

A Lost Innocence

THE FORGOTTEN CHILDREN OF CENTRAL AMERICA

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“Illegal Immigrants”





BORDER PATROL





NO. 18 BRAKE BEAMS
39" INTERMEDIATE TRAINLINE HOSE

G 7 OC D5 7 IC D5 2 OC B353 2 IC B354

1-W 36 IN WHEELS
FM 10KN1E





Customs and
Border Protection

BORDER PATROL









Overview



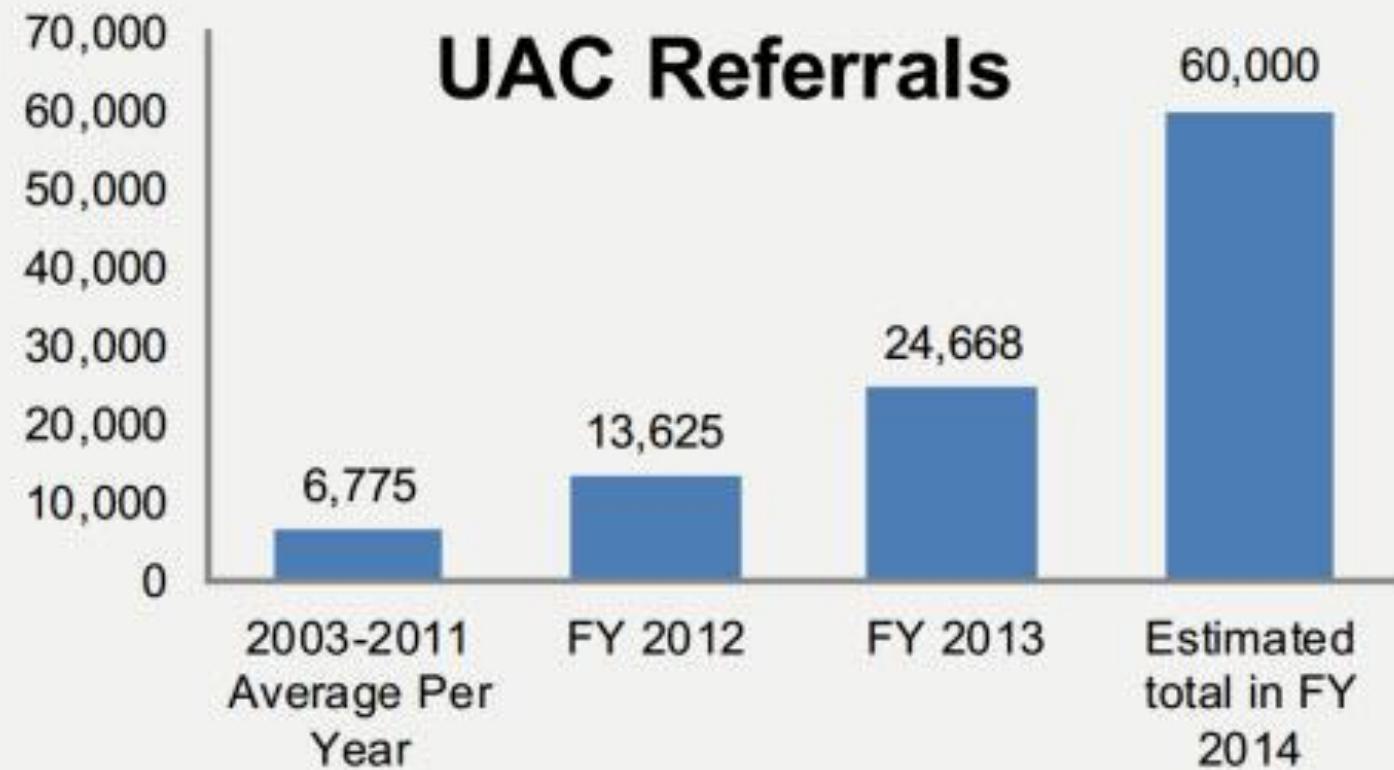
UAC “Unaccompanied Alien Child”



“A person under 18, without parent or legal guardian in the United States or without a parent or legal guardian in the United States who is available to provide care and physical custody”.



