



**UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR MODEL UNITED NATIONS**

**HIGH SCHOOL CONFERENCE**

**SPECIALIZED COMMITTEE**

04.28.2017- 04.28.2017

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## LETTER FROM YOUR SECRETARY-GENERAL

Dear Teachers, Parents, and Prospective Delegates,

It is my honour have you attend the University of Windsor Model United Nations 2017 high school conference. UWindsor Model United Nations (WinMUN) is proud to be hosting it's third annual conference with students coming together to compete and debate. I can promise that WinMUN's secretariat team has been hard at work making this conference the best one yet.

Since its inception in 2014, WinMUN has striven to provide realistic and engaging simulations of the United Nations and its associated bodies to inspire diplomacy among students and foster an interest in global issues. In only 3 years, WinMUN has grown exponentially in terms of membership, travelling and winning in conferences, campus involvement through our first annual gala and panel discussions, and of course our high school conference. We are excited to once again offer the top- notch debate quality and will bring the same effort and enthusiasm that we have when planning all our events.

Over the past few months, our Secretariat team has worked hard to prepare the best conference to date and we are excited to share some of our work with you. We are thrilled that delegations from around the community continually express their interest in our work. The committees for this year provide students with a diverse array of options depending on their interests. All of our chairs are well trained and committed to providing delegates with the best experience possible.

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In addition to offering a diverse and educational experience, WinMUN also offers great social and networking events. Taking advice from previous delegates and faculty advisors, we look forward to hosting events in which delegates will be able to connect with each other as well as the secretariat members.

The conference will be hosted at the beautiful Center for Engineering and Innovation with spacious rooms that allow for good flow of debate. It is at the edge of campus so students will be able to go and explore the university while also having many restaurants nearby to explore.

It is my sincere hope that you will enjoy WinMUN 2017 and that you have such a great experience that you come again next year or even join our team once you start attending university. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact [rodri118@uwindsor.ca](mailto:rodri118@uwindsor.ca), or peruse our website.

On behalf of the WinMUN Secretariat and staff, thank you for your time and consideration. We are thrilled to have you as our honoured guests!

Regards,

Arianne Rodriguez Saltron

Secretary General

WinMUN



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## Central American Migration Crisis





## Introduction:

In 2014, many Central Americans experienced a tough year as violence reached its peak, and thousands of families and unaccompanied children made the long and dangerous journey to Mexico in search of a haven in the United States. This would start the first significant movement of people from the Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala in the 2000s. The Northern Triangle countries have faced increasing instability in the past decade due to the insecurity arising from the brutal war between criminal organizations and security forces. This humanitarian crisis has caught media attention; due to the impact it has had on the US southern border, the conditions in Central America, as well as the dangers involved in making this journey. The initial response from the American and Mexican government was an aggressive deterrence strategy to increase border enforcement measures to prevent others from making this trip. [1] The factors behind migration are clear as many are fleeing to save the lives of their children and are in search for security and protection. However, the reasons behind the problems facing these countries are multiple and remain three years after the initial crisis.

The dangers present in the Northern Triangle countries affects the neighbouring countries, which ultimately makes it the responsibility of the OAS to prevent the spillover and spread of violence in the region. Thus, the OAS must work towards find solutions to protect Central Americans from the disastrous effects of this situation. In 2016 alone, 80,000 people (mostly children) from the Northern Triangle countries are expected to apply for refugee in the US, but the sad reality is that much more are unable to seek help. [2] The mix of gangs, repressive security forces, increasing poverty and lack of protection is creating the “world’s least visible refugee crisis”, largely ignored from media attention. [3] In the past few years, almost 10% of the population of the Northern Triangle countries have fled the country, mostly to the US and Mexico. [4] The Northern Triangle region is a complex area in dire need of support; the continuation of the conflict calls into question the capability of the OAS to resolve both internal and regional issues instigating the insecurity, migration, and violence facing these countries. The OAS must find a diplomatic and sustainable solution to de-escalate the violence and bring stability to El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala.





