A/HRC/27/L.1

On the websites of the Organization of American States and the African Union, you can navigate to chronological lists of resolutions, but they do not have useful search functions. The Council of Europe lists resolutions and recommendations by issue area or you can see all the texts adopted by the Committee of Ministers on its website.

**Jurisprudence**

Judicial and quasi-judicial decisions, as well as advisory opinions, are arguably the most important sources for your purposes, in understanding the status of international human rights law on particular topics and how your own and other institutions have interpreted specific protections.

First, we’ll look at databases of judgments and decisions on complaints. Then, we’ll turn to advisory opinions and other interpretations.

Again, there is no one database for human rights jurisprudence. But, by running searches on three different databases, you can cover all the human rights bodies. You will want to double check, though, that you are capturing the most recent decisions.

For UN treaty body decisions on individual complaints, you can use the Treaty bodies search and filter by jurisprudence. The OHCHR Jurisprudence database is even easier to use, though, and can filter searches by keyword, body, treaty article number, and issue. However, it only contains the decisions of five treaty bodies out of the nine that accept individual complaints: the Human Rights Committee, CAT, CEDAW, CERD, and CRC. And, note that if you use punctuation in your search, you will get this error message.

Separately, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has created a website to share its decisions. However, it is currently empty and the decisions can instead be accessed through the Working Group’s webpage by selecting the “Documents” link.

To search various regional human rights bodies decisions at once, as well as the international criminal tribunals and sub-regional courts, use World Courts. This database includes both admissibility and merits decisions from the Inter-American and African human rights bodies and is complete through approximately August 2014. For the international criminal tribunals and hybrid courts, WorldCourts may be more recently updated and includes interim orders as well as judgments.

Use the index page to see a list of decisions from each body. This is useful, for example, in determining how up-to-date each section is.

If you are only looking for one court or commission’s jurisprudence, there are also more up-to-date options for searching the decisions of specific bodies or regions. Each body also makes its decisions available on its own website, but they are often not searchable.

Spanish speakers search the Inter-American Court’s judgments using the “Search BJDH” option from the Court’s website or access it directly at at BJDH.org.

The new database at Loyola Law School contains the judgments of the Inter-American Court, along with summaries.

If you are looking for caselaw that may be related to the rights of a particular group, visit the webpages of the Commission’s rapporteurships, which each list the decisions and judgments relevant to their mandates.

The African Human Rights Case Law Analyzer allows you to search the decisions of the African Commission, Court, and Child’s Rights Committee, as well as sub-regional bodies.

The European Court of Human Rights’ database is excellent and allows you to search using many different criteria. I also recommend the Court’s factsheets, which summarize leading cases - including pending cases - on dozens of different rights topics. Similarly, the Court’s case-law guides, case-law research reports, and its handbooks also summarize its jurisprudence on particular topics.

The European Committee of Social Rights does not have a searchable caselaw database, but does make its decisions available on its website. It has produced a caselaw digest, in 2008, that summarizes its interpretations up to that point.

Several additional databases house judgments from national and international courts on specific issue areas. The ESCR-Net Caselaw Database contains decisions related to economic, social and cultural rights. The Global Health and Human Rights Database, Human Trafficking Case Law Database of UNODC (which includes cases from CEDAW Committee and ECtHR), and Global Freedom of Expression database (which includes regional and UN bodies) are similar.

So, if you are looking for case law from all of the human rights bodies, you can use the OHCHR Treaty Body database, World Courts, and the European Court’s HUDOC database to cover all your bases. Then, once you’ve found the relevant decisions, go to the specific body’s websites to double check that there are not more recent cases citing or modifying the decisions you have found.

**Other Interpretation of Human Rights Standards**

For general interpretations of treaty provisions, look to general comments and advisory opinions. The UN Treaty bodies’ general comments are listed on the OHCHR website and can be searched through the treaty body database.

Advisory opinions are available on the websites of the various bodies, and some are searchable on WorldCourts.

The International Law Commission, which is charged with producing legal analysis and recommendations for the possible preparation of treaties. Its work is useful in gaining insight into particular questions of international law, and identifying the emergence of customary norms or, at least, some consensus regarding principles of international law.

Similarly, thematic reports of the IACHR and publications by the European Court and Council of Europe outline these bodies’ reasoning in particular issue areas.

**Observations on State Implementation**

There are, of course, multiple sources for analysis and conclusions regarding States’ fulfillment of their human rights obligations. These include the outcome documents of the Universal Periodic Review, concluding observations from UN treaty bodies, the African Commission on Human & Peoples’ Rights and the European Committee of Social Rights, and the thematic reports of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the European Commissioner for Human Rights. Again, there is no one database that contains them all.

However, the Universal Human Rights Index does allow you to search all documents from the UPR, treaty bodies, and UN special procedures by keyword, country, affected group and other indicators. These are important sources for information both on human rights conditions in specific countries and on how States’ policies and practices compare to international standards.

If you are only looking for treaty body documents, you can use the OHCHR treaty body database.

At the regional level, both the African Commission and Arab Human Rights Committee review States reports on implementation of regional human rights instruments.

The League of Arab States’ English version website is not working, but you can navigate the Arabic site, including by using the automatic translation by Google if you use the Chrome web browser. This will allow you to access the Arabic versions of the State reports and concluding observations.

The African Commission publishes the State reports and its concluding observations on its website, although many of these documents are years out of date.

As you may know, the European Committee of Social Rights’ State reporting procedure is more complex than others and is organized articles of the Social Charter, meaning that States report only on certain articles each time they submit a report. You can look up the reports and conclusions by State or by year.

And, the Inter-American Commission reports on significant concerns in State policies and practices in its annual reports.

**National Legislation & Jurisprudnce**

As a starting point for national legislation and case law, I recommend the Yale Law Library’s country-specific foreign law research guides, which link to a number of other sources. These include the GlobaLex site, which offers comparative and foreign law research **guides** with explanations of more than 150 countries’ governmental structures and sources of law, including links. Lexadin provides similar information, as does the Legal Information Institute at Cornell University. These databases do not include jurisprudence.

LegislationOnline includes legislation, treaty law, and case law – as well as commentary – on human rights and related topics for the countries of the OSCE countries of Europe, Central Asia, and North America.

For former Commonwealth countries, the Pacific, the United States, and the United Kingdom, use the World Legal Information Institute (WorldLII) databases. For example, the CommonLII database allows you to search for legislation, jurisprudence and journal articles by keyword. These databases are kept up-to-date.

There are then a number of sources for specific regions, like the African Law Library and the European Court of Justice’s caselaw database.

**And, finally**, I would like to again offer the assistance of the International Justice Resource Center for any research questions or problems you may run into. We can confidentially and quickly help you to find what you are looking for. And, if anyone would like a copy of my presentation, I would be happy to provide it. Thank you.