

# **RADICAL REALISM**

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## **BUILDING POSITIVE PEACE IN MEXICO**

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**12 INTERVIEWS WITH PEACEBUILDERS**



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## **Quantifying Peace and its Benefits**

The Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit think tank dedicated to shifting the world's focus to peace as a positive, achievable, and tangible measure of human well-being and progress.

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# INTRODUCTION

This paper — *Radical Realism: Building Positive Peace in Mexico* — seeks to give a voice to leading practitioners and policymakers working on the front lines to build peace in a country troubled by high levels of violence and corruption.

It consists of 12 interviews with a small sample of the many individuals engaged in peace related issues in Mexico. Reflecting the complexity of the issue, interview subjects ranged widely, from representatives of leading NGOs to government officials, scholars and members of the media. An edited transcript of each interview is presented in this paper.

The Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) has spent the last decade measuring peace and its economic consequences. It has done so most prominently through the Global Peace Index, which ranks 162 countries on their peacefulness using 23 different indicators. The Global Peace Index has documented several important trends, which include small but significant declines in peace over the last decade and changes in the nature of everyday violence. As Mexico exemplifies, decreases in the amount of conflict between nations have been counteracted by increases in violence within nations.

“Positive peace is a radical concept because it suggests a different understanding of the conditions that lead to peace than is typically advanced.”

The title of the paper is borrowed from an interview subject, Gerardo Palacios Pámanes, who as the founder and dean of the University of Security Sciences in Nuevo León led a successful effort to revitalize the state’s police training academy. In describing how he convinced the state’s then-Governor to sign off on his ambitious plans, he said that conditions were so bad in Nuevo León that the Governor had no choice but to be “radically realistic.”

Palacios’s turn of phrase is apt because it captures something very important about Mexico. Alongside the Global Peace Index, IEP has brought an empirical lens to the study of the attitudes, institutions and structures of more peaceful societies — or what is termed positive peace.

## NEGATIVE PEACE



... is the absence of violence or fear of violence

## POSITIVE PEACE



... is the attitudes, institutions and structures which create and sustain peaceful societies

Positive peace is a radical concept because it suggests a different understanding of the conditions that lead to peace than is typically advanced. The eight factors identified as essential to peace include well-functioning government, sound business environment, low levels of corruption, acceptance of the rights of others, high levels of human capital, good relations with neighbors, free flow of information and equitable distribution of resources. These factors were identified through a rigorous assessment, which compared over 4,700 variables with the Global Peace Index.

As the *Pillars of Peace* box on the opposite page suggests, countries must advance more than a narrow-minded security agenda if they are to become more peaceful. This has become painfully clear in Mexico, where the dominant strategy of the last decade (seeking the capture and arrest of leaders of major drug gang organizations) has led to mixed results at best. “When I first approached the issue of security, the talk was about guns, vests and patrols,” said Eduardo Bohórquez, the director of Mexico’s office of Transparency International. “Then we realized that there was a need to develop prevention strategies. There are many things that can be done that have nothing to do with crime and violence but that can generate secure environments.”

“ Small improvements in peace over the last three years have given Mexico an important window of opportunity to make more lasting changes.

The good news is that Mexico is uniquely positioned to benefit from prioritizing investments in positive peace over typical law and order strategies. Mexico has been identified as having a large “positive peace surplus.” This means that, compared to global averages, Mexico’s capacity for peace is much higher than its actual peace levels would suggest. This makes intuitive sense, because Mexico’s basic institutions (troubled as they may be) are stronger than many fragile states. In recent years Mexico has worked hard to reform and modernize its economy and despite domestic unrest, does not face the threat of civil war or conflict with another nation. As IEP’s research shows, citizens in countries with higher levels of positive peace are more likely to express their grievances in non-violent ways.

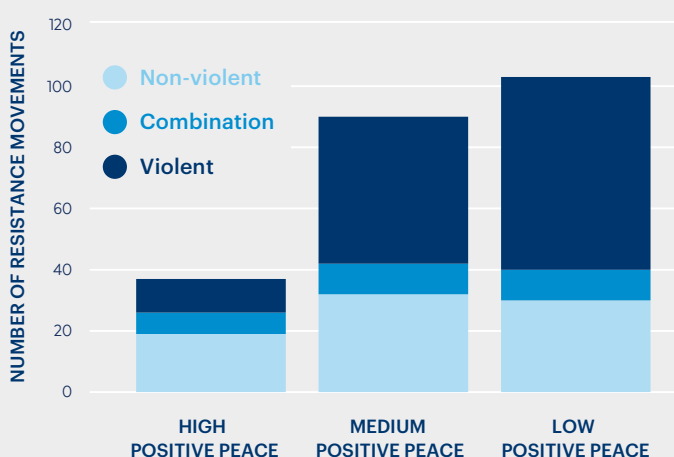
At the same time, small improvements in peace over the last three years have given Mexico an important window of opportunity to make more lasting changes. The 2015 edition of IEP’s Mexico Peace Index documented a 16 per cent increase in peace largely due to a decrease in the number of homicides (although it also showed an overall 18 per cent decrease in peace from 2003 to 2014).

In other words, for Mexico, peace is both a radical and realistic goal to pursue. It is radical in the sense that positive peace upends conventional thinking about how peace should be conceptualized and pursued. It is realistic because Mexico has much strength to draw upon in seeking to become more peaceful. The interviews outlined in this paper examine these themes in greater detail, providing a snapshot of how Mexico can build the long-term drivers of peace.



## PREVALENCE AND NATURE OF RESISTANCE CAMPAIGNS

Between 1945 and 2006, 91 per cent of violent resistance campaigns have occurred in countries with weaker Positive Peace. The proportion of resistance movements that are non-violent is higher in countries with stronger Positive Peace.



Source: University of Denver, IEP

## KEY THEMES

### DISTILLED FROM THE INTERVIEWS

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#### › **INTERVIEW SUBJECTS WERE SURPRISINGLY UPBEAT ABOUT THE COUNTRY'S FUTURE**

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While not shrinking from the challenges faced by Mexico, the individuals interviewed for this paper were surprisingly upbeat about the country's future. "I would say my optimism is about 70 per cent, which is very high considering the situation," said Libertad Zavala, coordinator of Barrios Amables (Kind Neighborhoods) in the municipality of Zapopan. "I have no crystal ball," Juan E. Pardinas, the Director of the Mexico Institute for Competitiveness (IMCO) told us, but "I have faith" that the current energy in society will produce "better circumstances" for Mexico.

This optimism even extends to direct victims of violence such as Adrián López, the Director of the newspaper Noroeste Culiacán in Sinaloa, a state that has struggled with gang-related drug violence (López was shot in an assault). "My optimistic viewpoint tells me that we are not the same Mexico," he said. "We are approaching a new level of public discussion, public demands, that are strongly broadcasted through new technologies and social networks."

#### › **CRISIS ALSO PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE**

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High-profile incidents like the disappearance of 43 students in Iguala and drug lord Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán's brazen escape from federal prison have hurt Mexico's image in the world. However, the perception that Mexico is in crisis may actually help build pressure on government and society to make needed changes. "Crisis can also be spaces for transformation," said Gabriella Gomez-Mont, echoing a theme mentioned by other interviewees. For Gomez, who started a public agency (the Laboratory of the City) at the invitation of Mexico City's newly elected Mayor, Miguel Ángel Mancera, to increase citizen participation in government, these incidents have shined a spotlight on some of Mexico's thorniest problems.

