

Naming and Shaming in the Human Rights Committee: Individual Petitions' Effect on Human Rights*

Rachel J. Schoner[†]

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Abstract

Can non-binding decisions by inter-governmental organizations improve respect for human rights? Much of the existing literature believes that international law has a limited effect, especially without enforcement mechanisms, in the countries where it's needed the most. Focused on repressive regimes, this paper analyzes petitions filed by victims of human rights abuse in the United Nations Human Rights Committee, the overseeing body of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. As a form of naming and shaming, I theorize that Committee violation rulings may improve human rights when paired with civil society organizations that publicize the rulings. I use a multi-methods approach including quantitative analysis of physical integrity rights and case studies focused on specific policies under contestation in the Committee. Leveraging an original dataset, I find that governments improve respect for the most severe abuses involving bodily harm immediately after violation rulings. These short-lived effects are driven by petitions where civil society actors are listed as representation.

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[†]Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Niehaus Center for Globalization and Governance, Princeton University. rjschoner@princeton.edu

1 Introduction

Can non-binding decisions by inter-governmental organizations, without enforcement mechanisms, affect respect for human rights? Scholars have long been skeptical of international organizations' ability to effectively change state behavior without enforcement.¹ Specifically, many doubt the international human rights regime's ability to hold states accountable and improve human rights because of the lack of enforcement (see: Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui 2007; Hafner-Burton 2005; Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui 2005; Hathaway 2002) although this has garnered increased push-back with theoretical and empirical support (see: von Stein 2015; Simmons 2009; Neumayer 2005). Nonetheless, some of these international institutions seem to matter (see: DeMeritt and Conrad 2019; Vadlamannati, Janz and Berntsen 2018; von Stein 2005). I argue international organizations that publicize noncompliance without enforcement power can be effective when this information is effectively disseminated to global audiences and when governments are concerned about their reputation.

United Nations treaty body decisions are best conceptualized as a form of naming and shaming. Committee violation rulings on individual petitions can be an effective form of naming and shaming because of two key elements: (1) personal framing and (2) third-party legitimacy. Petitions detail specific, personal instances of abuse which serve as convincing and relatable narratives. Second, Committee bodies' more objective nature lends legitimacy and credibility to civil society's constant naming and shaming. Civil society actors play a crucial role in filing petitions—finding and assisting victims, lowering their costs of participation (Schoner 2022a). They continue by publicizing Committee rulings. Therefore, I expect Committee violation rulings to improve respect for rights under contestation when civil society actors are involved. Not all states are equally concerned with their reputation, so I argue these rulings affect only those which are economically dependent on Western, liberal

¹ The enforcement approach is rooted in political economy and how actors can overcome the collective action problem (see: Tallberg 2002; Downs, Rocke and Barsom 1996; Axelrod and Keohane 1985). The World Trade Organization's dispute resolution mechanism, for example, has been lauded as an example of increased enforcement increasing compliance.

democracies.

I focus on a subset of countries, repressive regimes, who routinely violate the treaty provisions. These countries' high degree of noncompliance makes them the main targets of this institution. Naming and shaming dynamics operate differently in these more repressive countries, and I am interested in changes in repression among these regimes. In countries that have high respect for human rights, domestic actors (including coalitions of non-governmental organizations) are most likely to pressure the government to remedy these issues. In repressive countries, pressure is likely to come from both domestic and international actors. Additionally, prior findings are largely driven by countries with high respect for human rights, overlooking the dynamics among repressive countries. Therefore, I exclude countries with high respect for physical integrity rights (those focused on protecting bodily autonomy) at the time of ratifying the ICCPR's Optional Protocol, which allows for individual petitions.

This paper uses a multi-method approach to analyze the UN Human Rights Committee (HRC), the overseeing body of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Using original data on individual petitions in the HRC, I disaggregate human rights into specific rights under contestation. The quantitative analysis focuses on physical integrity rights broadly, and case studies, including interviews with civil society actors, examine specific government policies. I find that violation rulings are associated with improved respect for human rights although this correlation is short-lived. The results are driven by petitions with third-party legal representation, highlighting the importance of civil society actors. Moreover, the empirical analysis suggests the importance of reputational concerns based on relevant audiences, specifically the European Union and the United States.

This work combines the literatures on (1) international organization compliance and (2) non-governmental organization naming and shaming. I show that quasi-judicial institutions, those unable to enforce legally-binding decisions, can nonetheless affect state behavior. Repressive regimes selectively allow this additional monitoring when they perceive the ability

to avoid the costs (Schoner 2022*b*), and individual victims face high costs of participation (Schoner 2022*a*). While some governments ignore these petitions, the findings here suggest that this costly participation can be effective. Importantly, victims of abuse and civil society can interact within inter-governmental organizations to affect state behavior.

Scholarly work on naming and shaming, largely by non-governmental organizations, provides insight into this question of compliance. Scholars debate the effectiveness of naming and shaming as some find positive effects (DeMeritt 2012; Krain 2012), negative effects (DeMeritt 2012; Hafner-Burton 2008), or state scope conditions (Hendrix and Wong 2013; Murdie and Davis 2012; Wright and Escribà-Folch 2009). I discuss how United Nations treaty bodies possess unique characteristics, combining elements traditionally common to inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations. This paper highlights the importance of understanding the core characteristics of institutions, especially pathways for outside actors to participate; compliance is dependent on institutional design and particularly non-state actor access.

2 UN Treaty Bodies

Committee bodies monitor the implementation of United Nations human rights treaties. Committees have two main tasks: reviewing (1) states' regular self-reports and (2) individual petitions (also referred to as communications or complaints).² The former is the main, time-intensive role of the Committees, examining periodic reports, addressing concerns, and making recommendations to states in the form of "concluding observations." Additionally, all core UN human rights treaties have an individual petition mechanism.³

Governments allow individual petitions to each treaty on a state-by-state basis. For the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, states ratify its First Optional Protocol

² Committees are also able to consider inter-state complaints. There have been none filed in the Human Rights Committee. In 2018, three inter-state complaints were submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, the first such communications across all treaties.

³ The individual petition mechanism for one of these bodies, the Committee on Migrant Workers, has not yet entered into force. It will become operative when ten countries make the necessary declaration; currently, only five countries have declared this authorization.

to allow victims to submit complaints to the overseeing Human Rights Committee. After a state ratifies the Optional Protocol, any individual can file a complaint alleging that the government has violated a treaty provision. As is common in international law, complaints must be focused on violations *after* ratification. Victims themselves must be involved in the process, submitting the complaint unless there is reasonable justification: the main victim is missing, detained, dead, or they have given explicit permission with reasoning for another to file on their behalf. Civil society actors are often involved, listed as legal representation on the submission.⁴

This paper focuses on the Human Rights Committee, but the theory applies to all UN monitoring bodies. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights is one of the broadest treaties, covering a range of rights, including freedom from torture, the right to a fair trial, the right to family, and freedom from discrimination. Almost all countries (173) have ratified the ICCPR, and more governments allow complaints in the HRC than any other treaty body. Since the ICCPR and its First Optional Protocol were open for ratification in 1966, over three thousand petitions have been filed, the most of all treaties.

Before discussing what effect these petitions and Committee violation rulings may have on state repression, we must understand selection: (1) when and why do governments allow this additional oversight, inviting this criticism, and (2) when and why do victims of human rights abuse file petitions? Schoner (2022*b*) analyzes why repressive regimes allow human rights petitions, drawing attention to their blatant violations of treaty provisions. Schoner argues that repressive regimes face international incentives to signal their human rights commitment to the European Union, a global power with a strong and continued interest in the global human rights regime. These governments, however, only ratify agreements when they perceive low domestic costs with little institutional constraints on the executive. Empirically, she finds that repressive regimes are more likely to ratify the ICCPR-OP allowing individual petitions when they are trade dependent on the EU while facing lesser

⁴ See Appendix sections on HRC membership and the process of filing petitions for more information.

institutional constraints, both legislative and judicial.

Once these repressive regimes selectively allow petitions, why do individual victims file human rights petitions in international law against repressive regimes? Schoner (2022*a*) details the high costs of participation victims face, including retaliation from the government. If mistreated, political individuals and civil society organizations file petitions as part of their broader mobilization efforts to improve human rights. This paper continues analyzing petitions filed in the Human Rights Committee, testing for any effect of these mobilization efforts. Civil society plays a crucial role in subsidizing the costs of individual participation, both information costs and the fear of retaliation, and their involvement does not stop at filing. I argue that civil society organizations continue to publicize these petitions and subsequent violation rulings, using the HRC to add legitimacy and credibility to their naming and shaming.

3 Committee Violations as Naming and Shaming

Here, I discuss the Human Rights Committee as a forum for naming and shaming, situating this paper within the broader literature and detailing the unique aspects of individual petitions. Similar to regional human rights courts, the Committee (in part) focuses on individual cases rather than more aggregate government behavior. Unlike courts, quasi-judicial Committee bodies lack any enforcement and do not produce legally binding decisions. Therefore, any effect of these rulings would not be directly through legal channels. I expand on the large naming and shaming literature focused on both inter-governmental and non-governmental actors and discuss how this institution is unique.

Scholars first focused on naming and shaming by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), finding mixed effects. Hafner-Burton (2008) states, “The evidence shows that naming and shaming is not all cheap talk,” (690) but it can improve, worsen, or have no effect on government abuses. Increasingly, scholars have broadened the view of naming and shaming to include not just human rights advocacy organizations (Park, Murdie and

Davis 2021; Hendrix and Wong 2013; Meernik et al. 2012; Murdie and Davis 2012) but also inter-governmental organizations including UN treaty bodies (Kahn-Nisser 2019, focused on concluding observations country reports), the Universal Periodic Review (Terman and Voeten 2018), the International Labor Organization (Koliev and Lebovic 2018), and the UN Human Rights Council/Commission (Vadlamannati, Janz and Berntsen 2018; Ausderan 2014; DeMeritt 2012; Lebovic and Voeten 2009, 2006). Some scholars argue any effects of naming and shaming are conditional on domestic politics, including regime type (Hendrix and Wong 2013) and type of dictatorship (Wright and Escribà-Folch 2009).

Committee rulings on individual petitions are unique among these organizations, combining elements found in both inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations. Three main factors differentiate these rulings:

1. States voluntarily delegate this authority (not universal jurisdiction).
2. Individuals initiate this process in inter-governmental organizations (rather than state-to-state or NGO shaming of states).
3. The content is focused on individuals and specific instances of violations rather than aggregate behavior.

