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DIPLOMA PROGRAM

# CLIMATE LITIGATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



**FRAY BARTOLOMÉ DE LAS CASAS  
INSTITUTE OF LEGAL RESEARCH**



# About the Fray Bartolomé de las Casas Institute



The Fray Bartolomé de las Casas Institute of Legal Research (IFBC) aims to generate critical knowledge that promotes the enforceability and implementation of economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights (ESCER), recognizing their intrinsic interdependence with civil and political rights, and advancing the effectiveness of international human rights standards that safeguard the progressive development of communities.

Through its research and academic training activities, the IFBC seeks to contribute to the recognition and implementation of ESCER across all areas, especially within migratory and colonial contexts, advocating for equality and respect for human dignity. In this mission, the Institute collaborates with diverse actors to influence public policies that ensure sustainable development and the protection of human rights.

## WHAT DO WE DO?

The IFBC focuses on the training of professionals, researchers, and judicial officials in the field of economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights (ESCER), through research groups, courses, and seminars that provide tools to address these rights in different contexts.

- **RESEARCH:** A space for the generation of original knowledge and the promotion of interdisciplinary studies, with the mission of addressing specific challenges and proposing innovative evidence-based solutions, centered on four major themes: judicial structures, colonialism, migration, and the climate emergency.

- **TRAINING:** A specialized academic program focused on the Institute's areas of research, aimed at strengthening the capacities of judges and other judicial operators, as well as academic and research professionals, through specialized training, interdisciplinary dialogue, and the production of socially impactful knowledge.

By generating and disseminating original knowledge, the Institute strengthens regional capacities to address challenges such as climate change, enabling more sustainable, inclusive, and equitable development, as emphasized by Pope Francis in the encyclical *Laudato si'* and the exhortation *Laudate Deum*, and as pursued by the IFBC Diploma Program in Climate Litigation in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The IFBC was created by **Pope Francis** on August 15, 2023, within the framework of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, through Chirograph No. 570, under the functional authority of the Pan-American Committee of Judges for Social Rights and Franciscan Doctrine (COPAJU).

## MISSION

The defense and promotion of economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights (ESCER).

## INSPIRATION

Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, defender of Indigenous peoples and pioneer of human rights.



## STRATEGY

To raise awareness within the academic community and the general public, and to produce knowledge that supports governmental decision-making.



Alberto Filippi (IFBC Director), Roberto Andrés Gallardo (President of COPAJU), Lucas Ciarniello Ibáñez (Executive Director of the IFBC), and Eugenio Raúl Zaffaroni (IFBC Director).

## DIPLOMA PROGRAM

# CLIMATE LITIGATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

The climate emergency is one of the greatest threats to humanity, disproportionately affecting vulnerable communities. In Latin America and the Caribbean, its impacts include the increasing frequency of natural disasters, the degradation of crucial biomes such as the Amazon, and structural human rights violations linked to environmental degradation. In this context, climate litigation is a key tool for environmental protection and the enforcement of human rights.

### OBJECTIVES

The IFBC Diploma Program in Climate Litigation in Latin America and the Caribbean, developed in partnership with the National University of José C. Paz (UNPAZ), seeks to foster critical reflection on key issues in climate science, the regional impacts of climate change, and international legal frameworks. Its objective is to provide an in-depth understanding of the causes of climate change, its effects in the region, relevant legislation, and landmark jurisprudence, enabling more informed decision-making.

### TARGET AUDIENCE

JUDGES AND JUSTICE SECTOR PROFESSIONALS FROM LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN.

### FORMAT

This academic program is designed to be delivered within a virtual learning environment that facilitates learning and interaction between faculty and students. The IFBC Campus will be used as an online platform for hosting content, managing academic activities, and fostering communication among participants. Synchronous sessions will take place via Zoom, while the infrastructure and resources of the IFBC headquarters in Buenos Aires and Brasília allow for hybrid sessions.

### DURATION

The diploma program has a total duration of five months, with the second edition scheduled to begin in August 2026. Seminars will be conducted consecutively from August through December. The total course load is 200 hours, including weekly four-hour synchronous classes and asynchronous activities such as readings and practical assignments to be completed through the IFBC Campus.

FIVE-MONTH DURATION

**200**  
HOURS

TOTAL  
COURSE  
LOAD

WEEKLY 4-HOUR SYNCHRONOUS  
CLASSES VIA ZOOM

FOR JUDGES AND JUDICIAL  
OFFICIALS FROM THE REGION

### HEADQUARTERS

The IFBC has two headquarters: one in the **City of Buenos Aires, Argentina** (Av. Ingeniero Huergo 1189), and another at the **Catholic University of Brasília Campus, Brazil** (QS 07, Lot 01, Taguatinga Sul - Taguatinga, Brasília/DF).