## History of Conflict and Weak Rule of Law:

Central America has faced extended periods of authoritarianism, violence, and corruption. In the 1990s, these three countries known as the Northern Triangle countries faced long civil wars that would leave behind weak institutional governments and a legacy of violence. The wars in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras have impeded upon democratic development, and in the long term have undermined rule of law. [5] In El Salvador, due to large inequalities and brutal local struggle, a civil war erupted in 1979 that lasted until 1999, which translated into a war between the right-wing liberal regime against the communist guerrilla forces. This 12-year conflict resulted in 70,000 deaths, 500,000 refugees and tens of thousands disappeared and wounded out of a country of 6 million people. [6] The consequence of the violence during that period is that it brought about a weak environment that would allow the reemergence of the same violence that happened during the war. Today in El Salvador, the number of people fleeing from violence exceeds the rate during the civil war. Additionally, in 2017 alone, almost 7,000 people were killed and the repercussions of violence affected at least 23,000 children who stopped going to school.[7]


Guatemala also faced a long period of violence whose effects are still felt today. From the 1960s until 1996, the country suffered a civil war fought between government forces and leftist rebel movements that would take the lives of 200,000 people. During the civil war, Guatemala faced many human rights violations and state-sponsored aggression. Today violence is a major concern in Guatemala as it faces the highest per capita rate of murder in the world, the majority of which are not investigated. [8] Honduras on the other end was also rocked by a civil war that claimed the lives of thousands of innocent civilians. Today, Honduras continues to face insecurity and instability, the 2009 coup, removal of the president from office, would further exuberated the lack of respect for the rule of law and put the country on the verge of being a failed state. [9] What followed these wars were broken institutions, easier access to weapons, and demobilized unemployed men. All these conditions would set the stage for the emergence of organized crime and a weak and repressive government that would be unable to deal with them effectively.

### **Violence/Crime: Gangs, Drug Trafficking and Insecurity:**

Although the nature of violence is different in every country, there are common factors that are endorsing insecurity in the region; a proliferation of gangs and gang violence, a growing drug trafficking zone, and a repressive paramilitary response. All three countries are in the top five of the most murderous countries in the world; Honduras is often labeled as the murder capital of the world, and both El Salvador and Guatemala have exceedingly high homicide rate, this is why they are called the Northern Triangle of Death. [10] Most of this violence is directed towards the youth who face 80% more violence since 2014. [11] This data stands in stark contrast to the neighbouring countries of Costa Rica and even Nicaragua.

A large part of the crime emerges from street gangs who have taken control of vast territories within the Northern Triangle countries. These two dominant gangs are Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and 18th Street, which initially emerged from the Latino street gangs in Los Angeles and due to increased deportation they were sent back to their country of origin and would replicate the gang phenomenon in the mid-1990s. At this point, the countries were still dealing with the impact and aftermath of civil wars which is why the youth may have found protection and rank within these gangs. Today these gangs are estimated to hold a membership of 85,000 gang members in the three countries. [12] These gangs have become involved with organized crime and more recently with Mexican drug cartels. [13] El Salvador currently holds the largest number of gangs per capita in the world, and a multiplicity of multifaceted and intertwining factors have contributed to the violence that continues to plague Northern Triangle countries today, the effects of which on their society cannot be overstated. Today, the people paying the price for the continuous violence are the children who are forced to enlist into gangs against their will, and families that are coerced into extortion. These people must live with the continuous threat of physical violence and sexual violence- especially females that are very often taken as sex slaves. Many areas occupied by gangs are extremely dangerous as they enforce harsh laws and curfews, and are used to sell drugs and control the area outside of government protection. [14] According to data by the UN agencies dealing with these refugees, nearly one-third of the children who fled from the Northern Triangle countries cited gang-related violence as their primary reason for fleeing. [15]

In recent years gangs have started to become involved in drug trafficking, because the location of Central America has made it prone to being used as a transit point for drug shipments making their way to the United States, as 80% of drug flows pass through Central



America. [16] It has become the bridge between the world's largest drug producers in South America to the largest consumer base in the US. American Intelligence pushing for counter narcotic efforts in the region has resulted in drug cartels and organizations vying gangs against each other as they compete for control of land and routes. The region's use as a transit point exacerbates the already weak institutional situation and strains the already unaccountable state enterprise that is easily infiltrated by criminal networks.