Rise in UAC



- More than 66,000 have come so far in 2014

Immigration Reform



Immigration Reform



Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals “DREAM” Act

- Temporarily defers immigration hearings for those who entered before 2007 as children
- Created in June 2012
- **San Diego State University:** Only 1/400 children asked about immigration reform



*“Every parent can image its not an easy decision to send your child with a stranger thousands of miles away to a foreign country... that’s not something you do because you want to. **It’s something you do because you have to**”.*

Humanitarian Crisis



Humanitarian Crisis



- “A singular event or a series of events that are threatening in terms of health, safety or well being of a community or large group of people. It may be an internal or external conflict and usually occurs throughout a large land area.”
- Acknowledged by Senior Protection Officer of High Commissioner for Refugees and the Obama Administration
- At least half of all Central American child migrants should qualify for humanitarian legal status

Humanitarian Crisis



Changing Demographics

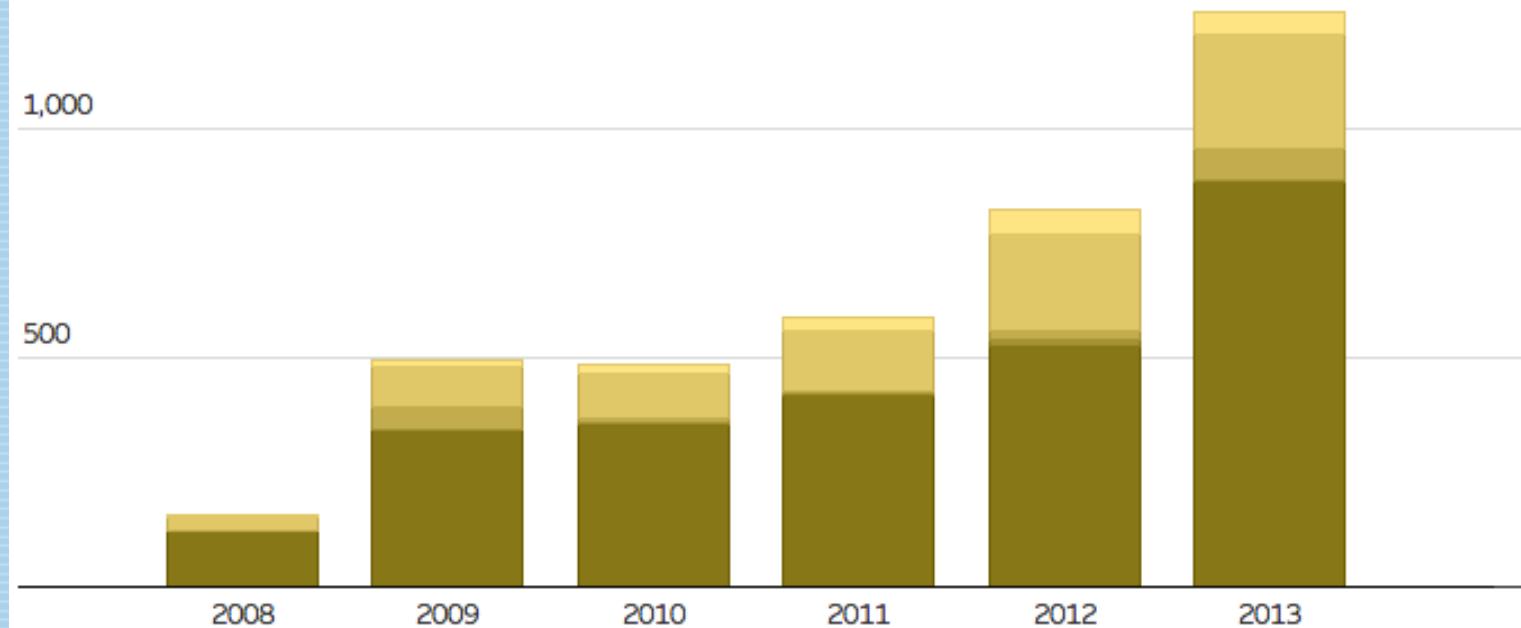
- Increase of girls and children under 13 years of age
- Number of females more than doubled in FY2010 compared to previous years
- Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services: 46% under 9 years old and 4% under 4 years old

Humanitarian Crisis



Central Americans are seeking asylum in other countries, too

Mexico Panama Nicaragua Costa Rica Belize



Source: Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees

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Legislation



Legislation



Homeland Security Act of 2002

Divided responsibility of UAC children between Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Office of Refugee Resettlement

DHS- Apprehension, transfer and repatriation

HHS- Care/placement of UAC, reunification, provision of legal services

Legislation



Before William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) of 2008

- Children were detained for an indefinite amount of time

Special Immigrant Juvenile Status

- Failure to reunify with **both** parents due to abuse, neglect, abandonment was required
- No deadline

Legislation



TVPRA 2008

- UAC children may not be placed immediately into removal proceedings
- UAC must “be promptly placed in the least restrictive setting that is in the best interest of the child”
- Sped up process for attaining legal status

Legislation



Reno V. Flores (1993)

- Juveniles must be placed in least restrictive setting
- UAC children may not be detained with unrelated adult for more than 24 hours
- UAC children must be released without necessary delay