As with all forms of naming and shaming, Committee rulings reveal information, publicizing poor behavior by governments for failing to respect human rights. This information can then be used by “stakeholders and broader civil society to reveal and criticize discrepancies between the conduct of governments and their projected self-images” (von Staden 2018, 350). I argue there are two key components to human rights petitions and subsequent violation rulings: (1) petitions serve as an effective personal frame, focusing on specific victims of abuse, and (2) the Committee serves as a third party, international actor and provides legitimacy to civil society calls for change.

4 Theory

How do petitions filed in the Human Rights Committee affect respect for human rights? Committee violation rulings increase the international salience of abuses, and this increased

salience leads to pressure on repressive governments. Violation rulings are particularly salient because of their (1) personal frame and (2) increased legitimacy from a (relatively) objective international institution. This increased salience can pressure some governments to improve respect for human rights when civil society actors publicize these rulings and when governments are concerned about their international reputation. Specifically, I argue economic dependence on Western, liberal democracies increases pressure on governments to improve respect for human rights. I discuss how this effect is likely short-lived and the possibility of strategic substitution.

It is important to consider the selection into this stage, detailed earlier, where there is the potential for retaliation for filing complaints. Although retaliation does occur, this grounded fear is most important and effective as a deterrent for victims filing, without actual repression (Schoner 2022a). There is an inherent tension here, analyzing the effect of these petitions and Committee rulings on respect for human rights: they may be an increase in repression after filing (targeted, personal retaliation) compared to a decrease associated with naming and shaming, which I theorize below. I argue that improvement in respect for human rights is most likely not after *filing* a petition (although this is a possibility I test for) but after *violation rulings*. Committee Views are, on average, published four years after the communication is submitted (with large variation). Any targeted retaliation is likely to occur in this period and thus should not greatly affect the theoretical or empirical analysis of violation rulings. Further, any targeted retaliation is small and rather unlikely to be picked up in aggregate measures.

This leads to the question of the conceptualization of respect for human rights and compliance. The current theory and empirical analysis are focused on broad respect for human rights. I consider compliance with treaty provisions at large rather than individualized, targeted remedies. Targeted remedies are important to study as well but are more limited in scope (which has current data limitations to be discussed in the research design). Future steps in this research agenda will expand to consider both broader and targeted compliance.

Governments strategically substitute repressive tactics (Dragu and Lupu 2021; DeMeritt and Conrad 2019; Payne and Abouharb 2016; Lupu 2013), so analyzing only targeted remedies may miss an important component.

4.1 Personal Frames

Research across fields shows that “personal narratives appear to be the most consistently successful, increasing individuals’ knowledge on the issue, their emotional reaction to the issue, and as a consequence, leading them to reject the practice and participate in a campaign to remand its cessation” (McEntire, Leiby and Krain 2015, 421).⁵ Human rights groups regularly focus on narratives and storytelling, carefully crafting the most compelling narratives for their advocacy campaigns. Open Global Rights published an article on “Be the narrative: How embracing new narratives can revolutionize what it means to do human rights.”⁶ Similarly, Human Rights Funders Network discusses storytelling and how “Stories Help Human Rights.”⁷ Large, well-known, international IGOs like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch regularly publicize individual victims of human rights abuse in their campaigns. Amnesty International publishes lists of political prisoners and has successfully launched writing campaigns to free imprisoned persons.

Schaffer and Smith (2004) detail the history and usage of narratives in human rights advocacy, including the importance of trauma, traumatic remembering, and the Holocaust. Discussing the commodification of narratives of suffering on the global market, they discuss the commodification of narratives of suffering on the global market, where “publishers and media conglomerates recognize that stories of suffering and survival sell to readers” (12). Human rights advocacy groups strategically use this powerful device: “In the midst of the transits that take stories of local struggle to readerships around the world, NGOs and activists enlist stories from victims as a way of alerting a broader public to situations of human

⁵ See also McEntire, Leiby and Krain (2017); Small, Loewenstein and Slovic (2007).

⁶ Gomez, Krizna and Thomas Coombes. “Be the Narrative: How Embracing new narratives can revolutionize what it means to do human rights.” Webpage

⁷ 07 November 2013. In Focus: Storytelling and Social Change: How Stories Help Advance Human Rights. Webpage

rights violations. They also solicit and package stories to attract readerships” (14). These narratives sometimes serve as “lightning rods in rights campaigns” (16) with the potential for great efficacy.⁸

4.2 Third-Party Legitimacy

I argue that the involvement of a UN treaty body provides third-party legitimacy to civil society’s calls for naming and shaming. There is no shortage of scholarly work on the legitimacy of international institutions, including these treaty bodies. In addition to theoretical discussions of legitimacy challenges to international institutions (Ulfstein 2018; Alter and Helfer 2013; Carrubba and Gabel 2013; Danner 2003), recent work has increasingly focused on elite and public opinion (Dellmuth et al. 2021; Chapman and Chaudoin 2020). Here, I do not argue about the legitimacy of the UN human rights bodies (see Ulfstein 2018, for discussion of the variety of legitimacy challenges the HRC and other Committees face).⁹ I use a popular definition of legitimacy to be synonymous with validity, presented with justification, rather than a more common political science definition of the belief that authority is appropriately exercised within established institutional arrangements (Kentikelenis and Voeten 2021; Tallberg and Zürn 2019). Instead, I argue that the Committee bodies are seen as *more* objective and credible than victims of human rights abuse or their representation. This relative objectivity provides legitimacy, *i.e.* Committee rulings provide evidence and justification to civil society’s calls for change. The relevant comparison here is the calls for change by the victim(s) and any third-party representation *without* any Committee ruling.

The involvement of a non-aggrieved actor helps validate claims of wrongdoing and calls for change. It is important to distinguish between the violations themselves and these Committee rulings, as Park, Murdie and Davis (2021) detail shame in international politics: “It is the public condemnation of human rights violations, rather than the violations themselves, that matter for third-party actions” (173). While civil society groups can use petitions as

⁸ I note that the author discusses limitations such as depersonalization through recontextualization.

⁹ Future research can explore the perceived legitimacy of treaty bodies, although this faces challenges because these institutions are not well-known.

a focal point for their campaigns, Committee violation rulings make these campaigns more powerful. Committee violation rulings, therefore, should have more substantial effects than petitions.

UN naming and shaming is more powerful than NGO shaming (Esarey and Demeritt 2017).¹⁰ Thus far, scholars have focused on the political nature of UN inter-governmental organizations such as the UN Commission on Human Rights (Esarey and Demeritt 2017; Lebovic and Voeten 2009, 2006) and Universal Periodic Review (Terman and Byun 2022; Terman and Voeten 2018), exploring how global politics affects inter-governmental naming and shaming and the effects this may have on state behaviors, especially aid flows. Here, I shift the focus to a less politicized IGO, UN treaty bodies, and argue that their more objective nature lends credibility and legitimacy to NGO naming and shaming. The Committee rules upon the evidence presented to the body of experts and produces a View, which often, but not always, condemns governments and demands change.

H1 *Violation rulings* increase respect for human rights.

4.3 Civil Society

Civil society organizations publicize the work of treaty bodies, bringing attention to states' non-compliance. Schoner (2022a) highlights the central role civil society actors play in subsidizing costs to individuals, informing them of this remedy, and protecting them from potential retaliation. Their involvement, however, does not end when the Committee produces a View. These organizations use petitions as part of their broader mobilization efforts, publicizing the petitions filed and the Committee's subsequent rulings.

Depending on the type and scale of the organization, they may post this information on their website, release reports, hold press conferences, and/or network with other organizations and activists. They release information to the media, both domestically and internationally, and offer interviews to those interested. Additionally, civil society actors

¹⁰ I note that Esarey and Demeritt (2017) analyze bilateral aid flows rather than respect for human rights.

send this information to other actors, including other IGOs, powerful states and organizations such as the United States and the European Union, and larger, more well-known organizations such as Amnesty International. For example, the Collectif des Familles de Disparus en Algérie (CFDA) is an NGO focused on achieving truth and justice for the families of the disappeared.¹¹ The CFDA has filed 15 communications in the Human Rights Committee concerning the enforced disappearances committed in the 1990s. In addition to their international legal filings, they advocate in a variety of domestic and global institutions. The CFDA regularly advocates in the European Parliament, European Council, and the European Commission as well as UN bodies in Geneva. Additionally, they attend the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights and events such as the World Social Forum.¹²

H2 Violation rulings increase respect for human rights with *involvement of civil society actors*.

4.4 Reputational Concerns

Naming and shaming relies on an audience; external actors must care about the norm violations. Further, naming and shaming is effective only when actors care about their reputation, i.e. what these external actors think (Park, Murdie and Davis 2021; Allendoerfer, Murdie and Welch 2020; Squatrito, Lundgren and Sommerer 2019). Committee violation rulings increase reputational costs to governments for continuing to violate human rights. Krain (2012) discusses how naming and shaming the most severe human rights abuses can effectively pressure for change:

Naming and shaming should force perpetrators to reduce the severity of these ongoing atrocities [genocide or politicide] in order to shift the spotlight, save their reputation, reframe their identity, maintain international legitimacy and domestic viability, and ease the pressure placed on them by states or IOs.

¹¹ There were widespread enforced disappearances in the 1990s in Algeria. CFDA was created in 1999 and has continued its advocacy through today.

¹² Collectif des Familles de Disparus en Algérie: Plaidoyer (*Advocacy*) Webpage

Thus far, I have discussed the pressure civil society places on the government to change behavior. Here, I shift to discuss the government as a strategic actor. How do human rights petitions and subsequent Committee violation rulings affect the government's repression calculus? I consider the costliness of this form of naming and shaming for repressive regimes and discuss how states respond to improve their reputation, maintain domestic power by reducing domestic challenges, and redirect focus.

This pressure may cause some states to alter behavior out of shame rather than longer-term norm adoption (Risse, Ropp and Sikkink 2013). Petitions bring negative attention governments would rather avoid, all else equal. Reputational costs increase with media coverage and both international and domestic pressure, highlighting the importance of organizations with resources for a broader publicity effort. Different states may be more responsive than others, dependent on democratic institutions or reliance on foreign actors. Petition violation rulings, with their effective personal frame and increased credibility, are fuel for domestic actors to use in challenging the regime and can be used to question the legitimacy of the government. Governments are threatened when powerful domestic actors use effective ways to mobilize their base and potentially attract new supporters. Additionally, international actors may pressure the regime to improve respect for human rights.

Petitions, with their increased efficacy detailed above due to their personalized nature, and subsequent violation rulings, with legitimacy from the Committee, are fuel for domestic actors to use in challenging the regime. Governments are threatened when powerful domestic actors use effective ways to mobilize their base and potentially attract new supporters. Additionally, international actors may pressure the regime to improve respect for human rights after widespread publicity. Different states may be more responsive to either domestic or foreign actors, dependent in part on democratic institutions and economic structure.

