The Seventh Intensive Course on Truth Commissions covers the following main topics:

1. **Truth-seeking: political, social, and legal implications.**

   We will focus on the ‘right to truth’ as the main motivation to establish truth commissions in the wake of mass human rights abuses. Under this topic, the course addresses the different dimensions of the right to truth and examines the political, social, and legal context that enables official truth seeking efforts to be shaped.

2. **Inception and legal mandate of truth commissions.**

   Truth commissions are created and enabled through legal provisions known as “mandates”. We cover the process of the inception of truth commissions and examines the key aspects of a legal mandate such as objectives, functions, scope, powers, composition, and duration.

3. **Implementing a mandate: research, investigations, findings, and recommendations.**

   The course reviews the operational aspects of a truth commission from its organization, to the clarification of goals and objectives, and finally to the elaboration of an investigative strategy leading to findings and recommendations. The discussion includes the role of statement taking and discusses other research and investigative techniques.

4. **The process of taking research to the elaboration of a Final Report.**

   From research to reporting; how truth commissions organize to deliver final reports and what are the importance and uses of a final report. The course addresses the various components that make up a final report and their relevance in serving the right to the truth as well as providing a useful platform to advance the victims’ rights.

5. **Inclusion of gender, child-friendly, and indigenous people’s perspectives.**

   A successful truth commission should develop approaches to address the needs of particular, vulnerable, or marginalized collectivities or categories of victims. We take a particular look at; women’s rights and the necessity of a gender approach when dealing with the legacy of mass human rights abuses; indigenous peoples and their specific needs
and demands regarding truth-seeking; and the need to address children’s experience under violence and abuse.


Truth commissions are social processes and public-oriented bodies. The course discusses how to build trustful and cooperative relations with victims’ groups and the necessity to go beyond immediate stakeholders and speak to the public at large. Additionally, we will examine truth commissions as political, social, and moral agents impacting the public sphere through the truth-telling process they activate.

7. Simulation exercise

The course includes an interactive exercise where participants debate and “negotiate” the creation of a truth commission. Organized in groups, participants engage in a role-playing dynamic to deal with the different issues and potential conflicts arising when political and social actors seek to create a truth commission.

Methodology

The Intensive Course on Truth Commissions is a week-long residential training program consisting of interactive lectures, roundtable discussions, and practical exercises. The interactive lecture sessions are led by ICTJ experts and guest lecturers with extensive experience in truth commissions. Thus, the course takes a comparative approach. Additionally, participants are expected to engage actively in discussions and exercises as well as prepare for and complement the course with a selection of theoretical, historical, and comparative reading materials.