



AMERICAS POLICY GROUP

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR THE AMERICAS

MESSAGE FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

For more than 40 years, Canadian civil society has organized in solidarity with the human rights and environmental justice struggles of our Latin American and Caribbean neighbours. From the member-led-and-funded Inter-Agency Working Group on Latin America (IAWGLA) to 25 years under the umbrella of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC), we have argued for fair trade and investment policies from the Canadian government and its agencies, and accountability from Canada's corporations.

In collaborating with our partners in the region, we committed to championing Indigenous rights and popular sovereignty, labour rights, democratic governance, peace, and security in the region.

Coming to the decision to return to our roots and say no to Cooperation Canada's 2020 invitation to continue as a Working Group of a re-branded CCIC was not easy. We set ourselves the task of reviewing our mandate, rewriting our policies, and hitting pause on staffing until we could raise enough funds from our members. At the same time, we monitored human rights, labour issues, and environmental concerns closely through our networks, and invited partners to share their insights with us at our meetings.

As the Colombia and Mesoamerica sub-groups continued on with their collective work, the APG became a federally-incorporated not-for-profit with a five-member Steering Committee in August of 2020. Two dozen international

development and humanitarian organizations, human rights organizations, labour unions, research institutions, faith-based and solidarity groups joined the newly-independent coalition.

The pandemic opened up time to re-create the APG on its own terms. As the global health crisis unfolded, however, we saw how authoritarian governments in Latin America used the threat of COVID-19 as an opportunity for social repression. Attacks on human rights, labour, and environmental justice activists intensified, as did violence against women, LGBTTQ+, and Black and Indigenous communities.

By the fall of 2020, we were ready to once more let our voice be heard at Global Affairs Canada, urging the Minister of Foreign Affairs to stand up for a strong and independent Inter-American Human Rights System in the face of interference from the Secretary General of the OAS. Our interventions since are documented below.

Creating the infrastructure and advocacy tools that we needed to rebuild took time, but with a trilingual website up and running and a newly-hired, part-time Coordinator supporting our work together, we know that we can now address the struggles pressing on our hearts with more determination than ever.

In Solidarity,
Robin Buyers & Laura Ramirez, Co-Chairs

FINANCIAL REPORT

	2020	2021 (Jan. - Jul.)
INCOME		
CCIC Balance Carried Forward	\$ 3,440.94	
APG Members' Contributions	\$ 36,725.00	\$ 20,220.00
Balance Carried Forward from 2020		\$ 40,165.94
EXPENSES		
Job Posting		\$ 324.31
Website Registration		\$ 225.90
APG Cheques		\$ 274.90
Consultant's Fees (May-July, 2021)		\$ 7,170.00
BALANCE	\$ 40,165.94	\$ 52,390.83



Photos: Day of Action for Human Rights in Colombia event in Toronto (Credit: Steelworkers Humanity Fund) and Meeting between Mexican HRDs, the APG, and GAC (Credit: Amnesty International Canada).

SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER IN A PANDEMIC 2020-21

On Bolivia:

Endorsed *Bolivia, the end of a cycle? Reflections on the political crisis, the pandemic, and what comes next* Speakers Series hosted by Carleton University.

On Brazil:

Wrote to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Foreign Affairs Minister Marc Garneau to put a stop to the many ways Canadian economic interests are benefiting from human rights violations, environmental degradation, and the pandemic under the repressive Bolsonaro government.

On Colombia:

Wrote to former Minister of Foreign Affairs François-Philippe Champagne, new Minister Marc Garneau, as well as opposition party foreign affairs critics denouncing the human rights crisis in Colombia and requesting a meeting with the APG.

Met with International Development Minister Karina Gould to discuss the crisis, March 24, 2021.

Published [an op-ed in the Hill Times](#), May 17, 2021, denouncing the deterioration of human rights in Colombia and demanding the Canadian government take action.

Co-organized a national [Day of Action for Human Rights in Colombia](#), #CanadaSOSColombia, June 22, 2021, together with social movement representatives from the Colombian diaspora in Canada. Radio-Canada International, L'Aut Journal, and 16 civil society organizations covered the event.

Following the Day of Action, the Bloc Québécois and the NDP signed on to a multi-party statement by parliamentarians from Canada and Colombia.

On Mexico:

Sent a letter to President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, "[El GOPA llama al presidente de México a poner fin a la violencia en Chiapas](#)," November 24, 2020.

Organized "[No More Blood +10 in Mexico](#)," September 22, 2021. Over 400 participants were updated on the human rights

situation in Mexico since the 2011 No More Blood conference.

Facilitated a meeting September 23, 2021, between 6 Mexican human rights activists, Global Affairs Canada officials, and officials from other government departments preparatory to the annual Mexico-Canada Bilateral Dialogue on Human Rights.

Endorsed "[What does the murder of activist Mariano Abarca in Chiapas, México say about Canadian government accountability?](#)," October 5, 2021.

On Guatemala:

Shared concerns throughout 2020 with the Canadian Embassy in Guatemala and with Ministers Garneau and Ng with respect to Canadian mining interests capitalizing on the pandemic.

Sent a [letter of concern to Minister Garneau](#) on February 17, 2021, and a similar [letter exposing violent attacks against Xinka land defenders](#) March 30. The APG urged the Canadian government to make a public declaration in support of the work of the Human Rights Ombudsperson in Guatemala.

[Met with opposition MP Jack Harris](#), May 27, 2021, to discuss the human rights and democracy crisis.

Requested a meeting with Sylvia Cesaratto, Director General for Central America & Caribbean, Global Affairs Canada, in June, 2021, and in July, 2021, prepared a Briefing Note: "[Canada profits from the rapidly increasing violence and repression in Guatemala, causing deteriorating rule of law and democracy.](#)"

On Nicaragua:

Met to analyze the increasing contraction of democratic space and the repercussions for civil society, May and September, 2021.

On El Salvador:

Endorsed "[The Water Defenders: A Celebration and Reflections on International Solidarity in El Salvador's Victory over Mining](#)," July 13, 2021.