I argue that economic dependence is one important pathway demonstrating the importance of reputation. Schoner (2022*b*) shows that trade dependence on the European Union incentivizes repressive regimes to ratify the ICCPR-OP allowing individual petitions.

I extend this theory and argue that repressive regimes that are economically dependent on Western, liberal countries are more likely to alter their behavior and improve respect for human rights. Not all governments are concerned about their reputation for respecting human rights, but Western powers make human rights (alongside democracy and good governance) core components of their foreign policy. Schoner (2022*b*) focuses only on economic ties with the European Union because of the United States’ skepticism of the global human rights regime, particularly institutions with high legalization. Committee violation rulings, however, are a form of naming and shaming that both the EU and US are likely to be concerned with. Therefore, I hypothesize that HRC violation rulings will improve respect for human rights in countries that are economically dependent on either the US or EU, the two major powers of which I refer to collectively as “Western, liberal states.”

H3 Violation rulings increase respect for human rights when *countries are economically dependent on Western, liberal states.*

The state has options in considering how to save its reputation, deter domestic challenges, and minimize foreign disapproval. The government can respond to the Committee violation in many ways, addressing: (1) the specific individual’s situation and providing a personal remedy, (2) the specific policies under contestation, and (3) the rights under contestation more broadly, with or without altering the relevant policies. For example, if an individual files a complaint against a government alleging torture, the government can respond by (1) remedying the individual’s situation, (2) changing the torture policy, improving torture practices for the foreseeable future, or (3) improving respect for physical integrity rights, including torture and/or killings, or other political or civil liberties. Governments strategically substitute repressive tactics (Dragu and Lupu 2021; DeMeritt and Conrad 2019; Payne and Abouharb 2016; Lupu 2013; Hafner-Burton 2008), so if a policy under contestation is considered too costly to change, the regime may decide to improve respect for human rights to improve their reputation while limiting costs. Acknowledging

the possibility of substitution, as a first analysis, I consider broader, more aggregate respect for rights under contestation (and consider personal remedies in future work).

To summarize, the theory presents the following **hypotheses**:

H1 *Violation rulings* increase respect for human rights.

H2 Violation rulings increase respect for human rights with *involvement of civil society actors*.

H3 Violation rulings increase respect for human rights when *countries are economically dependent on Western, liberal states*.

5 Research Design

Following (Schoner 2022b, a), I focus on a subset of the human rights detailed in the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights: physical integrity rights.¹³ I begin by defining the repressive sample, measured by respect for physical integrity rights at the time of Optional Protocol ratification. Leveraging original data on petitions in the HRC detailing the nature of the alleged violations, relevant dates, and Committee decisions, I present a multi-method research design. First, I analyze physical integrity rights in a cross-national quantitative analysis. I pair this statistical analysis with qualitative plausibility probes in Algeria and Belarus. Finally, I discuss alternative explanations and analyze naming and shaming by other actors.

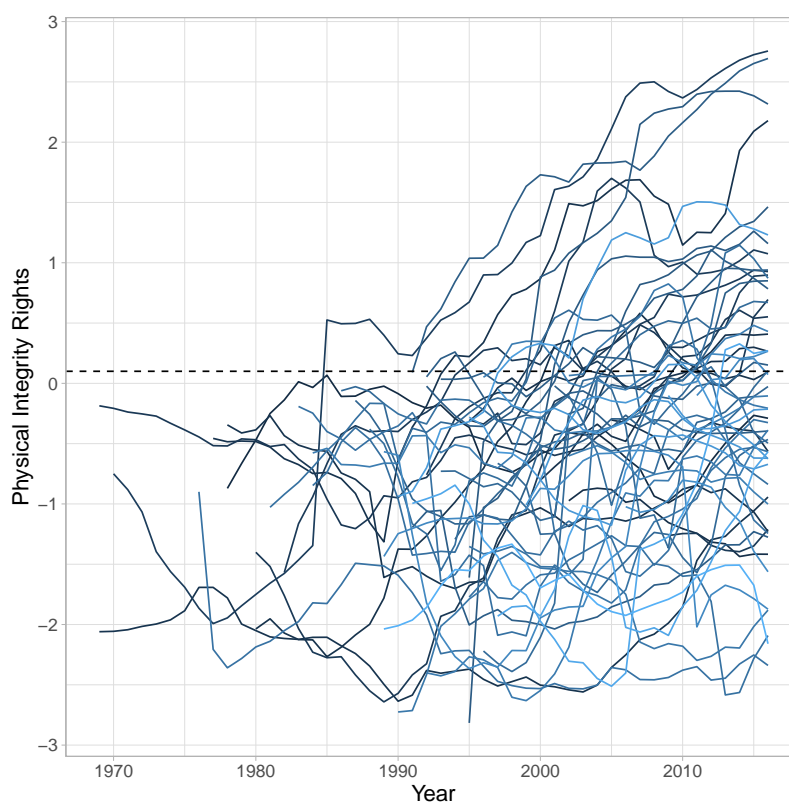
5.1 Repressive Sample

I measure repression at the time of Optional Protocol ratification using a latent measure of respect for physical integrity rights from Fariss (2014); Schnakenberg and Fariss (2014), where higher values indicate greater respect. Countries enter the sample at the time of OP ratification, if they have a value below 0.1, continuing prior analysis of repressive

¹³ In future research, I plan to broaden this to include other freedoms and liberties.

countries’ decision to ratify the Optional Protocol (Schoner 2022*b*) and victims’ decisions to file petitions (Schoner 2022*a*). I use 0.1 as a threshold for repression; states with a latent measure below 0.1 are considered “repressive.” Because this is an arbitrary threshold, previous work explores the minimal changes to the sample and robustness of initial results with threshold adjustments. This threshold aims to capture those with low and medium respect for human rights, excluding those countries with high respect for human rights. Figure 1, where each line represents a country, shows the large heterogeneity in this sample. Many countries do greatly improve their respect for human rights over the decades after ratification. For example, South Korea meets the definition of repressive when it ratified the OP in 1990 but later democratizes and significantly improves human rights. Similarly, Uruguay, Estonia, and Croatia all contemporaneously have high respect for human rights although they were considered repressive at the time of OP ratification.¹⁴

Figure 1: Physical Integrity Rights Panel



¹⁴ Uruguay ratified the ICCPR-OP in 1970, Estonia in 1991, and Croatia in 1995.

I restrict the sample based on the dependent variable because there are heterogeneous treatment effects for states with high respect for human rights and those with low or medium respect. This paper is only focused on these low- and middle-respect countries. Moreover, current data for Committee violation rulings are only available for this sample, not the full, global sample. States drop out of the sample if and when they surpass this threshold, 0.1, for three consecutive years. Because I am interested in estimating treatment effects for low and middle respect countries, once states reach this threshold, I consider them in the “high” respect category, and they drop out of the sample. I note this removes the uncommon possibility of improving above this threshold but reverting. Thirty-one countries improve respect for human rights above 0.1 for at least one year, and 26 countries improved for at least 3 consecutive years, exiting the sample. For robustness, I present the analysis for the full sample where no countries exit, shown in Appendix Tables 6 and 7.

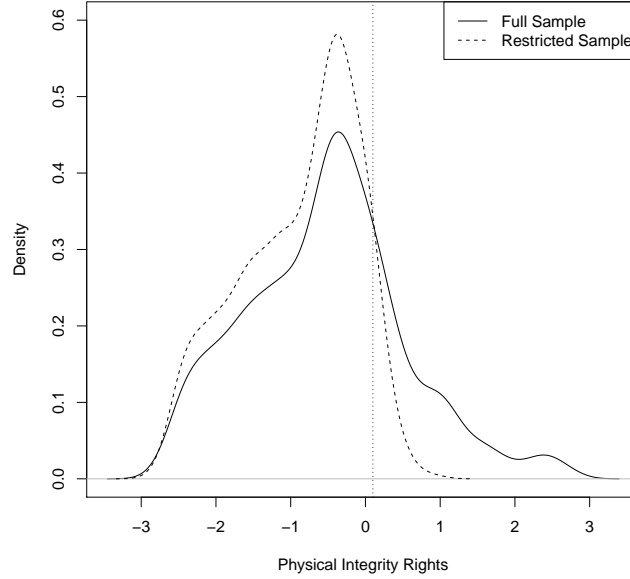
The sample includes 56 repressive countries beginning the year of their ICCPR-OP ratification, ranging from 1969 to 2011, through 2016, and the unit of analysis is country-year. I restrict the sample through 2016 to account for the average length of time (4 years) from submission to the Committee’s Adoption of Views, which is when they release the communication to the public. These data, updated in May 2021, have Committee Views through the end of 2016. Countries are in the sample for an average of 21 years.

5.2 Dependent Variable

The dependent variable of interest is respect for physical integrity rights, capturing an aggregate measure of related rights including torture, extrajudicial killings, and enforced disappearances. I use this aggregate measure given current data limitations and supplement it with qualitative work to disaggregate the rights and policies.¹⁵ Figure 2 shows the distribution of the dependent variable for both the full repressive sample and the restricted sample of interest, where countries exit after improving repressive practices. The DV ranges from -2.82 to 2.76 with a mean of -0.54 and a standard deviation of 1.07 .

¹⁵ Data under development from von Staden and Ullmann (2021) focused on specific remedies is of particular interest in future research.

