



# RESOLVING CONFLICTS

## ***What is the prevalence and nature of conflict worldwide today?***

Wars produce the worst violations of human rights worldwide and are the greatest impediment to human development. The number of conflicts between nations has decreased since World War II, yet there have been more than 50 major armed conflicts since the Cold War ended in the late 1980s. Most of those have been internal clashes over religion,

national or ethnic identity, or access to natural resources or wealth.

Some recent wars have been the bloodiest, most devastating of modern times: over 5 million people killed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, over 2 million killed in Sudan, and genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In 2008, 16 major armed conflicts were active in 15 locations around the world. Over the past decade, the global number of active major armed conflicts has declined overall,

but the decline has been very uneven, with major drops in 2002 and 2004 and increases in 2005 and 2008.

## ***Why is The Carter Center involved in peacemaking? Shouldn't that be the role of governments?***

Considered to be free of political or partisan positions, nongovernmental organizations such as The Carter Center have been able to gain access, build relationships, and offer mediation services in situations where more formal diplomacy has not been immediately welcomed. War-torn countries also may be more receptive to organizations that have already provided humanitarian or development assistance to them.

With President Carter's involvement, the Center can operate a level above other nongovernmental organizations, working directly with heads of state. Our role in brokering peace agreements falls between countries' official diplomacy and unofficial peace building efforts. The Center coordinates its work with government and nongovernmental organizations to avoid duplication of efforts or contradictory plans.

## ***What does building lasting peace involve?***

A lasting peace requires more than an end to fighting. The underlying causes of violent conflict must be addressed to prevent its resurgence. Much time is spent implementing a peace agreement and reconciling hostilities caused by war. Solidifying peace demands patient, persistent efforts to bring former combatants together to forge a shared future.

A culture of respect for human rights is crucial to permanent peace. This includes strengthening freedom and democracy in nations worldwide, securing for people the political and civil rights that are the foundation of just and peaceful societies. The Center assists countries in maintaining peace by nurturing full citizen participation in elections and public policymaking and by helping to establish government institutions that bolster the rule of law, fair administration of justice, access to information, and government transparency. When democracy backslides or formal diplomacy fails, the Center offers mediation expertise and has furthered avenues for peace in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and Asia.



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## *Where and how is the Center working to prevent conflict?*

The Carter Center monitors situations around the world that could erupt into conflict to detect the earliest signs of trouble and identify opportunities to divert violence, which might otherwise be overlooked or recognized too late. In addition, parties in dispute sometimes seek a neutral third party such as the Center to facilitate dialogue in an effort to avert violence.

Examples of our conflict prevention projects include:

- **Venezuela** – After an attempted coup in Venezuela, the Center worked to advance discussions between the government and opposing factions. This dialogue helped to prevent a descent into internal armed conflict.
- **Ecuador and Colombia** – The shared border of these two nations is under strain from multiple issues, including an ongoing guerilla war in Colombia and large numbers of Colombian refugees fleeing into already poor Ecuador border towns to escape fighting in their country. The Center has worked to improve the relationship between the people of Colombia and Ecuador through a dialogue process between key citizens of both countries, organized in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program.
- **Andean Region** – The Carter Center and International IDEA are supporting a dialogue forum between the five Andean countries (Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia) and the United States. The Andean-U.S. Dialogue Forum consists of groups of influential citizens from a variety of sectors in each country. In a series of dialogue sessions in the United States and the Andean region, civil society group are forming personal relationships, learning, and creating proposals to reinforce official diplomacy.
- **Gaza Strip** – The Center is partnering with the United Nations Development Programme to establish a student parliament, bringing together university students from throughout Gaza. Students in Gaza tend to be highly politicized, aligning with the same factions that dominate Palestinian politics at the national level. The parliament provides a forum for students to work constructively together to address issues of common concern, while also providing a platform for dispute resolution.