



Màster en Relacions Internacionals Seguretat i Desenvolupament (MURISD)

Ten Proposals to combat transnational crime in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. An Approach from Criminology and International Relations

Autora: Alba García Nebot

Tutora: Nora Sainz Gsell

Treballs de màster i postgrau. Màster en Relacions Internacionals, Seguretat i Desenvolupament (MURISD). Curs 2022/2023

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Treballs de màster i postgrau. Màster en Relacions Internacionals, Seguretat i desenvolupament (MURISD). Curs 2022/2023

<http://murisd.uab.cat>




Esta obra está sujeta a una licencia [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

Coordinador de la col·lecció: Dr. Rafael Grasa Hernández, Rafael.Grasa@uab.cat.

Aquesta col·lecció recull una selecció de treballs duts a terme pels estudiants del Màster Universitari en Relacions Internacionals, Seguretat i Desenvolupament. Els treballs es publiquen en algunes de les tres llengües del màster, català, castellà i anglès

Esta colección recoge una selección de trabajos realizados por estudiantes del Máster Universitario en Relaciones Internacionales, Seguridad y Desarrollo. Los trabajos se publican en algunas de las tres lenguas del máster, catalán, castellano y inglés

This collection includes a selection of research by students of Master's Degree in International Relations, Security and Development. These researches are published in any of the three languages of the master's degree, catalan, spanish and english



ABSTRACT: The present policy paper analyses the overall security and crime conditions of The Northern Triangle of Central America (El Salvador, Honduras, & Guatemala), evaluating their human development and crime policies. It also exposes how the states historically responded to transnational crime and the current trend of their penal and penitentiary policies, as well as their outcomes. Based on an extensive analysis of literature about organised crime in these states, the policy brief introduces ten propositions addressed to policymakers so they can get a better understanding of making efficient policies. The proposals have the final aim of improving the security of the population and, consequently, upgrading their living standards. Finally, the policy paper combines the knowledge of two different fields: Criminology and International Relations. Criminology offers us evidence on how to prevent and combat crime and International Relations, the knowledge of the Human Security and Development fields. Hence, both serve to explain the phenomenon of organised crime and its impact on today's society.

KEYWORDS: Organised Crime, Criminology, International relations, Central America



Universitat Autònoma
de Barcelona

**MÁSTER UNIVERSITARIO EN RELACIONES
INTERNACIONALES, SEGURIDAD Y DESARROLLO**

**Ten Proposals to combat transnational crime in El
Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. An Approach
from Criminology and International Relations**

Author: Alba García Nebot

Tutor: Nora Sainz Gsell

1st term: 30th of June 2023

Declaro, con mi firma al pie, que el presente trabajo es original y que no contiene plagios o usos indebidos de otras fuentes y acepto las consecuencias que podría tener contravenir el presente compromiso.

Alba García Nebot

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alba García Nebot' with a small star-like mark at the end.

Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, 30 de junio de 2023

Abstract

The present policy paper analyses the overall security and crime conditions of The Northern Triangle of Central America (El Salvador, Honduras, & Guatemala), evaluating their human development and crime policies. It also exposes how the states historically responded to transnational crime and the current trend of their penal and penitentiary policies, as well as their outcomes. Based on an extensive analysis of literature about organised crime in these states, the policy brief introduces ten propositions addressed to policymakers so they can get a better understanding of making efficient policies. The proposals have the final aim of improving the security of the population and, consequently, upgrading their living standards. Finally, the policy paper combines the knowledge of two different fields: Criminology and International Relations. Criminology offers us evidence on how to prevent and combat crime and International Relations, the knowledge of the Human Security and Development fields. Hence, both serve to explain the phenomenon of organised crime and its impact on today's society.

Key words: Organised Crime, Criminology, International Relations, Central America

CONTENTS

1. Introduction.....	4
2. The situation of organised crime in The Northern Triangle of Central America.....	6
2.1 The situation in El Salvador.....	7
2.2 The situation in Guatemala.....	8
2.3 The situation in Honduras.....	9
3. State actions to combat organised crime: The Northern Triangle of Central America cases.....	10
3.1 State actions to combat organised crime: El Salvador.....	10
3.2 State actions to combat organised crime: Guatemala.....	12
3.3 State actions to combat organised crime: Honduras.....	14
4. Recommendations: Ten proposals for policymakers.....	15
5. Conclusions.....	28
6. Bibliography.....	30

1. Introduction

In May 2022, the United Nations delivered its usual report on homicides in the world. The result was that nine out of the ten countries with the highest number of murders per 100,000 inhabitants are on the American continent, and four of them are in Central America: El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and Belize.

The present policy paper will focus on three of them, the so-called “Northern Triangle of Central America”: El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, which have something in common: a great presence of organised crime in their territories. Regarding the period of time, a brief review is given on how states have historically confronted organised crime, but the central analysis is located in the current policies that the governments carry out to combat the criminal phenomenon.

The results of the United Nations Report were not a surprise since these events have been repeated for years, exposing that the current policies adopted by decision-makers are not effective. One of the main objectives of this policy paper is to help policymakers in the respective

states gain a better understanding of how to make efficient security policies. More specifically, it is intended to prevent individuals' adherence to criminal organisations. Moreover, it also intends to provide knowledge to the states on how to act with these criminal structures and, finally, how to proceed to intervene with people who are already part of them.

In addition, through ten proposals, it is intended to provide tools to states so that they can carry out evidence-based criminal and penitentiary policies to make sure that their decision-making strategies to combat crime do not respond to an electoral gain. Moreover, one of the final objectives is to improve the security of the population and reduce the violence of organised crime. Hence, to improve the human development of these states.

The policy paper argues that the most effective perspective to combat organised crime is not the severity of the punishment but to address the deeper reasons why these criminal structures appear in the first place and combat them with re-socializing and community measures. However, at the moment, the most recurrent way to combat crime that politicians are using in the studied states is by being *"tough on*

crime". This includes, among others, the revival of the idea to reintroduce the death penalty, the militarization of public security, massive arrests, and the building of enormous prisons, which resulted in indiscriminate repression and disregard for human rights.

When it comes to the militarization of security, the huge impact of violence made clear that states cannot be providers of one of their basic functions: security. Hence, they subcontract under their national laws the use of force to private military companies (CMP). According to a report by DCAF and UNLIREC, there are around 16,174 identified companies with more than 2,500,000 employees in Latin America. Specifically, 1,348 companies and 166,769 guards are legally registered in the Northern Triangle (Báez, 2021).

However, it is also convenient to clarify that this increase in the use of private security has been done by the wealthy. The impoverished tend to organise themselves into associations, brigades, and self-defence groups. In Guatemala, for example, the incidence of surveillance has increased by 400% since 2004, and some of it is directly related to the fight against drug trafficking (Báez, 2021).

Moreover, both Honduras and El Salvador are in a state of emergency, which has been considered an authoritarian and populist measure (DW, 2023) that does not consider the root issues of crime.

With the recent boost of Nayib Bukele's popularity (El Salvador's president), implementing extremely repressive measures to combat crime (such as opening the biggest prison on the American continent) was extended to the other two states. Since violence is present in the daily lives of the communities, the promise to combat crime becomes really popular.