Figure 2: Distribution of the Dependent Variable



5.3 Explanatory Variable

The key explanatory variable is Committee violation rulings. These come from an original dataset of 984 petitions filed against 44 repressive countries (12 have had no petitions filed against them in the Committee), introduced in Schoner (2022a). These data include details of the alleged violation, individual characteristics of the victim, third-party representation listed, Committee Views, and dates of submission and Views. This allows me to distinguish the rights under contestation for each submitted complaint. Many petitions include allegations of a variety of rights violations, and I code a petition as “physical integrity” if a physical integrity right is listed as one of the alleged violations. Table 1 shows the number of total Views from the HRC against each state, the number of violation rulings, and the number of violation rulings on physical integrity rights. The full data, without countries exiting with rights improvement, is shown in Appendix Table 4. The data are skewed, with most countries (and thus most country-years) without any petitions filed or rulings, and the statistical analysis is robust to excluding key outliers. Most petitions result

Table 1: Violations in the Human Rights Committee: Restricted Sample

Country	Views	Violation Rulings	Physical Integrity Violations
Belarus	122	104	17
Russia	64	33	19
Uruguay	49	40	34
Uzbekistan	43	36	29
Colombia	36	19	10
Algeria	27	25	24
Tajikistan	25	22	21
Democratic Republic of Congo	21	18	14
Libya	21	20	18
Sri Lanka	21	16	12
Turkmenistan	17	16	15
Philippines	17	13	10
Peru	15	14	10
Zambia	15	10	8
Cameroon	11	9	6
Kazakhstan	9	7	3
Nepal	9	9	9
Panama	8	2	0
Ecuador	5	5	4
Georgia	5	5	5
Togo	5	4	1
Venezuela	4	3	1
Chile	4	0	0
Azerbaijan	4	3	2
Equatorial Guinea	4	4	4
South Korea	4	3	0
Dominican Republic	3	3	2
Bolivia	2	2	2
Croatia	2	1	1
Bulgaria	2	0	0
Cte d'Ivoire	2	1	1
Central African Republic	2	2	1
Angola	2	2	2
South Africa	2	1	1
Turkey	2	2	0
Mexico	1	0	0
Nicaragua	1	1	1
Paraguay	1	1	0
Yugoslavia	1	1	0
Sierra Leone	1	1	0
Tunisia	1	0	0
Guatemala	0	0	0
Honduras	0	0	0
El Salvador	0	0	0
Brazil	0	0	0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0	0	0
Romania	0	0	0
Estonia	0	0	0
Niger	0	0	0
Guinea	0	0	0
Chad	0	0	0
Republic of Congo	0	0	0
Uganda	0	0	0
Somalia	0	0	0
Djibouti	0	0	0
Malawi	0	0	0

in violation rulings: 78% of all submissions result in violation rulings, and 65% of physical integrity petitions result in violation rulings.

The maximum value of PI violation rulings in a given country-year is 8: Uruguay (1981), Uruguay (1983), and Algeria (2013). I also run a model with PI petitions filed in a given year. The maximum value of PI petitions for a country-year is 10: Uruguay (1981), Algeria (2008), and Turkmenistan (2012). The first statistical model includes contemporaneous count variables, capturing a simultaneous relationship among the variables within a given year.¹⁶ It is reasonable to measure the variables in the same year given the Committee's expectation for a quick response from the State party. The end of each violation ruling ends with the following:

Bearing in mind that, by becoming a party to the Optional Protocol, the State party has recognized the competence of the Committee to determine whether there has been a violation of the Covenant... The Committee wishes to receive from the State party, within 180 days, information about the measures taken to give effect to the Committee's Views. The State party is also requested to publish the present Views to have them widely disseminated in the official languages of the State party.

The Committee meets multiple times a year, and my data include the exact date, allowing for careful qualitative analysis.

I expect any effects to be short-term because of short-lived media cycles, where the core mechanism is civil society advocacy and publicity. Media cycles, both domestic and international, move quickly and focus on the day's news and abuses. Because respect for human rights is a sticky measure, improvement may be within the same year or the following year. I do not expect this to have a long-lasting effect because short-term improvement appeases critics while minimizing costs. I include a contemporaneous measure of PI violation rulings as well as lags for one, two, and three years.

To test *Hypothesis 2* concerning civil society involvement, I include an indicator of whether each petition has listed third-party representation. I separate PI violation rulings into two separate variables: (1) the petition has listed representation and (2) the petition

¹⁶ The main results are robust to a dichotomous indicator rather than a count variable.

has no representation listed. 62% of violation rulings concern petitions with third-party involvement. Listed represented may be a human rights organization such as Track Immunity Always (TRIAL International, based in Geneva, Switzerland), World Organization Against Torture (also based in Geneva), or Kazakhstan International Bureau on Human Rights and Rule of Law. Alternatively, representation may be a single individual. This often is a staff member from such an organization (which may not be easy to determine from publicly available information), an individual lawyer, or a law firm. These lawyers generally cannot publicize the rulings like civil society organizations, but often there is an organization behind the scenes. For example, numerous lawyers including Shane H. Brady and André Carbonneau represented the many petitions filed by Jehovah’s Witnesses. All JWs filing complaints are represented by counsel, and these two lawyers (who represented the majority of submissions) are at the same Canadian law firm: W. Glen How & Associates LLP. There is surely some JW organizational power behind this, so a record of only lawyers and not organizations does not preclude the involvement of broader organizations with the ability to publicize the rulings and increase pressure on the regime.

For *Hypothesis 3*, I examine economic dependence on the European Union and the United States. Trade data (summing imports and exports) are taken from the International Monetary Fund’s Direction of Trade Statistics.¹⁷ After dividing trade by GDP, I log the ratio given the skewed distribution.¹⁸ Finally, I standardize these measures of trade dependence for a more intuitive presentation.

5.4 Quantitative Analysis

I run an OLS regression with clustered standard errors by country, a lagged dependent variable because past levels of repression significantly predict repression (Zanger 2000; Dav-

¹⁷ The European Union was not a political entity for the entire temporal sample. The IMF’s Direction of Trade Statistics covers the following countries for all periods: Austria, Belgium, Belgium-Luxembourg, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Of these European countries, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Romania are in my repressive sample. The results are robust to excluding these three countries.

¹⁸ All economic data are adjusted to constant 2012 USD.

enport 1995; Poe and Tate 1994), country fixed effects, and a linear time trend. This specification helps address heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation. The presence of civil society has been strongly linked to respect for human rights (see: Chaudhry and Heiss 2022; Wong 2012; Keck and Sikkink 1998), and this theory discusses how civil society helps publicize Committee rulings and increase pressure on repressive governments to improve repression. I include a measure of domestic civil society, which has its limitations given the importance of international actors (which is better captured in the listed representation on individual petitions). I include a measure of civil society in all models, using Varieties of Democracy’s (V-Dem) civil society index which asks, “How robust is civil society?” (Coppedge et al. 2017; Pemstein et al. 2017).¹⁹

I include controls standard in the literature: judicial independence (Staton et al. 2019; Linzer and Staton 2015), presence of war (civil or international), (logged) population, and (logged) GDP.²⁰ The Appendix presents models with year fixed effects (instead of a linear time trend) in Table 9 with similar results. I also present a first difference model where the dependent variable is the change in physical integrity rights in a given country-year, and Table 10 shows the results are robust to this alternative specification.

6 Results and Discussion

Table 2 shows the main results exploring the relationship between violation rulings and respect for physical integrity rights. As expected, a robust civil society is correlated with increased respect for human rights. In support of my theory, I find that *violation rulings* in

¹⁹ V-Dem provides the following clarification: “The sphere of civil society lies in the public space between the private sphere and the state. Here, citizens organize in groups to pursue their collective interests and ideals. We call these groups civil society organizations CSOs. CSOs include, but are by no means limited to, interest groups, labor unions, spiritual organizations if they are engaged in civic or political activities, social movements, professional associations, charities, and other non-governmental organizations. The core civil society index CCSI is designed to provide a measure of a robust civil society, understood as one that enjoys autonomy from the state and in which citizens freely and actively pursue their political and civic goals, however conceived.”

²⁰ I measure the presence of civil or international war from Gleditsch et al. (2002). I use World Bank Development Indicators for both population and GDP, logging both given their skewed distributions (World Bank 2015).

the HRC are associated with *increased* respect for these rights at standard levels of statistical significance. The contemporaneous variable has the lowest uncertainty (standard error), and this uncertainty increases with the lagged variables. This suggests that violation rulings do significantly improve respect for human rights in the short term, although the effect quickly fades. As a placebo test, I include a lead variable, testing if physical integrity violation rulings are associated with respect for human rights in the *previous* year. As expected, I find no significant effect, shown in Appendix Table 8; future violations have no significant association with respect for human rights.

Table 2: Respect for Physical Integrity Rights

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Physical Integrity Violations	0.021* (0.009)	0.016+ (0.008)	0.009 (0.011)	0.009 (0.010)	
Physical Integrity Violations _{t-1}		0.014 (0.012)	0.001 (0.015)	-0.001 (0.017)	
Physical Integrity Violations _{t-2}			0.039 (0.023)	0.036+ (0.020)	
Physical Integrity Violations _{t-3}				0.014 (0.011)	
Physical Integrity Petitions					0.006 (0.013)
Civil Society Index	0.197 (0.137)	0.198 (0.136)	0.250+ (0.132)	0.249+ (0.134)	0.194 (0.138)
Judicial Independence	-0.127 (0.231)	-0.133 (0.228)	-0.255 (0.212)	-0.316 (0.208)	-0.123 (0.233)
War	-0.229*** (0.039)	-0.229*** (0.040)	-0.211*** (0.043)	-0.209*** (0.045)	-0.230*** (0.040)
Population (ln)	-0.245 (0.149)	-0.231 (0.146)	-0.310* (0.130)	-0.328* (0.137)	-0.262+ (0.156)
GDP (ln)	0.038+ (0.021)	0.038+ (0.021)	0.054** (0.018)	0.051* (0.020)	0.037+ (0.021)
Time	0.007* (0.003)	0.007* (0.003)	0.007* (0.003)	0.007* (0.003)	0.008* (0.004)
DV _{t-1}	0.857*** (0.025)	0.857*** (0.025)	0.884*** (0.021)	0.880*** (0.025)	0.858*** (0.026)
N	992	992	939	889	992
R ²	0.944	0.944	0.949	0.950	0.944
R ² <i>adjusted</i>	0.940	0.940	0.946	0.946	0.940

All models include country fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by country.

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Only violation rulings, not filing petitions, are significantly associated with improved respect for human rights. An increase in the number of petitions filed in the HRC is *not* associated with any change in respect for PI rights. This lends support to the theoretical

importance of the Committee’s third-party legitimacy. Additionally, civil society actors likely focus their publicity efforts after the violation ruling, not at the time of submission.

The key independent variable, violation rulings, is statistically significant but substantively small. This variable does not explain a large amount of variation in the dependent variable. This is not surprising because repression is a complex political behavior with numerous input factors. However, *any* statistically significant change in respect for human rights is important. The dependent variable measures abuses including torture and extrajudicial killing, so a very small increase indicates a reduction in bodily harm and killings.

To test *Hypothesis 2*, I separate violation rulings on whether the alleged victim is represented by a third party. The results are shown in Figure 3 (with full table in Appendix Table 5). The significant relationship in the core model is driven by violation rulings that list third-party representation. Rulings without a third party listed are not significantly associated with any change in repression. This lends empirical support to the second hypothesis, highlighting the importance of civil society involvement.

Next, I interact violation rulings with a measure of domestic civil society with the marginal effects shown in Figure 12 (full results are in Appendix Table 11). The interaction is not statistically significant, and there is no meaningful relationship between PI rulings, domestic civil society, and respect for PI rights. This is not surprising because of the variety of ways civil society can become involved. These third parties need not be domestic actors and are often international organizations (as mentioned before, many of which are located in Western Europe) that would not be picked up in this measure.

