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URBAN VIOLENCE IN LATIN AMERICA: TOWARD EVIDENCE-BASED SECURITY POLICIES

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. BAHAR: Good afternoon. Welcome to Brookings on this lovely hot and humid Friday afternoon. My name is Dany Bahar. I'm a Rubenstein Fellow here at the Global Economy and Development Program and I'm here to introduce today's event in the quickest manner I can.

This event is cohosted between Brookings' ESPLA program, which is our Economic and Social Policy for Latin America Initiative, together with Innovations for Poverty Action and the Jameel Poverty Action Lab, known as J-PAL.

As you've been entering, we show here some amazing pictures. This slide show comes from the Lightscape Foundation's World Press Photo exhibition. These pictures were taken by the Spanish photographer Javier Arcenillas and he's part of this project, Latidoamerica, which illustrates emotions of victims of violent crimes in Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Columbia.

Here we are to talk today about crime in Latin America. We know that crime is one of the bottlenecks perhaps that is keeping Latin America from actually achieving its full potential.

The homicide rate in the region is 24 per 100,000 population, that number's back from 2015, and it's four times (inaudible) average, 33 percent of murders happening in Latin America, despite the region being just eight percent of the world's population.

So in spite of Latin America really being able to achieve a lot in economics and crime, there's a lot of room to go. The cost of this high crime are really high, probably puts hurtles in economic growth for activity.

People often pay for their own private security. The public goods often are not enough to really protect their own citizens of their important costs. Some report by the IDB

estimated that this cost amount $260 billion each year, which is about 3.6 percent of GDP.

To put this in context, this is -- first of all it's twice the average cost of crime for developed countries and second this figure matches roughly the amount of money devoted to infrastructure in the region.

Anyway, so we're trying to learn best practices on how to deal with that, that's why we have this amazing panel of experts. I'm here just to introduce you first to our moderator, who's Daniel Ortega. He's a director of Impact Evaluation and Policy Learning at CAF, the Development Bank of Latin America. Most importantly, he's a nonresident Fellow here with us at the Global Economy and Development program at Brookings and he's one of the top economists studying and researching crime in Latin America, so I'll let him present speakers and kickoff event. Thank you.

MR. ORTEGA: Thank you, Dany. It's great to be here today and great to host this wonderful panel, which provides I think a great mix for thinking about crime in Latin America and specifically one of the most pressing issues, which we've actually spent the last couple of days thinking and talking about, which is how to generate more and better scientific evidence about what works in crime reduction in Latin America and also how to help policymakers make more efficient use of this global evidence, whatever evidence might be relevant for the specific context.

So we have Daniel Mejia, who is currently director of Public Policy and Strategic Affairs in the Attorney General's Office in Columbia, who was up until recently Secretary of Security in the city of Bogota and in that context implemented a series of quite impressive impact evaluations at some of our initiatives.

Chris Blattman is world known academic. He's professor at the Harris School at the University of Chicago and has done extensive work on violence and violence reduction

strategies in different context and recently has shifted his attention, to our great benefit, to Latin America. So we're very happy to have seen him apply his great talents to thinking about Latin America problems and that's great.

And Joana Monteiro who also comes from an academic background. I didn't mention that Daniel from his previous life, he was also professor at the University of Los Andes in Bogota.

Joana also come from PCU University in Rio and she is now -- also in public service and she is the director of the office of -- the Institute for Citizen Security of the state of Rio, in Rio de Janeiro and Brazil.

So she's also sort of in charge of being the brains of the Citizen Security Strategy in Rio and that's also been quite a challenge and so will be very interested in hearing her talk about her experience.

So I would like to begin by asking Chris in order to set the tone and to help everyone understand what we mean by evidence and what we mean by quality information and data to just provide like a very basic one-on-one explanation as to what is the -- what do we mean by quality evidence, what do we mean by quality science in order to inform public policy in general, and security specifically, so that people understand the difference between the impact of a given policy versus the basic diagnosis.

