Legislative Advocacy Workshop:  
*Your taxes, your impact*  
Raising our voices for human rights in Mexico & Central America  

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Workshop Agenda

Intro: Who we are

Part I: Overview of Policies
• U.S. policies impacting human rights in Mexico & Central America

Part II: How to make your message heard
• Research, Organize & Communicate, Follow-up
• Dos & Don’ts
• Roleplay
• Resources
Latin America Working Group (LAWG) advocates for U.S. foreign policy towards Latin America and the Caribbean that promotes human rights, peace, and social justice.

We mobilize grassroots. We lobby with Congress and the administration. We educate the public. We uplift civil society partners in the region. We bring together organizations with similar values to work towards the same goals.
To ensure that U.S. policies advance human rights, peace, and social, environmental, and economic justice in Latin America and the Caribbean.
CAMPAIGNS

In our 35 years, we've helped pave the way from war to peace in Central America and Colombia, successfully pushed the United States to open diplomatic relations with Cuba, defended migrants' and refugees' rights, campaigned for justice and accountability in Mexico, and demanded protections for human rights defenders.

Promote Peace

Uphold Justice & Defend the Defenders

Stand Up for Migrants & Refugees

Advance Land, Economic & Environmental Rights
U.S. – Mexico Security Assistance: Merida Initiative

- Main **U.S. security assistance** package to Mexico
- Nearly **$2.9 billion** since FY 2008 for the war on drugs
- Military-military assistance mainly through **DOD** now
- **Human rights conditions** on 15% of aid

*Source: https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41349.pdf*
U.S. – Mexico Security Assistance: Merida Initiative

- **End military assistance** to Mexico, incl. any assistance encouraging a military role in law enforcement.

- **Stop exporting weapons** to Mexican military and police.

- Stop pressuring and supporting border militarization at Mexico’s southern border.

- **Enforce human rights conditions**, suspending assistance tied to conditions until advances.

U.S. SECURITY ASSISTANCE

- Nearly 10,000 complaints filed of abuse by the military, 2006-2016.
- 29,168 homicides in 2017, the most ever recorded.
- 35,410 registered disappearances as of January 2018.

**U.S. MONEY & ARMS SHOULD NOT FUEL VIOLENCE & ABUSE IN MEXICO.**

CALL CONGRESS >> LAWG.ORG/AssessSecurityAid

2017 homicide rate in Mexico: [https://t.me/2FF1tEJ](https://t.me/2FF1tEJ)
U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America

• Largest **U.S. assistance package** to Central America since 1980s

• Security assistance **piece**—Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI)

• **Human rights conditions** on 50% of assistance

• **Migration conditions** on 25% of assistance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>FY2016</th>
<th>FY2017 (estimate)</th>
<th>FY2018 (request)</th>
<th>% Change 2017-2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belize</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>-94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>-93%</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
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<td>72.7</td>
<td>46.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
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<td>125.5</td>
<td>80.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>98.3</td>
<td>95.3</td>
<td>67.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
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<td>9.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Panama</td>
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<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>-63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America Regional Security Initiative</td>
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<td>329.2</td>
<td>263.2</td>
<td>-20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Regional Assistance</td>
<td>91.4</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>750.0</td>
<td>655.0</td>
<td>460.0</td>
<td>-30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5. Funding for the U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America by Country: FY2016-FY2018**

(appropriations in millions of current U.S. dollars)

**Sources:** U.S. Department of State, **Congressional Budget Justification for Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, Fiscal Year 2018, May 23, 2017; and the explanatory statement accompanying P.L. 115-31.**

**Notes:** “Other Regional Assistance” includes assistance appropriated or requested for Central America as a whole through funding accounts such as the State Department’s Western Hemisphere Regional program, USAID’s Central America Regional program, and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation. Health assistance provided through USAID’s Central America Regional program is not considered part of the strategy.

Source:
U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America

• **End military assistance** to Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, incl. any assistance encouraging a military role in law enforcement.

• **Enforce human rights conditions** on U.S. assistance to Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, **suspending assistance tied to conditions until advances**.

• Oppose U.S. assistance to **harsh and ineffective counter-narcotics assistance** in Central America.
How to get your message heard

• Research your Representatives & Senators
  – Research policy positions, personal connections/special interests, press coverage, social media
  – Contact info-D.C. & In-district office
  – Sign up for email updates, events, news alerts, etc.
  – Find out committee assignments (Appropriations, Foreign Affairs, Homeland Security, Judiciary, Armed services, etc.)
How to get your message heard

• Organize & Communicate
  • Identify issue & talking points
  • Strength in numbers
  • Organize in district meetings
  • Attend town halls & local events
  • Make calls & write letters, op-eds
  • Follow-up

Senators need to hear from you!
How to get your message heard

• **DO** use personal stories to make a point.
• **DO** bring short materials-fact sheets, reports, petitions.
• **DO** relate situations in their home state or district to legislation.

• **DON’T** overload a meeting with too many issues.
• **DON’T** expect staffers or members to be specialists.
• **DON’T** forget to follow-up.
How to get your message heard

Sample Dear Colleague Letters


• **Rep. Ellison**, May 2018, [https://bit.ly/2tKHOQS](https://bit.ly/2tKHOQS), Mx security “We write to urge you to conduct a fill and public assessment of U.S. security assistance to Mexico. We are concerned that U.S. hinds may be furthering cycles of violence and enabling human rights violations by the Mexican military.


Resources

- **LAWG** - www.lawg.org
- **Security Assistance Monitor** - https://securityassistance.org
- **Indivisible Guide** - https://indivisible.org/guide
- **Congressional Research Service** - https://crsreports.congress.gov/
Thank you!

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