



A New Insight into INTERPOL's Finances – And Who Makes the Rules

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INTERPOL has a reputation for being opaque. Concerned as it is with law enforcement, this is not surprising. But when it comes to its finances, INTERPOL is remarkably transparent: it publishes, among other information, an audited annual financial statement on its website. A [recent press release](#) from Liberia offers new insight into an important aspect of these statements: how INTERPOL handles nations that fail to pay their dues.

INTERPOL's finances matter for the obvious reason that those who pay the bills have an outsized voice in making the rules – including the rules that govern INTERPOL. In INTERPOL, this is in theory true in a literal sense: under Article 52 of INTERPOL's General Regulations, a member nation must be suspended from voting in INTERPOL's General Assembly, INTERPOL's supreme governing body, if it has failed to pay its statutory contribution for both the current and the previous financial years.

In practice, though, things are not quite so simple, and not all nations in arrears are actually subject to Article 52. It is fair – and important – to acknowledge that INTERPOL's member nations generally have a good record of paying their dues. This likely reflects the deterrent effect of Article 52 as well as the value that many nations attach to INTERPOL. In the most recent [INTERPOL financial statement](#), covering 2024, INTERPOL reported that it collected 97.9% of the dues owed to it, and that only 13 countries are subject to Article 52, with a further 8 countries in debt rescheduling agreements. Most international organizations would kill for that collection rate. By way of [comparison](#), 43 of the UN's 193 member nations are in arrears.

INTERPOL does not like its member nations to be in arrears. That is undoubtedly in part because it has a budget, has made commitments, and needs the money to fulfill them. But there seems to be more to it than that: INTERPOL boasts about “the Organization's ongoing efforts to closely monitor and follow up with member countries in arrears,” its “proactive approach to addressing payment arrears,” and its “active dialogue with member countries, leading to successful debt rescheduling agreements and payment settlements.” In the financial realm as in others, INTERPOL appears to value being a universal membership organization.

Given that African nations paid only 59% of their dues in 2024, it is unsurprising that five of the 13 countries in long-term arrears are in Africa. That is where the press release from Liberia comes in. The Liberia National Police recently announced that INTERPOL's Executive Committee had in March "agreed to cancel Liberia's arrears accumulated between 2004 and 2018, totaling approximately €356,554.12" Furthermore, "additional arrears covering the period from 2019 to 2025, amounting to €301,315, have been restructured into a four-year repayment plan running from 2026 through 2029." The agreement commits Liberia to "the timely payment of its future annual contributions to INTERPOL."

Remarkably, Liberia was the third most indebted member nation of INTERPOL – far behind Venezuela and barely behind Guinea-Bissau. The press release spells out INTERPOL's strategy: forgiveness of older debt, a commitment to repay newer debt, and a promise to keep up with future dues in exchange for removal from the Article 52 list, which in 2024 included Liberia.

This strategy has definite advantages. At some point, continuing to insist that countries with ongoing and mounting debts pay very old obligations begins to seem silly. The amounts at stake are generally (except for Venezuela, which owes 1.92 million Euros) relatively small, and so it is perhaps more important to get countries paying again than it is to fuss about old debts. And the old saying about blood and a stone comes to mind: the alternative to a debt repayment agreement is likely getting nothing at all.

But it also has downsides: the fact remains that 21 of INTERPOL's 196 member nations are not current on their dues, that 9 of them (now including Liberia) are nonetheless voting in the General Assembly, and that the eagerness of INTERPOL to enter into debt rescheduling agreements reduces the deterrent power of Article 52. For those concerned with who pays the bills – and who makes the rules – in INTERPOL, its method of dealing with its debtor members is just part of the overall picture of its finances and governance that any reforms must consider.