I think that's a good place to start so that we can help everyone share sort of some definitions.

MR. BLATTMAN: Sure. There's a hundred ways that better evidence and data can help deliver better programs, studying programs underway is one example.

I think what you have in mind is maybe just a primer on the idea that there's also this thing we would like to know, which is what effect -- has the program ever have its intended

effects and one way we do that -- in substance you want to know what the world would look like if you didn't have this program in place. So one thing that's become more common over the last few years is you try to find -- counterfactuals, you try to find places or people or times that look a lot like the place that receive the program or policy and compare that and construct that kind of counterfactual and thus have some semblance of what the program did.

Sometimes we get to that extremely precisely and rigorously, like when we run a randomized trial, and other times we have to construct a different kind of argument, sometimes with more success than others.

MR. ORTEGA: Thank you. I'd like to ask -- so given this basic distinction, one thing is we know that this policy causes this effect on crime, that's one thing, and another possible source of information or knowledge is basic diagnostic data, like we have data on where crimes are occurring or what sort of the -- what are the social economic characteristics of population that are more affected by crime.

These are two sources of quite distinct information. Chris just explained to us sort of what is the difference between these two and the complexity in achieving one versus the other.

So I'd like to ask both Daniel and Joana so -- because the general question here is how do we bring more and better evidence to bear on the way that decisions or made, so how do we bring science to bear.

So the question here is -- I would like to basically start by asking both Daniel and Joana: In your respective context, how much do you think that -- where are we at with respect to this, how much do you think evidence, scientific evidence, weighs in the way decisions are made, like relative to, for example, political influence or relative to inertia or relative to there are some people -- someone's preconceived notions like inertia.

What I mean by "inertia" is like doing the things the way things have traditionally been done and people going along with the flow versus maybe other factors.

How much do you think that knowledge, systematic knowledge, maybe causal or maybe not causal, how much does that weigh -- if you were to divide this into hundred percent each of these things, what would be the weight that scientific evidence would have?

MR. MEJIA: You want to start, Joana --

MR. ORTEGA: You want to start, Joana?

MR. MEJIA: -- please?

MS. MONTEIRO: Well, I think we are pretty behind. I think as you said, there are two groups of information. If we think about basic statistics like really know where the crime is, know the stuff, I think we have -- like 50 percent of the discussion inside of Gorman is based on some data, but this doesn't mean that the decisions are based on that.

So basically like -- I believe that one of the key decisions would be simply like allocate resource based on data. So the places that have more crime or that need more government intervention should be the ones who have more resources, and we are very far away from that. It's not because we don't have information to do that, it's because we don't have -- there is no political decision to do that.

This also relate to the fact that Brazil is a very unequal country. Rio de Janeiro is very unequal, so basically what you would need to reallocate resource toward more areas that are more prone to crime, you would need to take resources out from the rich areas, and nobody's willing to do that.

Based on what you have, so I think that police deploy part of their resource based on hotspot analysis for instance, but it's not all of the resources. Some of them are like follows all the rules.

In terms of impact of innovation, we are completely behind. We really decide policies based on what people think in that moment and we don't have any culture about waiting, what do we do.

We don't have even the basics about like discussing the policies there we have evidence that has worked. So because you can think of the Gorman that he can consume information, consume evidence from what has worked in other areas, and you also may think about them thinking and redesigning your activities based on evaluations. We don't do both actually.

We are currently in a situation, for instance, that we are -- the frontrunner in the presidential elections is discussing whether to liberalize guns, in which we have evidence this does not help. We have a lot of this -- like I believe that most of the police departments very few of them work with the idea of hotspot analysis, that it's one of the main policies recommended worldwide, so we have huge space for improvement.

MR. ORTEGA: So let me just follow up on this, because I think it's really interesting. We'll talk a little bit more about Brazil and then we can go back to your experience.

