The Washington Office on Latin America and the Center for Latin American and Latino Studies at American University cordially invite you to

One Year after the Gang Truce in El Salvador

Challenges and Opportunities

Featuring

Héctor Silva Ávalos
Research Fellow, Center for Latin American and Latino Studies, American University

Edward Maguire
Professor, Department of Justice, Law & Society, American University

Steven Dudley
Co-Director, InSight Crime
Research Fellow, Center for Latin American and Latino Studies, American University
Fellow, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

Alys Willman
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Moderated by

Geoff Thale
Program Director, WOLA

Friday, March 29, 2013
10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Washington Office on Latin America
1666 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC

This event will be livestreamed at www.wola.org.

To RSVP, please click here. For more information, please contact Ana Goerdt at agoerdt@wola.org.

In March 2012, authorities in El Salvador facilitated a truce between the country’s two largest street gangs, MS-13 and 18th Street. To many observers’ surprise, the truce has now lasted for more than a year. Homicide rates began to drop immediately after the truce was announced, and the reduction in murders has been sustained throughout the year. At the same time, there are concerns about the lack of transparency in the planning and implementation of the truce and what kinds of agreements may have been made with criminal groups; there are also questions about its long-term sustainability. Observers have noted that although there has been a dramatic decrease in homicides, rates of extortion and other crimes that negatively affect large numbers of citizens have continued. Notwithstanding these concerns, the dramatic drop in homicides may provide an opportunity to implement comprehensive violence prevention and reintegration programs for Salvadoran youth in high-risk communities.

The panelists will focus on the political context and implications of the truce, what role the church or actors within the church have played either in launching or sustaining the truce, and what opportunities the truce may provide for implementing long-term programs that respond to the needs of those communities most affected by violence. The discussion will also draw on experiences with gang truces in
the United States and other contexts. We hope that you will be able to join us for this event.

Héctor Silva Ávalos is the former Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of El Salvador in Washington, DC. Silva Ávalos holds a Bachelor's degree in journalism from the Universidad Centroamericana, El Salvador; a Masters in television production from the Ayuntamiento de Vitoria, Spain; and a Masters in journalism from Universidad de Barcelona and Columbia University. He has 15 years of experience as an investigative reporter for La Prensa Gráfica, a major Salvadoran newspaper. As an expert on Salvadoran organized crime, he has researched and authored journalistic pieces on organized crime in El Salvador and the influence of Mexican and Colombian cartels in Central America. He currently authors two blogs on organized crime and U.S.-El Salvador-Central American relations.

Edward Maguire is a Professor in the Department of Justice, Law & Society at American University. He has held previous positions at George Mason University, the University of Nebraska, the U.S. Department of Justice, and the United Nations. Professor Maguire’s professional interests cover a wide range, but most of his work focuses on three topics: police organizations, violent crime, and social science research methods. Professor Maguire is invited regularly to speak on topics related to crime and justice throughout the United States and around the world. He has written or edited three books and more than 50 articles and chapters on various themes related to policing, crime, criminal justice, organization theory, and social science methodology.

Steven Dudley is the former Bureau Chief for The Miami Herald in the Andean region and the author of Walking Ghosts: Murder and Guerrilla Politics in Colombia. Dudley has reported from Haiti, Brazil, Nicaragua, Cuba, Venezuela, and Miami for National Public Radio, The Washington Post, and the BBC’s The World; and written feature articles for The Washington Post Magazine, The Economist, Columbia Journalism Review, The Progressive, and The Nation. He is currently serving as the co-director of InSight Crime, a website that monitors, analyzes, and investigates organized crime and its increasingly destructive role in Latin America. This initiative is co-sponsored by American University's Center for Latin American and Latino Studies.

Alys Willman is a social development specialist at the World Bank, leading analytical and project work on urban violence, youth violence, and gender-based violence for the Social Cohesion and Violence Prevention team in the Social Development Department. She has authored various books and articles on urban violence, youth violence, and illicit economies. She serves on the Steering Committee of the Violence Prevention Alliance, and on the Board of the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women. Prior to joining the Bank, she taught at the New School University and worked with international NGOs and bilateral agencies in Nicaragua, Guatemala, Cuba, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru. She holds a doctorate in Urban and Public Policy from the New School University in New York.

Geoff Thale is WOLA’s Program Director and oversees WOLA’s research and advocacy on Latin America policy and human rights issues. In conjunction with WOLA’s work on citizen security, he follows police reform issues in Central America and works with Central American counterparts on community-based responses to youth violence. Before coming to WOLA in 1995, Mr. Thale was the founder and Executive Director of the El Salvador Policy Project in Washington, D.C., which followed the negotiations to end El Salvador’s civil war and the construction of post-war institutions.