Marcelo Suárez Orozco (IFBC Director; Chancellor of the University of Massachusetts Boston, United States).

## DIPLOMA PROGRAM

# CLIMATE LITIGATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

COPAJU has identified the climate emergency as a priority area of work, given its implications for social justice and economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights (ESCER). This led the IFBC, together with UNPAZ, to develop a diploma program that addresses this environmental challenge from a judicial perspective and promotes the enforceability of social rights throughout the region.

### FOUR SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- A) Develop a comprehensive understanding of climate science
- B) Analyze regional climate impacts
- C) Gain an overview of the key legal frameworks for climate litigation
- D) Examine relevant climate jurisprudence

### THEMATIC UNITS

The training program consists of four thematic areas and an integration workshop for the development of the final project. Each thematic unit will include three to four synchronous classes, each lasting approximately 3 hours, along with asynchronous work through the IFBC Campus.

### THREE SESSIONS



**1 - FUNDAMENTALS OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

**2- CLIMATE CHANGE AND ATMOSPHERIC SCIENCES**

**3- CLIMATE DATA AND ATTRIBUTION**

### UNIT 1

## INTRODUCTION TO CLIMATE SCIENCE

Basic principles of climate science and its historical development. How human activity, particularly greenhouse gas emissions and aerosols, contributes to anthropogenic climate change; the critical processes influencing the Earth's climate system; and the need to curb warming in the short term, over the next 10 to 20 years, and beyond 2050. Climate data and its use in projecting future scenarios and in specific litigation cases. The causal chain linking individual events to climate change, an attribution process that is crucial for connecting this phenomenon to impacts within legal and political contexts.

### THREE SESSIONS

**1 - ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS**

**2- CLIMATE CHANGE AND COMMUNITIES IN SITUATIONS OF VULNERABILITY**

**3- REGIONAL CLIMATE RISKS AND DISASTER PREPAREDNESS**



### UNIT 2

## IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Environmental and socioeconomic impacts of climate change in the region: biodiversity, ecosystems, water resources, air quality, and human health. Specific vulnerabilities of Latin American countries and the intersection of climate change with issues such as poverty and inequality. The effects on vulnerable communities, their resilience strategies, and the importance of integrating their perspectives, knowledge, and practices into climate adaptation efforts and procedural justice. Strategies for disaster preparedness, risk reduction, and resilience-building. The role of government policies, international aid, and community-led initiatives.

## FOUR SESSIONS

- 1 - LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AND INTERNATIONAL LAW
- 2- PROCEDURAL TECHNIQUES AND JUDICIAL REMEDIES
- 3- LANDMARK CLIMATE LITIGATION CASES
- 4- EFFECTIVE JUDICIAL SANCTIONS IN THE CURRENT REGIONAL CONTEXT

## UNIT 3 CLIMATE CHANGE AND LAW



International legal frameworks governing climate change. The role of international courts and tribunals. Effects on human rights and State responsibility. Introduction to categories of climate litigation, procedural techniques, innovative approaches, types of remedies, and challenges related to the enforcement of judicial decisions. Landmark climate litigation cases. The intersection between climate change and human rights. Access to justice and legal standing in litigation. Accountability of State and non-State actors in climate policy. Existing sanctions within the judicial systems of States in the region related to climate justice. Specialized environmental jurisdictions and common guidelines for the establishment of regional environmental courts.

## FOUR SESSIONS

- 1 - RECENT CASES AND ONGOING CLIMATE LITIGATION
- 2- BIOME PROTECTION AND THE OBLIGATION OF PRIOR CONSULTATION
- 3- OBLIGATION OF REGIONAL COOPERATION
- 4- ENVIRONMENTAL POLICE JUDICIAL BODIES

## UNIT 4 CLIMATE LITIGATION IN LATIN AMERICA

Overview of climate litigation in the region. Judicial challenges and opportunities specific to Latin America. Fundamental concepts of legal anthropology and Indigenous law in relation to the protection of key biomes. The impact of colonialism. ILO Convention No. 169 and prior consultation processes. The interdependence of ecosystems, shared challenges, and the fundamental role of regional cooperation in addressing climate change. The need to integrate environmental police technical bodies into judicial structures. The creation of these specialized bodies as a step toward more effective environmental justice. Their interaction with other key actors, as well as the political and budgetary challenges involved.