Next, I explore *H3* and discuss the interaction between trade dependence and PI rulings. Figure 5 displays the marginal effects plots, and full results from the models are included in Appendix Table 11. The interaction between rulings and trade dependence is not significant. At average trade dependence, there is a significant effect of PI violations, and there is suggestive evidence that the effect increases at higher levels. Qualitative analysis helps explore this relationship further.

Figure 3: Violation Rulings by Representation

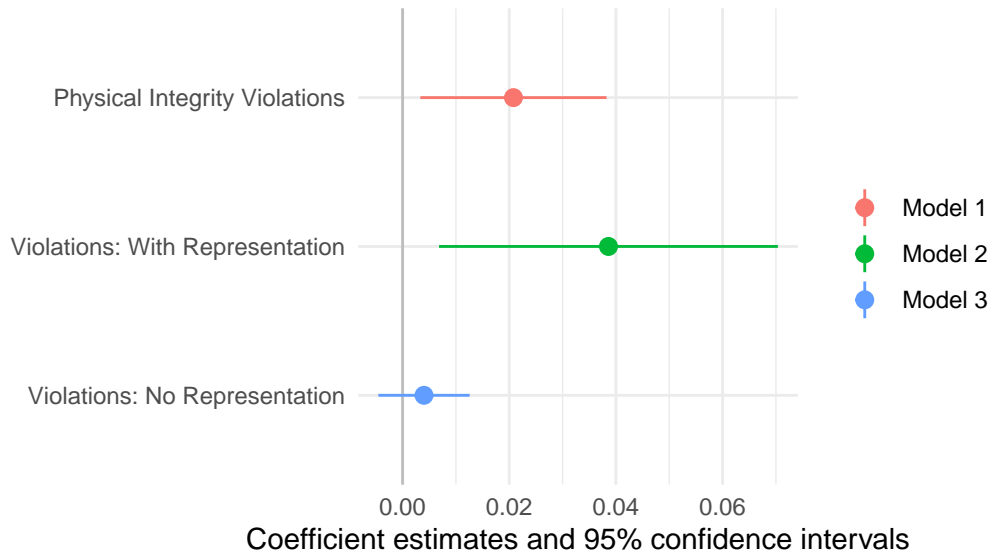


Figure 4: Violation Rulings and Civil Society

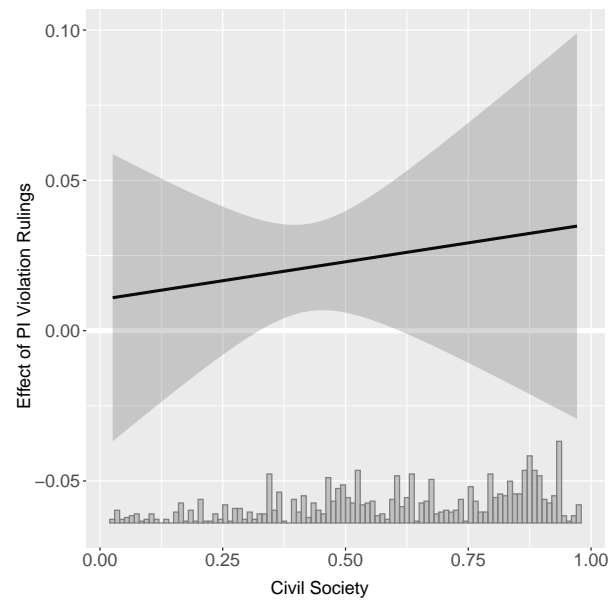
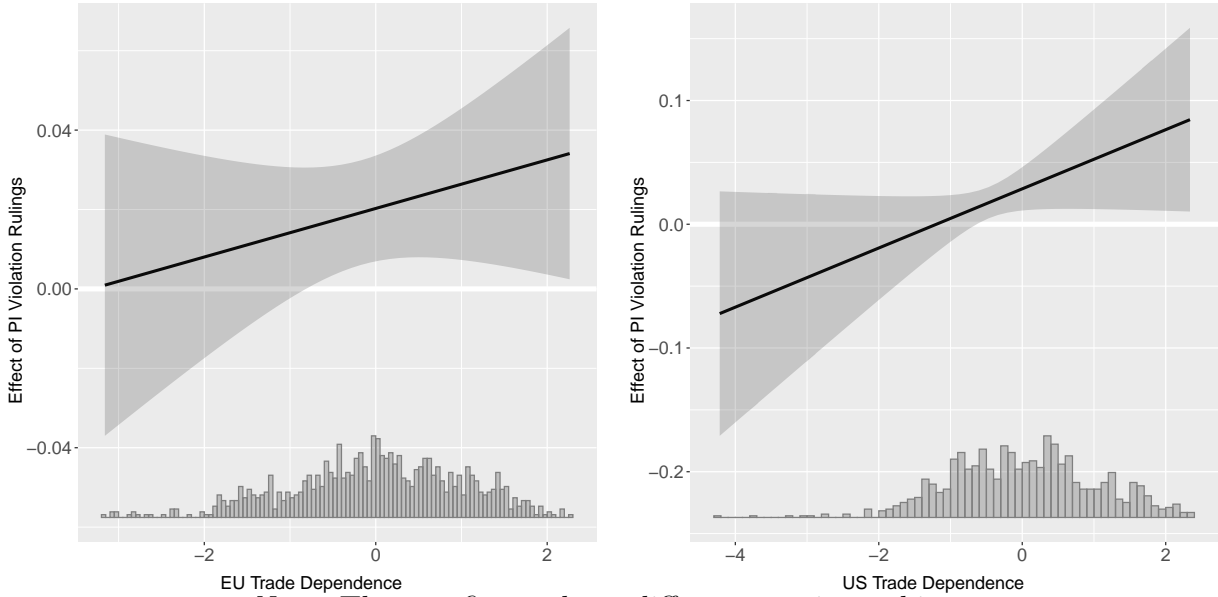


Figure 5: Trade Dependence



Note: The two figures have different y-axis markings.

6.1 Qualitative Analysis

I supplement the quantitative analysis with a qualitative analysis of two countries: Algeria and Belarus. I use these two cases as illustrative, plausibility probes, which are particularly useful in combination with statistical analysis (Levy 2008). I seek to explore the plausibility of this theoretical argument and unpack the aggregate, quantitative data. Here, I am able to explore the mechanism: Committee violation rulings, when publicized by third parties, increase negative attention to the repressive government and harm its reputation. Additionally, I disaggregate physical integrity rights and analyze the policies under contestation in the Committee.

I choose Algeria and Belarus, two countries with extreme X values that are well explained by the model (low residuals). I avoid Uruguay, another country with high X values because of data limitations due to the timing of Uruguayan filings, concentrated in the 1980s. Algeria improved respect for human rights, in line with the number of PI violation rulings, while the dependent variable for Belarus remained constant over time, despite its many violation rulings. This provides important and interesting variation on the dependent

Figure 6: Physical Integrity Rights and Committee Violation Rulings over Time

Figure 7: Algeria

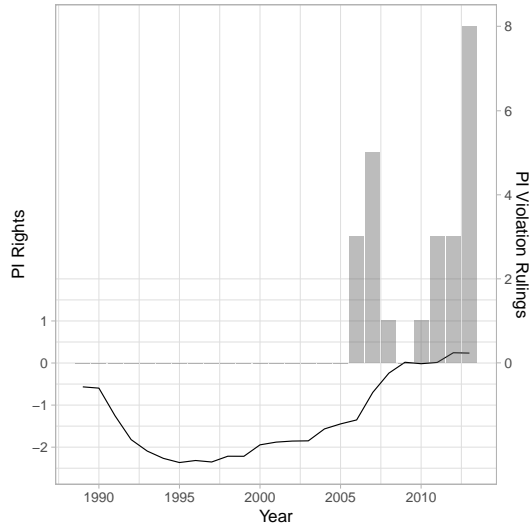
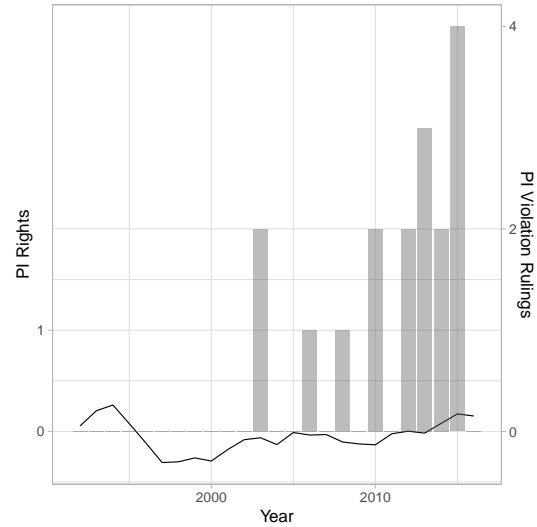


Figure 8: Belarus



variable.

Algeria ratified the OP in 1989 and exits the sample in 2013. Belarus remains repressive throughout the sample, from its ratification in 1992 through the end of the data in 2016. First, I discuss Algeria, which has the highest number of PI rights violations in the full sample (Table 4) and 24 PI violations in the sample of interest. Belarus has the greatest number of Views in Table 1, and a small (but not negligible) proportion are focused on physical integrity rights. These cases allow for exploration of variation among rights detailed in the ICCPR, PI rights specifically, and potential strategic substitution.

6.2 Algeria

Algeria improved respect for physical integrity rights in the 2000s, especially in the second half of the decade, which coincides with several Committee violation rulings. Figure 7 shows the dependent and independent variables over time. Low residuals indicate the model explains this variation well, but is it simply a trend driven by other factors and the lagged dependent variable? First, I unpack the dependent variable and explore what is driving this improvement in the data. Then, I use an interview and online sources to discuss the possible connection between violation rulings and improvement in PI rights.

From analyzing Amnesty International reports of Algerian human rights in the 2000s,²¹ the improvement in this decade seems to be due to, in part, a decrease in political killings. There was political violence over the years between the state and armed groups, with civilian killings decreasing. Figure 7 shows a general increasing trend with a large increase beginning in 2007. In 2006, “some 400 people were killed as a result of continuing violence, including dozens of civilians.” Similarly, in 2007, “More than 300 people were reported to have been killed by either armed groups or government security forces during the year, including over 70 civilians.” In 2008 there was no mention of confirmed civilian killings in the political killings section of the report, and in 2009, political killings were no longer a component of the report. Instead, the 2009 report mentioned counter-terrorism, where terrorist groups were responsible for civilian killings and the government was responding in an appropriate military capacity.

