

LATINMUN 2026

**United Nations
Office on Drugs
and Crime
(UNODC)**

**Addressing the influence of Criminal
Organizations on Sovereign Governance and
Security in Latin America**



LatinMUN

Director: Mateo Perez

Moderator: Jimena Martínez

Welcoming message from the chair:

Dear delegates and advisors,

We are pleased to welcome you to LatinMun 2026. It is great to have you present here with us. We will be your chairs for this Model United Nations Simulation. Our role is to direct and maintain control throughout the sessions.

We hope that you find the selected topic interesting and that it uplifts the passion you carry inside for this. We wish you the best possible experience from this year's LatinMun. Our names are Jimena Martínez and Mateo Pérez, we will be your chair for this edition of LatinMun. We are at your disposition to ensure that this event is memorable and that everything flows in the right direction. Once again we are honored to welcome you to this event as part of the United Nations Office On Drugs and Crime and hope you not only learn but make this a good and fun experience. This is all about showing your commitment and dedication, making sure to stand out and show your worth. We await for this moment and expect great things from both parties. Give your best and hope for the best achievements.

Thank you, and good luck!

Sincerely,

Jimena Martínez and Mateo Pérez

Committee's Background:

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) was created in 1997. The organization counts with headquarters in Vienna, as well as operating in more than 20 offices globally, with around 500 members located across the world.

Not only that, the organization has made multiple global approaches in educating people on the dangers of illicit drugs and improving global approaches to combating organized crime. Today, the UNODC not only stands among the most primordial branches of the UN, but also as a globally recognized collaborator towards the United Nations' central counter-terrorism goals.

This committee first emerged as a union between the United Nations Drug Program (UNDP) and the Center for International Crime (ICPC), and the committee has risen to become the United Nations' most influential and powerful agent against specialized terrorism, and has also contributed significantly to strengthen laws and reforms around drug production and trafficking worldwide.

In 2011, the UNODC established an Open-Ended Intergovernmental Expert Group on Cybercrime, which has been successfully implemented in a diverse number of countries across the world. As a result to this, the committee's Global Programme on Cybercrime was formed in 2013, which focuses on building capacity and strengthening cybersecurity, as well as providing technical assistance.

The committee, along with the United Nations, has already laid ground on the issues it wants to address and solve, and has created elaborate agendas to implant their strategies with efficiency. The UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, established in 2006, is a unique agenda that helps guide the United Nations and its committee on enhancing counter-terrorism efforts, and works in unison with other separate agendas that have been created for other purposes.

Topic Background:

In Latin America, organized crime has grown into a huge issue that hurts the ability of states to be sovereign. Sovereignty refers to a country's ability to govern itself, make its own laws, and maintain order within its borders. But, due to criminal organizations, such as drug cartels, the government starts to be undermined by corrupting institutions, getting inside law enforcement, and creating a lot of violence, which hurts the government's reputation.

It has grown from a simple law enforcement issue into a big threat to state sovereignty and democratic governance. Sovereignty depends on the strength and legitimacy of public institutions. When criminals, such as drug cartels or gangs, start joining or infiltrating these institutions, it starts to damage their reputation by making citizens doubt their ability to control its territory and its population.

Drug trafficking groups and multi crime networks have become part of every space in the region. Because of their use of violence, bribes, corruption, blackmail, and economic power, they have gained control of many parts of Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador, and Central America. These organizations can make millions if not billions of dollars in illegal revenue, which they usually invest in weapons and political influence. Thanks to this, they can operate across borders, integrate with legal businesses, and may even use digital platforms, which would make it even harder to dismantle.

One of the worst effects of organized crime is how they weaken state institutions. Criminal groups mainly bribe or threaten politicians, judges, prison officials, and police officers. As a result, public institutions start to become more helpful to criminals rather than the citizens. This issue targets many local governments. Mayors and local governments often receive threats, are forced with extortion, or are assassinated.

Latin America is still the most violent region in the world, due to the region's kidnappings, murders, and disappearances. In 2025, at least 108,838 people were murdered across Latin America and the Caribbean. Organized crime and gangs are linked to roughly 40–50% of homicides in the region, more than twice the global average. These problems create fear among citizens, and makes them distrust democratic institutions and reducing civic participation. Also, money laundering and the corruption in political campaigns make it even harder to make meaningful reforms.

At an international level, organized crime from Latin America has become increasingly widespread. Criminals often move cocaine, heroine, and other variations of illegal objects through North America, Europe, and Africa. They now work across borders, with bribes, blackmail, money laundering, and cybercrime to avoid being prosecuted.

Current Situation:

As of 2026, organized crime continues to destabilize state authority throughout Latin America, marking itself as a constant threat to governance, sovereignty, and to the collective safety of civilians. These groups have grown to a point where they are actively disputing territorial and political power with the state itself, diminishing its capacity to govern and its sovereignty.

Criminal organizations have begun to occupy spaces that are affected by the state's absence, rooting themselves within communities. In neighborhoods in Rio de Janeiro and rural areas in Colombia, criminal groups provide security, distribute food, and even fund whole communal projects. But all of this comes with a cost, people must obey the rules imposed by these groups, pay for protection, and live under continuous threats. This act is called "criminal governance", it does not pursue to overthrow and replace the state, but to coexist with it.

An extreme example of criminal governance is what is happening in the capital of Haiti, Port-au-Prince. Criminal groups have switched from coexisting with the state, and have instead almost completely replaced it. According to the UNODC, criminal groups have gained control of over 90% of its territory, leaving only 10% under government control. This has allowed these gangs to completely operate the supply chains and extort commerce, gaining a huge percent of Haiti's resources, damaging its economy and giving these crime organizations immense power. Political corruption is also enabling armed crime groups to grow. Political and economic elites, customs officers, law enforcement, and port officials often collaborate with these groups, simplifying the trafficking of firearms, drugs and other illicit goods.

Organized crime has also come to directly affect whole democratic processes in states across the region. Many criminal groups threaten or kill candidates and elected officials, taking away the rights of citizens to freely choose, while others manipulate and obstruct elections through corruption. An example of this is what happened during and after the 2024 Mexican elections. Many politicians across the country were targeted, threatened, attacked, or assassinated. A total of 1,709 attacks, threats and assassinations were recorded against Mexican politicians during these elections, with at least 37 candidates murdered. Even after the elections were completed, violence continued, within days of Claudia Sheinbaum taking office in October, the mayor of Chilpancingo was murdered and beheaded.

Conclusion:

In Latin America, organized crime became a really big threat to sovereignty and democracy. They corrupt officials with bribes or blackmails, infiltrate institutions, and create a lot of violence. These groups make citizens lose their trust in their government. Some go across borders by trafficking, money laundering, kidnappings, etc. which makes

them harder to find. To help fight this issue, international cooperation is key, since this fight is mainly about protecting sovereignty and ensuring that states can serve their people correctly.

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