#### › **IN BUILDING PEACE, START SMALL AND THINK BIG**

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So, if Mexico is going to become more peaceful, where should it start? Eduardo Bohórquez from Transparency International Mexico is an advocate of starting small but thinking big. "What if instead of facing a big problem," he says, "we turn it into ten less important problems that together comprise the biggest problem," citing the success of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and his organization in improving and eradicating corruption from the process of issuing passports in Mexico.

Other interview subjects sought to follow Bohórquez's advice. For example, as Gomez-Mont acknowledges, linking citizens and government together in a "megapolis of 22 million people" is a huge undertaking. Her solution is to launch pilot programs in a handful of schools and hold a series of experimental workshops between the government and the public over the future of the city. "If we want nimble, innovative and creative governments we also need experimental spaces where controlled risks can be taken" she said.

#### › **THERE IS A ROLE FOR BOTH GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN BUILDING PEACE**

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One of the challenges Mexico faces is widespread public distrust of government, fueled in large part by high-profile corruption scandals at the state and federal level. In response, some may believe that the energy and momentum for change in Mexico can only come from outside government. However, as this paper shows, that is not the case. Three of the 12 interview subjects profiled currently work in the public sector and a fourth (Gerardo Palacios) recently left a government position. Several others have had significant public sector assignments.

From the interviews, it is clear that there are significant examples of government innovation in Mexico. In addition to Gabriella Gomez-Mont's work on citizen participation in Mexico City, this includes a federal effort to create a culture of violence prevention throughout Mexico (led in part by

Eunice Rendón, the Undersecretary, Prevention and Citizen Participation of the Ministry of Interior) and targeted efforts to improve human rights and gender justice in the state of Campeche (led by Perla Castro, Campeche's Government Undersecretary).

“ If we want a better country, a better society, we must first imagine it, and if you can imagine it then you can be creative in building what you have imagined.

While excited by the progress they have made, the government officials interviewed are also mindful of the work that needs to be done. “To implement (new human rights reforms) successfully, we need to raise awareness among public servants as well as convey to people their rights,” said Castro. “We need more training to governments, so that what is captured on paper becomes a reality.”

There is also a need for government and civil society organizations to work together more closely. “Ideally the government and (civil society) organizations will coordinate and implement actions together,” said Rendon. “There are organizations that have worked for many years in some cities and have more information and experience than the government.”

## › CORRUPTION IS AN ENORMOUS AND PERVERSIVE PROBLEM FOR MEXICO

Another commonly expressed viewpoint in the interviews presented in this paper is the enormously negative impact of corruption. “I don't think there is a problem in the country which is not touched, impaired or increased by the issue of corruption,” said Juan E. Pardinas, the director of the Mexico Institute of Competitiveness. Bohórquez echoes that assessment. “Corruption is corrosive and weakens any institution,” he said. Among other things, “it decreases public spending on education, health and safety.”

## › PEACE IS A SYSTEM, AND THE FACTORS OF PEACE CANNOT BE WORKED ON IN ISOLATION FROM ONE ANOTHER

As the example of corruption shows, our interview subjects were quick to point out the interrelationships between the factors of positive peace. Corruption, for example, degrades other important elements of peaceful societies, such as the creation of a sound business environment and good governance. As Bohórquez points out, it also decreases the amount of money available for investment in other needed areas like education and accelerates other negative trends, such as inequitable distribution of resources across Mexican society.

The important point that was reiterated by interview subjects is the need to approach peace in a more holistic way. As IEP defines it, positive peace is not just the absence of violence but also the presence of other factors that help societies realize their full potential. “We cannot talk about peace if we have no justice,” said Consuelo Bañuelos, the Director of Promoting Peace, an initiative that works in poor neighborhoods and prisons in the northern state of Nuevo León. “By justice I mean access to education, health services and housing, so that a person can fully develop as a human being.”

Fernando Cortes Cáceres, professor emeritus at the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences and the National Autonomous University (UNAM), shares this view. “The current violence crisis in Mexico has a lot to do with inequality,” he said. “Relatively equitable countries have much lower levels of violence.” Similarly, according to Miguel Sarre, a Professor and Researcher at the Autonomous Technological Institute of Mexico (ITAM), “the biggest problem (in Mexico) is relating the issue of security to the importance of due process of justice. The violation of human rights increases a person's level of violence and it comes back to haunt the rest of society.”

While the challenges faced by Mexico are great, so are the opportunities. This view was best expressed by Alberto Serdán Rosales, associated Professor at the Center for Research and Training in Economics (CIDE).

“If we want a better country, a better society we must first imagine it, and if you can imagine it then you can be creative in building what you have imagined.”

“ If we want nimble, innovative and creative governments we also need experimental spaces where controlled risks can be taken.

# EDUARDO BOHÓRQUEZ

DIRECTOR, TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL MEXICO

Eduardo was born in Mexico City and has a Major in Political Science and Public Administration from the National Autonomous University (UNAM) and a Master in Development from the University of Cambridge. He is better known for co-founding and directing the Mexican chapter of Transparency International for more than fifteen years. He has participated in the development of innovative systems to fight corruption in a country like Mexico, where the problem is so complex.

## › What issues motivate you?

My main challenge is transforming a country that considers itself corrupt. Having lived outside of Mexico, I know that other countries faced similar problems and built solutions for them. There was nothing unusual in the genetic code of the Finns or Danes, except having the luxury of putting people together to solve big challenges. I find it motivating to be part of an innovative community that knows and has experienced that some things can change for the better.

## › Why is it important to have low levels of corruption to achieve peace?

Corruption is corrosive and weakens any institution. The social pact is weakened and in some places broken. When rights are not met in practice, what gets put in its place is a process of defending privileges. Another consequence of corruption is that it hinders the effective use of public resources for such important

purposes as peacebuilding. It decreases public spending on education, health and safety, among others.

## › Is it possible to end corruption with policies focused on transparency?

No. We have used the term transparency as a euphemism for other things, for example, absence of corruption. The D.F. is a perfect example. It ranks number one in terms of transparency but very low in corruption. It is counterintuitive because for years we have argued that transparency is one of the best antidotes to corruption. But, to be very open is not necessarily to be very honest. In fact, being very open can lead one to become very cynical. I do what I want, I'm unpunished, but everyone knows. Transparency does not solve corruption on its own, but it can provide tools to help create accountability.

## › What is our greatest challenge to fight corruption?

We want to solve all problems simultaneously. What if instead of facing a big problem we turn it into ten less important problems that together comprise the biggest problem. For example, it is easier to design strategies to address corruption in procurement, services and procedures, traffic cops and public ministries, instead of having a big anti-corruption strategy.

“ Transparency does not solve corruption on its own, but it can provide tools to help create accountability.

It is a matter of efficiency and above all, strategy. No country has solved the issue of corruption in the abstract, everyone proceeds by limiting specific problems, which may generate other but less complex issues.



### > Are we creating better solutions?

Yes, a good example is the Anti-Corruption System. The original proposal from various political groups was to have a great Anti-Corruption tsar and what we persuaded legislators was that what we really needed was an Anti-Corruption system. Instead of having a single very powerful institution, with great autonomy, it is actually a set of institutions that solve specific problems. Another example is the Consejo Coordinador Empresarial, which recently published a set of guidelines for companies to fight corruption in Mexico. The private sector was more used to denounce corruption but now they have acknowledged to be part of the problem: the side that pays the bribe.