Almost all (21) of the 24 PI violation rulings against Algeria concerned enforced disappearances from the civil conflict in the 1990s. Families of the disappeared are alleging violations of the right to life, freedom from torture, and the right to an effective remedy. Despite these many petitions, filed from 2000 through 2009, the government refuses to provide remedies, investigate the disappearances, provide information to the families, prosecute those responsible, or provide compensation to the families. All 24 of these petitions ruled upon before 2013 were represented by third parties. I discuss the role civil society played in publicizing these rulings and the attention it garnered, which might have pressured the Algerian government to improve respect for other rights that were deemed less costly, including lessening civilian killings in fighting terrorism.

Nassera Dutour, spokesperson for Collectif des Familles de Disparus en Algérie (Coalition of Families of the Disappeared in Algeria, CFDA), highlights the importance of their broader advocacy networks and how the Algerian government values its reputation:

“Algeria has not followed or implemented any of the recommendations that were made by the Committee so far. The thing is, since these recommendations are

²¹ Ref World. *Amnesty International* Webpage

public, they're visible by all. So what we have seen, other associations have referenced those cases, the communications that have been made regarding Algeria. For example, referenced the Bouchouf case in Algeria. That has been a problem for the Algerian government. They are very susceptible. They are very aware of their image, and they want to keep this image of being better than they actually are...Otherwise, the recommendations have not yielded much.”²²

Despite the lack of remedies, CFDA does perceive these petitions have an effect (although not the intended, immediate effect). She was happy to share that the continued filings and responses in the Human Rights Committee “continues to annoy Algeria as much as possible,” and “The Algerian government gets angry.” CFDA strategically advocates and publicizes these rulings to a broad audience. An Al Jazeera article (Osman 2021) recently summarized the work CFDA and other organizations have done in the Committee:

“After families could not obtain redress at the domestic level, several turned to the United Nations human rights mechanisms. However, the authorities refused to respond to individual complaints and resorted to the charter to challenge their admissibility, stating the text provided a “global framework” and constituted, in itself, a domestic remedy addressing the issue of the missing. To date, the UN Human Rights Committee has issued 44 decisions on Algerian cases, but none has been implemented.”

CFDA, a self-described “small organization,” regularly partners with larger organizations, such as Amnesty International, to advocate against the Algerian government for improved practices. Although outside the relevant dates (in part due to the wealth of information in more recent times with the widespread usage of the internet), CFDA partnered with 15 other organizations, including Amnesty International, Reporters Without Borders, and Human Rights Watch, to publish a joint press release supporting the European Parliament’s calls for action on Algerian human rights and demanding broader “collective public action from the international community.”²³ CFDA states the goal of this press release was “to urge the European Union and its Member States to more severely condemn the management of human rights by the Algerian authorities, during a meeting held between the European Union and representatives of the Algerian government which took place a few

²² Interview on 12 March 2021.

²³ November 27, 2022. Amnesty International, “Algeria: European Parliament calls for action on human rights and expresses solidarity with demonstrators” Webpage

days after the publication.”²⁴

In the mid to late 2000s, Algeria attracted increasingly negative attention from global actors. The relatively small NGOs filing these cases, CFDA as well as TRIAL- Swiss Association against Impunity and Alkarama for Human Rights Foundation, sufficiently publicized these actions to relevant audiences, including Amnesty International and the US State Department. AI’s 2007 report detailed the 2006 HRC Adoption of Views concerning the unlawful detainment without trial and torture of Malik Medjnoun.²⁵ The US State Department reports note these rulings as well: “In March 2006 the UN Human Rights Committee issued its first ruling on enforced disappearances in the country. The Committee found that the government violated several provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights when it failed to protect the rights and life of Salah Saker and Riad Boucherf, who disappeared in 1994 and 1995 respectively.”²⁶ Although the Algerian government refuses to remedy the enforced disappearances under review in the HRC (by providing information to the families, investigating the disappearances, or providing compensation), Algeria has improved respect for physical integrity rights during the same time the HRC published violation rulings that were widely and strategically publicized to global actors. This case illustrates the publicity and reputational mechanisms present, although alternative explanations have yet to be ruled out.

Algeria has relatively high trade dependence on both the EU and US, shown in Figures 9 and 10. This supports the other qualitative evidence that Algeria cares about its global reputation regarding human rights.

6.3 Belarus

Despite scores of petitions filed against Belarus over the years, Belarus has not improved its respect for human rights. Many of the petitions have focused on non-PI rights: political and civil liberties. President Lukashenko has not changed the civil law suppressing

²⁴ Collectif des Families de Disparus en Algérie: Nos Actions Webpage

²⁵ Communication No. 1297/2004 submitted by Ali Medjnoun regarding his son, Malik Medjnoun, on 11 June 2004. Committee deemed Algeria in violation on 14 July 2006.

²⁶ Ref World. “2007 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- Algeria” Webpage

Figure 9: EU Trade Dependence

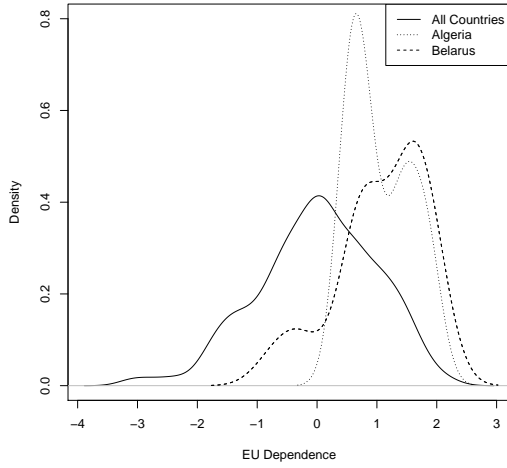
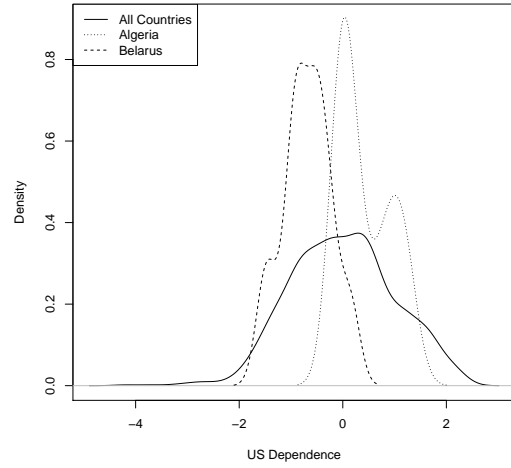


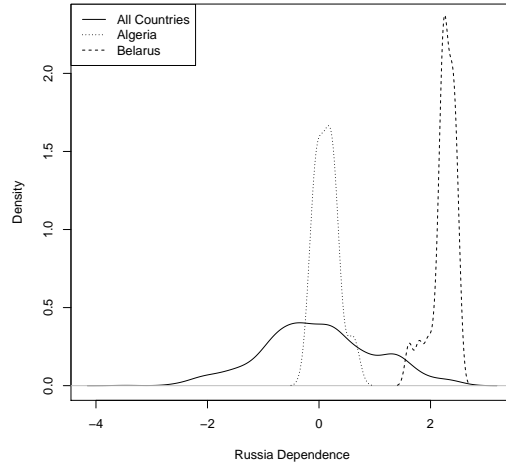
Figure 10: US Trade Dependence



the freedoms of expression and assembly, a main target of the petitions. Numerous petitions also detail allegations of torture and enforced disappearances. Figure 8 displays the PI rights and violation rulings over time. PI rights, while there are some natural fluctuations in the latent variable, have stayed quite flat without meaningful differences (the magnitude here is approximately 1/10 of that of Algeria). Why has Belarus not improved respect for human rights despite the numerous violation rulings?

Most of the petitions against Belarus (126 in total), particularly those concerning civil liberties, are filed by individuals without third-party involvement. Individual activists and politicians use the HRC as a form of international anti-regime mobilization. Of the 17 physical integrity petitions that resulted in Belarusian violation rulings, approximately three-quarters (13) have listed representation. Similar to Algeria, these are not large international organizations filing. Here, human rights lawyers and small organizations are assisting victims of Belarusian human rights abuse. Many of the third parties here are human rights lawyers and defenders, including Raman Kisliak and Andrei Paluda. The Helsinki Committee has also been involved in numerous petitions. Despite third-party involvement, these petitions seemingly have little to no effect on Belarusian policies and practices. Similar organizations were involved in Algerian petitions; why did Algeria improve respect for physical integrity

Figure 11: Russian Trade Dependence



rights while Belarusian repression remained constant?

This is likely due to the different reputational concerns of Belarus. Figure 9 shows Belarus' relatively high economic dependence on the European Union. This would suggest, like Algeria, that Belarus is concerned with the EU's perception, but this is missing a large part of the story. After President Lukashenko took office in 1994, the relationship between Belarus and the European Union deteriorated, and the EU condemned his regime for authoritarianism and poor human rights and imposed sanctions. In contrast, Lukashenko has very strong economic ties with Russia, where the Kremlin also regularly violates human rights and is unconcerned with these practices in his allies. Unlike the EU, Russia is rather unconcerned with global human rights and does not pressure its partners to join these institutions or improve respect for human rights. Belarus trades significantly more with Russia than the EU, and this trade dependence is exceptionally high, shown in Figure 11. This highlights the importance of the overall dependence network, not simply one targeted dependence. Russia serves as an important outside option, so Belarus is not as concerned with the European Union and its reputation for human rights.

6.4 Alternative Explanations

Repression is complex, and many factors determine a regime’s decision on when and how to use repressive tactics on its population. Past levels of repression are highly predictive of repression, indicated by the significance of the lagged dependent variable in all models. Here, I discuss alternative explanations, focusing on one (of many) possible explanations for changes in respect for PI rights and perhaps also the significance of the PI Violation rulings in the statistical models. These rulings are only one form of naming and shaming. As discussed earlier, a variety of both non-governmental and inter-governmental organizations name and shame governments in hopes of improving respect for human rights. Does naming and shaming by other organizations correlate with the key explanatory variable here, Human Rights Committee violation rulings? Could these alternatives be driving the results?

Existing data for naming and shaming is limited, particularly before 1990 and in recent years. Here, I discuss two alternative forms of naming and shaming, present the correlations between these data and Committee rulings, and include these new variables in the models. I present one alternative IGO naming and shaming, the Human Rights Council (DeMeritt and Conrad 2019), and one dataset comprised of INGO human rights shaming (Murdie and Davis 2012). Data from the UN Human Rights Council is limited from 1995 to 2011, losing many observations. Additionally, the Human Rights Council has only shamed 4 countries concerning physical integrity rights with 8 instances in this sample: Bosnia (1995, 1996), Belarus (2003, 2004, 2005), Equatorial Guinea (1997), and Turkmenistan (2003, 2004). This is not correlated with Committee violation rulings, shown in Appendix Table 12.