Legislation



Reno V. Flores

- Food and water
- Medical assistance in emergencies
- Toilets and sinks
- Adequate temperature control and ventilation
- Adequate supervision
- Separation from unrelated adults

UAC Process



1. Flee Central America
2. Apprehended near border by CBP
3. Detained and interviewed for UAC criteria
4. Transferred within 72 hours to ORR
5. Complete case management assessments
6. Released within 2-4 weeks to sponsor
7. Proceed with immigration hearings

A Lost Childhood Innocence



A Lost Innocence: 3 Aspects



- **Life in Home Country:** Increasing violence and lack of governmental protection
- **Journey through Mexico:** Vulnerable to dehydration, hunger, rape, abuse, theft and violence.
- **U.S. Policy:** Lack of physical and emotional protection for UAC children and disregard for their need for international protection

A Lost Innocence: Part 1



Life in Home Country



Life in the “Northern Triangle”



- Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador
- Transnational street gangs, drug cartels, etc.

Life in the “Northern Triangle”



History of Violence and Poverty

Honduras: 2009- Military Coup limited Government control

El Salvador: Recovering from civil war (1980-1992)
Extreme poverty and human rights violations
Hurricane Stan (2005): 65,000 displaced

Guatemala: Recovering from Civil War (1961-1996)

School of the Americas: School of the Assassins



- Established in Panama in 1946
- Trained 64,000 Latin American soldiers in sniper training, psychological warfare and interrogation tactics
- Students have routinely used their skills to kill hundreds of thousands of their own people

Life in the “Northern Triangle”



Poverty

- 53% of children lack basic survival necessities
- **Guatemala:** 66% live on \$1/day, 75% live below poverty line
- **Honduras:** 2/3 live in poverty
- **El Salvador:** 5,000-6,000 street children



Life in the “Northern Triangle”



Lack of Opportunity: Education

Honduras: 25% complete middle school

El Salvador: 17 million children work

- Gangs specifically target children





[The gangs] had killed the two police officers who protected our school. They waited for me outside the school. It was a Friday, the week before Easter, and I was headed home. The gang told me that if I returned to school, I wouldn't make it home alive. The gang had killed two kids I went to school with, and I thought I might be the next one. After that, I couldn't even leave my neighborhood. They prohibited me. I know someone whom the gangs threatened this way. He didn't take their threats seriously. They killed him in the park. He was wearing his school uniform. If I hadn't had these problems, I wouldn't have come here.”

- ALFONSO, EL SALVADOR, AGE 17

Life in the “Northern Triangle”



Escalating Violence

Honduras: Murder capital of the world

El Salvador: Second murder capital of the world

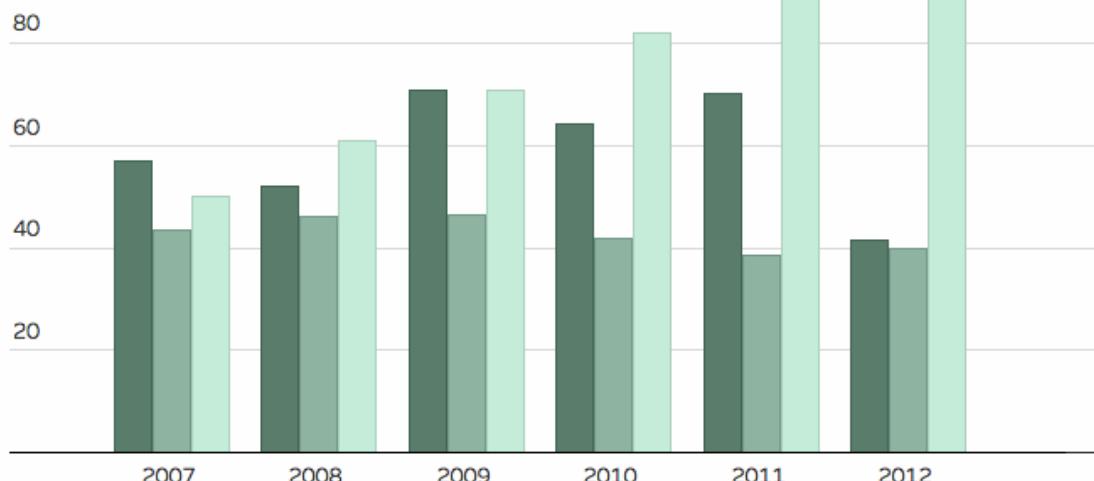
Current homicide rate is higher than during civil war

Life in the “Northern Triangle”



