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# Human Rights Violations, Transnational Corporations and a Scandal in the Fishing Industry

Virtual Panel / Webcast during the 49th Session of the Human Rights Council  
31 March 2022, 12h00 – 13h00 CET

## Introductory remarks:

**Kaajal Ramjathan-Keogh**

(Director of Africa Regional Programme  
International Commission of Jurists,  
Johannesburg, South Africa)

## Panelists:

**Mahongora Kavihuha**

(Trade Union Congress of Namibia  
(TUCNA))

**Ana Maria Suarez**

(FIAN International)

**Thor Fanndal**

(Transparency International Iceland)

**Graham Hopwood**

(Institute for Public Policy Research,  
Namibia)

**Sam Eastwood**

(Mayer Brown International LLP)

## Moderator:

**Gladice Pickering**

## THE FISHROT SCANDAL:

The “Fishrot” corruption and money laundering scandal touches on Namibia, Angola, Iceland, Spain, UK, Poland, Cyprus, UAE, Mauritius and Faroe Islands.

Over the course of a 7 year period Samherji, Iceland’s biggest fisheries group with extensive international interests in North America, Germany, France, UK, Portugal, Norway and elsewhere, became the single biggest recipient of fishing quota rights within Namibia and secured nearly a third of the total available Namibian horse mackerel annual quota.

The value of transactions flagged as suspicious by Namibia’s Financial Intelligence Centre in connection with the Fishrot scheme is reported to be around US\$650 million.

The Fishrot scheme has undermined the rule of law and the Namibian public’s faith in their government’s democratic institutions and public processes. In particular, the scheme directly impacted the Namibian government’s social programmes and contributed to the bankruptcy of parts of the Namibian fishing industry, including the reported loss of more than 18,000 jobs and increased rates of poverty. For example, there have been numerous reports of the scheme leading to home repossessions, loss of social protection, children being removed from schools, family crises, and even suicides among fishing communities.

There is evidence, including by Samherji’s own admission, indicating that its Namibian subsidiary, through the conduct of its executives, did not adhere to expected ethical standards and breached Namibian laws.

Samherji has, to date, not given any meaningful indication of remedying any of the adverse human rights or economic impacts caused directly or indirectly by its actions. Transnational corporations in the fishing industry have a responsibility to prevent human rights abuses in their operations and to provide remedies if such abuses take place.

Samherji and its principals are currently acting with impunity and must be held to account inter alia through discussions at an international level that seek to deliver appropriate and effective remedies to the Namibian people, including through an independent Operational Grievance Mechanism and engagement with relevant stakeholders.

## TOPIC FOR DISCUSSION:

The impact of States’ national laws violations by Transnational Corporations operating in the Fishing Industry on the enjoyment of human rights: **A specific focus on the activities of Samherji (Iceland) in Namibia.**

The Panel will discuss:

1. The impact of Fishrot on Namibia and its people;
2. Steps that can be taken by States and businesses to avoid similar violations;
3. Remedies available to the Namibian Government and/or impacted persons; and
4. The Icelandic dimension.

Please register by sending an email to [info@ippr.org.na](mailto:info@ippr.org.na)  
(although this is not a requirement for joining)

## Related Reports:

<https://www.ruv.is/kveikur/fishrot/fishrot/>

<https://issafrica.org/iss-today/namibias-fishrot-trial-will-test-the-scales-of-justice>

## Meeting Link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88981815645?pwd=MmdsU0hXR084b0Z5dFBodEI4VWVUUT09>

Meeting ID: 889 8181 5645

Passcode: 567206