Next, I use a measure of international non-governmental human rights organizations (HROs) from Murdie and Davis (2012). They use events data from the Integrated Data for Event Analysis, which uses all Reuters Global News Services reports concerning HROs. They narrow to 432 international NGOs that have a mission statement that focuses on core human rights using the *Yearbook of International Organizations*. Murdie and Davis produce a count variable of the number of HRO conflictual events that occurred toward a government

Table 3: Human Rights Council and NGO Shaming

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Physical Integrity Violations	0.021* (0.009)		0.004 (0.015)		0.021 (0.021)
Council Shaming		0.157 (0.154)	0.156 (0.154)		
NGO Shaming				-0.004 (0.008)	-0.004 (0.008)
Civil Society Index	0.197 (0.137)	0.155 (0.198)	0.162 (0.199)	0.277 (0.274)	0.314 (0.278)
Judicial Independence	-0.127 (0.231)	-0.172 (0.281)	-0.177 (0.284)	-0.343 (0.417)	-0.376 (0.420)
War	-0.229*** (0.039)	-0.220*** (0.046)	-0.219*** (0.046)	-0.274*** (0.060)	-0.271*** (0.060)
Population (ln)	-0.244 (0.149)	-0.174 (0.191)	-0.170 (0.191)	-0.279 (0.252)	-0.272 (0.254)
GDP (ln)	0.038+ (0.021)	-0.001 (0.028)	-0.002 (0.029)	0.051* (0.025)	0.052* (0.025)
DV _{t-1}	0.857*** (0.025)	0.807*** (0.038)	0.808*** (0.038)	0.756*** (0.036)	0.755*** (0.037)
Time	0.007* (0.003)	0.012** (0.004)	0.012** (0.004)	0.012* (0.006)	0.012* (0.006)
N	994	548	548	500	500
R ²	0.944	0.956	0.956	0.955	0.955
R ² <i>adjusted</i>	0.941	0.950	0.950	0.949	0.949

All models include country fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by country.

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

in a given year. These data begin in 1992 and are recorded through 2007. This measure is also uncorrelated with the key variable of interest, shown in Appendix Table 13.

I substitute these alternative measures of international naming and shaming for the Committee rulings variable, shown in Table 3. These new variables are not statistically in any models, with or without the key explanatory variable of interest. In these new models, the core finding of this paper is no longer statistically significant. This is likely due to the large decrease in sample size and restriction to a few years, greatly decreasing the variation in the data. As an exploration, I remove country fixed effects and the core result is statistically significant with this alternate model specification, shown in Appendix Table 13. Data limitations restrict this quantitative exploration of alternative explanations, but this analysis suggests there is little concern of collinearity with other international forms of

naming and shaming, and thus they are unlikely to drive the main result.

7 Conclusion

United Nations human rights treaty bodies are quasi-judicial institutions and lack enforcement power. Therefore, the functions of these Committees are best thought of as naming and shaming. Committees produce Views on individual petitions, deciding whether allegations made by victims disclose violations of treaty provisions. I argue these petitions, focused on individual circumstances of alleged abuse, are an effective personal narrative, differentiated from other forms of naming and shaming commonly used in inter-governmental organizations. Further, the Committee’s violation rulings provide legitimacy and credibility to civil society’s near-constant pressure. Civil society plays an important role in publicizing these rulings which may harm states’ reputations. Not all repressive governments are concerned about the poor reputational effects of these rulings, and evidence suggests that trade dependence on Western powers may drive these concerns.

Focused on repressive regimes, I find statistical support for this theory. Committee violation rulings do improve respect for physical integrity rights when third-party actors are involved. Although these effects are substantively small, any change in respect for human rights is meaningful because the data reflect human welfare and suffering, capturing the presence and severity of severe abuses including torture and political killings. Two case studies, Algeria and Belarus, highlight the role of civil society and suggest that these rulings are effective only when the government cares about its international reputation.

Civil society plays a crucial role in both filing these complaints (Schoner 2022*a*) and publicizing the rulings. There is a wide variety of third-party representation, and these actors may be domestic or international. This paper adds to a growing literature on non-state actor access in international institutions, and the role third parties play in international politics (see: Brutger 2022; McNamara 2019; Sommerer and Tallberg 2016; Tallberg et al. 2013). Future research will explore this variation in civil society actors.

This research highlights a core function of international institutions: providing information and identifying non-compliers (Keohane 1984, 1982). Committees provide additional information to domestic and international actors, supporting civil society's more constant naming and shaming. Both domestic politics, particularly the presence of civil society, and international relations combine to affect compliance. Naming and shaming in inter-governmental organizations is not limited to the Human Rights Committee or even human rights as an issue-area. The Paris Agreement, for example, functions primarily through naming and shaming (Falkner 2016).

This paper shows that quasi-judicial international institutions, that lack enforcement power and have low levels of obligation (Abbott et al. 2000), can be an effective forum for naming and shaming. These human rights institutions have the potential to have a real effect in the most repressive countries, where there is the most concern and greatest potential for improvement. By involving relevant third-party civil society actors, victims of human rights abuse can effectively improve government practices, if the government is sensitive to its global reputation.

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8 Appendix

8.1 Committee Body Membership

Each treaty body is comprised of “independent experts who are persons of high moral character and recognized competence in the field of human rights”²⁷ who are “nominated and elected for fixed, renewable terms of four years by State parties. The elections of half of the committees members are staggered every 2 years to ensure a balance between continuity and change in committee composition. All elected members serve in their personal capacity.”²⁸ Guidelines detailed in the General Assembly resolution 68/268 encourage states to consider “equitable geographic distribution, the representation of different forms of civilization and the principal legal systems, balanced gender representation and the participation of experts with disabilities when nominating experts for Committee elections.” These monitoring bodies are generally less politicized than other inter-governmental organizations and institutions although there is, to my knowledge, no scholarly work exploring the make-up of these Committees and their effect on Committee behavior.

8.2 Process: Inside the HRC

When a victim of human rights abuse submits a communication to the HRC, they must provide detailed information about the alleged violation in addition to basic personal information. The case is then transmitted to the State party for an opportunity to comment. The author of the communication is then able to comment on the State’s observations on admissibility and merits. This process can go back and forth. The Committee first considers the admissibility of the complaint, meeting the formal requirements including *ratione temporis*. Many complaints are considered inadmissible, often for failure to exhaust domestic remedies (this international institution serves as a second, complement to domestic

²⁷ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner “Membership: Human Rights Committee” Webpage

²⁸ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner “Electing Treaty Body Members: Treaty Bodies” Webpage

institutions) or failure to sufficiently substantiate claims. Finally, if deemed admissible, the Committee produces a decision on the merits of the communication, concluding whether the state violated any treaty provision. If the Committee decides the state has violated the treaty, it recommends remedies, including compensation, and ends with “The State party is also under obligation to take all steps necessary to prevent similar violations from occurring in the future.” The Committee asks for follow-up information from the state to monitor compliance. These statements, however, are not legally binding, and treaty bodies have no enforcement power.

8.3 Full Sample Description

Table 4: Violations in the Human Rights Committee: Full Sample

Country	Views	Violation Rulings	Physical Integrity Violations
South Korea	126	122	2
Belarus	122	104	17
Russia	64	33	19
Uruguay	60	45	36
Algeria	43	41	40
Uzbekistan	43	36	29
Colombia	36	19	10
Tajikistan	25	22	21
Democratic Republic of Congo	21	18	14
Libya	21	20	18
Sri Lanka	21	16	12
Turkmenistan	17	16	15
Philippines	17	13	10
Peru	16	15	10
Bosnia and Herzegovina	16	15	15
Zambia	15	10	8
Nepal	13	13	13
Cameroon	11	9	6
Kazakhstan	9	7	3
Panama	8	2	0
Chile	7	0	0
Ecuador	6	6	4
Croatia	6	3	3
Bulgaria	6	1	0
Estonia	5	1	0
Georgia	5	5	5
Togo	5	4	1
Venezuela	4	3	1
Azerbaijan	4	3	2
Equatorial Guinea	4	4	4
Dominican Republic	3	3	2
Paraguay	3	3	2
Yugoslavia	3	2	1
Bolivia	2	2	2
Romania	2	1	0
Cte d'Ivoire	2	1	1
Central African Republic	2	2	1
Angola	2	2	2
South Africa	2	1	1
Turkey	2	2	0
Mexico	1	0	0
Nicaragua	1	1	1
Sierra Leone	1	1	0
Tunisia	1	0	0
Guatemala	0	0	0
Honduras	0	0	0
El Salvador	0	0	0
Brazil	0	0	0
Niger	0	0	0
Guinea	0	0	0
Chad	0	0	0
Republic of Congo	0	0	0
Uganda	0	0	0
Somalia	0	0	0
Djibouti	0	0	0
Malawi	0	0	0

8.4 Model Results and Robustness Checks

Table 5: Respect for Physical Integrity Rights: Representation

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Physical Integrity Violations	0.021* (0.009)		
Violations: With Representation		0.039* (0.016)	
Violations: No Representation			0.004 (0.004)
Civil Society Index	0.197 (0.137)	0.194 (0.138)	0.193 (0.139)
Judicial Independence	-0.127 (0.231)	-0.122 (0.235)	-0.126 (0.234)
War	-0.229*** (0.039)	-0.234*** (0.039)	-0.231*** (0.040)
Population (ln)	-0.245 (0.149)	-0.238 (0.147)	-0.255 (0.155)
GDP (ln)	0.038+ (0.021)	0.036+ (0.021)	0.037+ (0.021)
Time	0.007* (0.003)	0.007* (0.003)	0.008* (0.004)
DV _{t-1}	0.857*** (0.025)	0.853*** (0.025)	0.858*** (0.026)
N	992	992	992
R ²	0.944	0.944	0.944
R ² <i>adjusted</i>	0.940	0.941	0.940

Standard errors are clustered by country.

