

The Community of Portuguese Language Countries and Human Rights

João Casqueira Cardoso

Introduction

The Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP in Portuguese) is a relatively new intergovernmental organization. It emerged after a process that started in the early 1980s, but actually turned into a reality in the second half of the 1990.

The paper is divided into four parts: first, it looks at the historical background and contextualization of this international organization, and its initial scope, specifically but not only in the area of human rights (1). Second, the article turns to the progressive attention given by the CPLP to the human rights issues, through an analysis of its institutional framework and the way it that has contributed – or not – to increase its action in this area (2). Third, the analysis underlines the possible strategy that the CPLP developed, especially after July 2013, concentrating in the area of human rights, and the way this development has been challenged by international politics (3). Finally, a close look is dedicated to the challenges that the CPLP faces in the area of human rights today: the first is the question of new member states, and in particular the enlargement to Equatorial Guinea; the second is the tension among the member states of the CPLP, namely on human rights questions; finally, a more structural challenge is the question of education, as a mainstream human rights issue, and an example *in concreto* of how the CPLP is moving forward – or backwards – on the question of human rights – in the case of this organization with a vocation to promote culture (4).

As the reader will understand, there are more questions than answers in this analysis, in part as a result of the uncertainties that are still hampering the development of the CPLP in several areas of action, including on human rights issues.

Historical background

The original intent

In 1983, during an official visit to Cape Verde, Portugal's Foreign Minister, Jaime Gama – a Portuguese political personality with an interesting background (he graduated in Philosophy) – declared: *“The most appropriate process to make consistent and decentralize the tri-continental dialogue of seven Portuguese language countries across Africa, Europe and America would be performing rotating biennial summits of Heads of State or Government, promote annual meetings of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, make frequent political consultations between policy-makers and regular meetings of representatives at the UN or other international organizations as well as proceed with the establishment of a Portuguese lan-*