### > Are there conditions in place to end corruption in Mexico?

I think so. Now no one has to pay a bribe for having a passport issued. That means that the reform of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Transparency International Mexico has been done right. What we cannot do so easily is to solve corruption at all levels, in all subjects, at the same time. It is necessary to prioritize and focus.

### > How can civil society participate in this battle?

Citizens can help choose priorities; usually we do not ask them what they need. Maybe they need to do something less intensive than what we imagine when we talk about participation. A nice example is the one we learned in the nurseries of the Mexican Institute for Social Security (IMSS). We designed a model in which parents were

required to help improve the quality of childcare. This will take them two hours and not two years.

### > What context do you imagine in Mexico over the next 10 years? And within that context, what gives you hope?

As Jesus Reyes Heroics said, "All that resists, supports." The fact that there is a political class so affected by corruption with such low levels of institutional and social confidence is fertile ground for innovation. Today we have more information technology than ever before at a very low cost, with pockets of public information that no society ever had until the twenty-first century. Only then could we have seen so many organized movements without a visible leader. We have many problems to solve but these conditions have never existed before in the world.

### > If you had unlimited resources, what would you support in order to have peace in Mexico?

I will change the question. I like scarcity. Understand that it is not a problem of resources but of strategy. When I first approached the issue of security, the talk was about guns, vests and patrols. Then we realized that there was a need to develop prevention strategies. There are many things that can be done that have nothing to do with crime and violence but that can generate secure environments. In reality no public policy is comprehensive when it gets implemented. The question I would ask is; knowing that we have so few resources, how can we coordinate businesses, citizens, politicians and resources to solve challenges?



“ It is not a problem of resources but of strategy. When I first approached the issue of security, the talk was about guns, vests, and patrols. Then we realized that there was a need to develop prevention strategies.

# GABRIELLA GOMEZ-MONT

## DIRECTOR, LABORATORY FOR MEXICO CITY

Gabriella is the founder and director of Laboratory for the City, a new area of experimentation of the Government of Mexico City. She is a visual artist, writer and director of documentary films, and a consultant on creative and multidisciplinary international projects. She was named a TED Senior Fellow, Yale World Fellow, MIT Director's Fellow and World Cities Summit Young Leader. She is interested in creative methodologies to co-create cities and improve the urban experience.

### › What is the Laboratory for the City?

The Lab for the City is the experimental space of the Government of Mexico City that opens a citizen space inside the government. In fact, most of my team come from foundations or civil society organizations and have not worked for government before. We divide our work in two areas, the first is about civic innovation, which consists in asking ourselves how to re-invent the way that government and citizens interact and create a vision of the city. The other area is urban creativity, which looks at the city with imagination as a place of experimentation. The Lab investigates current trends that are interesting for the city, it hosts dialogues between the government, citizens to have close and intense discussions, and we bring experts to workshops. The Lab also promotes policies that involve several areas of the government. The goal of our work is to show how government can

become a space for ideas and debates. Conversations are important because there is a big gap between what is being done by the government and its citizens and when you sit people at the same table, suddenly you realize that we are all talking about the same things.

### › What difficulties have you had?

We want to identify the best side of government and the best side of civil society, it is in that space where we begin to build bridges. While obviously both have dark sides, if there is enough good will, collaboration and constructive criticism, we can achieve a better understanding of the challenges and address them. The most relevant issue is resilience, a component of positive peace that I particularly appreciate. The key is understanding the system as a whole, when the nodes start interconnecting, then crisis-or even breaking points- can be solved more easily and the system is strengthened.

### › Give us an example of the projects carried out at the Laboratory.

This year we will work with the Ministry of Education in implementing pilot school programs for kids between the age of nine and fourteen. This is a small scale project being done with four schools to see if it works and to learn from the experience. This is an example of the experiments we do in collaboration with other government offices and civil society. If we want nimble, innovative and creative governments we also need an experimental space where controlled risks can be taken; that is what labs are for.

### › You worked in civil society, what have you found that you can achieve working at the government level?

The creation of the Lab is already an achievement. Many stereotypes about government are true but I believe in the potential of a government to build

a city. I think the reason why my team and I work here is because of a bold invitation by the Mayor of the city, who gave us creative license and an open space. The Laboratory is small within the structure of government and to be effective we needed to have the ability to call for attention. It is important that the issues brought to the table by citizens, through us, can be echoed within the government. We are a hybrid entity in the structure of government. The team includes experts in artificial intelligence, urban geographers, security experts, international relations, journalists, artists, designers, filmmakers, historians and many architects, among others. It has been very interesting to bring together a group of people that don't usually work together.

“ The challenge of designing participatory mechanisms is huge. We are talking about a megalopolis of 22 million people. How do you create a participatory process for so many people?

#### ➤ How do you work in a city as big as this one? Do citizens participate?

One of our lessons is that we have idealized the meaning of citizen participation. Too often we believe that when the doors open, citizens enter and everything gets solved, but that is not true. Some implemented measures such as creating bicycle lanes and installing parking meters to discourage the use of private cars often have a negative response, even if they are things that will ultimately benefit everyone. The challenge of designing participatory mechanisms is huge. We are talking about a megalopolis of 22 million people. How do you create a participatory process for so many people? Our work scheme operates at several levels, from working with the dining hall just around the corner, to the Milpa Alta delegation where there are many young people that are prone to suicide. The great charm and



the great difficulty of Mexico City is that if you compare San Bartolo and La Condesa (two different areas of the city), you will find that they have very different characteristics, not only socio-economic but also cultural.

#### ➤ How do you picture Mexico in ten years?

I think as a country, Mexico is now going through a particularly problematic place. I confess that my heart breaks a little. On the other hand, historically we have seen that crisis can also be spaces for transformation. A conversation between governments, civil society, businesses people and all the various actors is needed to move the country forward. As for Mexico City, it responds as few cities in the world do. We have recently become the city with the fourth largest bike system in the world, and it is the same with green transport. Although it is not perfect, we have achieved improvements in human rights issues such as same sex marriage, legalizing abortion, euthanasia and other social programs. It is important that the city keeps innovating and being an example of a modern city within this country.

“ The goal of our work is to show how government can become a space for ideas and debates. Conversations are important because there is a big gap between what is being done by the government and its citizens. When you sit people at the same table, suddenly you realize that we are all talking about the same things.

## ADRIÁN LÓPEZ

DIRECTOR, EDITORIAL GROUP NOROESTE

Originally an engineer from Tecnológico de Monterrey, Adrián decided to make journalism his profession. Since 2008, he is the director of the newspaper Noroeste and collaborates with several non-governmental organizations and business chambers in Sinaloa. He teaches ethics and citizen engagement in his alma mater and is currently a candidate for a Master in Public Management.

### › What work have you spent doing over the last decade?

When I was studying for my master's in applied ethics I was invited to become Business Director for the newspaper El Mazatlan. That was my introduction in to journalism. I lived in Mazatlan during a very difficult time. In March 2008 the economic crisis in the United States began. Mazatlan is a city that lives from American tourism. However, the worst crisis came later when in 2011 Mazatlan became the city with the second highest murder rate in the country, nearly 307 homicides per year. Cruise ships stopped coming after the U.S. warned its citizens not to travel to Sinaloa. This had a heavy impact on the economy.

