

# The of criminal violence and human rights violations

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The high levels of violence and crime in El Salvador have caused tens of thousands of victims in recent years. Despite the purposes of the most recent security plans and policies, the Salvadoran government, has not had the capacity to create programs catered, specifically to the victims of criminal violence efficiently and effectively, until today. The victims of criminal violence and human rights violations in El Salvador have suffered from the exclusion and abandonment of the Salvadoran state historically. The options to face the violence they suffer, especially the most impoverished sectors of the population, have depended on the help of their own family or social networks of support. Therefore, it is not surprising that they frequently resort to the option of irregular migration, especially to the United States of America, since the State institutions in general do not provide assistance, care or protection mechanisms, even at the level of humanitarian aid. or psychosocial accompaniment. Although Salvadoran mass migration responds to diverse and structural causes, it is very likely that violence and crime now become a new expulsion factor that fuels irregular migration, based on the analysis of the statistics of recipient countries. . The rise in requests for refuge or international protection, by Salvadorans abroad, is an indicator that supports this hypothesis.

Internally, those who do not have the economic capacity to undertake the transit of international migration, increasingly seek options for internal displacement, under the difficult conditions that have led to the expansion of the activity of criminal structures, especially gangs, in El Salvador . The refusal of the Salvadoran State to officially recognize the

existence of forced displacement caused by violence limits its possibilities to prioritize humanitarian assistance measures for many affected individuals and families; in addition, it impedes the taking of pertinent decisions to disaggregate information in public institutions, which are required by displaced families to access elementary public services, such as health and education. Very probably these families in internal forced displacement because of the violence, will feed at some point the already massive channel of irregular migration, without leaving any record in the official institutions. The generation of disaggregated information on the probable condition of a person or family in displacement due to violence is one of the most relevant challenges to address this problem. Despite this, it is still possible to approach official information from various institutions, derived from the requirements of basic public services or assistance that people in high vulnerability due to their displacement status have requested from them. For these reasons, the list of available information on migration – requests for international protection – violence and other requests for humanitarian aid services in public institutions is particularly relevant to approach the phenomenon of forced displacement due to violence in El Salvador. The above, given the specific official information scenario that has been described.

\*\*\*The Civil Society Board against forced displacement due to violence and organized crime in El Salvador is made up of the following organizations: American Friends Service Committee, Salvadoran Red Cross, Fundacion de Estudios para la Aplicacion del Derecho, Fundacion Cristosal, Fundacion

Quetzalcoatl, Grupo de Independent Monitoring of El Salvador, Anglican Church of El Salvador, Instituto de Derechos Humanos of the Central American University “Jose Simeon Canas” Pastoral Care for the Migrant of the Network of Missionaries of San Carlos Scalabrino, Network for Migrations – El Salvador, Service Social Passionist, Ludo Salvadoreño Synod, Save the Children and Universidad Tecnológica de El Salvador. The MESA was formed in response to the increase in cases received in the various organizations, individuals or families seeking humanitarian support for serious harm to their integrity or safety due to violence, who reported not finding answers from the state institutions to their situation. Facing the Salvadoran state, it continues without officially recognizing the problem of internal forced displacement due to violence in El Salvador. This position of denial makes it difficult to design and implement public policies and specialized programs for the care of victims of criminal violence, caused mainly by gang groups or other organized crime groups.

The lack or insufficiency of integral programs of protection and attention of victims of violence in general and of victims in displacement condition in particular, is a reality that has motivated the organizations of the MESA to get involved in favor of these and to demand a greater attention to them, in order to promote actions that allow them to find durable solutions to the serious damage they have suffered because of the crimes they have had to experience. In this report, the figures reported by the observatory of the MESA of Civil Society are presented, they do not represent all the cases that occurred in the country in 2016, but a representative sample, constituted

only by the cases that received accompaniment by the organizations that make up the the Mesa, within the limitation of its resources. Therefore, the figures are an approximation that allows to conclude the existence of the phenomenon of forced displacement in El Salvador, being pertinent to consider that the real number of cases of displacement occurred in the country is much higher. The international human rights treaties, of which El Salvador is a member, oblige it to undertake actions aimed at the prevention of violence, as well as the protection and assistance of the victims of the general criminal violence, especially that caused by structures of violence.