These countries have weak justice systems and low public confidence in law enforcement's ability to provide safety; most citizens don't report crimes because they know they will not be investigated or think they will put themselves in further danger by doing so. [17] Additionally, many public institutions are underfunded and are ripe with corruption hence the government is unable to deal with violence and provide safety to its citizens. The majority of crimes go unpunished, which results in the public no longer trusting the law enforcement mechanisms in their countries. High levels of corruption within governments is an issue at the forefront of reforming governments to deal with the security crisis and regain public trust efficiently. The Northern Triangle countries have attempted to enforce anti-gang policing strategies known as Mano Dura (2003) and Super Mano Dura (2004). In this effort, increased spending on policing and a creation of a joint anti-gang military police patrols were endorsed. [18] These efforts would largely criminalize youth street groups as well as limit the civil rights of gang members; the intended goals were a large-scale persecution and suppression of gangs. [19]

This cycle of despair with a weak governments and high levels of crimes are a push for migration (AWK), and many parents send their kids on risky journeys to the US. [20] Many of these innocent children are faced with the inconceivable choice of either dying on the way to the US or risking their lives at home. Additionally, bleak socioeconomic possibilities is a large push factor for migration, the possibility of a better future elsewhere as years of inadequate state response has left parents and families in a state of desperation over their children's future or lack thereof. [21]

### **Journey to Mexico & America: Dangers & Barriers**

The trains or "Bestia's" (Beast) that head from southern Mexico to the United States have come to symbolize the dangerous odyssey that migrants embark on to flee violence. This is the most common means of travel for the poor and vulnerable citizens, which are often the





targets of gangs and drug traffickers.[22] Throughout the past decade, it has become clear that neither the Mexican or American border controls are sufficiently dealing with the increase of migrants coming from the Northern Triangle countries. In recent years, asylum petitions have doubled in Mexico, adding stress that decreases the ability of staff to process requests fairly and efficiently. In fiscal year 2015, Mexico returned 166,000 Central Americans, including some 30,000 children and adolescents, while the U.S. deported 75,000.[23] The regrettable truth is that migrants, who are attempting to escape violence, are met with similar brutality as they seek asylum in North America. Entire industries have matured and profited off the state's instability, creating a near impossible journey for migrants. Below, a few of these obstacles are discussed:

## **Issues:**

### **Human Smuggling:**

Migrant smugglers – called coyotes or polleros (chicken herders) were once productive members of society but have changed professions due to financial necessity.[24] It is believed that smugglers move about 200 migrants at a time and networks charge about \$5,000-\$7,000 a person to reach the U.S. There are modifications: some pay more to guarantee a child will be delivered to a family member, Asians that attempt to enter the U.S. might pay double the price because safer routes which include travel by car or bus are more expensive.[25] Smugglers also work to secure migrants against kidnapping by paying for protection (\$600 - \$1,000 for each migrant).

### **Invisible Victims**

Apart from the already 26,000 missing Central American refugees who have become registered Mexican citizens, there are thousands more that maintain their status as migrants.[26] The National Human Rights Commission along with the Mexican government ombudsman said in 2013 there were about 11,000 kidnappings a year. Despite this, only 48 preliminary investigations into migrant kidnappings were initiated between 2010-2014.[27] A federal prosecutor's office created in December 2015 was to expand access to justice for migrants. However, it has fallen short with no jurisdiction over serious cases involving organized crime and does not investigate corruption and abuse by immigration agents, police and other government officials.