However, experts warned of the risks of combating crime through repressive measures: the fragile state of democracy and human rights, as well as the potential reproduction of more violence. "The strategy of massive imprisonment comes with large violations of human rights and it is complemented by a strategy of co-optation of justice institutions and a critical surveillance of civil society" (DW, 2023). Hence, there is a real need to adopt new measures to fight organised crime, given that these organisations seriously

affect the human development, well-being, and freedom of the population.

It is evident that the populations of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador do not have the possibility to carry out their ordinary activities. For that reason, organised crime represents a serious security challenge, causing massive rates of violence and homicides and dramatically interfering in citizens' everyday lives. Likewise, these criminal structures make it difficult for youth to envision a prosperous future, which is why many end up seeing the option of joining criminal organisations as a viable, recurring, and normalised way out.

Given the fact that we live in a globalised world, the structure of organised crime in Central America is a relevant global security issue since these gangs also operate and carry out their criminal activities in other spaces such as the USA and the EU, exporting and reproducing their model. Hence, organised crime should not be treated as a problem that concerns only a specific geographical area.

Hypothesis:

- The state's response to combat crime with repressive policies or

“tough on crime policies” feeds back and aggravates violence.

- Community and resocializing responses help reduce crime.

Research questions:

- What have the three states done so far to fight organised crime?
- What was the outcome of their implemented policies?
- What can policymakers do to improve the situation?

2. The situation of organised crime in The Northern Triangle of Central America

In order to understand why organised crime is successful in these three countries, one should consider different variables of development such as the GDP, the life expectancy, and the literacy rate. These three indicators have been chosen since they constitute the Human Development Index. They are the foundation of human development, which tells us the degree of well-being that a state brings to its population. However, variables such as society's cohesion, levels of exclusion, and the perception of security will also provide necessary information to comprehend the

context in which these organised crime gangs operate.

2.1 The situation in El Salvador

According to PNUD (2020), The Human Development Index (HDI) of El Salvador in 2019 was 0.673, which places the country in the medium category of Human Development and ranked 124th out of 189 countries. The expected years of scholarship were 11,7 in 2019 and the GDP per capita was 8,359\$. The life expectancy in 2019 was 73,3 years old.

In El Salvador, 7.9% of the population (505 thousand people) lives in a situation of multidimensional poverty (overlapping deprivations suffered by people in three dimensions: health, education, and standard of living), and another 9.9% is classified as vulnerable to multidimensional poverty (635 thousand people). The intensity of deprivation in El Salvador, which is the average deprivation score of the population in a situation of multidimensional poverty, is 41.3% (PNUD, 2020).

The country has been considered one of the most dangerous worldwide, where gangs have proliferated in a context characterised by violence and

impoverishment. In 2014, El Salvador had a national poverty headcount—a measure of the percentage of the population living below the poverty line—of 31.8%. The country has also faced economic difficulties, especially after the global economic crisis of 2008: the annual percentage growth of the GDP decreased by 3.13% in 2009 (PNUD, 2020).

According to the World Prison Brief (2023), the prison population rate of El Salvador (per 100,000 of the national population) was 605 in March 2022, and the prison population total was 39.538 on the same date.

Cruz, J. M., & González, L. A. (1997) stated that concern over the so-called “crime problem” is of such magnitude that Salvadorans have become more alarmed by criminal violence than they were by war in the second half of the 1980s. However, the ten years of civil war not only brought serious consequences for the country's development and respect for human life but also exacerbated the already existing culture of violence (Cruz, J. M., & González, L. A, 1997).

Statistics show how the crime rate has officially decreased with Bukele, but there are many underlying reasons to consider:

1. In El Salvador, 2% of the population is imprisoned (DW, 2023). Hence, massive imprisonment prevents potential re-offenders from committing crimes again since they are being confined.

2. The president secretly arranged deals with gang leaders in order to reduce crime rates and consequently boost his popularity (Reuters, 2021 & The Guardian, 2020).

3. Experts have already stated that El Salvador's repressive policies are working in terms of numbers but not for other countries, since gang members are moving to other states where there is no state of emergency, such as Guatemala and Mexico (DW, 2023) to continue with their criminal activities.

2.2 The situation in Guatemala

According to PNUD (2020), Guatemala's HDI in 2019 was 0.663, which places the country in the medium Human Development category and ranks it 127th out of 189 countries. The expected years of scholarship were 10.8 in 2019, and the GDP per capita was \$8,494. The life expectancy in 2019 was 74.3 years old.

Guatemala is a predominantly rural country with a young population and high

percentages of poverty (57%). 21.5% of the population lives in extreme poverty, considering they do not have enough resources to cover the cost of minimum food consumption. Guatemala contains 39% of the malnourished population of all of Central America, and many children die from problems related to malnutrition (United Way, 2023).

The indicators classify Guatemala as one of the most vulnerable countries and with the highest rates of food insecurity in all of Latin America due to its low income, low schooling, low capacity to produce food, high levels of malnutrition, and high vulnerability to climatic phenomena. 79.7% of children live in poverty, and 47.2% live in extreme poverty (United Way, 2023).

The Analysis of population security between January and June 2022 in Guatemala concludes that violence and homicides are concentrated mostly in vulnerable areas of the cities. That is, where there are fewer resources to pay extortion to gangs and overcrowded areas where there is rivalry between different gangs.

Experts emphasised the modification of personal and community life due to the exacerbation of violence, which has an implicit curfew. Therefore, public spaces

cannot be freely used. These statements indicate that the daily violence in Guatemala is palpable, and the coexistence with gangs can be understood as a way of militarising neighbourhoods (Rivera, 2016).

2.3 The situation in Honduras

According to PNUD (2020), The Human Development Index (HDI) of Honduras in 2019 was 0.634, which places the country in the medium category of Human Development. The expected years of scholarship were 10.1 in 2019, and the GDP per capita was \$5,308. According to the Global Peace Index (2022), Honduras is not in a good position in the global peace ranking, located at number 117. Therefore, it can be considered a dangerous country. Similar to Guatemala, the homicides are concentrated in specific areas, since according to Infosegura (2022), 10 municipalities account for 39% of the total homicides.

Honduras remains one of the poorest and most unequal countries in the Western Hemisphere. Before 2020, 25.2% of the Honduran population lived in extreme poverty, and almost half (4.4 million people) lived in poverty, according to official poverty lines. Poverty has fallen a

little since 2014, while extreme poverty has increased in rural areas since 2014 and in urban areas since 2017. Rural inequality has also risen sharply, from a Gini index of 0.431 in 2014 to 0.486 in 2019. Overall, Honduras had the fourth highest level of income inequality in 2019 (a Gini index of 0.482) in the LAC region (Banco Mundial, 2022).

Poverty and inequality levels are expected to remain above pre-crisis levels, while other development challenges for Honduras persist. Human development results in the country are among the lowest in LAC. A child born today in Honduras will be, when he/she grows up, 48% as productive as he/she could be if he enjoyed a full education and full health (Banco Mundial, 2022).

