



## Americas Policy Group | A Brief Herstory | 2021

### APG Timeline

- 1981 - Inter-Agency Working Group on Latin America (IAWGLA)
- 1987 - El Salvador Monitoring Group (ESMG)
- 1991 - Central America Monitoring Group (CAMG)
- 1996 - Americas Policy Group (APG)
- 2016 - Americas Policy Group/Regional Working Group
- 2020 - Americas Policy Group (APG)

### 1981 - Inter-Agency Working Group on Latin America (IAWGLA)

#### IAWGLA (1981-1991) comprised of CCIC and non CCIC members

- Space to share programming strategies and conduct policy work on human rights and development
- Met 3 times annually with focus on Central America and Andean region
- No staff: Coordinated by members and funded in part with R&R CIDA funds administered through CCIC.

#### Armed conflict & massive HR Violations

- Archbishop Oscar Romero assassinated (1980); Salvadoran civil war (1980-92); Salvadoran death squads murder 30,000 (1979-81); El Mozote massacre by Salvadoran army (1980)
- Lucas Garcia/Rios Montt dictatorships in Guatemala. Genocide against Indigenous peoples; scorched earth tactics; “beans and bullets” program (model villages, civilian patrols, etc.).
- Reagan administration supports military regimes throughout region; funds the contra war against the Sandinistas.

#### Liberal government (P.E. Trudeau/Turner) 1980-84

- Parliament creates sub-committee on Canada’s relations with Latin America and the Caribbean

- 1982: Canadian government suspends bilateral aid to El Salvador and Guatemala

## **1987 - El Salvador Monitoring Group (ESMG)**

**ESMG (1987-1991) formed by IAWGLA member agencies to protect humanitarian space**

- IAWGLA had devolved into an information sharing forum; ESGM funded through member contributions.
- ESGM members helped facilitate delegation to El Salvador (Lloyd Axworthy); engaged in focused advocacy work with MPs and bureaucracy.

### **Armed conflict & massive HR Violations**

- Massive increase in military aid by Reagan administration to Salvadoran and Guatemalan regimes
- Several failed attempts to reach a negotiated settlement to the armed conflict in El Salvador.
- Refugees return to El Salvador from Mesa Grande

### **Conservative government (Mulroney/Campbell) 1984-93**

- 1985: Canadian government (Parliament and Senate) conducts review of Canada's international relations. It received hundreds of written submissions—around Central America.

## **1991 - Central America Monitoring Group (CAMG)**

**CAMG (1991-96) Increasing desire to take up work in other parts of Central America (especially Guatemala)**

- ESGM's mandate was broadened, and it took on new name.
- Focused policy work was strengthened through inter-institutional collaborations.
- We got results from CIDA on refugee return process and bilateral programming.

### **Human Rights Situation**

- Guatemala and Honduras: Ongoing human rights violations
- El Salvador: Armed conflict was coming to an end. Ceasefire reached in 1991; peace accords signed in 1992.
- Zapatista uprising in Chiapas (1994)

**Conservative government (Mulroney/Campbell) 1984-1993; Liberal government (Chrétien/Martin) 1993-2004**

- NAFTA comes into effect January 1994.

**1996 - Americas Policy Group (APG)**

**APG (Phase 1-1996-2016)**

- Initially, high degree of participation by members (put under pressure due to cuts)
- Advocacy work focused on peace processes and peacebuilding. Mexico and continental integration also identified as issues needing attention.
- Colombia: Focus on Human Rights Impact assessment for CCOFTA

**Human Rights Situation**

- Guatemala: Ceasefire reached; peace accords signed in 1996.
- Colombia: Human rights crisis; war; internal displacement
- Mexico: Growing rights abuses and displacement; Acteal massacre (1997)
- Honduras: Zelaya ousted in 2009 coup.

**Liberal government (Chrétien/Martin) 1993-2006;**

**Conservative government (Harper) 2006-2015**

- Chrétien government creates Secretary of State positions for Latin America and Africa (1993-2003)
- 2006: Harper government launches Strategy of Engagement in the Americas: trade, resource extraction
- 2010: Harper govt. cuts CCIC budget; several APG members lose funding; Rights and Democracy – a strong ally and member of the APG is shut down (2012)

**2016 - Americas Policy Group /Regional Working Group**

**APG/RWG (Phase 2 – 2016-2020)**

- Decreasing funding levels led to decision to restructure the APG and 2 other CCIC Working Groups and merge them into a single CCIC Regional Working Group
- Initially, some collaboration among RWGs; however, that decreased
- Creation of new sub-group on Haiti within APG
- Dialogue with government (North America Strategy Bureau) on Mexico; and with South America Bureau on CCOFTA

## **Human Rights Situation**

- Ongoing concerns in Mesoamerican region; termination of CICIG in Guatemala; escalation of attacks against land and human rights defenders; situation of political prisoners in Honduras; and migrant crisis in the region.
- Peace process in Colombia in midst of ongoing human rights violations and murders of demobilized FARC guerrillas.

## **Liberal government (Justin Trudeau) 2015-**

- Re-engagement with our sector
- Unpredictability of funding/projectization

## **2020 – Americas Policy Group (APG)**

### **APG-GOPA (2020-present)**

- Following a process of reflection among the APG members in 2019/2020, the group made the decision to continue the next phase of its work as a stand-alone coalition. The organization got its legal registration in 2020 and looks forward to continued and enhanced collaboration among its members in support of peace, human rights, and social justice in the Americas.

## **Thank you! ¡Gracias! Merci!**

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