### › What are the biggest challenges in your profession?

We were the first newspaper in Mexico to present a set of criteria for violent content. Basically, we only publish violent content when two requirements are met: if it strengthens the rule of law, and if it is related to

topics beyond security, for example, politics, vulnerable groups or the business sector. The journalistic tendency is to say that the news is made up of gunfights and shootouts, but we decided to give our stories a more ethical treatment. The idea is to not only be a mirror of reality but to build a message. We realized that we could contribute more to social stability if we found a way to treat violence without increasing fear or undermining economic development.

“ It is very difficult to survive as an independent newspaper in this country.

### › What have you accomplished?

It is very difficult to survive as an independent newspaper in this country. However, we have successfully positioned ourselves as a serious newspaper, objective, truthful, and critical. We follow issues that are sensitive to citizens, but are not always pleasant for the political class,

as in the case of the driving licenses. There was a clear violation of human rights in the requirements to process a driving license in Sinaloa. We consulted with many experts and gave the issue wide coverage, and ultimately promoted a collective citizens movement against the measure. We also developed a network called “Open Parliament Sinaloa”, led by Noroeste with another eight civil society organizations. Its objective is to keep track of local congress decisions and make public every discussion session.

### › Is there freedom of expression in Mexico?

To say that there is, is a fallacy. I say that if Mexico were Twitter, Peña Nieto would not be president, however, Mexico is Televisa. The media at the state level receives funding by Governors, this happened after they realized that investing in their image could help them become President. We have media owners that have always been close to power, and that kills any chance of independent journalism.



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In Sinaloa, journalism is very difficult because we are caught in the crossfire between two actors: organized crime, which is a powerful force that goes completely unpunished; and the government, which also goes completely unpunished, although it is a bit more cautious about risk. That mix is a perfect breeding ground for a journalist to be a victim of violence.



› **Do you feel safe as a journalist in Mexico?**

It is clear that as you become more visible, you become more undesirable to the powers that surround you (editor's note: López was shot in an alleged assault). In Sinaloa, journalism is very difficult because we are caught in the crossfire between two actors: organized crime, which is a powerful force that goes completely unpunished; and the government, which also goes completely unpunished, although it is a bit more cautious about risk. That mix is a perfect breeding ground for a journalist to be a victim of violence. In our case we have been besieged and threatened and have about 90 previous investigations opened at the Public Ministry and at the Attorney General's office.

› **Are you optimistic or pessimistic about Mexico's future?**

I see a pessimistic scenario in which things will not change much, organized crime in Mexico is a very complex problem and we continue without attacking the root of the problem. We keep burying bodies as if nothing happened. My optimistic viewpoint tells me that we are not the same Mexico we were in the seventies. We are approaching new levels of public discussion, of public demands, that are strongly broadcasted through new technologies and social networks. About 70 million young people in this country have a smartphone. I think that's the hope, that Mexico, being such an unequal country, finds a way to have a common conversation. Just ten tweets sent to a senator are enough to make them start thinking about the political consequences of their actions.

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The idea is to not only be a mirror of reality but to build a message. We realized that we could contribute more to social stability if we found a way to treat violence without increasing fear or undermining economic development.

# PERLA KARINA CASTRO FARÍAS

## UNDERSECRETARY OF LEGAL AFFAIRS AND HUMAN RIGHTS, GOVERNMENT OF CAMPECHE

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Perla is a lawyer specialized in Justice for Teenagers, with a Master in Human Rights for Vulnerable Groups. She is a candidate for a PhD in Human Rights from the University of Education Abroad from Madrid, Spain. Currently, she is the Undersecretary of Legal Affairs and Human Rights of the Government of Campeche. Her motivation is transforming the state in matters of human rights and public policy for an efficient government.

### › What work have you been doing for the past fifteen years?

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When I was Ombudsperson for the Defense of Children, Women and Families, I realized we did not have a legal framework and infrastructure to carry out this role. This motivated me to seek an opportunity in the National Human Rights Commission, and so in 1999 I became General Visitor. In 2009, the current governor of the state of Campeche, Fernando Eutimio Ortega Bernés, invited me to work as Undersecretary of Government to serve the people of Campeche. In this role I have been able to carry what I had seen missing while in my previous role in the Human Rights Commission, strengthen public service and making it available for vulnerable sectors, especially, guarantee justice for women.

### › What have you accomplished?

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When I reached this position, I realized that agencies depending on the Government Secretariat needed to be strengthened. We transformed

public defense into the Institute of Access for Justice, that has as a mission to guarantee and efficient defense not only for victims and indicted, but also for vulnerable groups. Now we are about to complete the digitization of the Official Journal as well as of the Public Registry of Property of Commerce and the State and put it online. Also, the Direction of Public Registry has implemented campaigns to register minors to guarantee their right of identity, with mobile units, we reach communities that are often ignored. A very special theme is gender justice, which we have addressed with the creation of the Center for Justice for Women.

### › What is this and what makes it different?

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It is a project that began in 2011. It is a comfortable, dignified space, which concentrates all the comprehensive services offered to women and girls who are victims of rape. By protecting women, we are also protecting their families. Through concrete actions, we must ensure that citizens believe in the

government and the judicial system again. In my opinion, procuring justice is more than a trial and a sentence, it is also to create public policy that enable women to have a new life project, violence free.

### › What challenges have you encountered?

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The National Commission on Violence Against Women began promoting the project and Campeche agreed. It was the first state in the country to implement this model. The first challenge was having the institutions that were going to participate believe in the project. Interagency coordination in the beginning was not easy, no one understood why it was necessary that all institutions be in a single space. We also struggled to get funds for the center's construction and equipment. But we overcame that challenge with the leadership and commitment of the Governor and his wife; today there is a lot of coordination and great sensitivity for the cause. The Justice Center has been recognized nationally and is a model worthy of replication.

➤ **What are the characteristics of a good government?**

A good government is one that gives priority to serving the people. To serve the people there needs to be serious diagnostics to detect the needs of the population, from there, generate public policies to attend to them. To solve social problems, a government must be open to dialogue, implement legal strategies and administrative practices that function and which allow for the defense of human rights. It takes teamwork with federal, state and local governments, you need to have conviction and a commitment to the people.

➤ **Have you enjoyed working in government?**

There are very nice aspects and very difficult aspects to it. Over time, I realized that you don't need to be an autonomous body in order to defend human rights, but that it can be done at the government level. I have tried to instill this in other public servants and make them see when they are defending human rights without realizing it.

➤ **Is there sufficient capacity in governments in terms of human rights?**

We need more. Since the constitutional reform on human rights in 2011, which was a breakthrough, I have seen how the legal framework has evolved within this area. However, to implement reform successfully, we need to raise awareness among public servants as well as to convey among the people their rights in order for them to begin to demand them. We need to give more training to governments, so that what is captured on paper becomes a reality.

➤ **If you had to pick a program which can help overcome the challenges that Mexico faces today, which would it be?**

Public safety is a major issue. There is no greater value recognized and desired by Mexicans than to walk the streets safely. One of the guiding principles of the federal government, led by Enrique Peña Nieto, is a crime prevention program that consists of allocating resources to state governments influence the origins of violence. It also includes crime prevention in terms of a situational perspective: changing the physical environment, improving parks, increasing living spaces and motivating people to participate in their neighborhood committees



and organize themselves. The projects carried out in this strategy are not decided by the local government, citizens are the ones deciding.

