

# ASP MUN CONFERENCE



## ***UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF DRUGS AND CRIME (UNODC) GUIDE***

**Topic: Eradicating MS-13 and Other Transnational  
Crime Organizations**

**Chair: Dania Said  
Vice-Chair: Dannah Shalabi**



**Chair Letter:**

Dear Delegates and Observers,

Welcome to the UNODC Committee. It is my honor to serve as your chair for this upcoming conference and to guide you through this fruitful and inspiring experience. Our committee will examine severe issues associated with international crime prevention, drug control, and justice. I hope to see you all active and participating in this committee as I believe you will all have important insights and arguments on this topic. I encourage each of you to step beyond your comfort zone and overcome the hesitation that is initially felt at the beginning of the conference. With that confidence you will be able to come up with a wide range of innovative ideas.

I anticipate that each of you will dedicate time and effort for your research and come well prepared for the conference to help us create a productive and enjoyable experience for all.

It is also important to note that my vice chair, Dannah Shalabi, and I expect respect from everyone since we are working hard to make everyone's experience memorable.

Additionally, the use of AI is **STRICTLY PROHIBITED**. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, and those who choose to disregard these guidelines will face consequences. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or my vice chair. **\*Please refrain from using our socials, and instead, keep all communications through email\***



## **Background on the UN Office of Drugs and Crime:**

We are proud to be bringing back the United Nations of Drugs and Crime for the second time in ASPMUN history. The UNODC was established in 1997 by merging the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) and the Centre for International Crime Prevention (CICP). Like any other committee, the UNODC serves under the umbrella of the UN; it serves as a leading authority in the fight against illicit drugs, organized crime, corruption, and terrorism. The UNODC works to promote justice, security, and integrity in various areas related to crime prevention and criminal justice.

In this conference, we will be focusing on the issue of eradicating transnational crime groups, most specifically the gang MS-13, humanely and with respect to basic human rights. Of course, you are free and encouraged to research and attack other delegates on their own transnational crime organizations, even if they're not directly involved with MS-13. This ensures *everyone* is able (and required!) to participate and have fun in this conference.



## **Topic Overview:**

Organized crime is a serious issue worldwide. This issue becomes even more dire once those crime groups cross borders and establish themselves as a transnational organization. These transnational organized crime groups cause many important problems that we will discuss and eradicate in this upcoming conference.

Transnational organized crime groups use illegal and oftentimes violent means to obtain profit, control, security, and territory across multiple different countries. These gangs illegally transport drugs, weapons, people, and more across borders for economic gain, which can negatively impact the nations' economies the gangs work through and in. The gangs may vary in hierarchy, activity, presence, size, conduct, methods, and more. One specific gang that we will be discussing in detail is arguably the most infamous organized crime group in America: MS-13.

Mara Salvatrucha, mainly referred to as MS-13, is a transnational organized crime group founded by Salvadoran, Honduran, and Guatemalan immigrants in the United States. The gang was founded in 1980 in Los Angeles, California, and it is notoriously known for smuggling drugs and weapons, human trafficking, and excessive violence. Despite originating in the states, MS-13 now has a significant presence from Central America all the way to Europe. MS-13's current number of members is estimated to be around 50,000 to 70,000 in Central America. They also have presence in Mexico, Spain, Italy, and a smaller number in Canada.

MS-13 activity in the "Northern Triangle" (El-Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras) is defined by violent disputes and shows of power intended to intimidate rival gangs. Governments in Central America have contributed the "mano dura" (iron fist) policies, which profiled and arrested youth based on appearance as well as criminal association.



Here are the major parties involved:

**1) The USA:**

MS-13 was founded in the United States by immigrants from Latin America and now operates in at least 40 states, with members consisting both immigrants and US natives.

**2) El-Salvador:**

Salvadoran immigrants founded the gang back in 1980 to form protection against rival gangs. After the Salvadoran Civil War ended in 1992, the USA deported large numbers of gang members back to El-Salvador, resulting in its great MS-13 presence there. MS-13 and its rival Barrio 19 have been a major source of violence and crime in the country.

**3) Honduras:**

MS-13 maintains a unified leadership here compared to other “Northern Triangle” countries, like El-Salvador, where leadership is divided. This unified leadership has proven successful for MS-13 in Honduras.

**4) Guatemala:**

As part of the “Northern Triangle”, Guatemala has a large MS-13 presence within its country. MS-13 here is led by a group of nine imprisoned people, and their territory is divided into three sectors.



### **Brief Timeline of Events:**

- **1980:** MS-13 was founded in LA, California to protect Salvadoran immigrants fleeing the Salvadoran Civil War from rival gangs.
- **1992:** Salvadoran Civil War ended and the USA deported large numbers of Salvadoran immigrants back to El-Salvador.
- **1997:** Honduran President Ricardo Maduro was murdered by gang members, and the Honduran government passed a zero-tolerance policy for gangs.
- **1998:** Over the next seven years, more than 34,000 criminals are deported back to El-Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.
- **2004:** The FBI formed the MS-13 National Gang Task Force
- **2005:** The task force coordinated crackdowns and arrests across the States, Central America, and Mexico. 650 individuals were arrested.
- **2012:** US Treasury Department designated MS-13 as a transnational criminal organization. The El-Salvadoran government made a truce with MS-13 and its rival Barrio 18, leading to a drop in homicides.
- **2015:** Between 2012 and 2015, the truce fell apart and homicide rates spiked dramatically. El-Salvador's Supreme Court named MS-13 and Barrio 18 as terrorist organizations.
- **2020:** The US Department of Justice unseals an indictment against the top 14 MS-13 leaders imprisoned in El-Salvador.
- **2021:** After the indictment, the USA sought the extradition of the leaders, but the El-Salvadoran government blocked the request.
- **2022:** A massacre of 87 people triggers a crackdown by President Nayib Bukele's government in El-Salvador. The country continues its urgency to



the present day, suspending constitutional rights and resulting in the arrests of more than 89,000 people by the end of October 2025. This weakens MS-13's street operations in El-Salvador, but raises concerns of human rights abuses.

- **2024:** A high ranking member of the Ranfla Nacional, MS-13's highest level of leadership, is arrested in California.
- **2025:** ICE and FBI announce the arrest of another high-ranking leader in Maryland. The Department of Justice announces a federal jury in Maryland has convicted three MS-13 members of racketeering and murder.



## **Helpful Resources:**

- [mara-salvatrucha-ms-13-profile](#)
- [https://insightcrime.org/investigations/when-the-ms13-played-possum-guatemala/](#)
- [R45292](#)
- [The-evolution-of-ms-13-in-el-salvador-and-honduras](#)
- [Ms13-americas-major-findings](#)
- [Ms13-americas-major-findings](#)
- [https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/mara-salvatrucha-deadliest-street-gang-america](#)
- [https://orionpolicy.org/ms-13-unmasked-anatomy-of-a-decentralized-network/](#)
- [Ms13\\_011408](#)
- [https://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/uncategorized/18-with-a-bullet-timeline-gangs-el-salvador-and-united-states/1517/](#)
- [https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/news/stories/2005/september/ngtf080905](#)
- [D1](#)
- [https://americasquarterly.org/article/ms-13/](#)
- [el-salvador-needs-long-term-solutions-end-cycles-violence](#)