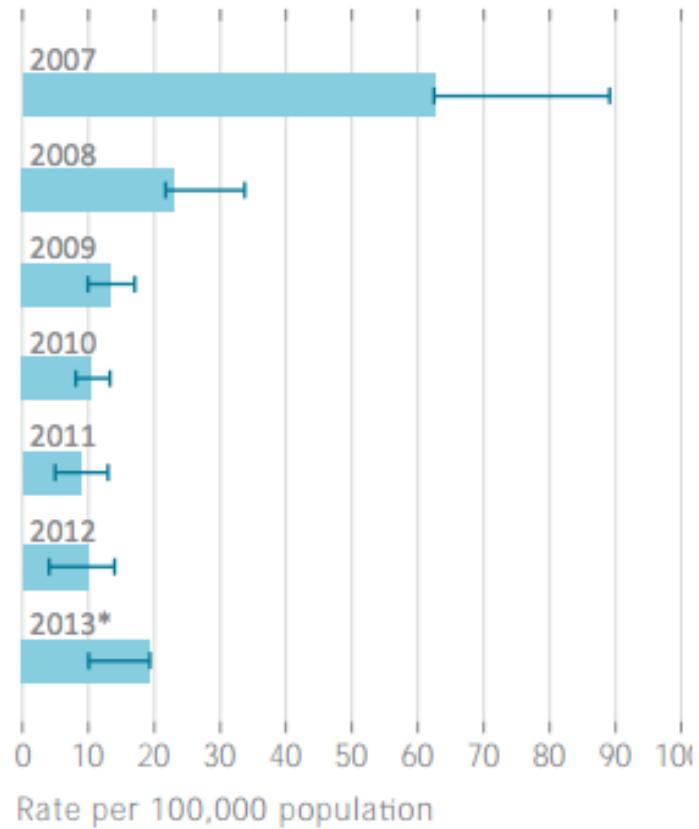
Homicides Per 100,000 People

El Salvador Guatemala Honduras



Source: UNODC [REDACTED]

Fig. 4.4: Rate of civilian casualties, Iraq (2007-2013)



V

Rate per 100,000 population

Note: Bars refer to data from UNAMI, with high and low estimates based on additional sources of information about civilian casualties in Iraq (Iraq Body Count and the Saban Centre for Middle East Policy).

*Note: 2013 data are based on statistics for January-August 2013.

Source: United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) (2013).

Life in the “Northern Triangle”

Gang Violence “Join or Die”



- **Gang Violence:** violence, coercion, kidnapping, rape, recruitment of children into criminal activity
- **Supreme Authority:** buy politicians, recruit members and charge taxes



Life in the “Northern Triangle”



Lack of Government Control

- Lack of resources
- Failure of past anti-terrorism programs
- **Honduras:** 96% of gang related criminal cases were uninvestigated and unprosecuted



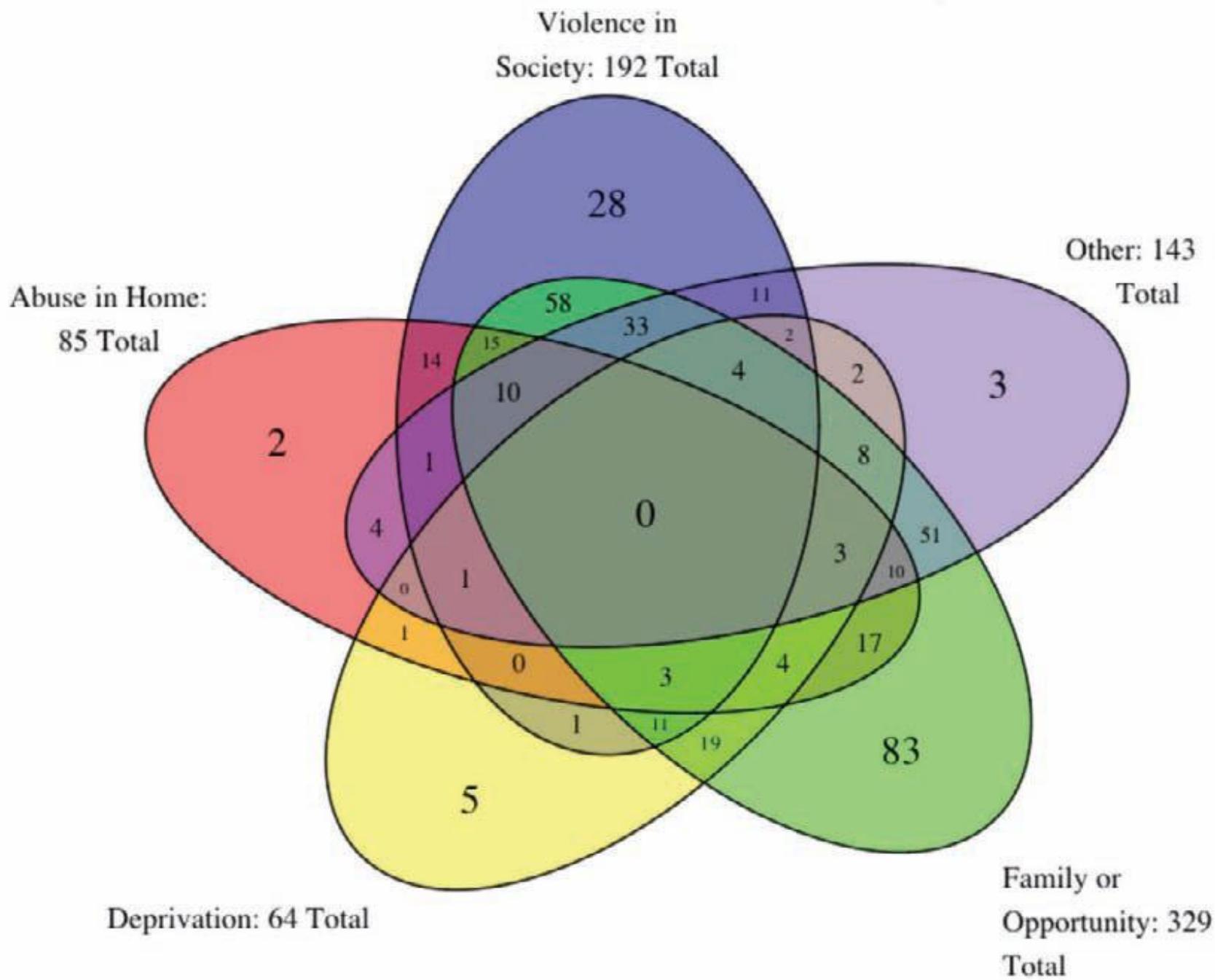
Circumstances and Fleeing: Is There a Correlation?