Why do you think this is? What's going on? Are like academics or is the academic world not communicating enough or is the policy world not interested in knowing what works, or what do you think are main barriers to this information flow?

MS. MONTEIRO: I think there are several issues. The academics do not communicate well for sure, but I think this is not a main problem. The main problem is there are very few politicians that do care about --

MR. ORTEGA: Improving the world.

MS. MONTEIRO: -- improving something. I would say it's less than ten percent actually. So you really need to have someone in power that needs to do something, otherwise

why (inaudible) care, she or (inaudible) about evidence, otherwise it's not.

Another thing I think that's quite crucial is the role of media, which is like the media does not really follow hard evidence, they follow what people say and they keep so -- I have already seen many, many times like the newspaper telling, oh, we have actually -- last year was very interesting. The federal government deployed federal troops to Rio de Janeiro in order to try to help to solve crime.

After the third day -- on the third day, the front cover of the newspaper was, Fast Reduction in Cargo Robbery, it was after three days, it's completely impossible that (inaudible) has improved, but the newspapers put there and it's true once they say that. So it's a challenge to really --

MR. ORTEGA: So it seems to me that what you're talking about is the mechanisms for holding the government accountable to its performance are somehow lacking, like the media is not helping.

What could be role of universities or NGOs or other civil society organizations to promote better mechanisms for holding public officials accountable and also I guess the media too?

MS. MONTEIRO: First of all I think we do very important work, which is disclose the data. So for instance in Rio, the second -- the third week of the following month we are disclosing data on what happened the previous month. So pretty much everyone can track the trends, but actually nobody does, so we follow that through the newspapers, through the media.

I don't know, it's a quite hard question. It's a question how to improve the debate. I think a lot of people needs to get to the table. You must have academics comment the problem, but the thing is that people really -- there are a lot of bias everywhere. So you have academics with bias, the media with bias, so pretty much people want to tell what they want and

are very like -- do not base a lot of what they say based on data.

The thing is that the ones that are very -- that really care about what they say, the media do not like to talk of them. Because they are not assertive about anything, so at the end they didn't talk much.

MR. ORTEGA: What do you think, Daniel?

MR. MEJIA: Well, first I think it depends too much on the policymaker and this is the case not only for security issues but for any issue, I think, education, health, who the minister is or who the director of this agency is, whether they value in foreign -- taking foreign policy decisions or not.

Of course, the policy restriction there is -- you have to build capacity inside institutions to be able to continue doing -- being serious about the evidence, make good policy decisions, but that capacity needs to stay there in those institutions.

Having said that, we tried in Bogota when I was in the Secretary of Security to push for rigorous (inaudible) evaluations or in a sense to try to gather the evidence existing in other context to implement better policies. That's what we tried to do. This needs to survive policymakers going through different institutions.

MR. ORTEGA: So you're touching upon a really important point, which is the institutional capacity to actually do this and how much it might depend on the specific policymaker, so you come from academia, you also come from academia, so I'm thinking maybe we just need academics to take up public office positions to get this -- is that our only option?

MR. MEJIA: No, I don't think that's the only way, but to have people who value the evidence to make policy decisions, that's really tough. But you find some people who actually value data, value the information that there is and the evidence that is available for making better policy decisions, and having people inside the team to actually push for that.

The other part I think complementing what Joana said, I think not only the media plays a role, but the quality of political control debate inside Congress, inside City Council.

For the two-and-a-half years that I was in the Secretary of Security, I never heard the word evidence or efficiency or anything like that. All they thought was political -- the political consequences of making different policy decisions.

If we manage not only to train policy makers but also people in the legislation, in Congress and City Councils, they will make sure to hold accountable policymakers for their actions, whether these actions are based on evidence or not. I think that's a space that we haven't explored yet.