In the following table, the main indicators of development of the three studied countries are compared:

Figure 1: Human Development Index and its indicators

2021	Human Development Index (HDI)	Life expectancy at birth	Expected years of schooling
El Salvador	0.675	70.7	12.7
Guatemala	0.627	69.2	10.6
Honduras	0.621	70.1	10.1

2021	Mean years of schooling	Gross national income (GNI) per capita	HDI rank
El Salvador	7.2	8, 296	125
Guatemala	5.7	8,723	135
Honduras	7.1	5,298	137

Source: UNDP (2022) Human Development Report 2021-2022

3. State actions to combat organised crime: The Northern Triangle of Central America cases

Once the overall situation of the three states has been exposed, this policy paper aims to explore what each government did to fight organised crime in order to see the outcomes. The common aspect that can be found in the three states is that the actions taken by the government differ according to the party that is ruling at the moment. Therefore, one country may have taken actions to fight organised crime that aimed to resocialize the offenders, but some years later, if another party takes the lead, penitentiary policies can change towards a more punitive perspective.

However, in the last decade, Central American governments have followed the trend of being punitive and *tough on crime*, especially on organised crime. This tendency has mostly been popularised by

Bukele, which is considered a role model for the other two countries on how to deal with organised crime successfully.

3.1 State actions to combat organised crime: El Salvador

According to Cruz, J. M., and González, L. A. (1997), in the 2000s, the government started to implement tough policies towards organised crime, which resulted in an increase in violence. According to Steven Dudley, millions of young people were arrested based on their looks, where they lived, and who they hung out with, which only reinforced the stigmatisation of already marginalised communities.

The tough policies on organised crime held by the government had a clear impact on the penitentiary system and the structure of the gangs. The harsh policies implemented by the government of Francisco Flores in 2003, resulted in massive arrests based on the appearance (tattoos) of the gangs, which led to an increase of 4,000 inmates in the fourth month after the policy started being implemented.

Several authors argue that these policies gave rise to the explosion in the number of incarcerated individuals. They also exposed the distinction being made between non-gang members and active

gang members, which was not always effective. (Cruz & González, 1997).

In 2012, the government negotiated a truce with the main gangs with the goal of eradicating violence and making the offenders participate in resocialization programmes. The violence actually decreased until the gangs broke the truce that was struck. Many experts have concluded that tough on crime policies are not effective since criminal activities have continued and the increased repression has been translated into a massive accumulation of prisoners in the penitentiary system (Cruz and González, 1997).

The relatively new president of El Salvador, Nayib Bukele, has declared a "state of emergency" as homicides soar. The Legislative Assembly, controlled by the ruling party, also approved tougher prison sentences: gang members will face sentences ranging from 20 to 45 years. Children under the age of 16 could face sentences of up to 20 years, and those under the age of 12 could face sentences of up to 10 years. Bukele also made massive arrests (Voz de América, 2022).

The president is popularly believed to have reduced homicide rates with his tough policies, but the decrease actually began a few years before he became elected (Voz

de América, 2022). Bukele, as Flores did, negotiated with the gang members, offering them incentives to stop violence, such as better conditions in prison. Since gang members are not trustworthy, they have broken these truces, producing an increase in homicide rates in April 2020 and November 2021 (Reuters, 2021; The Guardian, 2020).

El Salvador has suffered many cycles of extreme violence caused by gangs. Cruz (2022) exposes that national authorities have responded to the matter with both repression and secrecy. In public, governments expose their tough on crime policies with massive arrests, but secretly, top politicians negotiate with gang leaders, offering them benefits if they reduce the violence (Cruz, 2022).

Bukele is believed to have negotiated with the gangs in order to boost his popularity since crime rates decreased in that period. But even with the repressive measures Bukele has implemented, there have been some episodes of extreme violence where the secret agreements have been broken. This is exactly what occurred in March 2022, when 7 people got killed on Friday and 62 on Saturday, which led to Bukele declaring a state of emergency (AP News, 2022).

Bukele has become popular worldwide for building what is known as "the largest prison in America", which is a maximum security prison where thousands of inmates are being transferred. The harshness of the policies is thought by experts to exist for electoral purposes, since 90% of the population approves them (DW, 2021).

However, many international organisations claim that the harsh regime affects constitutional rights. A report presented by Human Rights Watch (2023) reveals that "abuses on a large scale" have been committed, including extreme overcrowding, violations of due process, a lack of guarantees, mass arrests, and deaths in custody. "Thousands of people, including hundreds of minors, have been arrested and prosecuted for broadly defined crimes that violate basic due process guarantees and undermine the prospects for justice for victims of gang violence" (HMW, 2023).

According to DW (2023), there are clear dangers in Bukele's repressive policies: "One is the remilitarization of politics and a dismantling of the fragile institutions of the rule of law in the region." El Salvador has been in a state of emergency since the end of March 2022, and 60,000 people have been imprisoned; overall, 2% of the country's population is in prison.

3.2 State actions to combat organised crime: Guatemala

Guatemala is the only country of the three studied that is currently not under a state of emergency. Guatemala suffers from organised crime violence and has historically fought against crime with "tough on crime" policies, as have the other two countries.

In 2011, Otto Pérez Molina, an ex-militar, was elected. He claimed that he would impose repressive measures to reduce crime, and this idea became popular since it was the top worry among the voters. It was the first time since the restoration of democracy in 1986 (after the civil war) that a former military officer had reached the presidency. He promised to integrate the functions of the national police and the army, but that would violate the peace accords, which limit the role of the military to defending sovereignty and territorial integrity (Política Exterior, 2011).

In 2022, between March and June, crimes committed by the gangs increased exponentially. As a response, the government and the General Directorate of the Penitentiary System (DGSP) transferred 75 highly dangerous leaders from "Barrio 18" of the Preventive Centre for Men in Zone 18 to the maximum

security prison Fraijanes 1. But this led to a rearrangement of the gangs on the streets, and the panorama changed and became more violent (Barreno, 2022).

The expert in gangs, José Miguel Cruz, exposed that in Guatemala, gangs are a hybrid of local and urban crime, in which extortion, drug dealing, and turf wars predominate (Barreno, 2022). Recently, there has been a discussion on bringing back the death penalty, which experts state is a result of electoral strategies (DW, 2023).

The government recently expressed that it will reinforce the fight against gangs, and the president stated that he will ask Congress to introduce measures so the death penalty is effective again (DW, 2023). However, since the death penalty no longer exists in Guatemala, if they try to reactivate it, the country will enter into a breach and a clear violation of the American Convention on Human Rights.

DW (2023) states that the popularity of the death penalty among the population of El Salvador and Guatemala is due to the high crime rates, the constant violent acts of the gang members, and the consequent tiredness of people living in continuous fear. Therefore, harsh punishment is very welcomed by the population and has a clear electoral purpose (DW, 2023). The

current president, Alejandro Giammattei, has expressed his support for capital punishment, following Bukele's policies to boost his popularity as well as that of El Salvador's president.

DW (2022) exposes how In Guatemala, the undermining of the rule of law and the criminalization and harassment of human rights defenders and journalists are routine practises of the government and of the judicial apparatus that has been placed at their disposal.

