Frequently Asked Questions

What is Cristosal's mission?
Cristosal's mission is to advance human rights in Central America through rights-based programming, research, and learning. We believe all people are inherently equal in rights and dignity. We take a human rights approach to all our work, guided by internationally recognized human rights principles and standards.

Is Cristosal a not-for-profit?
Cristosal is a nongovernmental organization with nonprofit 501(c)(3) status in the United States.

Where is Cristosal based?
Cristosal is headquartered in El Salvador and also works in Guatemala and Honduras. We have no paid staff in the United States.

What programs does Cristosal operate?
Cristosal operates three main programs:

- **Victim Protection and Advocacy** We provide emergency protection and legal assistance to families displaced by violence, collect data on forced displacement, collaborate with state institutions to protect victims, and advocate regionally and internationally. Our strategic litigation unit is currently leading the legal team representing victims of the El Mozote massacre.

- **Community Development** Through the Citizen Formation School, we bring together community members and municipal workers for diploma courses in conflict transformation, project design, and entrepreneurship.

- **Center for Research & Learning** We conduct original research on human rights issues. Our Global School provides experiential learning seminars on important human rights issues for North and Central Americans.

Who does Cristosal serve?
Cristosal works on behalf of victims of current and historic human rights violations in Central America.

The Northern Triangle of Central America—El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras—is one of the most violent regions of the world. An unprecedented humanitarian crisis is unfolding in the region, as thousands of families are forcibly displaced by violence committed by gangs, criminal organizations, and government forces. In 2016, El Salvador was second only to Syria in the per capita level of internal displacement by violence.

Today’s human rights crisis follows a pattern of unprosecuted crimes. Human rights violations committed during El Salvador’s civil war in the 1980s were protected under a post-war amnesty law until a recent Supreme Court decision opened the door to providing justice. Now Cristosal is leading the legal team representing victims of the 1981 El Mozote massacre, where more than 1,000 civilians were massacred. It’s considered one of the largest unprosecuted war crimes in the world.
Where does Cristosal get its funding?
Cristosal receives programmatic grant funding from the United States Agency on International Development, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Open Society Foundations, CAMMINA, and others.

We depend on unrestricted gifts from individuals and faith communities, including the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee and many Episcopal parishes and dioceses, to fund our core operations. This funding is critical for helping us maintain independence from any single funding source. It enables us to respond quickly to crises as they arise.

How big is the annual budget?
In 2016, our budget was about $500,000. In 2017, our annual budget is more than $1.5 million.

How can I get involved?
- **Become a Cristosal Advocate.** Join our next 5-week online training course.
- **Participate in the Global School.** Come to El Salvador for a human rights course!
- **Support us financially.** Your gift allows us to remain innovative and independent.

Can I visit El Salvador? Is it safe?
Cristosal has 15 years of experience safely hosting groups of North Americans in El Salvador. If Global School participants abide by Cristosal’s security guidelines, it is very unlikely that you will be affected by any type of crime or incident, including petty theft. Most people find El Salvador to be a beautiful country and Salvadorans to be inspiring and extraordinarily welcoming hosts.