MR. ORTEGA: Chris, what do you make of all of this, because this seems like there is an issue with I guess basic even Democratic institutions play and which extends beyond security issues, but -- so do you think there is -- so two things. One, like in general, what's your take on sort of this general view and do you think that there is anything specific about the security issues that might make this worse or like the political accountability channel might make it weaker than, for instance, what we see in a sector like education or health care, or something like that.

MR. BLATTMAN: So the thing that sets security apart from a lot of other areas and that I think brings more accountability is the fact that there's -- typically the first and most basic data that any city will have on anything I think is homicide rates, and they can try to keep a lid on this, but I think it's difficult to conceal these, they're so visible. So people try and succeed, but it's harder than usual.

I think the seriousness with which the average person takes this issue, not just homicide, but lots of violent crime in general, needs there to be more accountability in this area than health or education is my sense.

I don't know if it applies to Brazil or not, but certainly these strike me as the public agencies, whether it's United States or developing countries that I've worked in, where I feel like there's more accountability to the numbers.

Maybe not accountability to the ideas, but there's certainly accountability to the numbers in the way that I don't see with schools or hospitals. So that gives me a little bit of hope for the security realm.

MR. ORTEGA: Coming from Venezuela, I don't feel so optimistic.

MR. BLATTMAN: Well, there's an absence of political accountability there more than perhaps any place on the planet right now.

MR. ORTEGA: So why don't you tell us a story about -- why don't you tell us a success story, Joana, something that can give us hope about the use of quality information, quality rigger in a decision on security policy; is there any area of hope?

MS. MONTEIRO: No, I believe actually there is a lot of room for improvement and very big marginal benefits actually. You may expect -- I believe there are a lot of people who expects a major change. If you think more improvements can take place and give you -- that's a lot of improvements.

So just to build on something that Chris just mentioned, I agree that I don't believe that any other area in the public sector has the level of accountability that the security area have.

For instance in Rio we disclose monthly data about -- like 40 indicators at the establishment level, at the precinct level. So you will not find something similar to that in any other -- in education or health.

What is impressive is the fact that the ideas are not flowing and people -- I was discussing that before coming here. The political rants about improving the security area is

huge. It's amazing how people do not really try to understand what really works.

I believe the reason it doesn't happen is that we are all the time working doing emergencies and most of the team are working to deal with the crisis that happened yesterday, that happened today, and these were the things that strike me most when I was in the Gorman.

Like in Rio de Janeiro, there is a crisis every day, actually, and a big one every week. So basically people are trying to -- in that sense, actually we have too much accountability in the sense that people spend incredible amount of time just answering to what are you going to do now, this event happened yesterday. Because we are doing that too much, we do not think in the medium term.

So I think thinking what has been done in the past and what is the space of hope, we have actually a Performance Management System that was basically to do that. You simply tell cops that in the medium, you're going to need to compromise with these targets and this is something you're going to need to deliver in the medium run in six months' period, not today.

In addition to that, you tell them what's your priority. This is something that we don't do actually. We think that our problems are everything. Most people believe that priority is (inaudible), but it's not. Because a lot of people that die are criminals and are involved in a gang, so a lot of people simply don't care, they are poor people.

So we have different priorities every day. That person who is on the streets, he has -- one day he's trying to reduce (inaudible) robberies, other pedestrian robberies, other bank robberies, and other -- so it's one emergency after another.

So I think any system that try to deal with that is very welcome and we have tried that in the past. We actually in Brazil, eight different states have experienced systems like that and I do think it's improved.

Actually because of systems like that, people start to -- cops start to look at data to do criminal analysis and things like that. The challenge is that we don't see that. This is not tangible in the sense that you do not view this to (inaudible), do not view anything, which means that it's very easy to dismantle and this is what happened.

So for instance we have in other state of Brazil, (inaudible), a very strong management system that was managed by the governor. Once the governor left, the system was completely dismantled and the one who got into -- who stepped in kept saying it's the same, but it was not the same. The design was completely disrupted.