➤ **What programs have been done in Campeche with this background?**

We have the fortune of being one of the most pacific states. However, it is crucial to implement actions to maintain this level of peace and security. Hence, with this resource we intervened in two high risk communities known as “polygons”, where unfortunately there are high rates of youth suicides. We intervene at schools and with a network of psychologists, we provide them with services. We managed to gain their trust, and now they alert us when a friend is depressed or taking drugs. We have also been able to rehabilitate high-risk communities that once suffered completely from violence, from their parks to their schools. Last summer we launched the Summer Course for Peace, we invited children with the worst behavior at school. At first they were unwilling to participate, but we made them feel special by offering them the best conditions and making them feel worthy to receive the best care. For them it is important to feel loved, to feel that someone cares for them and that they are not bad. I don't think you need much money. Rather, you need the will to do it. It is necessary to create alliances and have full conviction in public service.

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## JUAN E. PARDINAS

DIRECTOR, MEXICAN INSTITUTE  
FOR COMPETITIVENESS (IMCO)

### › Why is an institute focused on competitiveness studying safety? What is the relationship?

We define competitiveness as the ability of a city, a state or a country to attract and retain talent and investment. Security, whether physical, financial or legal, is essential to attract people who can initiate opportunities for prosperity or business. The need for security is a priority. If you feel that the security of your family is at risk in a particular city or state, or country, how can you have the elements to attract investment and talent?

### › Is that how Mexico is perceived?

Yes and no. If we look at the data, the rate of violence and crime at the regional level is very high. But there are big variations. If we divided the OECD at the subnational level, whether it be states or provinces, the state of Yucatán is one of the safest places in the world, and Tamaulipas and Michoacán some of the most dangerous. I think the phenomenon of security is very important to analyze by region. We are a country of 2 million square kilometers and 118 million people. We have 32 states with each state and each region sharing its own history. Even if you compare the level of crime in Morelia, in Michoacán, to its rural areas, they would seem to be on two different continents. These are

regional problems rather than a national problem.

### › How can the business sector contribute to improve the environment for peace in Mexico?

A strong and diverse private sector is what gives a natural space for civil society organizations to exist. The key principle is a diverse, plural private sector with varying business groups, a multiplicity of firms and companies involved in not only generating potential profits for their shareholders or owners, but also involved in the society and the environment.

### › And what is the relationship between the fight against corruption and reaching the levels of peace we desire?

If we do not tackle the problem of corruption we cannot have strong institutions. For me, insecurity and the lack of peace are the result of corruption. I don't think there is a problem in the country which is not touched, impaired or increased by the issue of corruption and the most obvious of all is the problem of violence. The absence of institutions representing the State in Tamaulipas cannot be explained without acknowledging corruption. The killing of Ayotzinapa students cannot be understood without acknowledging corruption. The cases

of kidnapping in the country, due to the weakness of the police force or its complicity in it, are a phenomenon derived from corruption.

### › What role do civil society organizations play in addressing corruption?

I think the role of civil society has become critical. We live in a country where I question the existence of a functional democratic opposition. We see the leaders of the opposition parties justifying scandals of conflict of interest by the President and his cabinet. Civil society organizations have, to some extent, taken the role of a critical opposition because we denounce what we think is wrong and we offer proposals. The role of civil society is to propose and criticize, to offer alternative public policies, not to become a sort of proxy for the opposition parties.

### › Do you have an optimistic outlook for Mexico in the next ten years?

I think we are reaching a situation of critical mass, of an implosion, which will lead to changes. Many of us are willing to work so that all of those changes become a positive path for the country to take. I have no crystal ball to ensure that the current energy in society will build better circumstances, but I have faith that it will, despite much evidence to the contrary.



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If we do not tackle the problem of corruption we cannot have strong institutions. For me, insecurity and the lack of peace are the result of corruption.

**Before directing IMCO, Juan was a collaborator of the Research Center for Development (CIDAC). He has a PhD in Government Studies from the London School of Economics, a Master in Economics from the University of Sophia in Tokyo, Japan and a Major in Politics from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM).**

# CONSUELO BAÑUELOS

## DIRECTOR, PROMOTING PEACE

Consuelo is the founder and director of Promoting Peace, an initiative that broadcasts a culture of peace and the defense of human rights primarily in detention centers and spaces vulnerable to violence and human rights violations in Monterrey, Mexico. She has a Master in Human Development from the Iberoamerican University and a specialization in Human Rights Education by the American Interamerican Institute of Human Rights.



### › What motivates you?

Since I was a little girl, I realized that the reality I live in is not the same for the rest of my community. Working for fairer living conditions for everyone really motivates me.

### › What is Nuevo León to you?

I know this state like the back of my hand, in every way: from the most difficult and poorest slums to the most beautiful and elegant neighborhoods, and in all of them live human beings, sensitive, with personal troubles, strengths and weaknesses. The challenge is to be able to say 'I do not live in the most unequal state in the country', we cannot have the richest town in the country and six kilometers away municipalities living in extreme poverty.

### › How is peace related to the respect of basic rights?

We cannot talk about peace if we have no justice. By justice I mean access to education, health services and housing, so that a person can fully develop as a human being.

### › Tell us about your work in prisons, what do they represent for you?

I am aware that there are people who for various reasons represent a danger to society, but I think it is a small percentage. For me, jails represent a great opportunity to provide people with tools to strengthen their lives and make better decisions. Under the current conditions, prisons do not do any good to anyone. In fact, a system of punishment and revenge does not help us at all.

### › What is the biggest difficulty for prisons in Mexico?

Lack of funding. There are prisons in which they only have four teachers per 5,000 people. There is overcrowding, there is not enough funding to purchase more beds or provide better food. Last year in Nuevo León there was a funding cut of one hundred million pesos to the prison system, while there were very significant increases in the budgets to, for example, improve the image of the government. I know that prison staff does everything possible to carry

out the task at hand, but they are given too little. There is one bathroom per one hundred people, a bed for every ten people and the food budget is really low. These are inhuman conditions.

### › Do you have hope that things in Mexico can improve?

There is a window of opportunity. In Nuevo León emergency measures were implemented to control the rates of homicide and somehow they worked. Now we can go out without fear, this allowed us to see that our biggest and deepest problem is corruption. I think that if people begin to worry about their neighbors and their neighborhoods and start looking beyond just their immediate family, then things can improve. I think the most important value, beyond justice and freedom, is solidarity.

“ A system of punishment and revenge does not help us.

# GERARDO PALACIOS PÁMANES

## DEAN, UNIVERSITY OF SECURITY SCIENCES (UCS)

Gerardo is the founder and dean of the University of Security Sciences of Nuevo León. He is also is a professor of criminology at the Faculty of Law and Criminology at the University of Nuevo León.

### > What is the University of Security Sciences?

In Nuevo León we have a state police academy like in any other state. I became the director in November 2007 and when I got there I realized it was training only a few cadets. The course lasted six months and once the students graduated and became police cadets, they never returned to receive further training. When the violence intensified in Nuevo León, I approached the current governor and proposed not only to reform the police force but to relaunch it. I told him the police academy should be a decentralized and more formal agency. We used the Academy of the National Police of Colombia and the Police Academy of Chile as reference, among others, and designed legislature to create the university. The Academy went from having 150 students to 1,000. We have trained five thousand cadets in three years. We have a school of command, with the first generation of 55 police officers who were elected by their merits to study as Advanced Technicians in Administration and Police Command.