## WORKSHOP AND FINAL PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

A key stage in the learning process. During the integration workshop, acquired knowledge will be consolidated and applied in practice. This space is designed to foster interdisciplinary collaboration, combining legal, social, and scientific perspectives in the analysis of specific climate litigation cases.

In the final project, participants will put their analytical and creative skills into practice by developing proposals that integrate theoretical and practical elements. The objective is not only to assess what has been learned, but also to generate innovative and applicable solutions through initiatives that reflect a comprehensive and transformative approach to the challenges of climate change.

## DIPLOMA PROGRAM

### CLIMATE LITIGATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

## FACULTY AND TUTORS

The seminars will be led by faculty members specialized in each subject area, selected through extensive research among leading institutions in the region. A significant portion of the teaching staff has collaborated with the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). All activities will be supported by tutors specialized in virtual human rights education.

## GRADUATE PROFILE



Graduates of the Diploma Program in Climate Litigation in Latin America and the Caribbean are expected to be able to:

- Develop a comprehensive understanding of the foundations of climate science.
- Analyze scientific evidence in order to assess arguments and evidence in climate litigation cases.
- Identify and evaluate the environmental and socioeconomic impacts of climate change in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Contextualize climate litigation within regional vulnerabilities and challenges.
- Apply international legal frameworks relevant to climate change.
- Interpret and use jurisprudence to strengthen arguments in climate litigation.
- Establish connections between climate change and the protection of human rights.
- Develop effective legal strategies for climate litigation cases.
- Make informed judicial decisions by integrating scientific, legal, and regional-context knowledge.
- Promote judicial practices that contribute to sustainability and to the protection of the rights of populations in situations of vulnerability.

## CERTIFICATION

Certificates issued upon completion of the program will be endorsed by the **IFBC, the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, and the National University of José C. Paz, Argentina.**



THE PONTIFICAL  
ACADEMY OF SOCIAL  
SCIENCES



**FOR MORE INFORMATION,  
VISIT THE IFBC CAMPUS**

 [CAMPUS.INSTITUTODELASCASAS.ORG/](https://campus.institutodelascasas.org/)



### CONTACT:

-  [INSTITUTOFBC.ORG](https://institutofbc.org)
-  [INFO@INSTITUTODELASCASAS.ORG](mailto:info@institutodelascasas.org)
-  [INSTAGRAM.COM/IFBCARG/](https://www.instagram.com/ifbcarg/)

# Climate Change in the Vision of Popes Francis and Leo XIV



**“TODAY, WE CANNOT FAIL TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT A TRUE ECOLOGICAL APPROACH ALWAYS BECOMES A SOCIAL APPROACH; IT MUST INTEGRATE JUSTICE INTO DISCUSSIONS ON THE ENVIRONMENT, SO AS TO HEAR BOTH THE CRY OF THE EARTH AND THE CRY OF THE POOR.”**

*“Many of those with greater resources and economic or political power seem mostly concerned with masking problems or concealing their symptoms, merely attempting to reduce some of the negative impacts of climate change. Yet many signs indicate that these effects may become increasingly worse if we continue with current models of production and consumption.”*

Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'* (May 24, 2015)

**“TRAGICALLY, THOSE IN THE MOST VULNERABLE SITUATIONS ARE THE FIRST TO SUFFER THE DEVASTATING EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE, DEFORESTATION, AND POLLUTION. THEREFORE, CARE FOR CREATION BECOMES AN EXPRESSION OF HUMANITY AND SOLIDARITY.”**

*“Due to their global nature, these challenges endanger the lives of all people on the planet and therefore require international cooperation and a cohesive, forward-looking multilateralism that prioritizes the sacredness of life, the inherent dignity of every human being, and the common good. Sadly, we witness political approaches and human behaviors moving in the opposite direction, marked by collective selfishness, disregard for others, and shortsightedness.”*

Message to the 30th United Nations Climate Change Conference (November 7, 2025)

# AUTHORITIES

## FRAY BARTOLOMÉ DE LAS CASAS INSTITUTE OF LEGAL RESEARCH (IFBC)

Created by Pope Francis on August 15, 2023, within the framework of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, under the functional authority of the Pan-American Committee of Judges for Social Rights and Franciscan Doctrine (COPAJU).

### DIRECTORS

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### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

- LUCAS CIARNIELLO IBÁÑEZ

## PAN-AMERICAN COMMITTEE OF JUDGES FOR SOCIAL RIGHTS AND FRANCISCAN DOCTRINE (COPAJU)

Established pursuant to the Constitutive Act of June 4, 2019, in Vatican City, under the inspiration of Pope Francis. Constituted as an International Private Association of the Faithful and as a legal entity within Canon Law through a papal chirograph dated August 15, 2023.

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