

Conference organised by the Heinrich Böll Foundation and Misereor

Monday 20 and Tuesday 21 April

Transnational Organised Crime Counter-strategies from Latin America to Germany

Transnational organised crime (TOC) ranks among the most pressing social, political and economic threats to society, the state and development in Latin America. The region has the highest rates of violence in the world. In light of recent developments, we will examine the situation in Mexico, El Salvador, Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador and Peru from the perspective of our partners.

Ever-changing forms of criminal governance undermine democratic institutions, decision-making processes and their legitimacy. The breeding ground for this is structural inequality, a lack of economic prospects and limited opportunities for social advancement. Trump's assault on Venezuela under the pretext of the war on drugs is a prime example of a policy of false solutions that places an additional burden on the civilian population. There is a danger that the fight against organised crime will increasingly be exploited for political ends to legitimise military interventions in the Western Hemisphere that violate international law. How can organised crime be effectively curbed? What role can local civil society play? And how can transnational cooperation be structured in such a way as to strengthen human security as a goal? At the same time, the question arises as to what we in Germany can learn from initiatives and strategies in Latin America.

For transnational organised crime has long posed an acute risk to human security here too: Germany is currently experiencing a flood of cocaine and is regarded as a money-laundering haven. Alongside the drug trade, human trafficking, forced prostitution, environmental and arms-related crime, as well as cybercrime, are among the key sources of income. The profits and flows of goods generated from these activities are channelled into Europe via highly efficient supply chains. At the same time, criminal networks are gaining increasing influence over legal economic structures. Despite the gravity of the situation, the issue still receives too little nuanced media and political attention in Germany. Public debate is often reduced to the activities of individual groups or buzzwords such as 'clan crime'. Repressive measures and increased investigative pressure on both continents have so far proved ineffective in sustainably tracking financial and goods flows through international cooperation and skimming off illegal profits. Meanwhile, the TOC operates with a high degree of adaptability, utilises innovative forms of international cooperation and is capable of endangering democratic structures in Europe through corruption and violence.

The conference therefore brings together civil society and government representatives from Latin America and Europe to discuss strategies and assess their effectiveness. The focus is on trade, environmental crime, financial flows and the existing instruments of international cooperation. The experiences of organised civil society in Latin America in its democratic and human rights-based resistance against transnational organised crime provide important insights in this regard.

On 20 and 21 April, Latin American guests and political actors from Germany and Europe will gather at the Heinrich Böll Foundation to discuss strategies for preventing and combating TOC.

With simultaneous interpretation in German, Spanish and English

Programme

Monday, 20 April, Heinrich Böll Foundation

15:30 **Registration**

16:00 **Opening remarks and welcome to the Heinrich Böll Foundation**

Imme Scholz, Executive Director of the Heinrich Böll Foundation

Jonas Wipfler, Head of the Berlin Office of the Episcopal Relief Organisation Misereor e.V.

Keynote: José Luis Caballero Ochoa, Vice-President of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

16:30 **From Buenaventura to Berlin: Cocaine and corruption between Latin America and Germany**

This discussion will examine how the supply chains and routes from Latin America to Germany are structured and what social dynamics drive them. On this basis, countermeasures to the current cocaine glut in Germany will be identified. The focus will be on the interfaces between state and criminal structures, as well as initiatives against endemic violence, using examples from Colombia, Brazil and Germany. The role of customs will also be discussed.

With:

- **Diana Salinas**, Cuestión Publica, Colombia
- **Victor Vidal**, former mayor of Buenaventura and Proceso Comunidades Negras (PCN), Colombia
- **Carolina Grillo**, Study Group on New Forms of Illegality – Fluminense University, Brazil
- **Benedikt Strunz**, NDR, Germany
- **Arne Schwoch**, Hamburg State Criminal Police Office, Port Security Center

Moderator: Regine Schönenberg, Head of the Rio de Janeiro Office, Heinrich Böll Foundation

18:00 **Reception**

20:30 **End of the first day**

Tuesday, 21 April, Heinrich Böll Foundation

08:30 **Registration**

09:00 **Introduction to the day: Keys to new strategic approaches**

Mareike Bödefeld, Latin America Officer, Latin America Department, Heinrich Böll Foundation

Helena Raspe, Latin America, Human Rights and Security Officer, Misereor

09:30 **Panel 2: TOC, Authoritarianism and the Anti-Rights Agenda**

In many Latin American countries, violence perpetrated by organised crime shapes everyday life. Given this reality, the call for a heavy-handed approach seems understandable. But do purely military strategies lead to lasting security? Are there links between transnational criminal networks and the rising popularity of authoritarian movements and regimes? The workshop examines the connections between authoritarianism and organised crime and explores alternatives to repressive security strategies. With:

- **Andrea Dip**, Research Against Global Authoritarianism (ReGa), Brazil
- **Victor Peña**, El Faro, El Salvador
- **Ingrid Garcia**, INREDH, Ecuador
- **Axel Hemmerling**, MDR, Germany

Moderator: Ingrid Wehr, Latin America Democracy Officer, Heinrich Böll Foundation, Mexico City

11:00 **Coffee break**

11:30 **Panel 3: Instruments of international cooperation**

In this discussion, we will analyse which state mechanisms and civil society instruments of international cooperation have proven effective in the fight against transnational organised crime and which could be further developed – also against the backdrop of political changes in Latin America and the USA. Under what conditions can civil society and academic monitoring bodies provide valuable insights into criminal networks beyond the documentation of human rights violations? And how can their recommendations have a political impact? At the same time, we will examine the existing architecture of international cooperation: Which mechanisms work, where are the gaps, and what priorities should Germany set in future?

With:

- **Ingrid Garcia**, INREDH, Ecuador
- **Carolina Grillo**, Study Group on New Forms of Illegality – Fluminense University, Brazil
- **Marcel Emmerich**, Member of the German Bundestag, Alliance 90/The Greens, Germany
- **Carlos Pérez Ricart**, Centre for Economic Research and Teaching (CIDE), Mexico
- **Florian Lewerenz**, Division South America, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany
- **Andrea Richards**, Division 332, Federal Foreign Office, Germany

Moderator: Daniel Brombacher, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime (GI-TOC)

13:00 -

Lunch

14:15

14:30

Panel 4: Profits at the expense of nature: Organised crime and environmental crime

Environmental crimes and environmental criminality must be recognised internationally as organised crime and addressed accordingly. This is particularly evident in the Amazon region, which has developed into a logistical hub for criminal organisations. Transnational criminal actors, who primarily traffic in drugs, people and weapons, are increasingly investing in poaching, illegal logging, gold mining and the trade in endangered species – often for the purpose of money laundering. In doing so, they not only destroy endangered ecosystems but also commit human rights violations: the livelihoods of many local communities and environmental activists are under acute threat.

In this panel, we will discuss the interconnection between organised crime and environmental destruction, using mining in Peru and Colombia as an example, as well as Latin American, European and international approaches to addressing these issues.

With:

- **Marcos Alan Ferreira**, Federal University of Paraíba, Brazil
- **Paul Maquet**, CooperAcción, Peru
- **Alvaro Pardo**, former Minister of the Mining Authority, Colombia
- **Sophia Pickles**, Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime, Portugal
- **Lukas Benner**, Member of the German Bundestag, Alliance 90/The Greens, Germany

Moderators: Johanna Sydow, International Environmental Policy Officer, and Julia Ziesche, Latin America Officer, Heinrich Böll Foundation

16:00

Coffee break

16:30 Panel 5: Follow the Money: Combating Financial Crime Effectively

In this discussion, we will explore how Latin America and Europe, particularly Germany, can make their cooperation in the fight against money laundering and organised crime more effective. The focus will be on three questions: How can a joint review of anti-money laundering efforts provide new impetus? What are the potentials and limitations of instruments such as asset forfeiture on both continents? What significance does the social reuse of confiscated assets have for strengthening civil society? At the same time, we will examine which political, institutional and legal hurdles stand in the way of deeper cooperation and which innovative strategies can help to overcome them.

- **Emiliano Cottini**, Libera – Associations, Names and Numbers against the Mafia and the Latin American Alternative Social Network (Red Alas), Italy
- **Michael Findeisen**, mafianeindanke and former Head of Division at the Federal Ministry of Finance, Germany
- **Cecília Farfán-Méndez**, North American Observatory, Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime (tbc)
- **Sven Giegold**, Member of the German Bundestag, Greens/Alliance 90, Germany

Moderator: Helena Raspe, Misereor

18:00 Coffee break

Closing workshop: Working together against criminal networks: The role of civil society

18:15

Moderator: Berit Bliesemann-Guevara, Professor, University of Aberystwyth, Wales

- [Safer Spaces Project](#) – interactive workshop for all conference participants
- Closing session on the learnings from the workshop and the conference, with one suggestion per participant to be documented

Closing remarks: Betina Beate, Head of the Latin America and Caribbean Department, Misereor

19:30