Children on the Run

- “58% of children were forcibly displaced because they suffered or faced harms that **indicated a potential or actual need for international protection.**”
- “41% percent of the children interviewed disclosed they feared or had already experienced harm related to violence in society.”



El Salvador



“I am here because the gang threatened me. One of them “liked” me. Another gang member told my uncle that he should get me out of there because the guy who liked me was going to do me harm. In El Salvador they take young girls, rape them and throw them in plastic bags. My uncle told me it wasn’t safe for me to stay there. They told him that on April 3, and I left on April 7. They said if I was still there on April 8, they would grab me, and I didn’t know what would happen. . . .”

- MARITZA, EL SALVADOR, AGE 15

Guatemala



“Gangs in a nearby neighborhood wanted to kill me and some other people. They wanted me to give them money, but what money was I supposed to give them? I didn’t have any. They asked me a bunch of questions, like who was my father, and who was my family. I told them my father was dead. They told me to say goodbye because I was going to join my father. They asked me if I knew who they were, if I could identify them. I said no, because I knew if I said yes they would kill me. They held my cousin and me for three hours, tied up. My cousin was able to untie the rope and he helped me untie mine. We heard gun shots and we ran. They kept looking for us, but we escaped.”

- DAVID, GUATEMALA, AGE 16

Honduras



- “When Ricardo was 16, members of the [rival] gangs began to appear in the streets of his town, extorting shop owners and competing to recruit students. One day he was walking with a cousin when several gang members approached, demanding money. The cousin lashed out verbally. The men responded with bullets, killing him. Ricardo ran, a move that began a months-long game of cat and mouse. He lived in hiding while gang members searched for him. ...Only: from school to home, from home to church.” At one point, gang members shot a cousin they mistook for him. The cousin lived, but Ricardo fled to the United States, bringing his brother with him.”



“My grandmother wanted me to leave. She told me: “If you don’t join, the gang will shoot you. If you do join, the rival gang will shoot you—or the cops will shoot you. But if you leave, no one will shoot you.”

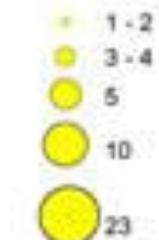
- Kevin, Honduras, Age 17

Life in the “Northern Triangle”

