

News

## From being in juvenile delinquency gangs to joining peace movements in Mexico



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The organization is formed by disintegrating people and members of youth gangs.

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In Mexico there are many juvenile crime groups that are engaged in drug trafficking.



Carlos Cruz and Erika Llanos at the delivery of the ICIP Prize 2018 Peacebuilders.

Cauce Ciudadano has been working for the last 19 years to reconvert violent groups of juvenile delinquents into members of society that promote peace and social change.

**Youth street gangs** are a reality in many countries around the world. However, in Mexico, specifically, these

gangs surface from the **economic needs** of people, which causes members of the youth population to end up getting involved with **violent gangs and drug trafficking**.

[Cauce Ciudadano](#) was established in Mexico 19 years ago with the aim of preventing, reducing, and eliminating a climate of crime. Unlike other organizations, the founding people of **Cauce Ciudadano** come from these violent gangs and, at the time, were contributing to the juvenile violence in Mexico during the 1990s.

At the time, the murder of an integral member of one of the gangs took place. As a result, **Cauce Ciudadano, founded by Carlos Cruz**, companion of the murdered person, was established. **Erika Llanos**, an educator and the **director of Cauce Ciudadano**, claims that the engine that drives the entity lies in this motto: "Never again a young man in prison, never again a young person in the hospital, and never again a youth in the cemetery."

"We raise the importance of **dismantling the social base of organized juvenile delinquency**. The motive of ??Cauce Ciudadano is to direct the people in these gangs towards becoming a part of the positive facets in society, **agents of peace**, and social change," explains Llanos. She adds: "Who better to work with gangs than members of former gangs?"

At the moment, Cauce Ciudadano focuses on **educational and community work** at school centers, public spaces, and penitentiary centers in order to train young people as agents of change. Since its establishment, **Cauce Ciudadano has invested more than 260,000 people** and has worked with more than 832 entities from 126 municipalities in Mexico. According to Llanos, the organization is currently also working in two provinces of Argentina, Santa Fe and Rosario.

"We have designed a model for the prevention of violence based on four axes of action: understanding the human rights perspective, promotion of health, attention to the damage caused, and rehabilitation," says the director. One of its leading projects is '**Ciudad Retoño**' which brings together relatives of victims of disappearances and groups of civil society organizations. The initiative aims to develop comprehensive strategies aimed at peacebuilding. As part of this project, Llanos says, community interventions have been conducted aimed at a thousand children and young people from communities affected by organized crime.

The trajectory of Cauce Ciudadano has been recognized by the '[Institut Català per a la Pau](#)' (ICIP). Llanos emphasizes the need to listen to reverse the climate of violence and crime in Mexico with the idea of ??organization in the social field and **creating "peace economies."**

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