## **Gangs & Corruption**

While there are many cartels that financially gain from vulnerable migrants, the Zetan Mexican drug cartel, one of the most violent in Mexico has particularly spearheaded the industry. Acting as a modern drug cartel without family ties, territory or tradition, they lend expertise and reputation to local groups along the Gulf of Mexico.[28] While mass kidnappings no longer take place, criminals still grab individuals for ransom with little fear of response by police, who are either intimidated or corrupt. However, crime against migrants is not limited to solely gangs like the Zetas. There have been many documented cases of various crimes committed by authorities including robbery, extortion, beatings and illegal detentions.[29] Others include the police, migration officials and members of the military have also taken advantage of the disparity of migrants. In fact, the most recent report by Red de Documentación de las Organizaciones Defensoras de Migrantes (REDODEM) points to an increase in crimes against migrants by state officials alongside a reduction in abuses by organized criminal groups.[30]

## **Human Trafficking**

While estimates vary, all studies point to a growing human trafficking industry. A recent study put the number of sexually exploited victims in Guatemala alone at 48,500, estimating that for every reported case there were 30 hidden victims.[31] Adolescents as well as females are the most vulnerable to human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Along the Mexican/Guatemalan border, the sex industry is a “direct byproduct of migrant smuggling.”[32] Some women simply run out of money making their way north and see no alternative. Some smugglers abandon clients and sell or trade them to another smuggling network that force women into prostitution. Guatemala has legislation to combat trafficking but the state lacks the resources to enforce such laws outside the Guatemala City, the capital.

## **The Role of the United States**

At a glance, many might see the atrocities transpiring in the Northern Triangle countries as entirely apart from the United States. However, during the Cold War, the United States supported and in many cases installed authoritarian governments across these countries which then forged armed conflicts throughout the 1970s and 1980s (covered earlier in the guide). The democracies that ensued continue to be fragile without the financial and political support needed from the U.S. Furthermore, in the 1990s and 2000s, the U.S. deported more than 250,000 convicted criminals to the NTCA that largely created the notorious gangs that fuelled American demand for illegal drugs like cocaine.[33]




## **Stalled Reform**

The role of the United States in the region expanded greatly in 2014 due to the massive influx of unaccompanied migrant children, mostly from the Northern Triangle countries into the United States. In 2014, President Obama described the issue as an “urgent humanitarian situation.” By year’s end, the U.S. had detained nearly 70,000 unaccompanied children, up from 39,000 in 2013.[34] The US state department put forth an information campaign to deter further migration and help Guatemala and Mexico to reintegrate migrants. These measures worked in the short term but began to rise again in 2015. Later in 2014, the U.S. launched a refugee program, the Central American Minors (CAM) Refugee/Parole, in the Northern Triangle countries that would provide a legal alternative for children who decide to embark on a dangerous journey to America for family reunification. However, there are plenty of pitfalls. To begin, the process must be initiated by parents in the U.S. and not other close relatives. The process involves many interviews, DNA testing and security clearances resulting in a process that takes up to a year to be complete. Thus far, only about 600 of 9,000 CAM applicants had been admitted to the U.S. as of July 2016.[35]

## **Moving Forward**


Led by former Vice President Joe Biden, the United States looked to address the push factors that lead to individuals becoming migrants, most notably the cemented violence and lack of economic opportunity. Congress approved a \$750 million assistance package called Alliance for Prosperity for the fiscal year of 2016 and a similar amount is requested for this year.[36] Those funds are targeted towards poverty reduction and combating corruption. The proposal contains four strategic lines of action: stimulating the productive sector to create economic opportunities, developing growth opportunities, improving public safety and enhancing access to legal systems, as well as strengthening institutions to increase people’s trust in the state. In February 2016, the Northern Triangle countries have similarly promised to allocate 2.6 billion from their national budgets to support the plan’s goals. It is necessary for the U.S. to extend its support for the next five years and include targeted programs to address community violence prevention. However, the U.S. aid does not compensate for the regions historically low investment in its children, which is necessary to curb future migration. The Alliance for Prosperity Plan has also been heavily criticized due to its emphasis on attracting foreign investment, the support it provides for the continuation of dubious security initiatives, and the Central American government’s lack of accountability. Furthermore, many Central American



