



Umbrella Areas	
	Issues
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## ANTI-REPRESSION

IRTF challenges US legislators and government officials to investigate (and pressure foreign governments to investigate) human rights abuses in Mexico, Central America and Colombia and monitors their responsiveness. IRTF challenges US legislators to decrease military spending and increase spending for alternative economic development and humanitarian assistance in Central America and Colombia and monitors their responsiveness.

### Anti-Militarism

**Description:** IRTF opposes militarism in Latin America because the military is used to suppress democratic movements and to maintain economic inequality and exploitation. Security forces (police, military) are often used in “counter-insurgency,” i.e., against what are labeled as domestic enemies (e.g., guerrilla groups). Too often, members of social movements are labeled as guerrillas to justify attacks by government security forces against them. The “insurgents” are often people defending their basic rights. The US—in its quest to promote political and economic dominance over Latin America—has propped up military forces in the region since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Making the region secure for foreign investment has been a key policy objective. Targets in that objective have been groups challenging centuries-long structural economic inequality.

**Vision:** *IRTF envisions a world where US-Central American/ Colombian relations have moved beyond mostly military-to-military ties toward relationships that develop and uphold self-determination, freedom, democracy, and social and economic justice. By shifting money and human resources away from militarism—both in the US and in Central America and Colombia—more resources are devoted to meeting human needs.*

### Environmental Human Rights

**Description:** Many peasant, fishing, and other traditional communities have been on their lands for centuries. They have the right to not be displaced. Today, corporations (multinationals with domestic partners and funding from international financial institutions like the World Bank) are taking over vast tracks of land. Sometimes they want the land itself: hydro-electric dams, mega highways, rails, industrial agriculture. Other times they want the precious resources hidden beneath the surface: gold, copper, coal, silver, oil. Because land is often held under community title by indigenous or Afro-descendant communities, it is easier to hire private security forces (e.g., paramilitaries) to coerce people to abandon their land than to negotiate sale or mineral rights. Communities resisting corporate-sponsored “development” projects are under attack. Protecting the land and water is intimately tied to protecting human rights. Not only is the land in danger but indigenous and Afro-descendant cultures themselves. As communities are forcibly displaced and members are dispelled into urban areas, their cultures will dissipate and disappear.

**Vision:** *IRTF envisions a world where local communities (particularly indigenous and Afro-descendant) are able to assert their right to communal lands and self-determination, especially when outsiders try to impose infrastructure or development projects. Communities are able to define the kind of development they want: economically and environmentally sustainable while maintaining cultural integrity. Their autonomy is respected by governments and corporations. The modern economic view of natural resources as something to be exploited for the sake of development or profit has been replaced with an ethic of people over profit.*

# ANTI-REPRESSION

## Anti-Militarism

### Democratization

#### Goals:

- To support people's pro-democratic, nonviolent movements.
- To support people's sovereignty and democracy instead of military and coup-imposed governments
- To advocate for public policy and US accountability to people's pro-democratic movements.

#### Objectives:

- Educate NEO of the current political climate in identified country.
- Communicate with leaders of the movement.
- Respond based on their needs.
- Organize local institutions' denouncement of the coup.

### US Training of Central American & Colombian Militaries

#### Goals:

- To end US training of Latin American military and other security forces in Central America and Colombia and on US soil.
- To end the US militarization of humanitarian, economic, environmental and other foreign assistance to Central America & Colombia.

#### Objectives:

- Organize to close the School of the Americas
- Educate Northeast Ohioans on the US training of Central American and Colombian militaries.
- Educate Northeast Ohioans of the US military's interference in various aspects of Central American and Colombian civil society.
- Organize people to speak out against US policy that perpetuates US military policy in Central America and Colombia.

### US Military Presence in Latin America

#### Goal:

- To eliminate long-term US military presence in Central America and Colombia, including personnel and bases.

#### Objectives:

- Educate NEO on US military presence in Central America & Colombia.
- Provide Northeast Ohioans with opportunities to affect change in US militarization by adopting a base through Bridges not Bases.
- Organize a delegation to the base and surrounding community.

## Environmental Human Rights

### Industrial Degradation

#### Goals:

- To stop the forcible exploitation of lands and resources for profit.
- To stand with communities (particularly indigenous and Afro-descendant) as they resist exploitation to preserve their lands and resources.

#### Objectives:

- Collaborate with environmental groups to research and advocate on issues of industrial degradation in Central America & Colombia.
- Level consumer power through specific campaign education.
- Respond to requests for solidarity from local communities resisting industrial degradation.

