

Argentina

**Period of democratic transition: 1982–1983**

**Pro-democracy civic movement: present**

Following a 1976 military coup that removed Maria Isabela Peron from the presidency, the new military regime began a campaign of severe repression against political opponents and alleged terrorists and sympathizers. The campaign, known as *el proceso*, or the “dirty war,” resulted in the disappearance of some 10,000 to 30,000 persons during the years 1976–83.

Initially, trade unions and other potential focal points of opposition were harshly repressed. However, in the late 1970s labor slowly began to reassert its voice. A key role in the emergence of the protest movement was played by the Mothers of the Disappeared and other civic groups in the 1970s and early 1980s. The defeat of Argentina in the 1982 Falk lands war further eroded support for the armed forces and led to an expansion of civic activism and protest. The year leading up to the return of civilian rule saw the reemergence of strong trade unions, more outspoken business associations, and active human rights and civic groups that successfully coordinated protest actions. A massive protest in December 1982 was the decisive moment, after which the military regime definitively moved to set a date for new elections. The restoration of electoral politics resulted in the election of Raul Alfonsin as president in December 1983 and the reestablishment of democratic institutions.

Since the return of democracy, Argentina has vacillated between moments of political and economic stability and growth and periods of crisis. Tensions have continued between the military and civilian governments over the human rights abuses during the military era, but no military intervention has occurred. Democratic institutions remain imperfect in Argentina, but the risk of returned military rule appears low.