

THE CARTER CENTER



THE LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN PROGRAM

The Carter Center established the Latin America and Caribbean Program (LACP) in 1986, when the Western Hemisphere was undergoing dramatic political changes, restoring or establishing democracies, and opening economies. The program was a pioneer in monitoring elections and made important contributions to profound reforms in the region. In the late 1990s, the program evolved from an emphasis on observing transitional elections in Latin America and the Caribbean to ensuring that democracies in the region work effectively to serve their citizens and governments are held accountable.

Countries in the region have now achieved almost four decades of democratic governance. In some, however, dissatisfaction with the performance of democracy has been growing, and problems still prevail: weak political institutions, persistent poverty, income inequality, insufficient economic growth, high violence rates, and human rights violations. Citizens are demanding expanded political, civil, and social rights.

The mission of the program is to enhance the quality of democracy in the region and make it more accountable to citizens. Projects aim to strengthen regional capacities to uphold democracy, transform and prevent conflicts, and improve governance. In pursuit of this mission, LACP conducts activities in three principal areas: (1) Promoting democracy and preventing democratic crises through the Friends of the Inter-American Democratic Charter and the Organization of American States; (2) addressing contentious issues in democracy; and (3) building peace in Colombia.





Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and Luis Almagro, secretary-general of the Organization for American States, in July 2017 at a Friends of the Inter-American Democratic Charter meeting.

Friends of the Inter-American Democratic Charter and the Organization of American States

The collective defense of democracy is a key challenge and opportunity for countries in the Western Hemisphere. The Carter Center promotes more effective action by regional institutions, governments, civil society groups, and the media to help prevent democratic crises, rather than trying to resolve crises once they occur.

The Inter-American Democratic Charter establishes representative democracy as a citizen right and government obligation. In recent years, basic assumptions of liberal democracy have been revisited as governments recognize the need for greater social and political inclu-

sion and experiment with more participatory mechanisms. However, competing models of government organization have produced conflict in some places.

The Carter Center works closely with the Organization of American States to strengthen regional capacities and serves as the secretariat of the Friends of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, a group of former presidents, prime ministers, cabinet ministers, and human rights experts. Through quiet diplomacy and fact-finding missions, the Friends listen to disputing parties in country conflicts, encourage peaceful and constitutional means to resolve democratic conflict, focus international attention at critical political moments (including elections), and contribute to more informed diplomatic actions. Among other activities, the program organized a high-level political mission for the Guatemalan election in 2015, a study mission for the Peruvian election in 2016, and a consultation for the Honduran election in 2017. Electoral reform and more inclusive political participation are current priorities for LACP activities.



Juan Fernando Cristo, former Colombian minister of the interior and member of the government's peace negotiation team, speaks to the Friends of the Inter-American Democratic Charter about the Colombian peace process.

Contentious Issues in Democracy

The program aims to promote a constructive, facilitated debate on pressing and controversial issues affecting the region and to strengthen local capacities to address these tensions. LACP conducts seminars, roundtables, and trainings to address these issues and inform debate to influence advocacy and policymaking, and to strengthen democracy. The initiative seeks to identify critical topics and utilize the Carter Center's convening power to promote dialogue and generate knowledge. The Carter Center strives to help overcome controversy and move toward identifying common ground to strengthen democracy with ongoing and new projects in Nicaragua, Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. Topics include the protection of journalists and freedom of expression, electoral reform and campaign equity, and political participation.

Peacebuilding in Colombia

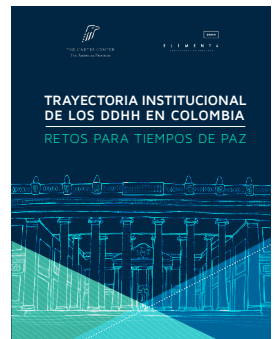
The government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP) signed a peace accord in 2016 after four years of formal negotiations in Havana, Cuba. The Carter Center has closely monitored the process since its initial stages and has organized several key activities in support of peacebuilding in Colombia.

The Carter Center supports the implementation of the peace agreement through four active projects that build local capacity to promote and protect human rights and ensure a lasting peace: (1) monitor the implementation of political participation mandates as described in the peace accord; (2) provide technical support to the Office of the Presidential Advisor for Human Rights to build a national human rights information system and build local capacity in conflict-ridden areas to respond to human rights violations; (3) assist in monitoring the separation of child soldiers from the FARC-EP as requested by both sides in the negotiations; and (4) coordinate a peace education task force to promote national reconciliation.



Colombians gather in Cartagena in 2016 for the signing of a peace accord that led to an end to a war between the government and the FARC guerilla group that lasted more than 50 years.

A Spanish-language book produced by The Carter Center maps human rights institutions in Colombia.



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A not-for-profit, nongovernmental organization, The Carter Center has helped to improve life for people in over 80 countries by resolving conflicts; advancing democracy, human rights, and economic opportunity; preventing diseases; and improving mental health care. The Carter Center was founded in 1982 by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and former First Lady Rosalynn Carter, in partnership with Emory University, to advance peace and health worldwide.

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Waging Peace. Fighting Disease. Building Hope.

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