According to DW (2022), El Salvador and Honduras are the countries in the Northern Triangle of Central America that have emergency regimes in force to detain gang members, who seem to flee to neighbouring countries such as Guatemala. Guatemala's response has been to increase surveillance at its borders. Moreover, Guatemala has arranged for two divisions of the Police to install surveillance around its borders: the Division of Ports, Airports, and Border Posts (Dipafront) and the General Subdirectorate for the Analysis of Anti-Narcotics Information (Sgaia). The work is also supported by the National Army (DW, 2022).

"We seek to protect citizens who live in border areas and prevent suspected gang members from entering the country; for this reason, more than 1,000 troops were

deployed to reinforce the territorial limit", said the Minister of the Interior when Guatemala presented its plan called Inter-institutional Security at the Northern Triangle Borders at the end of 2022 (DW, 2022). If a person enters Guatemala without having registered at the border and belongs to a gang, he is transferred to the Guatemalan Institute of Migration (IGM) to be expelled from the country and later handed over to the security forces of the nation to which he belongs.

3.3 State actions to combat organised crime: Honduras

Honduras ended 2022 with 35.3 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, according to official data. It is the lowest homicide rate that the Central American country has had in the last 16 years, and although an emergency regime was approved, in some neighbourhoods the government attributes the decrease in homicides to the exception measure (Voz de América, 2023).

According to Cruz (2019), in Honduras there were approximately 60.000 gang members in 2019, which means that if the state chooses to imprison all of them, that would lead to an increase in the imprisonment rate of a country that already has one of the highest imprisonment rates in America. Moreover, the expert states that crime organisations

such as "maras" exist in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, but they operate and express themselves in different ways in each country.

The FNAMP (*Fuerza Nacional Anti Maras y Pandillas*) fights against gangs in Honduras and liberates areas that the gangs previously controlled. The operations consist of neutralising the gang through operations to capture leaders and members. Later, a response with a community-social approach is implemented so as to recover public space (Global Initiative, 2020). However, the current policy against gang members in Honduras is more likely to be repressive. The country is experiencing a similar situation to El Salvador: they have a state of emergency, and some gang members are moving to neighbouring countries to continue their criminal activity.

DW (2023) states that "In Honduras, force as a response to violence is not something new," recalls Pineda. "We have been talking about this since the years of Tiburcio Carías Andino," he explains, referring to the politician who led the country's destinies between 1933 and 1949, first constitutionally and then under a dictatorship. "During his tenure, thieves were mutilated, their hands were cut off, and those who committed crimes were

shot." In light of the results, the measures were not effective, considering that almost 80 years later, we are still talking about the same thing, Pineda states.

The Government of Honduras declared a national emergency due to the insecurity that the country faces and "declared war" on criminal groups, in a decision similar to that adopted by the president of El Salvador, Nayib Bukele. Some 70,000 gang members propagate terror in neighbourhoods and colonies of the main cities of Honduras and have also emigrated to rural areas, according to non-governmental organisations.

Drug traffickers and gang members hold that country to a homicide rate of about 38 per 100,000 residents, one of the highest in the world. Faced with this situation, the current president, Xiomara Castro, after decreeing a national emergency due to insecurity, instructed the security authorities to establish "states of exception and suspend constitutional guarantees" wherever necessary. The president also ordered that the Military Police and the Armed Forces carry out controls at the border.

The Head of State assured that the Government is now immersed in the search for those mechanisms that guarantee the restitution of the lost peace.

She also confirmed that she gave instructions to the telecommunications agency (Conatel) to monitor the sale of chips for phones, a process that from now on will only be carried out after the buyer has been identified (Semana, 2022).

Meanwhile, the National Commission of Banks and Insurance must also establish "necessary measures so that bank movements are associated with the identification of people" (Semana, 2022). The director of the Police, Héctor Sánchez, highlighted the presidential announcement after pointing out that "the National Security Plan is framed in the Government Plan for the 2022-2026 refoundation that establishes the frontal and intelligent combat of crime as the third strategic axis of extortion and money laundering" (Semana, 2022).

4. Recommendations:

Ten proposals for policymakers

After analysing the situation of the three Central American countries and how their respective governments responded to organised crime, the policy brief aims to expose ten proposals addressed to policymakers in order to give them tools to solve the matter in an effective way. The proposals will be grounded on eventual

actions or policies that could be implemented based on evidence.

One of the main problems that experts on the subject, such as criminologists, have reported is that politicians in Central America are more driven by criminal policies that will increase their popularity (such as being tough on crime), rather than by professionals' advice, which keeps claiming that addressing organised crime with repressive measures does nothing but aggravate the problem at different levels.

Proposal 1: To invest in improving impoverished neighbourhood structures

According to the Salvadorian expert in gangs, Cruz (2019), usually young people who join gangs come from poor areas with few resources. When an area is disorganised, social control cannot take place. Shaw & McKay's (1942) research on juvenile crime, exposed different factors that characterise areas with higher juvenile crime rates. One factor was the variety of other social problems that already existed, such as not attending school, child mortality, and adult criminality.

Due to the poor state of areas, people tend to move out once they can afford it. Hence, these areas are places where mobility is

high which makes the sense of community difficult. An organised society is one that can effectively transmit its values to the youth. In order to make it effective, there must be associations between people, informal control must exist, and deviant values should be isolated. As Zinecker (2012) states, the democratic participation of civil society in the security sector must be strengthened without impelling or making it possible for this to mean a strengthening of "vigilantism."

Shaw & McKay's (1942)'s study concluded that if the neighbourhood is physically deteriorating, people will tend to leave. Hence, the bond between the communities will be hard to create. Physical deterioration also makes individuals feel more insecure, although that does not necessarily mean more criminality. Therefore, a higher state investment in poor areas structures would increase the perception of security on the streets.

The first proposal argues that states should invest in improving the area's infrastructure in order to make people feel safer and also to prevent high mobility, which complicates the transmission of values and social control.

Proposal 2: To give legitimate opportunities and prevent illicit ones

According to the expert in gangs, Cruz (2019), the lack of opportunities, such as finding a job, is crucial for young people. Based on the anomie theory in Criminology, youth experience tension and helplessness when they realise their life prospects and opportunities in their surroundings are almost non-existent, and this tension can lead to the commission of crime. The mentioned theory states that lower class teenagers compare themselves to wealthier individuals and feel frustrated by the lack of opportunities that their areas bring them (Cloward & Ohlin, 1998).

Cloward & Ohlin (1998), the authors of the theory, stated that the origins of gangs are the tension that mostly working-class youth suffer. The authors state that youth crime is fundamentally expressive (to achieve status), opposed to society's values (since the organisation has its own values), and impulsive. Being immersed in this unequal situation, crime becomes an option, which is reinforced by the lack of legitimate opportunities.

As mentioned by the authors, gang members do not join gangs and commit crimes to obtain a material benefit but to obtain the acceptance of others and share the values of the subculture they are part

of. Gangs create their own values that are distant from society's in order to consolidate their identity as a group and persist over time. Overall, tension, a structure of illicit opportunities (as adult delinquency) that competes with the limited licit opportunities (as jobs), and a feeling of discrimination and isolation from society make the commission of crimes easier in that context.