### > How did you go about doing this work?

It was a huge challenge. To train five thousand police officers we had to interview more than one hundred thousand Mexicans across the country. Unfortunately we found people who despite having secondary education, could not read or write. Therefore, our training goes beyond a police academy, we offer life training.

“ When the violence intensified in Nuevo León, I approached the current governor and proposed not only to reform the police force but to relaunch it. I told him the police academy should be a decentralized and more formal agency.

“ Our training goes beyond a police academy. We offer life training.

### > To what do you attribute your success?

Being radically realistic, the Governor had no choice. Just when we thought things were bad enough in the city, the tragedy of the Casino Royale occurred (editor's note: 52 people died in a fire caused by hired assassins), as well as a massacre in Apodaca prison and hangings and executions were occurring every day. The turning point was when they attempted to kidnapped the son of a prominent businessman. Thereafter, the private sector decided to engage and contribute to the solution. It was a kind of joint venture between the private sector and the state government, something that certainly helped to catapult this project forward.

### > According to surveys, people rely very little on the police. Why?

In my opinion, in Mexico police has not been designed to contain crime, but to create a large network and system of raising money through

corruption. The police officer that climbs in rank is the person that brought the commander the most amount of money. So, that corrupt system was what we were fighting against and in Nuevo León we needed to start from scratch. It was not possible to strengthen the previous system.

#### › So, the lack of confidence is due to corruption?

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Yes. Today we do not even trust our own President. When we see that our politicians are not an example of lawfulness but are the first ones to break the law, then it seems to me very difficult to build a lawful state.

#### › What role do citizens play in addressing corruption?

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The government is an oyster, we have to pry it open. In this case, the tool is citizenship. But it is necessary that the demonstrations, such as mass marches, are accompanied by proposals, otherwise they become missed opportunities. I think that the impact would be larger if an intellectual leader would carry a list of specific topics and join the private sector, academia and the general public. This would be much harder to ignore.

#### › What gives you hope?

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I think that if we decide to move to a higher level of lawfulness, we can make it happen. The context and the circumstances around us shape our behavior. We have to work as equals with the government to improve things.

“ That corrupt system was what we were fighting against and in Nuevo León we needed to start from scratch. It was not possible to strengthen the previous system.





## EUNICE RENDÓN

DIRECTOR, INTERMINISTERIAL COMMISSION FOR  
SOCIAL PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AND CRIME

Eunice is the Director of the Interministerial Commission for Social Prevention of Violence and Crime. She has a PhD and a Master in Political Sociology and Public Policy from the Institute of Political Study in Paris and belongs to the National System of Investigators of the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT).

### › What do you consider to be your accomplishments?

The decision to create an Undersecretary for Prevention was our first great accomplishment. Thanks to the initiative and vision of the Secretary, Miguel Angel Osorio Chong, we developed the National Crime Prevention Program. That was when the challenges began: How to create a culture of violence prevention inside the municipalities? How to implement policies at that level of government? How to measure the impact of our programs?

“ Violence is a multi-causal phenomenon, therefore prevention policies should be multi-sectoral and many government departments should be involved.

### › Where is the Mexican government planning to concentrate its violence prevention efforts?

We define clusters of violence, the zones in which highly vulnerable neighborhoods to violence and delinquency in urban areas, are grouped. Each cluster has between ten thousand and twenty thousand inhabitants. We have managed to systematize the National Institute of Statistics and Geography's (INEGI) databases, surveys and studies on a platform to detect which are the priority regions to work in. Recently, we published a survey conducted by INEGI, The Social Cohesion Survey for Crime Prevention and

Delinquency, which measures the level of social cohesion and the vulnerability of these communities, such as how many people have been in jail and require additional attention. This information will allow us to focus and better spend our resources. We also did an extensive research on worldwide studies of crime, including the causes and risk factors that generate crime. This information, broken down by individual, family and community factors, has helped us design our strategies.

### › Give us some examples of programs that have been undertaken.

In Morelia, Michoacán, we began a choir of children living in vulnerable situations. It's a program that runs daily and is accompanied by a team of psychologists and musicians. Many of the children have shown good progress in school performance. Another interesting project in Michoacán, is with the widows who lost their husbands as a result of violence. By working with them we try to break the cycle of violence. We received help from priests of the local church and eventually found two hundred widows. We gave them training for self-employment and psychosocial accompaniment, and after a while, we built a small fruit dehydration plant together to sell dried fruits.

“ It is important that local governments learn and implement the programs so they can regain citizens' trust.



“ The most important issue [...] is how prevention is understood and how it is implemented. There is much confusion about social development policies which are usually assistance programs. It has been difficult but we have made progress in convincing municipalities that the priorities of the policy of prevention are to work with young people, improve public spaces and develop productive activities.

#### › What challenges did you find with a new Undersecretary?

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Many. Violence is a multi-causal phenomenon, therefore prevention policies should be multi-sectoral and many government departments should be involved. At first there was reluctance, but with data and studies we proved the need for their participation to make this policy work. Today we have modified forty operating rules of the original program, the ones we have seen that work best at the municipal level. Working with feedback from local operators has been key for them to acknowledge and implement the rules.

#### › Do you think that prevention has been recognized as a priority in the country?

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I think there is still a long way to go, there are many obstacles. In Michoacán, there were three different mayors within one year. There is a major political issue, many do not want to implement policies of previous governments, although they are shown to work. Another issue, the most important in my opinion, is how prevention is understood and how it is implemented. There is much confusion about social development policies which are usually assistance programs. It has been difficult but we have made progress in convincing municipalities that the priorities of the policy of prevention are to work with young people, improve public spaces and develop productive activities. However, communities often prefer to invest in the police force. For many years, security was enforced through reactive and coercive measures, the more violence, the more force. We were caught up in a vicious circle that far from making things better, it made them worse.

#### › What is the role of civil society in the National Prevention Program?

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For a prevention policy to be successful citizens must be well involved, but this has also been misunderstood. Some civil society organizations require that programs be implemented through them and although it is important that they participate, resources are not exclusive. It is also important that local governments learn and implement the programs so they can regain citizens' trust. Ideally, the government and the organizations will coordinate and implement actions together. There are organizations that have worked for many years in some cities and have more information and experience than the government.

## ALBERTO SERDÁN ROSALES

ASSOCIATED PROFESSOR, CENTER FOR RESEARCH  
AND TEACHING IN ECONOMICS (CIDE)

Alberto has a Bachelor degree in Business and Administration and a Master in Social Policy and Management at the University of London. He is currently associated professor at CIDE and has worked in several NGOs including Muévete por la Educación, Fundar, Social Management and Cooperation (GESOC), and Mexicanos Primero, among others.

### › How would you describe the education system in Mexico?

Much of it is not working. For example, 60 per cent of new teacher applicants have been identified as ineligible to teach in a classroom. But how did they get into the classrooms? Until 2011, 92 per cent of teachers said they had obtained their position by simply paying for it. In terms of supplies and physical conditions schools are a disaster: out of the 177,000 schools for basic education that exist in Mexico, 14,000 have no blackboards, 36,000 have no plumbing for water or wells, 81,000 have no drainage, 45,000 have no area for sports and recreation, 125,000 do not have telephones and 100,000 have no signs of civil protection or security. In terms of years of schooling, in Mexico we have an average of 8.6, while the average for the OECD is 12. Some would say the problem is that there are no resources, but never in the history of Mexico has so much money been directed to education.