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table 6: Respect for Physical Integrity Rights: Full Sample

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Physical Integrity Violations	0.009 (0.008)				
Physical Integrity Violations _{t-1}		0.009 (0.010)			
Physical Integrity Violations _{t-2}			0.035** (0.012)		
Physical Integrity Violations _{t-3}				0.020+ (0.011)	
Physical Integrity Petitions					0.001 (0.012)
Civil Society Index	0.237+ (0.135)	0.238+ (0.136)	0.274* (0.131)	0.276* (0.137)	0.234+ (0.133)
Judicial Independence	-0.075 (0.194)	-0.078 (0.195)	-0.150 (0.187)	-0.208 (0.183)	-0.086 (0.189)
War	-0.212*** (0.037)	-0.213*** (0.037)	-0.194*** (0.037)	-0.188*** (0.038)	-0.213*** (0.037)
Population (ln)	-0.246* (0.113)	-0.248* (0.113)	-0.310** (0.110)	-0.340** (0.125)	-0.249* (0.116)
GDP (ln)	0.033 (0.021)	0.033 (0.021)	0.047* (0.019)	0.044* (0.020)	0.033 (0.021)
Time	0.008** (0.003)	0.008** (0.003)	0.008** (0.003)	0.009** (0.003)	0.008** (0.003)
DV _{t-1}	0.867*** (0.024)	0.867*** (0.024)	0.893*** (0.019)	0.891*** (0.021)	0.867*** (0.025)
N	1234	1234	1180	1129	1234
R ²	0.972	0.972	0.975	0.975	0.972
R ² <i>adjusted</i>	0.971	0.971	0.974	0.974	0.971

All models include country fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by country.

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table 7: Respect for Physical Integrity Rights by Representation: Full Sample

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Physical Integrity Violations	0.009 (0.008)		
Violations: With Representation		0.015 (0.011)	
Violations: No Representation			0.001 (0.000)
Civil Society Index	0.237+ (0.135)	0.236+ (0.135)	0.233+ (0.136)
Judicial Independence	-0.075 (0.194)	-0.079 (0.194)	-0.087 (0.191)
War	-0.212*** (0.037)	-0.214*** (0.036)	-0.213*** (0.036)
Population (ln)	-0.246* (0.113)	-0.243* (0.113)	-0.249* (0.113)
GDP (ln)	0.033 (0.021)	0.032 (0.021)	0.033 (0.021)
Time	0.008** (0.003)	0.008** (0.003)	0.008** (0.003)
DV _{t-1}	0.867*** (0.024)	0.865*** (0.024)	0.867*** (0.024)
N	1234	1234	1234
R ²	0.972	0.972	0.972
R ² <i>adjusted</i>	0.971	0.971	0.971

All models include country fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by country.

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table 8: Respect for Physical Integrity Rights: Future Violations

	Model 1
Physical Integrity Violations _{t+1}	0.010 (0.016)
Civil Society Index	0.195 (0.144)
Judicial Independence	-0.117 (0.240)
War	-0.231*** (0.040)
Population (ln)	-0.262 (0.158)
GDP (ln)	0.044* (0.020)
Time	0.007+ (0.004)
DV _{t-1}	0.856*** (0.025)
N	974
R ²	0.942
R ² <i>adjusted</i>	0.938

All models include country fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by country.
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table 9: Respect for Physical Integrity Rights: Year Fixed Effects

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Physical Integrity Violations	0.021* (0.009)				
Physical Integrity Violations _{t-1}		0.023 (0.014)			
Physical Integrity Violations _{t-2}			0.047** (0.017)		
Physical Integrity Violations _{t-3}				0.030+ (0.016)	
Physical Integrity Petitions					0.007 (0.012)
Civil Society Index	0.281+ (0.166)	0.280 (0.170)	0.345* (0.171)	0.336+ (0.176)	0.272 (0.165)
Judicial Independence	-0.214 (0.230)	-0.225 (0.231)	-0.337 (0.224)	-0.384+ (0.228)	-0.209 (0.231)
War	-0.232*** (0.039)	-0.232*** (0.040)	-0.219*** (0.043)	-0.212*** (0.045)	-0.232*** (0.039)
Population (ln)	-0.241 (0.150)	-0.240 (0.145)	-0.325* (0.142)	-0.390* (0.156)	-0.254+ (0.151)
GDP (ln)	0.030 (0.024)	0.030 (0.024)	0.043+ (0.023)	0.039 (0.027)	0.028 (0.025)
DV _{t-1}	0.856*** (0.024)	0.856*** (0.024)	0.878*** (0.021)	0.879*** (0.026)	0.858*** (0.025)
N	994	994	940	889	994
R ²	0.947	0.947	0.952	0.951	0.947
R ² <i>adjusted</i>	0.941	0.941	0.946	0.944	0.940

All models include country and year fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by country.

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table 10: First Differences: Respect for Physical Integrity Rights

	Model 1
Physical Integrity Violations	0.019*** (0.005)
Civil Society Index	0.245+ (0.129)
Judicial Independence	-0.393* (0.194)
War	-0.152*** (0.031)
Population (ln)	-0.178 (0.163)
GDP (ln)	0.015 (0.033)
N	994
R ²	0.194
R ² <i>adjusted</i>	0.142

All models include country fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by country.

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 11: Interaction Model Results

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Physical Integrity Violations	0.020** (0.007)	0.028* (0.011)	0.011 (0.029)
EU Trade Dependence	-0.007 (0.028)		
Physical Integrity Violation x EUTrade	0.006 (0.007)		
US Trade Dependence		-0.008 (0.023)	
Physical Integrity Violation x US Trade		0.024 (0.017)	
Civil Society Index	0.202 (0.139)	0.191 (0.145)	0.190 (0.131)
Physical Integrity Violation x Civil Society			0.024 (0.063)
Judicial Independence	-0.130 (0.234)	-0.129 (0.247)	-0.123 (0.233)
War	-0.230*** (0.039)	-0.235*** (0.041)	-0.229*** (0.039)
Population (ln)	-0.248 (0.160)	-0.241 (0.152)	-0.246 (0.151)
GDP (ln)	0.038+ (0.021)	0.036 (0.024)	0.039+ (0.021)
Time	0.007+ (0.004)	0.007* (0.003)	0.007* (0.003)
DV _{t-1}	0.858*** (0.025)	0.850*** (0.025)	0.856*** (0.025)
N	989	959	994
R ²	0.944	0.945	0.944
R ² <i>adjusted</i>	0.941	0.941	0.941

All models include country fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by country.

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

8.5 Case Studies and Alternative Explanations

Figure 12: Civil Society

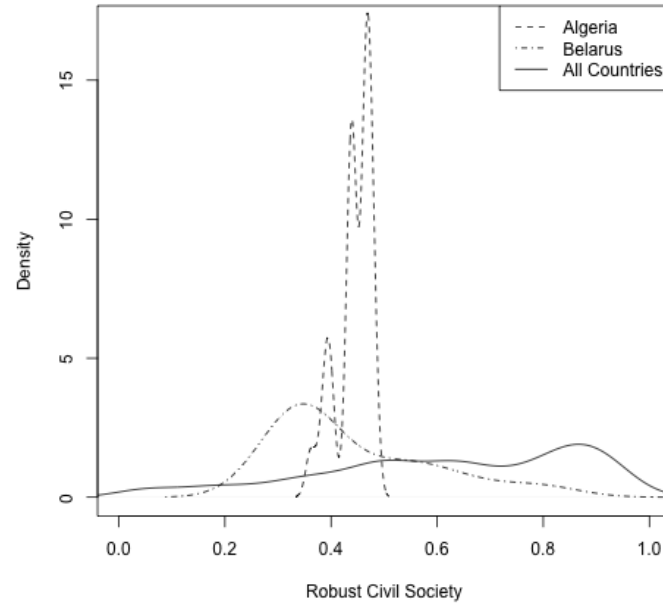


Figure 13: Correlation: Violation Rulings and HRO Naming and Shaming

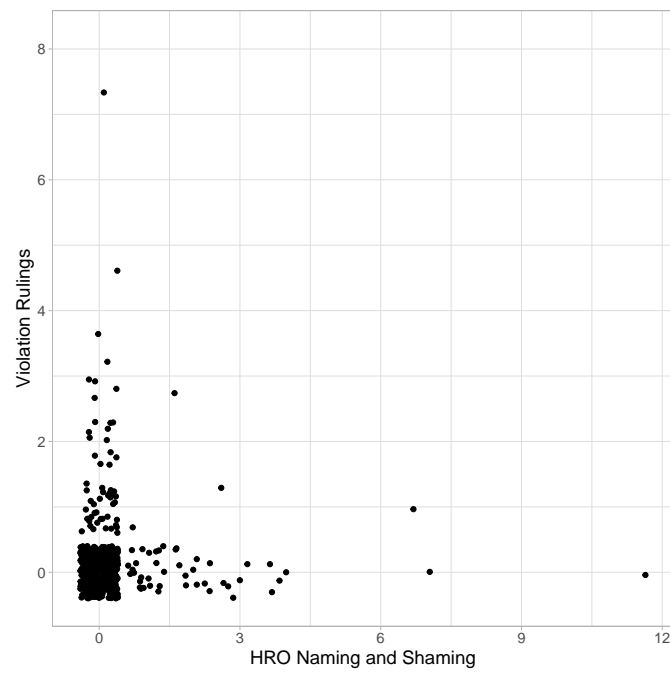


Table 12: Violation Rulings and Human Rights Council Shaming

	Council Shaming	
	0	1
0	541	7
1	48	0
2	17	1
3	7	0
4	3	0
5	3	0
6	0	0
7	1	0
8	0	0

Note: Correlation coefficient is 0.0045.

Table 13: Human Rights Council and NGO Shaming, No Fixed Effects

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Physical Integrity Violations	0.027** (0.008)		0.024+ (0.012)		0.030+ (0.017)
Council Shaming		0.199 (0.215)	0.200 (0.213)		
NGO Shaming				-0.010 (0.010)	-0.009 (0.010)
Civil Society Index	0.154** (0.055)	0.106 (0.072)	0.129+ (0.072)	0.105 (0.080)	0.121 (0.081)
Judicial Independence	0.043 (0.060)	-0.009 (0.076)	-0.014 (0.078)	0.044 (0.090)	0.044 (0.090)
War	-0.136*** (0.032)	-0.136** (0.044)	-0.135** (0.043)	-0.186*** (0.051)	-0.186*** (0.051)
Population (ln)	-0.037* (0.018)	-0.041 (0.025)	-0.045+ (0.025)	-0.043+ (0.025)	-0.046+ (0.025)
GDP (ln)	0.005 (0.009)	0.012 (0.014)	0.013 (0.014)	0.016 (0.015)	0.016 (0.014)
DV _{t-1}	0.894*** (0.018)	0.892*** (0.029)	0.890*** (0.028)	0.878*** (0.026)	0.877*** (0.027)
Time	0.003*** (0.001)	0.003 (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)	0.005 (0.003)	0.004 (0.003)
Constant	0.227 (0.194)	0.198 (0.258)	0.242 (0.253)	0.063 (0.292)	0.108 (0.294)
N	994	548	548	500	500
R ²	0.934	0.938	0.939	0.935	0.936
R ² <i>adjusted</i>	0.933	0.937	0.938	0.934	0.935

Standard errors are clustered by country.

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001