However, authors expose that expressive subcultures (status as benefit) will turn into instrumental ones (material benefit) when there is a structure of illicit opportunities in the neighbourhood. That structure is made up of the presence of adult delinquency and the integration of youth with the adult criminal world. Illicit behaviour is learned, and the youth frequently find themselves immersed in areas where the commission of crime by adults is successfully carried out, normalising these behaviours and receiving the message that crime is a reasonable option.

There is a confluence of youth and adults, where conventional life is mixed with the unconventional. DW (2023) argues that in these three Central American countries, there is a "lack of serious reflection on the sustainability of these policies, since there is high spending, militarization, and the

fact that criminal structures can be reborn if structural factors are not combated, that is, poverty, unemployment, and inequality".

Therefore, **this proposal is based on the idea that the governments of the studied states should create opportunities for young people so they do not consider crime a reasonable option, i.e., by creating job positions or supporting businesses that already employ former gang members.** However, the influence of adult delinquency should also be reversed since it facilitates a structure of illicit opportunities.

Proposal 3: To reduce intrafamilial violence with programs and reinforce parental control

According to Hirschi's (1969) social control theory, the family bond is the main factor in preventing crimes. The quality of the familiar bond (parental love, transmission of cultural values, transmission of aspirations, time spent, supervision exercised) creates a context where the commission of crimes is prevented.

Cruz (2019) argues that "a continuous line in most gang members is that they have suffered a lot of violence from their

parents; they have suffered family violence. (...) These young offenders return to the violence they suffered when they were younger". Therefore, parents are a figure that should be considered in the prevention of those crimes since the family is one of the main institutions that has to teach teenagers to reject violence and to solve problems in a prosocial manner.

The family is the main role model that a child has, and if violent behaviours are normalised or exercised from a young age, that constitutes a risk factor for reproducing these learned behaviours into adulthood.

A Florida International University study found that the average gang member joined at age 15. Most came from households earning less than \$250 a month, and many reported running away from dysfunctional or broken homes. Cruz argues that many want to leave gangs at the age of 18, but they face threats from other gang members, harassment from security forces, and discrimination from society in general (Clavel, 2017).

According to Barreno (2022), "gangs offer what no other community institution offers to the youth: a sense of belonging, protection, friendship, and respect. They also provide material resources through criminal activities."

Experts state that a plan that does not consider the deeper problems is a useless strategy (DW, 2022). Responsible parenthood is also key to developing a healthy bond and proper parental control, which will become more crucial in the teenage years, when most offenders join gangs. For that reason, authors Sykes & Matza (1957) state that the origins of juvenile gangs are the lack of parental control of teenagers in the transition process between childhood and adulthood.

Considering the above, the third proposal to decision-makers and the governments of the studied countries is that **the state should implement programmes to reduce family violence and reinforce healthy bonds and practises between the parents and their respective children (secondary prevention programmes).**

Proposal 4: To not increase the severity of the prison sentences

The 4th proposal recommends not increasing the severity of the penal code, that is, of the punishment. The harshness of the sentences is not correlated with a decrease in crime rates. If that were the case, the current high sentences for committing crimes related to organised crime would prevent young people from joining the gangs. However, the penal

response is already severe, and that has not stopped the gangs from growing in membership.

Moreover, long sentences facilitate a common space where gang members reinforce their bonds with other members, improving the organisation and structure of the criminal organisation. In Cruz *et al.*'s (2017) research, the authors state that in the 2000s, the Salvadoran government launched tough on crime policies to combat gangs in the country, and these policies resulted in increasing levels of violence.

Much more worrisome was the effect that the *Mano Dura Plan* had on the prison system, the leadership of the gangs, and their operational structures" (Dudley 2010: Gonzalez & Cruz, 1997). The government of Francisco Flores implemented the *Mano Dura* policy in 2003, which allowed police officers to arrest suspected gang members based on their physical appearance, as many gang members pledge allegiance to the organisation with tattoos on their faces, hands, and other extremities. This strategy resulted in the prison population increasing from 4,000 to 8,000 in the first four months after the implementation of this policy (Stone, 2012; Gonzalez & Cruz, 1997).

Several authors argue that the *mano dura* and *super mano dura* policies led to the proliferation of incarcerated individuals. They also argue that such policies did not effectively distinguish non-gang members from active gang members (Lessing 2016; Cruz 2011; Wolf 2012a; Gonzalez & Cruz, 1997). An expert interviewed maintains that the strategies of harshness will lead to spikes in violence as the gangs will not relent to the government.

It is also important to note that gang members have responded to such public policies by changing some of the traditional gang practises and developing new structures and ways of operating. For example, for some time after the implementation of the harsh policy, many gang members stopped tattooing and shaving their heads to make it more difficult for law enforcement and government authorities to identify gang-affiliated individuals (Wolf 2012b; Gonzalez & Cruz, 1997). They also developed strategies to challenge the government and security forces that ranged from public calls for transportation curfews to negotiations with government representatives (Martínez and Sanz 2012; Cruz and Durán-Martínez 2016; Gonzalez & Cruz, 1997).

The present policy paper argues that long prison sentences do not prevent organised crime from happening and therefore should not be the main resource that justice uses to deal with organised crime. The preventive effect is nonexistent due to the fact that what young members are looking for when joining is the social status they obtain. They want their peers to recognise them as someone relevant and have their approval; they seek to be part of a group and form their identity based on the gang.

Proposal 5: To improve community relations

Community is a key element in preventing crimes. A functional community should be able to transmit conventional values and create associations where everyone gets involved. Communities have to exercise informal control, meaning to point out and react to illicit behaviours instead of normalising them. To reinforce social control and social cohesion and to improve the communitary feelings helps to prevent crimes, such as by promoting associationism in the neighbourhood so that it comes together to defend its interests and increases informal social control. Hirschi's (1969) Control theory stated that there are four mechanisms that prevent people from committing crimes:

attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief.

- Feeling *attached* to others, that is, sensitive to others' opinions. The attached individual does not want to disappoint people who are important to him. He might not want to lose or diminish his bonds.

- *Commitment*: parents or teachers can convey high aspirations in children (getting good grades, etc.). Hirschi (1969) stated that if you have very high aspirations, deviant acts can put those aspirations at risk. The more aspirations you have, the less deviant behaviour you tend to commit, as you will not put your aspirations at risk by committing crimes.

- *Participation*: the perception of being subject to control. The more hours you are without adult supervision, the easier it is to stray because you are not under control. It is also a criterion of supervision to know who your children hang out with.

- *Beliefs*: Do you believe that rules must be respected in any case? Beliefs refer to your moral standing before the law. The more you agree with the law, the less you commit crimes.

To strengthen prosocial role models such as teachers or family members, being part of a prosocial group is crucial to dissociating oneself from the criminal sphere. The quality of the school relationship (dedication of the teachers, attention to the student's needs, values that are transmitted) contributes to the creation of bonds.

According to Cruz's (2019) study, being linked to the church/religious experience is essential for many of them to decide to leave the gang. To reinforce community role models, being part of a prosocial group such as the church helps to disassociate from the criminal sphere.