So I think there's a lot of things to be done just in terms of managerial decisions, but of course we need a lot of structural reforms, but I believe there is a lot of hope. First of all, you need the decision maker, the policymaker willing to make improvement.

MR. ORTEGA: There's something really important that you just said that touches upon what Daniel was saying before, which is the sustainability of the initial effort.

So you said the government changed and then everything went to hell, so what does it take, Daniel, to -- in your experience, how can you make this kind of effort, this kind of initiative, how can you make it sustainable? Because once the leadership changes within the institution, then all sorts of internal incentives change.

So what do you view as the main challenges for these sort of innovations to sustain beyond the leaders' presence in the institution?

MR. MEJIA: I think the basic condition is to leave capacity, to have part of the institution, part of agency institution taking care of the important and not only the urgent policy decisions in Bogota we created, inside Secretary of Security a unit for strategic analysis, which is actually the unit inside the Secretary that handles the impact evaluations, the data, the analysis of the data.

Second, not to give them any assignment on urgent things, so they can focus on the medium and long-term objectives, have a clear north of where we are going with security policy that is comprehensive that we spent -- we spent almost a year constructing a comprehensive security policy that had not only control policies but also prevention and justice.

You have to have people that are only thinking about the medium term of the policy and not -- because as Joana said, every day in a big city you have girl who is raped and killed, someone who is killed in a bar, people who are lost, because they are just partying or they're really lost or kidnapped, but you should not lose the focus of the north or the medium term of the policy decisions that you're making.

MR. ORTEGA: Do you have any thoughts on this, Chris, maybe? I guess it's -- I mean, you can say no. I'm just thinking -- giving you a chance to maybe bring --

MR. BLATTMAN: Because I'm a newcomer, I sort have been seeing this area in field afresh a little bit. What strikes me is that -- so I'm trained as an economist, so I'm going to think about the supply and demand for ideas.

The supply is interesting in the crime and security world. The supply is very personalized. So there's some ideas that are associated with individuals and those individuals carry that torch and have been carrying that torch for 20 years, so it's impossible to separate violence interruption -- this idea of violence interruption in an organization like Cure Violence from its crusading founder Gary Slutkin, and it's impossible to separate hotspots policing from one, a couple of large city police chiefs, but also from people like Anthony Brogger, David Wiseberg.

It's hard to separate broken windows from -- and disorder policing from -- now I'm forgetting this New York police chief's name. Someone might remind me.

(Talk over)

MR. BLATTMAN: It's hard to separate the idea of focused adherent, meaning targeting the people who are killing, the homicide makers, and threatening them with legal action in a very focused way without David Kennedy.

So have you this -- on the supply side, you have these individuals who for 20 years, sometimes with evidence, sometimes without, usually with something because they are academics, crusading.

Then on the demand side, there seems to be a thirst in a lot of cities for an off-the-shelf solution, so there's a lot of popularity. That's partly because there's these crusaders who are very good at getting their idea out and they're thoughtful and they're often I think, in most cases, they're good ideas.

They also have a set of police chiefs or police departments who are in some sense ambassadors for their ideas and have legitimated it. So there's a policymaker, not -- it's great if you can get a professor of economics for your Secretary of Security or a large city with this kind of group, but if you're -- but that's not the audience I'm worried about.

There's the demand side from the police chiefs and the Secretaries of Security without that kind of capacity and background. So those off-the-shelf-big-picture ideas are easier to sell to their police forces and easier to sell to their public.

If you think this is true and you're looking for short-term straightforward solutions, trying to subsidize the creation of innovative glamorous ideas with crusading figures isn't a terrible model, because if you think that the job that you could do in five years is replace bad policies with less bad policies, then that would be something.

MR. ORTEGA: Well, it seems that -- and perhaps recent work that we've served on focused policing is a good example on one sort of generally accepted common knowledge idea that once studied in detail and specific context all of a sudden provides some

nuance to the original idea.

So how do you handle the risk of a crusading idea with its non-generalizability to a specific context?