### › How did these conditions come to be?

Many argue the problem is that the government gave the teachers' union control over admittance, tenure, promotions, placements and above all, the liberty to manage resources in a corrupt way. The Government and the Union created a ladder system where teachers that obtain the highest score climb in rank. However, there are strong incentives to dedicate themselves to union life, rather than the classroom. For example, more points are given for attending union events than for writing a textbook. Another issue is that we are not forming critical, proactive, innovative, creative, imaginative citizens; instead the system is designed to create docile subjects.

### › What is the latest educational reform about?

It is a political reform to the rules that have governed the education system for decades. One of the most important changes is the establishment of the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education made up by academics and appointed by the Senate. The Institute aims at making all entry and promotions within the education system a competitive process. The Institute may also declare null those appointments that are not carried out according to the law. The reform establishes a system of information to know how many teachers and students there are and what the conditions of schools in Mexico are. It establishes a centralized payroll as well as a level of autonomy in schools where powers are given to the principals to lead the educational process and even manage the resources for each school. The most important thing is that it took the power to make all decisions away from the union.

“ I think that education reform is a very important first step, but in order for this reform to work, there must be a political reform so that those in power undergo accountability measures, have controls and prioritize the needs of the citizens and not the consolidation of power.



› **What are the challenges to the implementation of this law?**

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The main challenge is the enforcement of the law. Greater transparency and efficiency in the use of resources is needed alongside trust from the teachers. Finally, we need results. If all these changes do not improve the learning process of children, then it will all have been for nothing.

› **Would you expect the education system to improve as a result of the reform?**

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That depends on the amount of social pressure for the reform to take place. The problem is that the issue becomes complicated in a society that does not value education enough and a government that values political stability over improving the education system. I think that education reform is a very important first step, but in order for this reform to work, there must be a political reform so that those in power undergo accountability measures, have controls and prioritize the needs of the citizens and not the consolidation of power.

› **What motivates you?**

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If we want a better country, a better society, we must first imagine it, and if you can imagine it then you can be creative to build what you have imagined. Now that some achievements have been made I am returning to academia and research and looking for alternatives to help better understand the education system and seek approaches that may improve it.



## LIBERTAD ZAVALA

CO-FOUNDER, CUADRA URBANISMO

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➤ **How optimistic are you about the situation in Mexico today? What has changed in the country?**

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I would say my optimism is at about 70 per cent, which is very high considering the situation in Mexico. Many people are participating in solutions in their own ways, from working on a neighborhood garden to participating in an organization or trying to become an independent candidate for an election. Zapopan has the richest population in Jalisco, and also its poorest. I have the opportunity to travel throughout the entire municipality and meet people from different social levels and see that many are organizing to improve their environment.

➤ **Has this changed in recent years due to the rise in violence in Guadalajara?**

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I have noticed big changes in civil society since 2007. Before there were several organizations working on issues of sustainable mobilization, but today, new groups have emerged, it has diversified, organized and professionalized civil society. What unfortunately happened in Ayotzinapa has caused citizens to seek more and better information and has encouraged them to organize. In order to participate it is critical to be informed, and now people are comparing what different media outlets are saying in order to interpret information, to go beyond and not forget.

➤ **How did you end up working in the government of Zapopan?**

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It all started in the firm where I am an associate, *Cuadra Urbanismo* (we specialize in developing and implementing innovative strategies to solve urban problems. We bring together efforts and projects from different actors to co-create the city we want to live in).



As a firm we had our first approach to public administration in 2011 with the government of Zapopan, Jalisco, where we developed participative diagnostics and activities to improve public spaces in 10 neighborhoods. The experience and good performance led us to work in the next municipal administration with the liberty of proposing our model; we called it Barrios Amables.

#### › What is that about?

It is about giving neighbors the tools to organize and create their own projects. The initial approach was to work with twelve neighborhoods in three years, but after the project was made public, many others became interested. In Zapopan there are more than five hundred neighborhoods and over a million and a half inhabitants. We have worked in more than 70 neighborhoods. In the most organized areas, we launch cultural activities such as film screenings and outdoor theater performances to enhance the work they already do. We also implemented “Barriorama” consisting of interventions in the public space such as painting murals and restoring walkways to beautify the neighborhoods. Those projects create other things, such as raising awareness about what the community is lacking and intervene in parks or offer workshops to neighbors. They are pretexts with the aim to create ownership; the resources used are mixed. In some communities the municipality offers resources such as plants, soil, tools and paints, but the neighbors contribute the labor.

#### › Have you observed that neighbors distrust the government?

Yes, at first it was difficult. The offices of citizen participation in the municipalities, in general, exist in order to have a political base. The president of the local organization spoke more about political issues than issues concerning the neighborhood. There are also neighbors who no longer believe in the government, who are tired and do not want to participate. Others want to participate but are afraid, and there are those who simply always expect something from the government. In some neighborhoods we have managed to cross that barrier of confidence, and in others we haven't. Something that improves confidence is to work hand in hand with civil society organizations that have the appropriate experience.

Libertad has a degree in urban planning from the University of Guadalajara and is co-founder of Cuadra Urbanismo, a collective dedicated to sustainable urban development. Libertad is a dreamer, she trusts people's capacities to transform environments and believes in collaboration between neighbors and governments. Since 2013, she is the coordinator of Barrios Amables (Kind Neighborhoods) in the municipality of Zapopan.

#### › Why is it important to have good neighbors to achieve peace?

It is simple, we worry about our performance at work but not about our interpersonal relationships, like being kind with our neighbors. If we organize in small groups to improve our neighborhoods, we would make up for a better city. Being a good neighbor is a democratic exercise, to be informed and have an opinion.

#### › What context do you imagine for Mexico over the next 10 years? And within that context, what gives you hope?

There will be more independent candidates and active citizens around politics. There will be a higher incidence of strengthened organizations and professionals in public policy. However, I believe that the drug problem will not be solved in the short term. More ambitious reforms are needed including better and stronger coordination between all levels of government.

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Many people are participating in solutions in their own ways, from working on a neighborhood garden to participating in an organization or trying to become an independent candidate for an election.

## MIGUEL SARRE

PROFESSOR AND RESEARCHER, AUTONOMOUS  
TECHNOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF MEXICO (ITAM)

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Miguel is a professor and researcher at ITAM; he graduated in law from the Escuela Libre de Derecho in Mexico. He holds a Master in Human Rights from the University of Notre Dame. He was the third Inspector General of the National Human Rights Commission, before its Technical Secretary.



With the new criminal justice system, conceptually, the battle has been won and I am pleased to have participated in it.

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› **What has been your role as a promoter of human rights and justice reform in Mexico?**

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It has been to push and overcome resistance to changes; first on issues of criminal justice and now within the criminal enforcement system and in the prison system.

› **What would you say are the major flaws or major challenges in our criminal justice system?**

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In the criminal justice system, I think the problem is to incorporate changes to the everyday process of the new judicial system; defects persist, in the police system for example. The same could be said about forensic services throughout all stages of the criminal investigation system, the whole process should have greater autonomy and independence. Another aspect is the attachment to certain ways of doing things. There is heavy ritualism in Mexican political culture that usually focuses on the process more than the substance.

➤ **We are in the final stages of implementing the Penal Reform of 2008, what change would you make for it to be a success?**

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I think impunity is behind many issues. Even with the new system, problems like ill-treatment and torture continue, basically the system of justice is broken. I think that the top leadership in our political culture multiplies violence rather than decrease it. It is as if we had a health system that produced more disease than health improvements.