When José asked the inmates in his interviews what their options were to leave the gang, more than half answered to join the church. Joining a church is one of the most effective methods of leaving a gang in Central America, since "religious experience plays a very important role, because any church (especially the evangelical one) creates a kind of bubble that allows young people to create new reconstructive bonds, offers them in some cases work opportunities, and above all, brings them opportunities for education, and this helps them a lot to leave the previous life" (Cruz, 2019). The church community is one of the few communities

that does not stigmatise offenders after they are released and helps them reintegrate into society.

Hence, this policy paper stands that **improving community relations through voluntary work, church programmes, or any kind of activity that reinforces community bonds is a positive way to prevent people from joining criminal organisations as well as from committing crimes again once they leave prison.**

Proposal 6: To promote resocialization programmes: Why should resocialization programmes be implemented inside and outside prisons?

The present paper already exposed how punitive policies did not result in positive outcomes in the Northern Triangle of Central America. As Cruz (1997) argued, "those policies resulted in an increasing level of violence (...), further stigmatised already marginalised communities, and may have accelerated the recruitment of the gangs themselves."

An example of success in resocialization programmes working with gang members is the result of the truce that the

Salvadoran government negotiated with the main gangs in March 2012. In November 2012, negotiators proposed the creation of peace zones in several municipalities with the goal of getting gang members to cease their criminal activities and participate in programmes designed to reintegrate gang members into society (Valencia 2015b; Whitfield 2013; Martínez et al. 2012; Martínez and Sanz, 2012). Violence initially decreased as homicide rates dropped from 12 per day in 2011 to 6.8 per day in 2013 (AP 2016). However, the homicide rate increased after the truce was broken (González & Cruz, 1997).

For that reason, resocialization programmes can lead to good results, but negotiating with criminal organisations is not a safe way to reduce criminality since gangs might break the deal at some point, leading to an increase in violence.

The expert claims that Honduras is one of the countries that invests the least in social programmes. Precariousness, marginalisation, and the low quality of social services and education make gangs the only life option for young people, he says. As a result, **the present policy paper states that resocialization programmes that deal with anger, violent behaviour, self-control, and emotion management**

are necessary to be taken both in prison so as to prevent recidivism and outside prison for risk groups in order to avoid the commission of crimes (secondary and tertiary prevention programmes).

What policies have already been implemented, and what was the outcome?

Currently, the impact of tough on crime policies is clear because they have been the rule since the early 2000s. What experts have found is that these policies, especially in El Salvador, motivated gangs to organise much better. Firstly, these policies generated many grievances among the population. This pushed many young people into the hands of gangs. Secondly, the government put arrested gang members together in mass prisons. Consequently, people from different parts of the country gathered in a prison, which facilitated the start of a network. The repressive measures provided these kinds of opportunities since they had a great deal of time to organise themselves.

El Salvador started to implement proactive measures against gangs in 2003, and by 2004, experts began to see evidence that extortion was becoming a problem. That was due to the fact that gang members in prison began to demand that their friends outside prison send them money. Then, the

gang members from outside began extorting money from the population to send money to those inside. In addition, people in prison also started using cell phones to extort money from people outside prisons. Hence, it became clear that, after tough policies, extortion increased. Homicides also increased because there were wars between gangs for territorial control and also between the state and the gangs.

Salvadorans realised that "*mano dura policies*" were not working, so president Mauricio Funes started implementing more preventive policies after taking office in 2009. However, preventive measures took time, and in the meantime, gangs continued to get stronger while experts were trying to implement preventive policies. Therefore, society was not seeing results, and the homicide rate was still high.

Because of the lack of positive outcomes, Funes did a 180-degree turn and put the Minister of Defence in charge of public security, who decided to go back to tough on crime policies. However, at this point, the gangs were better prepared and started to respond with even more violence.

Prevention seemed not to be working, so the minister decided to reduce the homicides by talking to the gangs, and

that's how he came up with the truce. He negotiated the truce to reduce homicides, and it worked. The limitation of the truce was that while people were satisfied with the reduction in homicides, the truce didn't really address gang control in the communities, so the gangs continued to extort.

Proposal 7: To reinforce cooperation between the three states (Ameripol)

The presence of transnational gangs between the Northern Triangle states has generated the highest rates of violence in the world. According to the United Nations, the Northern Triangle of Central America represented one of the most dangerous regions worldwide, with the highest average of homicides rate. Among citizens and governments, the most important concern is still the lack of security.

Violence has a direct negative impact on support for democracy, as citizens do not trust governments to protect them from crime. Along these lines, it is also necessary to point out that mistrust in the criminal justice system and a lack of respect for the rule of law are indicators that have remained high in the Northern Triangle region, where there are concerns about the quality of governance.

As has already been presented, the three states have similar situations regarding security, democracy, and many other socioeconomic indicators. Hence, each state is interconnected. Moreover, since the situation of national emergency in El Salvador and Honduras is causing gang members from these countries to move to Guatemala, cooperation between the three countries is essential.

Cooperation could be implemented through the reinforcement of a cooperative network where the three countries would be interconnected and share essential information so as to facilitate security duties.

This could be done by reinforcing the use of the already existing Ameripol, a large network for international cooperation against organised crime, and a comprehensive initiative for the professionalisation of the police forces in America. Its main aim is the qualification of techniques in the fight against transnational crime, the horizontal exchange of information in real time, and allowing police forces from different countries to operate simultaneously to neutralise crime.

The fight against organised crime would be more effective if they all shared resources. **That is why the policy paper**

proposes that the police forces of the three studied states that participate in Ameripol: *la Policía Nacional de Honduras, la Policía Nacional Civil de Guatemala and la Policía Nacional Civil de El Salvador* could reinforce their connections by sharing information about the situation of organised crime in each area and sharing databases to speed their interconnection since they share similar conditions and crime phenomena that other American countries do not.

Even though this specific cooperation would be of more benefit than a wider one, the reality is that a close cooperation between the three countries could be quite complex considering the problematic relationship that the states had in the past, with a few ongoing conflicts. For instance, El Salvador has historically used migration as a foreign policy weapon, affecting the situation in Honduras and Guatemala due to the massive arrivals of migrants.

Proposal 8: To use alternative penal measures

Taking into account that most gang members are teenagers or young adults, the government should consider extending the use of alternative penal measures to the deprivation of freedom, especially for young offenders with no criminal record or

a short criminal trajectory. Many studies have proven the negative effects of prison, since individuals learn from other offenders. Hence, they can improve their skills, and the gang can also upgrade their structure and organisation inside prison since gang members have plenty of time to discuss and enhance their modus operandi.

Moreover, the state's cost of maintaining prisoners is extremely expensive. This high amount of money could be spent on other public funds, such as education or health. According to *la Dirección General de Centros Penales (DGCP)* of El Salvador, \$108,000 is spent daily on food and another \$66,000 in current expenses, for a total of \$174,000 per day.

On the contrary, serving the sentence in the community has many benefits, such as reducing the stigma the ex-convict may suffer once he has completed his sentence. The reoffending rate for alternative measures is also stated to be lower than for prison.