MR. BLATTMAN: You mean what if we --

(Talk over)

MR. BLATTMAN: Are you saying what if some of the crusaders are wrong or what if we crusade with a new idea based on insufficient evidence and it's probably wrong?

MR. ORTEGA: Or maybe right for some context, but not right for every context and we still crusade.

MR. BLATTMAN: Well, you're talking about the 15-year plan. I'm talking about the three year -- that's why I said replacing bad with less bad.

Actually here's a good example. It's one thing to march into Bogota with a new policing strategy and intensify the police and then another -- and I walked into Bogota and didn't know a lot about Bogota but knew enough and learned enough that I felt comfortable that this was a reasonable approach.

In contrast, I walked into Medellin along the same time, which is the second city of Columbia, and it was clearly infinitely different and more complex.

Medellin is a city where there are roughly a dozen very powerful Mafia-like organizations called Rastrojos and about -- between 150 and 300 very powerful street gangs called Campos where the chief problem is how can the city and how can the state exercise a monopoly of violence again, because these are not only extremely powerful criminal organizations but they actually govern many of their communities.

It was clear that the cupboard is bare. Nobody has the first idea of how to go after this, other than just arresting Campos, so it required like slowing down and really figuring it

out.

So to some extent you always have to adapt, but I think there are going -- if you could come up with a set of solutions that seem to work against organized crime, of which there aren't any yet that I know of, I think you could start to export those and test those in the context and you know quickly if they're working or not.

But otherwise, there's a lot of cities where that's not the case. I feel like there's probably some generalized rules and principles we can draw on.

MR. ORTEGA: So we've been talking about sort of more institutional factors on what kinds of institutions and what kinds of aspects of institutions lead to more frequent and better use of scientific evidence or just basic data in the decision-making process on security.

So it's clearly a very complex situation. The outlook is little bit murky, but from your experience both from your academic work, and this applies to every one of you, and your policy-making experience, what would you think -- would you feel confident saying these are going to be the two or three ideas that I'm going to crusade in my specific context with and maybe -- of course responsibly, trying to maybe test whenever possible, trying to create the deepest possible knowledge footprint that you can while doing it, but you have to make a decision.

Daniel's been in this position exactly, so he comes into this office and he's like, now we have to deal with all these emergencies that Joana was talking about.

How do we deal with all these emergencies, how do you prioritize, do you have like a set of two or three tools that you would say these are my go-to tools while I figure out what to do.

MS. MONTEIRO: Setting up priorities I think that sounds -- having two or three, no more, priorities, push them very hardly and not letting the urgent things take over the

important things.

Urgent things you're going to have -- every day you're going to have an urgency. You have to face that. You have to solve the problem. But if you have a clear idea of what you want to leave after you finish your term, I think you push a few things that you really want to achieve.

MR. ORTEGA: So it depends on the diagnosis is what you're saying.

So let's suppose you're coming into context where the criminal reality is basically one of a number of organized crime groups that dominate the landscape.

I know I'm pushing a little bit to -- pushing you to say something without any scientific base, which is fine, but what would you do? Like how do you -- so it's clearly -- you come into this context, it's mostly gang dominated, clearly it's going to be in your top three, what are your tools to deal with that?

MS. MONTEIRO: It depends on the problem. I think if you are talking about gang-related crime, like this type of crime you will find in Medellin, which is very different from the one you find in Bogota, you have to use appropriate tools and you have to work in that case with specialized units in the national police, with the general attorney's office to solve the problem.

It's very different -- for instance, in Medellin, it's about two-thirds of the homicides are gang related. In Bogota only a third or less of that. The rest is what we call intolerance homicides, people fighting after they get drunk and the tools that you need to use to confront. Different problems are completely different.

Maybe for the type of homicides that we have in Bogota, you have to use a lot more community-oriented police in preventive measures, but for the types of crimes that you have in Medellin maybe you need to use more specialized units like the Intelligence Unit or the

Criminal Investigation Units that you will have in the national police.