leaders are fearful that this plan will only help American businesses exploit the region. They argue the plan's emphasis on economic growth and the attraction of foreign investment rather than social progress is troubling. Aid needs to be primarily focused on empowering individuals rather than creating precarious employment opportunities, like those offered to unskilled workers by most foreign corporations.[37] On the other end, the Northern Triangle countries need to make fighting poverty and violence a greater priority. In terms of economics, emigration is an economic boom supplying thousands of jobs despite the long-term human capital losses. Ending criminal violence in Central America is costly, estimated to cost nearly Central American countries 8 percent of their collective GDP. [38] Furthermore, these governments are reluctant to label the violence in the region "a humanitarian crisis" as it would admit to their failure. Instead, they implement militarized policies that target the proximate causes of violence without addressing the underlying factors.

### **NGOs & their obstacles**

While there is a significant presence of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the region, their success has been restrained for many reasons. To begin, when governments are reluctant to admit to the scale of the problem, humanitarian actors have less space to intervene, leading many to focus on less politicized issues rather than directly targeting the violence. Also, currently gang violence is not categorized as armed conflict, so International Humanitarian Law (IHL) does not apply creating significant difficulties for International Committee of the Red Cross' (ICRC) work from both a legal and judicial standpoint. While this would help ensure a flow of aid to violence prevention programs, it would add legitimacy to these organizations.[39] A clear success for NGOs has been the creation of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG). It is an international body charged with investigating and prosecuting serious crime in Guatemala. Alongside the United Nations, the Guatemalan government has agreed to support an independent body to support the Public Prosecutor's office. It has widely been hailed as a success, arresting dozens of high level members of cartels and gangs across Central America. The United States has pushed for its adoption in other countries but other leaders have been more sceptical.[40] Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez stated, "If we depend on other countries, when are we going to solve our own problems?" However, with anti-corruption protests mounting, President Hernandez, in conjunction with the Organization of American States, created Honduras' own investigatory unit called the Support Mission against



Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH). The unit is a step in the right direction but has little power to act independently.[41]

### **The responsibility of the OAS**

The Organization of American States has played a major role since its creation 67 years ago; in being strong advocates of democracy, human rights, and regional development. The need for collective action is necessary now more than ever; as the number of people fleeing Central America is unprecedented since the civil wars in the 1990s. The impact of violence, gangs, drug trafficking, weak government institutions, and bleak socio-economic opportunities, has left the Northern Triangle countries in a very unstable state. This will have a direct impact on the region as a whole, both with transnational crime and the flow of migration. On the right agenda of the OAS is the pressing needs to discuss regional responsibility sharing and robust actions to deal with refugee and asylum seekers. There needs to be a protection of migrants and durable solutions to a crisis that has the ability to scale the whole region in a state of deep insecurity.

**NOTE: We do not claim ownership to any of the photos.**

### **Questions:**

What regional response could there be for dealing with gang proliferation in Central America?  
Is the War on Drugs making the situation in Central America worse?  
How can the OAS assist these Northern Triangle countries in prompting stronger security initiatives to provide protection to their citizens?  
Should the US and other countries in the region be obligated to take in refugees?  
Despite good intentions, is the Alliance for Prosperity Plan a good or bad?  
Are neighbouring countries worried about a spillover effect?  
How strong are the capabilities of MACCIH in fighting corruption?  
Can Honduras as well as El Salvador mimic the successes of the CIGC?



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