Due to all the inconveniences that prison involves, **this proposal encourages decision-makers and government leaders to consider the use of alternative measures to prison in cases where the offence is less serious, there is no criminal trajectory, or the offender is really young. These alternative**

measures could consist of working for the community, measures of security, fines, ordinary suspensions or with rules of conduct and/or other obligations, and the substitution of the penalty for a programme, among other options.

Proposal 9: To adapt a Community-Policing model

The relationship between the police and the communities is relevant to preventing crime, and the different types of police models define what kind of role society has and its tasks or involvement in preventing crime.

The *community-policing* method is based on the idea that police officers are regular citizens who serve others. This model starts from the assumption that what is necessary to guarantee security lies in sovereignty, meaning individuals who live in the same territory. Therefore, police officers should not have any authority or value themselves, but the citizens commission them to carry out tasks of protection and promotion of security. In this model, police officers are understood as a service, not as a security force itself.

The requirements of transparency towards the public and responsibility concerning the citizens are clearly essential. In this model, fluid, direct, and responsible

relations between the police and the public are key elements at different times:

- When establishing preferences. In other words, the priorities of the state should be the preferences of the citizens in terms of security, prevention, and repression of crime.

- The evaluation of police activity would be given by the fulfilment or not of the priorities set by the citizens.

- Citizen satisfaction would be the key point when defining the level of efficiency and effectiveness of the police. That is to say, depending on the degree of satisfaction, the police are more effective or not; the more satisfied citizens are, the more effective the model is.

- The need for interaction between citizens and the police is crucial. Firstly, adequate communication of the citizen's needs is assumed by the public police service. Secondly, with fluid communication both by the service regarding the timing and the content of the activities carried out by the service, from the police to the citizens.

On balance, a closer relationship and cooperation between citizens and police officers are proven to be effective and to make security tasks easier. When the

population gets involved, they have the feeling that they can have a direct impact on improving security. Hence, they might gain trust in the police when considering reporting a crime or demanding their services, since they will see themselves as part of the solution and perceive police officers not as a superior authority but as equal individuals that watch out for their well-being. However, transparency and low levels of corruption in the police body are needed for the population to gain trust in them.

Proposal 10: To promote post-penitentiary assistance

Life after being imprisoned can get really challenging because of the lack of support that ex-offenders may have on the outside, especially in cases of long sentences. The absence of job prospects and sometimes a place to live, stigmatisation, and the loss of social bonds make the situation even more complex.

Post-penitentiary assistance is understood as "the set of supervision, material, and moral help directed mainly at the prisoner released from a penal institution in order to allow and facilitate his effective reincorporation into free society" (Núñez, 2019).

Since the studied states contemplate specially long sentences for organised crime-related offences, post-penitentiary assistance is primarily relevant in these cases.

Due to the complexity that individuals face after being incarcerated, **the present policy paper states that to reduce the chances of recidivism that the lack of opportunities involves, policymakers in the three states should consider the implementation of programmes that offer assistance to individuals who have just been released from prison.**

Here are some ideas:

- Organising workshops to help ex-offenders find a job, such as helping them create their CV and recreating interviews with social workers.
- Planning weekly meetings where ex-offenders can discuss with professionals how they are dealing with their new life so they feel supported. The meetings have the aim of creating social bonds between them, so they are not isolated and can rely on others as well as seek help.

- Professionals could also make weekly calls to ex-offenders so they can keep track of their current situation. Individuals would have the feeling that they have a mentor they can go to when needed and wouldn't feel as lonely in the process of adjusting to their new life.

5. Conclusions

The countries that make up the Northern Triangle of Central America are comparable because of their similar socioeconomic, political, and historical situations. Hence, the same security proposals can be applied effectively in those territories.

Both hypotheses can be confirmed by all the research mentioned. *The state response to combat crime with repressive policies or "tough on crime policies" feeds back and aggravates violence*, and this fact can be stated due to many reasons: repressive policies do not address the root problems that cause the violence in the first place, such as the lack of opportunities, the easy access to organised crime, the lack of informal social control, the intrafamilial violence, the impoverished neighbourhood structures which increases the perception of insecurity, or individual matters such as

behavioural issues. Both structural and individual matters need to be addressed by specific programmes.

The second hypothesis, that *community and resocializing responses help reduce crime*, has been proven valid as well. The role of the community is extremely relevant in preventing crimes. The community has to be involved in exercising informal social control as well as cooperating with the police forces. They have to perceive the security problem as something that involves them as well and be a part of the solution by being able to transmit conventional values and point out illicit behaviour.

Regarding the research questions, the states applied different policies according to who was ruling the country, but at the moment, the three states are going for tough crime policies. The outcome of those policies has been an increase in violence, the migration of gang members to other states (where they reproduce the same criminal structures), and the restriction of human rights and democracy.

Therefore, the policy paper proposes to policymakers:

- **To invest in improving impoverished neighbourhood structures**

- **To give legitimate opportunities and prevent illicit ones**
- **To reduce intrafamilial violence with programmes**
- **To not increase the severity of the punishment**
- **To improve community relations**
- **To promote resocialization programmes**
- **To reinforce cooperation between the three states**
- **To use alternative penal measures**
- **To adapt a Community-Policing model**
- **To promote post-penitentiary assistance**

Prevention has to be done in conjunction with primary (addressed to the general population), secondary (to risk groups), and tertiary prevention programmes (to ex-gang members).

Regarding the future, the population might have a feeling of safety when harsh policies are being implemented since their perception is that more people are being imprisoned, but the reality is that long-term, these measures are not effective, and a decrease in crime in official data can be due to many factors, such as the secret negotiations of the presidents with gangs that do not tend to last and aggravate violence when they break or to the massive arrests, which lead to extortions from gang members inside prison and the improvement of their

criminal organisation structure. Hence, the evolution of security in the Northern Triangle of Central America might not change drastically with the present crime policies.

Politicians demand fast solutions to combat crime, and experts argue that effective policies to reduce crime are based on long-term policies. Hence, resocialization programmes might be perceived as ineffective since they do not bring the immediate results that the population demands. On the contrary, repressive policies are mediatic and have a visible impact, such as the construction of enormous prisons and massive arrests, among others, making people believe that actions are being taken.

However, long-term, repressive policies do not bring positive results in terms of a decrease in the crime rate and the respect for democracy and basic human rights. Politicians have also used this phenomenon to their advantage for electoral purposes after experiencing the boost of Bukele's popularity with his drastic measures to combat security issues. Hence, the present policy paper calls policymakers to implement security policies following the professional's advice on the matter, instead of punitive populism.