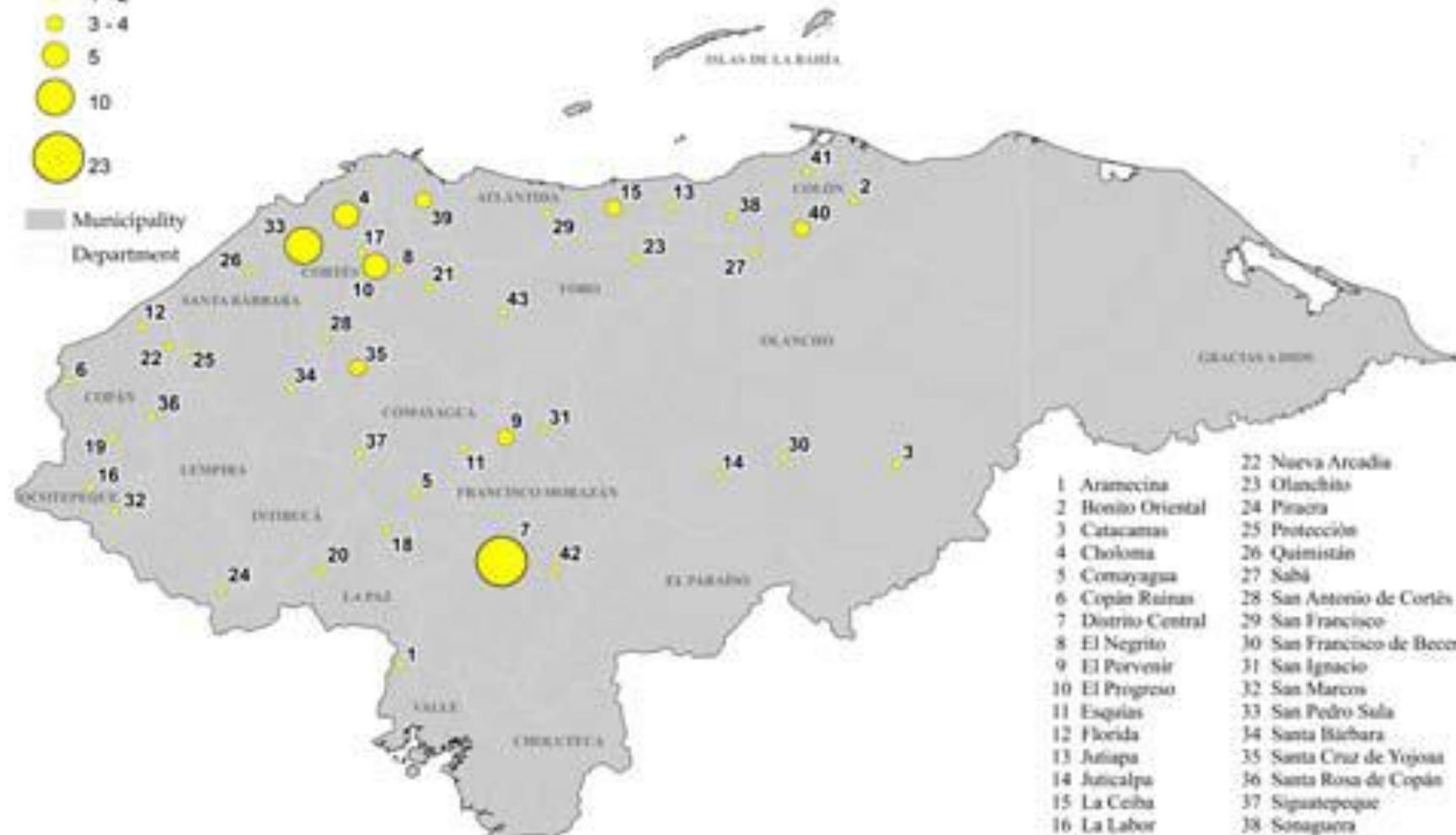


Origin Municipalities of Children: Honduras

Number of Children
from Municipality



Municipality
Department



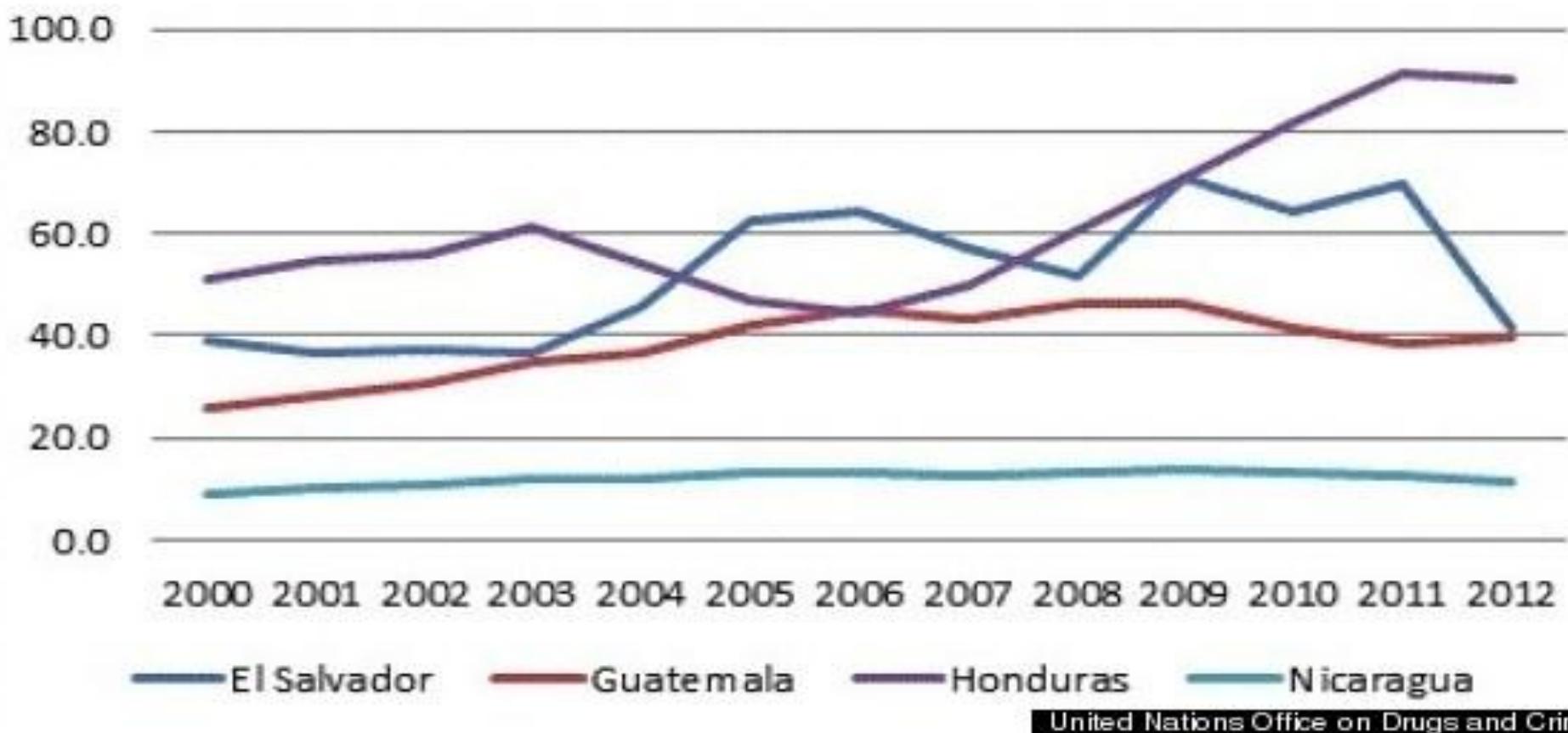
0 20 40 Miles
1

Data Sources: UNHCR, DIVA-GIS

Nicaragua



Homicide Rates Per 100,000



United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

A Lost Innocence: Part 2



Journey through Mexico



Journey through Mexico



- Dehydration
- Hunger
- Rape
- Theft
- Violence

Travelling through Mexico



Travelling with a “Coyote”

- Children can be abandoned
- Sold in sex slavery/human trafficking
- Held for ransom
- Faced with multiple trips through Mexico

