

Below please find three ‘situations’. Choose one of them and use it as a departure point for writing a text that contains the following elements:

- 1 Deduce a human rights-relevant research question from the situation described.
- 2 Explain briefly why you believe this research question is plausible and researchable.
- 3 Elaborate a research plan for answering the chosen research question (or exploring the relevant issues).
- 4 Give a sketch of the resulting research in the form of an outline of an essay or thesis, i.e., a text that demonstrates your methodological and editing abilities rather than answering the question as such. The maximum length of the assignment is 5,000 words including footnotes.

Situation 1

Andinia recently adopted a constitution saying it is a ‘multi-ethnic and multicultural country’. The constitution also declares the country to be sovereign and democratic and moreover the country has ratified all major international human rights conventions, including the relevant regional human rights instruments.

Since the end of a protracted civil war 15 years ago, which although it mostly involved fighting between left-wing and right-wing forces of a middle-income industrialised country, also involved casualties among the country’s indigenous population, and hence political mobilisation of hitherto marginal social groups, successive governments have tried to implement its new multiculturalist aspirations by way of fundamental reforms in its political and legal systems as well as various welfare programmes.

Andinia can be several countries in the Americas. Choose one of them in order to provide the situation with further empirical detail.

Situation 2

Antropia is a middle-income country with a culturally diverse population and rather large social and economic disparities between modernised, urban areas and a tradition-bound countryside. Over the last five years, the economy has stagnated and there are signs of political unrest in a country strongly dominated by a strong president and a single party. Recently, the national assembly passed a law outlawing homosexual practices, following several violent episodes and public marches against what various religious groups consider ‘ungodly practices’. In a widely disseminated and much debated report, also inside Antropia

itself, a world famous, international NGO details a dozen cases of murder and mutilation of homosexuals.

Antropia is formally a parliamentary democracy with a constitution that prohibits all kinds of discrimination and moreover the country has ratified all major international human rights conventions, including the relevant regional human rights instruments.

Antropia can be many countries. Choose one of them in order to provide the situation with further empirical detail.

Situation 3

Pilot Judgment Practices at the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR or Court)

Under Rule 61 of its Rules to issue pilot judgements, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has established a practice which addresses potential systemic or structural violations of human rights in a member State. The objectives of the pilot judgment procedure are the following:

- assist the 47 European States that have ratified the European Convention on Human Rights in solving systemic or structural problems at national level;
- offer a possibility of speedier redress to the individuals concerned;
- help the European Court of Human Rights manage its workload more efficiently and diligently by reducing the number of similar – usually complex – cases that have to be examined in detail.

Analyse the strengths and weaknesses of this approach to addressing systemic shortcomings by discussing the practice of pilot judgments more generally, or by selecting a particular judgment of the Court on a specific issue, for example ‘Prolonged non-enforcement of court decisions and lack of domestic remedy’, ‘Excessive length of proceedings and lack of domestic remedy’, or ‘Exclusion of convicted prisoners from voting’.

The analysis needs to take into account other methodologies used in international law. For more information on pilot judgments and relevant cases see the ECtHR factsheet on [‘Pilot Judgments’](#). Other factsheets and documents prepared by the Court’s registry might be useful.