6. Bibliography

- AP News. (March 27, 2022). El Salvador declares state of emergency amid killings. Source: <https://apnews.com/article/crime-caribbean-legislature-nayib-bukele-el-salvador-7e9bad0bfaca93db044b3cbcf921fc29>
- BÁEZ, G. (2021). Crimen organizado transnacional y maras en el Triángulo Norte de Centroamérica. Documento de Opinión IEEE 64/2021. Source: http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2021/DIEEEO64_2021_GARBAE_Crimen.pdf
- Barreno, R. (July 8, 2022). Las pandillas MS-13 y Barrio 18 se consolidan en tres departamentos de Guatemala. *Prensa Libre: Periódico Líder de Guatemala*. Source: <https://www.prensalibre.com/guatemala/justicia/las-pandillas-se-consolidan-en-tres-departamentos-de-guatemala/>
- Clavel, T. (16 oct 2017). Why It's So Hard to Leave El Salvador's Gangs: An Interview With José Miguel Cruz. *InSight Crime*. Source: <https://insightcrime.org/news/analysis/why-so-hard-leave-el-salvador-gangs-interview-jose-miguel-cruz/>
- Cloward, R. A., & Ohlin, L. E. (1998). *Delinquency and opportunity: A study of delinquent gangs*. Routledge.
- Cruz, J. M., & González, L. A. (1997). Magnitud de la violencia en El Salvador. *ECA: Estudios Centroamericanos*, 52(588), 953-966. Source: <https://doi.org/10.51378/eca.v52i588.6457>
- Cruz, J. M., Rosen, J. D., Amaya, L. E., & Vorobyeva, Y. (2017). La nueva cara de las pandillas callejeras: El fenómeno de las pandillas en El Salvador. Source: <https://repo.funde.org/id/eprint/1278>

Cruz, J. M (2019). Pandillas, ¿atrapados sin salida?. *TedTalk*. Source:

https://www.ted.com/talks/jose_miguel_cruz_pandillas_atrapados_sin_salida

Cruz, J. M. (October 13, 2022). Cerrando el ciclo de violencia de pandillas en El Salvador.

United States Institute of Peace. Source:

<https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/10/cerrando-el-ciclo-de-violencia-de-pandillas-en-el-salvador>

DW (August 15, 2022). El Triángulo Norte de Centroamérica: zona de deterioro democrático.

Source:

<https://www.dw.com/es/el-tri%C3%A1ngulo-norte-de-centroam%C3%A9rica-zona-de-deterioro-democr%C3%A1tico/a-62813859>

DW (February 8, 2023). Pena de muerte en Guatemala: mano dura como estrategia electoral.

Source:

<https://www.dw.com/es/pena-de-muerte-en-guatemala-mano-dura-como-estrategia-electoral/a-64644422>

DW (February 9, 2023). Mano dura en Centroamérica: pan para hoy, ¿hambre para mañana?.

Source:

<https://www.dw.com/es/mano-dura-en-centroam%C3%A9rica-pan-para-hoy-hambre-para-ma%C3%B1ana/a-64648049>

Global Initiative (2020). Fuerza Nacional Anti Maras y pandillas: Estudios de caso sobre la

lucha antiextorsión en Honduras. Source:

https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/20200610_FNAMP_A4.pdf

Hirschy, T. (1969). *Causes of Delinquency*. Berkeley: University of California Press

Human Rights Watch (2023). Informe Mundial 2023: El Salvador - Eventos de 2022. Source:

<https://www.hrw.org/es/world-report/2023/country-chapters/el-salvador>

Infosegura (2022). Análisis de la seguridad ciudadana en Guatemala Enero-Junio 2022.

Source:

<https://infosegura.org/2022/07/22/dataccion-analisis-de-la-seguridad-ciudadana-con-perspectiva-de-genero-en-guatemala-de-enero-a-junio-de-2022/>

InfoSegura (2022). Análisis sobre la situación de la violencia y seguridad ciudadana en Honduras 2022. Source: <https://infosegura.org/2023/01/18/analisis-sobre-la-situacion-de-la-violencia-y-seguridad-ciudadana-en-honduras-2022/>

Núñez, A (October, 2019). La Reinserción Social del Sentenciado y su Atención Postpenitenciaria en México. *Foro Jurídico*. Source: <https://forojuridico.mx/la-reinsercion-social-del-sentenciado-y-su-atencion-postpenitenciaria-en-mexico/#:~:text=Se%20entiende%20que%20la%20atenci%C3%B3n,a%20la%20sociedad%20en%20libertad.>

PNUD (2020). Informe sobre desarrollo humano 2020. La próxima frontera: desarrollo humano y el Antropoceno. El Salvador. Source: <https://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/es/SLV.pdf>

PNUD (2020). Informe sobre desarrollo humano 2020. La próxima frontera: desarrollo humano y el Antropoceno. Guatemala Source: <https://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/es/GTM.pdf>

Política Exterior (November 21, 2011). Centroamérica: la 'mano dura' triunfa en Guatemala. Source: <https://www.politicaexterior.com/centroamerica-la-mano-dura-triunfa-en-guatemala/>

Reuters (2021). El Salvador's Bukele deploys military after spike in murders. Source: <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/el-salvadors-bukele-deploys-military-after-spike-homicides-2021-11-11/>

Rivera, N. E. R. (2016). Violencia cotidiana, marginación, limpieza social y pandillas en Guatemala. *URVIO, Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios de Seguridad*, (19), 111-127. Source: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17141/urvio.19.2016.2414>

Semana (November 24, 2022). Al estilo Bukele, el Gobierno de Honduras le “declara la guerra” a las pandillas. Source: <https://www.semana.com/mundo/articulo/al-estilo-bukele-el-gobierno-de-honduras-le-declara-la-guerra-a-las-pandillas/202203/>

Shaw, C. R., & McKay, H. D. (1942). *Juvenile delinquency and urban areas*. University of Chicago Press.

Sykes, G. M., & Matza, D. (1957). Techniques of Neutralization: A Theory of Delinquency. *American Sociological Review*, 22(6), 664–670. Source: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2089195>

The Guardian (2020). El Salvador imposes prisons lockdown after 22 murders in a day. Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/25/el-salvador-imposes-prisons-lockdown-after-22-murders-in-a-day>

UNDP (2022). Human Development Report 2021/2022: Uncertain Times, Unsettled lives: Shaping our future in a Transforming World. Source: https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/global-report-document/hdr2021-22pdf_1.pdf

United Way (2023). Contexto Social en Guatemala. Source: [https://unitedway.org.gt/index.php/contexto-social-en-guatemala/#:~:text=Guatemala%20sigue%20siendo%20un%20pa%C3%ADs,alimentos%20\(o%20calor%C3%ADas%20m%C3%ADnimas\).](https://unitedway.org.gt/index.php/contexto-social-en-guatemala/#:~:text=Guatemala%20sigue%20siendo%20un%20pa%C3%ADs,alimentos%20(o%20calor%C3%ADas%20m%C3%ADnimas).)

Voz de América (March 2022). Congreso de El Salvador aumenta fondos y condenas para combatir a las pandillas. Source: <https://www.vozdeamerica.com/a/congreso-de-elsalvador-aumento-sentencias-y-financiamiento-para-combate-a-pandillas/6510058.html>

Voz de América (January 7, 2023). ¿Se puede combatir la criminalidad en Honduras y El Salvador sin regímenes de excepción?. Source:

<https://www.vozdeamerica.com/a/se-puede-combatir-la-criminalidad-honduras-el-salvador-sin-regimenes-de-excepcion-/6907866.html>

World Prison Brief (2023). World Prison Brief Data: El Salvador. Source: <https://www.prisonstudies.org/country/el-salvador>

Zinecker, H. (2012). *Más muertos que en la guerra civil: el enigma de la violencia en Centroamérica*. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung-fesamericacentral. Source: <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/fesamcentral/09184.pdf>