➤ **You talked about innovation. It is a very important issue in Mexico because we lack good proposals. What do you propose to change in our justice system?**

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On the issue of criminal justice, there are things being done well such as when you attend a hearing in the State of Mexico and see that the person who was arbitrarily arrested is released immediately. Another example, there is a Belgian priest who works outside the Reclusorio Norte (Northern Prison) and his mission is to go wait for people who are released at three or four in the morning and then take them to a shelter. That should not happen, the judge orders the prisoners' release during working hours, but because of "administrative issues" they end up being released at dawn. It's the small details that we must correct in order to get to the bigger issues.

➤ **As you mentioned, many of the challenges are rooted in our political culture, what should we do to change it?**

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Much of the solution lies in human rights training. I had the experience of meeting a judge who began to study human rights and now has a completely different view from many other judges or prison authorities. He is currently one of the most involved in defining the new legislation on criminal enforcement. We need a connection between what is taught in universities and what happens in reality.

➤ **What can citizens do to improve the justice system in the country?**

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I think society has all the power but the administration of justice is such a wide topic that most efforts fade away. Some people organize to fight the system's failures but having a relative in jail practically crushes a family's finances and is rare that they do any advocacy beyond their case. I think the biggest problem is in not relating the issue of security to the importance of due process of justice. The violation of human rights increases a person's level of violence and somehow it comes back to haunt the rest of society.

➤ **What do you feel that you have accomplished and what haven't you accomplished yet?**

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With the new criminal justice system, conceptually, the battle has been won and I am pleased to have participated in it. In practice it is harder but there are some achievements, for example, all states have an autonomous system of experts, and also some progress in the role of the public prosecutor at the service of the public's defense that has been implemented in the state of Guanajuato and Zacatecas. I was the first ombudsman in Mexico, and now the battle is to promote the model of due process in the justice system, where a person is seen as an individual with rights and guarantees, and not treated as an object.

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I think the biggest problem is in not relating the issue of security to the importance of due process of justice. The violation of human rights increases a person's level of violence and somehow it comes back to haunt the rest of society.



# FERNANDO CORTÉS CÁCERES

PROFESSOR EMERITUS, FLACSO AND NATIONAL  
AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY OF MÉXICO (UNAM)

Fernando obtained his doctorate in social sciences specializing in social anthropology at the Center for Research and Advanced Studies in Anthropology from the University of Chile. He is part of the academic body that directs and advises the National Council for Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL) in Mexico City. He is professor emeritus at the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences and the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). He was born in Chile, but he is now Mexican after living in Mexico for 39 years.



## › What have you been working on in recent years in your academic and professional life?

In the last nine years, I have been an academic adviser at the National Council for Evaluation of Social Development Policy, CONEVAL. That involves all kinds of work that deals with the evaluation of social development policy and the measurement of poverty. In academia, I dedicate myself to the study of inequality in income distribution.

## › How would you describe social inequality?

Previously, the state provided education, social security and healthcare, but this has changed. Today much of the school system is privatized, unequal income distribution filters those who can go to the best schools, which also

charge tuition. If someone is sick they can use the public healthcare service, but if they have money they go to a private practitioner because the service is better. So inequality is also reflected in the way one accesses healthcare, social security and housing.

## › Is ending social inequality in Mexico a step towards peace?

An intermediate step is to develop a cohesive social system where social relations are strengthened and that bind all people, and not what is happening now, where everyone distrusts each other. A survey by the National Electorate Institute said that only one in seven Mexicans trust the other Mexicans around them. We now have an individualist economic model that encourages everyone to increase their wealth without caring for their neighbors. The current

violence crisis in Mexico has a lot to do with inequality. Relatively equitable countries have much lower levels of violence.

## › Are there opportunities to end inequality in Mexico?

In the mid-nineties, economists argued that an unequal income distribution put to waste human resources because there were people who had skills but did not have resources to fund their ideas. Therefore it was necessary to increase human capital, namely through education and financing for their projects. By reducing inequality, income rises along with productivity; an increase in productivity helps reduce poverty, and thus there is a virtuous circle. The problem in Mexico is that there are no policies that encourage this because power is also unequally distributed.

### › You mean conflict of interest?

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Yes. The unequal distribution of income and power means access to government decisions. We have seen concessions for an aqueduct in Nuevo León for \$47,000 million pesos and multimillionaire homes that belong to federal government contractors. There are those who can make decisions and there are those who can afford to pay for decisions to favor them.

### › Do you think that in the near future there will be more equality in Mexico?

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Change must start by having an independent and effective judiciary system in order to raise the cost of corruption. I think that people have naturalized inequality. For example, in Uruguay the way the driver interacts with the parking attendant is more personal, there isn't that relationship of inequality we see here in Mexico. In countries where inequality is recurrent in daily life it becomes something natural and people stop noticing.

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An intermediate step is to develop a cohesive social system where social relations are strengthened and that bind all people, and not what is happening now, where everyone distrusts each other.

# Other publications from the Institute for Economics and Peace

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## 2015 Global Peace Index

Institute for Economics and Peace, June 2015

A statistical analysis of the state of peace in 162 countries and an assessment of the attitudes, structures and institutions that sustain peaceful societies.



## 2013 Mexico Peace Index

Institute for Economics and Peace, Nov 2013

The Mexico Peace Index measures the state of peace in all 32 Mexican states analysing trends and drivers of peace over the last ten years.



## Peace and Corruption

Institute for Economics and Peace, May 2015

The relationship between peace and corruption is statistically significant, as corruption is a leading indicator of peace.



## Pillars of Peace

Institute for Economics and Peace, Sept 2013

Pillars of Peace is a new conceptual framework for understanding and describing the factors that create a peaceful society.



## 2015 Mexico Peace Index

Institute for Economics and Peace, Mar 2014

The Mexico Peace Index measures the state of peace in all 32 Mexican states analysing trends and drivers of peace over the last decade.



## 2013 Global Peace Index

Institute for Economics and Peace, June 2013

The 2013 GPI Report analyses the state of peace around the world, identifying trends in violence and conflict, as well as the key drivers of peace.



## 2014 Global Terrorism Index Report

Institute for Economics and Peace, Nov 2014

The 2014 Global Terrorism Index Report analyses the impact of terrorism in 162 countries and identifies the social, economic and political factors associated with it.



## 2013 United Kingdom Peace Index

Institute for Economics and Peace, Apr 2013

The UK Peace Index report analyses the fabric of peace in the UK over the last decade and has found that since 2003 the UK has become more peaceful.



## The Link between Peace and Religion

Institute for Economics and Peace, Oct 2014

A global statistical analysis on the empirical link between peace and religion.



## 2012 Global Terrorism Index

Institute for Economics and Peace, Dec 2012

A global statistical analysis on the empirical link between peace and religion.



## 2014 Global Peace Index

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The 2014 GPI Report analyses the state of peace around the world and identifies countries most at risk of becoming less peaceful.



## Violence Containment Spending in the United States

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Violence Containment Spending provides a new methodology to categorise and account for the public and private expenditure on containing violence.



## The Economic Cost of Violence Containment

Institute for Economics and Peace, Feb 2014

A new methodology that calculates the cost of preventing and containing violence in over 150 countries.



## 2012 Global Peace Index

Institute for Economics and Peace, June 2012

The Global Peace Index is the world's preeminent measure of peacefulness. This is the 6th edition of the Global Peace Index.



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