So I think you have to have a good diagnosis, which not only necessarily depends on data, but on knowledge of the situation of what the criminal risks are and then take the decisions.

One of the worst things you can do in a position like this is to start jumping from one objective to the next, based on the urgency of the everyday day-by-day cases.

MR. ORTEGA: Joana.

MS. MONTEIRO: I totally agree. Like I think prioritization is key but it's less simple than people would believe. First you need to be very specific. Second, as his example, it's not only homicides, it's what type of homicides are we most worried about.

Second you really need -- this is kind of a political decision, what is your priority. It's not only a technical decision, because it's something that the government -- the politician needs to be on board and the -- it needs to match a little bit of what society wants, not only, but something, otherwise the crisis will never stop.

This is not that simple to realize, especially when you have a very large number of problems. I'm going to give an example. In Rio right now we have large problems with -- we have organized crime, but what kind of organized crime.

We have turf wars a lot in the city, we have high levels of homicides, we have a lot of pedestrian robberies and vehicle robberies, we have cargo robberies, we have high police victimization, we have problems with police corruption, police alleged (inaudible). If you want to deal with all these problems are complete different strategies.

So what is our key problem, it's something that I get a lot of people -- we wouldn't take like one day with the key people really to settle what would be the key priority.

MR. ORTEGA: I guess that itself can be a challenge?

MS. MONTEIRO: Yes. But I need -- it's totally necessary to make that discussion. Because the other thing that's crucial is that we need to recognize, at least in Latin America, that the scale of crime it's enormous.

The police works as if they can deal with each crime by itself. So when you start talking about prioritization, they say I cannot prioritize anything. I need to investigate all the case, but they do not have capacity to do that and they don't do that.

So they can open all the cases, but the speed they work on each case varies by prioritization, which is they cannot be explicit but there is some explicit prioritization. Most of the time it's made by the media. So many cases that receive a lot of public attention, they are solved with more speed than others, so this is crucial.

The second thing is to recognize that the resources are scarce and this is not going to change. When you go to a police station the first thing they say is, I can't do anything because I do not have enough policemen. This is going to the reality for the next 10, 20, to 30 years. It's always been like that.

Because even when you have more, you keep asking for more. So it's really like the idea -- I'm economist, so it's really like give -- we need prioritization, because we need to work with the resources we have.

I think people don't really want to think like that. They believe it's worth to keep saying we need more resources in -- we will not be able to do anything until the moment we going to have more.

MR. ORTEGA: Do you want to add to that, Chris? I guess the message, at least to me, sounds like the specific toolbox will depend on the specific circumstance and you need to prioritize and then draw from the best available, so that seems kind of reasonable of course.

MR. BLATTMAN: I guess maybe what I would add, so let's take for granted that you have priorities -- you can't take that for granted, but let's take that for granted as important and let's take for granted that you've done the diagnostics so that you understand the situation. So if you're a gang-controlled city, you understand the structure or if you're not, you understand where the crime is or what the nature of the crime is.

So then what should your priorities be and this -- I feel this tension that's symbolized by (inaudible) Medellin for me in this experience, which also I think ties to my experience as an economist and my experience as a political scientist.

So Bogota is the place where the economist feels at home, because this is a city with very individualized crime. It's not very organized. What the specialists -- the criminologists, especially the Americans who are dealing with a similar environment, will tell you is your priorities need to be extremely targeted, that crime is committed by specific people in specific places, where there's specific problematic behaviors.

Rather than us trying to fix the whole economy or fix the whole system or fix the whole infrastructure, be hyper targeted and that's also how you allocate your (inaudible) resources. This is why the economist is at home.

Then I go to place like Medellin and say how is it possible that you have a city that is not controlled by its state, presumably you feel the same way in Rio.