### Cultural Preservation

#### Goals:

- To stand with communities (particularly indigenous and Afro-descendant) to secure safe space to thrive and carry forward their cultures from generation to generation.
- To stop the repression of communities (particularly indigenous and Afro-descendant) as they organize their lives according to traditional values and ways.
- To support economic ventures that preserve traditional cultures, promote environmental sustainability, and meet local human need.

#### Objectives:

- Maintain direct communication with the communities affected by the environmental threat.
- Organize Northeast Ohioans to hold corporations and governments accountable to the safety and security of the communities they are invading.
- Educate the public about economic ventures that do not take care of these communities.
- Advocate for fair trade and sustainable practices in corporations.

## ECONOMIC JUSTICE

IRTF works towards justice and equity in the distribution, access to, and participation in the production and consumption of the world's resources for Central America and Colombia. IRTF examines the corporate-dominated globalization of the economy through the lens of people in Central America and Colombia and how their reality is linked to ours in NE Ohio. IRTF challenges the current neoliberal economic model that results in exploitation both at home and abroad and offers an alternative through Fair Trade.

### Exploited Labor

**Description:** Current trade policies are creating a “race to the bottom”: ever-decreasing standards for workers, consumers and the environment. IRTF responds to calls from workers’ associations for solidarity: consumer and legislative. IRTF joins them in campaigns targeting manufacturers and retailers to promote just wages and safe working conditions. IRTF conducts local educational, media, and action campaigns calling attention to consumer power, corporate responsibility, and government policies that can help put an end to child labor, sweatshop abuses, and other exploitive labor practices in the factories and the fields. IRTF calls on legislators to improve trade policies to protect workers, consumer safety and the environment.

**Vision:** *IRTF envisions a world where the economic system has been transformed to allow workers better housing, healthcare, nutrition, education and other basic needs for their families. Workers control the conditions under which they work, maintaining a value of labor that upholds the human dignity of the worker.*

### Fair Trade

**Description:** Fair trade is a trade model that sets a series of standards to ensure fair wages and human dignity for producers, community investment, environmental sustainability, and more. IRTF promotes Fair Trade as an alternative trade model to the free market/free trade system that currently dominates our world and further divides us into “haves” and “have nots.”

**Vision:** *IRTF envisions a world where people work for themselves and do not have to be dependent on the dominant economic model that perpetuates inequality and exploitation of people and the environment. Instead, self-determination, gender equality, transparency, and democratic organization are the norm.*

# ECONOMIC JUSTICE

## Exploited Labor

### Global Economic Policy

#### Goals:

- To create international and domestic legally enforceable workplace and environmental standards and trade policies through legislative advocacy and consumer campaigns.
- To build union-to-union relationships among US and Central American/Colombian unions for solidarity as resistance to the race to the bottom.

#### Objectives:

- Educate Northeast Ohioans about current international and domestic workplace and environmental standards.
- Organize legislative campaigns to change international and domestic workplace and environmental standards.
- Level consumer power to affect corporate policy change.

### Worker Rights

#### Goals:

- To support workers in organizing larger numbers of independent unions and democratizing workplaces.
- To support workers who want to start alternative, democratic models of production and economic relationships.

#### Objectives:

- Respond to requests for solidarity and maintain direct communication with unions.
- Educate Northeast Ohioans of abuses in corporate-owned workplaces in Central America & Colombia.
- Provide Northeast Ohioans with options to support alternative economic ventures in Central America & Colombia.

## Fair Trade

### Support for Cooperatives

#### Goals:

- To support the growth of Fair Trade cooperatives as an alternative economic model.
- To promote community-to-cooperative relationships between northeast Ohio and Central America and Colombia.
- To educate northeast Ohio on policy questions that impact local economies in Central America and Colombia.

#### Objectives:

- Expand the number of co-operatives that IRTF works with.
- Provide fair trade sales to Northeast Ohioans.
- Act as a resource to other NEO groups that want to develop relationships with co-operatives.
- Raise awareness of the policies that impede the success of co-operatives.
- Deepen people to people relationships between IRTF and members of cooperatives.

### Consumer Advocacy

#### Goals:

- To strengthen popular support for fair trade.
- To institute more fair trade products into local businesses.
- To get corporations to use more fair trade sources in their products.

#### Objectives:

- Educate Northeast Ohioans of the realities of economic exploitation.
- Organize Northeast Ohioans as part of the larger fair trade movement.
- Educate local businesses on fair trade products.
- Act as a resource to local businesses in purchasing wholesale fair trade products.
- Level consumer campaigns toward businesses that do not respond to efforts to sell fair trade products.
- Level consumer campaigns towards corporations.