

# ARGENTINA: Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales

## Why Argentina's democracy needs support

Argentina has experienced acute democratic backsliding since the December 2023 election of President Javier Milei. Under his government, checks and balances have been weakened, fundamental rights rolled back, and executive powers expanded through presidential decrees and attempts to pack the Supreme Court.

Civil liberties are also under threat: the government has escalated attacks on the press, and it has sought to criminalise protest and expand surveillance. Vulnerable groups are losing protections as long-standing rights are dismantled.

Once a model of transitional justice and civic mobilisation, Argentina is now withdrawing from multilateral bodies, undermining Latin America's collective capacity to address trade, climate, and rights challenges.

## How to support

Strategic legal action is a proven tactic for defending democracy, particularly in countries like Argentina where institutions are under pressure, but courts remain largely independent.

Civil society-led strategic litigation in Argentina has a history of reshaping judicial behaviour, improving accountability, and advancing institutional reforms. Landmark cases have increased transparency in the Supreme Court and upheld constitutional protections. But such litigation is costly, time-sensitive, and requires coordination and expertise that only a few actors can sustain.

## Who to support

Founded in 1979 during Argentina's military dictatorship, *Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales* (Center for Legal and Social Studies, or CELS) is an internationally recognised, award-winning organisation which uses strategic legal action to defend democratic institutions, protect civic space, and uphold fundamental rights.

In 2025, CELS's litigation and legal defence unit is managing around 150 active cases, challenging unconstitutional decrees, securing rulings that reinforce judicial independence, and protecting activists and journalists from politically motivated charges. Donor support will enable CELS to sustain and expand its litigation docket and escalate cases to international forums as anti-democratic threats rise.

With presidential and legislative elections set for 2027, supporting CELS now can help preserve civic space, strengthen institutional checks, and set enforceable precedents.

### About us

Power for Democracies strengthens and protects democracy by identifying and recommending highly effective civil society initiatives for donors to support. It is non-profit and non-partisan. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of Power for Democracies.

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