

Benefit from responsible private security

Private security companies provide important services, often operating in complex environments.

ICoCA's Member companies demonstrate their commitment to good governance, a high standard of professional conduct, and respect for human rights.

Ensure responsible private security

ICoCA's multi-stakeholder structure brings together industry, governments, and civil society organizations.

This unique interactive forum ensures participation, integrity, and a focus on preventing negative impacts on communities.

Insist on responsible private security

Many major private security clients – including governments and international organizations – already insist on compliance with the Code of Conduct, and so benefit from the responsible provision of private security services.

Commercial and non-profit entities – from extractive industries, and the development and humanitarian sector – increasingly engage with the ICoCA to benefit from insisting on responsible private security.

International Code of Conduct
for Private Security Service Providers'
Association

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Responsible private security



International
Code of Conduct
Association

Bringing together industry, civil society
and governments to promote
responsible private security services,
and respect for human rights



The challenge

Private security companies (PSCs) are increasingly contracted to work in complex environments, in conflict-affected contexts and situations where the rule of law is weak. They often work alongside state security forces and perform many military functions. Globally, it is estimated that there are two private security personnel for every one state security employee. However they do not have the same level of regulation and accountability as do state security forces.

Montreux Document

In 2008 the Swiss Federal Government together with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) developed the Montreux Document to establish agreed legal obligations and good practices for state engagement with PSCs in armed conflict. More than 50 states and three international organizations have signed the Montreux Document, signalling their commitment to responsible private security.

The Code of Conduct

The International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers (ICoC) was adopted in 2010 through a multi-stakeholder process, to lay out the responsibilities of PSCs operating in complex environments. It sets out principles regarding the conduct of PSC personnel, based on international human rights and humanitarian law, and provides management and oversight principles.

The ICoCA

The International Code of Conduct Association (ICoCA) was established in 2013 to implement the Code of Conduct. It is a Swiss-based non-profit Association, comprising three membership pillars: private security industry, civil society and governments. A twelve-member Board, representing each of the three pillars equally, governs the Association. A Geneva-based Secretariat administers membership and implements its functions.

The ICoCA receives its funding from a combination of membership dues and government contributions. Principal donors include Switzerland and the USA.

Promoting responsible private security

The ICoCA delivers on its mandate to promote responsible private security through an integrated approach designed to assist PSCs in developing a high standard of human-rights performance and maintaining compliance with the Code of Conduct.

Certification

The ICoCA provides Member companies with Certification that recognizes their commitment to compliance with the Code of Conduct; this involves first achieving third-party certification to an ICoCA-recognized standard (such as PSC.1, ISO 28007, and soon ISO 18788), and submitting evidence of compliance to additional human rights requirements, as specified by the Code of Conduct.



Monitoring

The ICoCA monitors Member companies' compliance through regular company self-assessment reports, and continual information gathering from public and community sources (including civil society organizations). The information gathered can trigger a field-based review, involving visiting Member company operations and engaging with local civil society and communities. The Secretariat engages in confidential dialogue with Member companies to improve performance and to address any concerns. In the event of persistent non-compliance the Board can decide to revoke membership.



Complaints

The ICoCA Complaints function receives and responds to complaints against Member companies from aggrieved individuals, and offers external processes for complaints beyond the capacity of the company's internal grievance procedures. In the event of a complaint against a Member company that alleges non-compliance with the Code of Conduct, the Secretariat works with both the complainant and the Member to seek resolution, always maintaining impartiality and confidentiality.



Multi-stakeholder participation

Industry

By joining the ICoCA, private security providers demonstrate their commitment to good governance, respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, and a high standard of professional conduct. The ICoCA offers them technical guidance to improve their human rights performance and to establish sound mechanisms for governance and accountability. As more clients – including governments, commercial enterprises and international organizations – are becoming aware of the benefits of using responsible private security and demanding assurances of compliance, ICoCA membership provides a distinct advantage.

Civil Society

By joining the ICoCA, civil society organizations (CSOs) constructively engage with private security providers to ensure that they protect the interests of communities. Civil society has an essential role as part of the ICoCA's CSO network to ensure compliance, by monitoring PSCs and affected communities.

Governments

By joining the ICoCA, national governments can ensure high standards for global PSC operations, compatible with their own national standards. A number of states, including the USA, Switzerland and Australia, have incorporated the Code of Conduct into their own legislation on private security procurement.

Other stakeholders

Associated industries, PSC clients, the research community, independent certification bodies, and others with an active interest in responsible private security, while not eligible to join as voting Members, support and inform the ICoCA as Observers.