Travelling through Mexico



Travelling alone

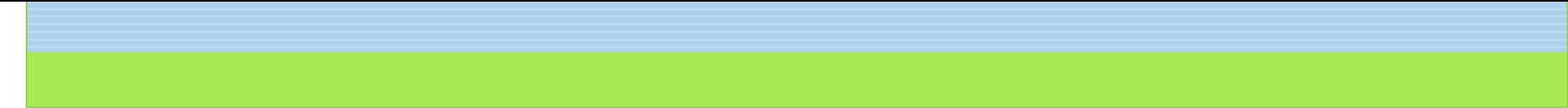
“La Bestia” Mexican Freight Train











A Lost Innocence: Part 3



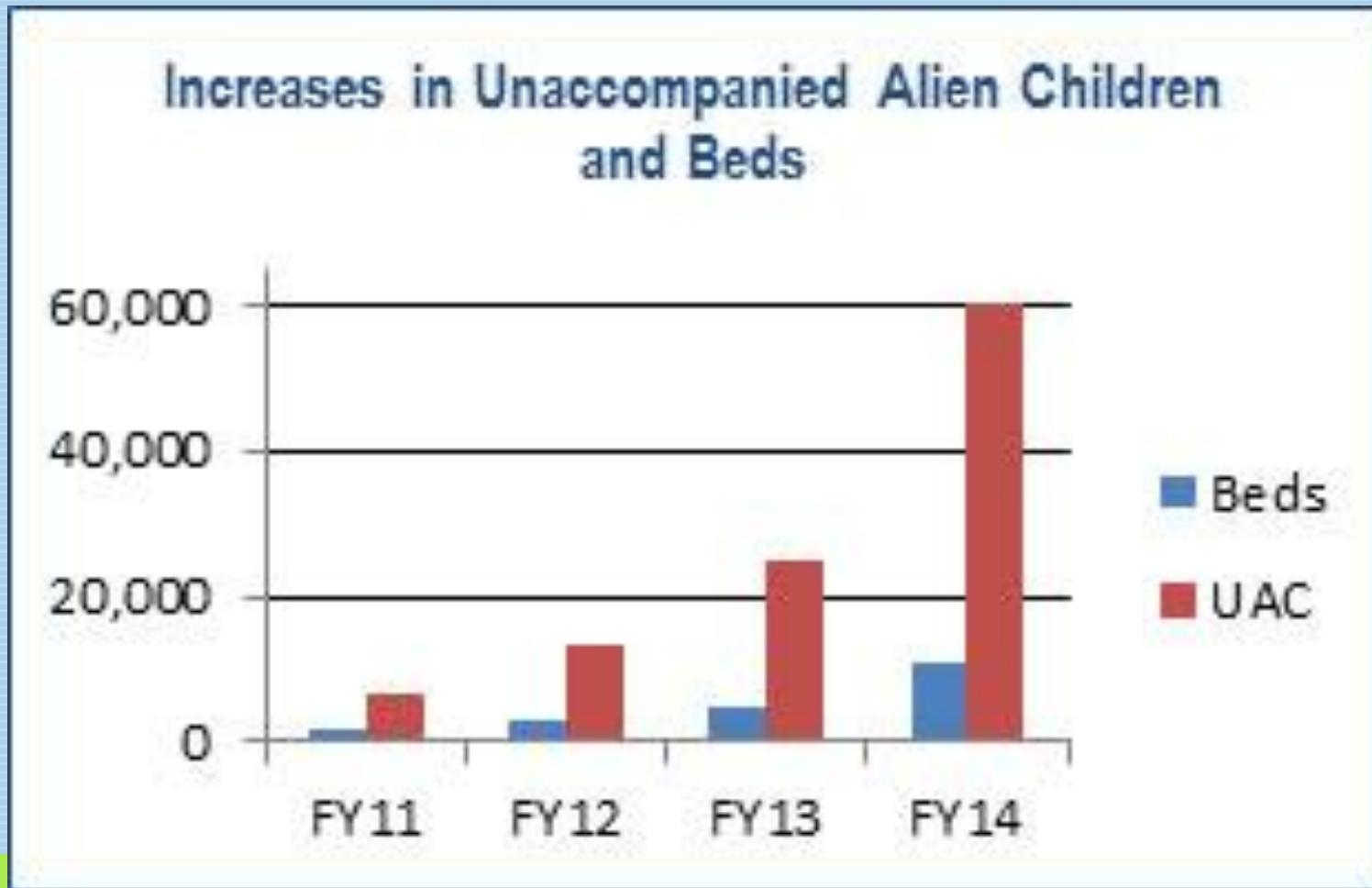
U.S. Policy



U.S. Policy



Customs and Border Patrol (CBP)



U.S. Policy



Customs and Border Patrol (CBP)

- Lack of beds, bathing facilities, recreation areas, medical care
- Complaints of bright fluorescent lights, freezing cold temperatures, rotten/frozen food
- Physical, verbal and sexual abuse

Breitbart Texas Release





Breitbart Texas Release





U.S. Policy



Lack of Humanitarian Status



U.S. Policy



UAC Children are not Considered Refugees

- **Refugee:** “Anyone displaced from their country, processed at refugee camps in country they’ve fled to, and resettled in the U.S.”
- Women's Refugee Committee: This is a refugee situation

U.S. Policy



Complications with Asylum

- Need to prove persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinions or participation in a particular social group
- Telling their story has adverse affects
- Few children who apply for asylum receive it

A Lost Innocence: Part 4



Childhood Innocence: Lost For Good?



Childhood Innocence: Lost For Good?



- “Don’t Migrate Campaign” does not solve the root problems
- Threatening deportations is not effective



Childhood Innocence: Lost For Good?



Immediate Screenings

- Not able to adequately screen children
- Children are not able to defend themselves

Mass Deportations

- Children will likely face increased gang violence





“To expedite deportations and expand detention without full due process places the very families and children who have risked their lives to find refuge in the U.S. from violence, hunger, and oppression at peril”.

-Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services
July 2014

Conclusion





- “To live again like I lived before, that would be horrible. If you've escaped where you are, you don't want to go back. You need to go forward. If they really do want to know how hard life is down there, they should go see it. There are kids who don't make it past five [years old] ... Just give us a chance. Let us better ourselves so we can be something better than what we are today.”





Response and Questions

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