There it (inaudible) to me a different problem, one where I think the state decided for a long period of time not to govern, cities exploded in growth, and maybe the stereotype is the elite in the valley or the nice property decided not to provide services, especially policing and justice to the new areas. There's an inherent demand for order and inherent demand for justice, the most basic demand of any human society and someone will provide it if the state does not.

So cities like Bogota may be expanded and missed that. Maybe they got lucky, maybe there's something's about the geography or not being close to a drug trafficking (inaudible), I don't know exactly, but probably lucky.

So how you prevent that from happening if you're a city where this has not yet taken hold or how do you deal with it if it has taken hold is in some sense a very untargeted strategy.

I think we need a new sort of received wisdom for thinking about how to think about these situations as they're generating or how to respond to them once they exist.

MR. ORTEGA: That's interesting and that takes me to the last question I want to ask before we open up the floor for questions. It has to do with what many people believe is the most pressing problem in Latin America in terms of citizen security, which is the legitimacy of the police, which is of course a big part of the legitimacy of the state.

And this has varying degrees. Chris, you just mentioned you have areas of the city that are basically controlled by non-state actors. This is true in Rio very much, this is true in many parts of Latin America. We have within our urban areas, parts of the city that are -- cities that are basically controlled by criminal organizations.

But then there is like a lighter version of that, which is I don't really trust the police very much. I don't report certain crimes. I run away from the police, even though I haven't committed any crimes, just because I think they might hurt me because I'm poor or whatever.

This actually is in some way related to a pattern that we've -- that I think is understudied for some reason, but I think is very much there. Every time we've looked at this pattern in different places, we see -- wherever we can establish a correlation between social economic status and public service provision in the form of policing services, we actually see

that richer areas are -- have a higher police presence than poor areas per capita. This is true everywhere we've looked at in Latin America and I think it sort of is somewhat related to this issue.

I wonder what you think about this issue, because it's certainly a priority. So if you come into a place and you say this is something I want to place a priority on, but then it's not going to get you to attend the urgent facts, the urgent aspects of the security situation in any clear way, maybe it does.

My perception is let's think about legitimacy, so let's train police better. Let's give them different incentives, let's do different selection process to improve the relationship between the police and the citizens or improve their capacity to control, which is somewhat different.

So how do we -- like in the case of Rio, it's always been sort of a case where everyone looks at Rio for a long time and said, this seems to be a really big problem. Trust in the police in Rio is super low, one of the lowest in the region.

So how does this fit in, like prioritizing longer term issues with the emergencies that you face?

MS. MONTEIRO: I think to work and to improve police legitimacy is not necessarily a long-term investment. You can find out results -- of course if you think about training, selecting different, this will take a while. But if you are thinking about have some type of control about the abuse of force or corruption, you can have pretty fast results.

I think the key thing is to recognize the problem, like this is crucial. I'm thinking what Chris just said that actually one of our problems that the state didn't refuse its role of providing order, and this is very structural.

So actually one of the key discussions that there is in Rio among scholars is

whether we must start with police reform there. Some people support the idea that before you reform the police in Rio, there's nothing that can be done, because this is the basics of the problem.

Other people support that this is very hard, we going to spend of rest of our life waiting for that, so let's do other marginal benefits -- marginal intervention.

So I think this relates back to the point that we really need to discuss what is our priority and what is the root causes of our problem. Because if it's really the lack of the state, police legitimacy is in its roots and we're going to need to address that. In that case, it's really corruption and abuse of force.

So this is something that -- of course you need to have a lot of training, but there are a lot of stuff that can be done with Internal Affairs that controls this, but it's very, very hard in political terms. So we really need to be sure that this is the way to go and this is crucial for any -- for the success of any policy.

MR. MEJIA: I think in this case, I would dare to say that one of the main reasons as for why Columbia has been successful in reducing the level of violence is the support and the degree of professionalism of the police force.

That started 30 years ago by cleaning the police -- the high rank officers from any corruption scandal and that has survived for the last 30 years. The Columbian police is not perfect, but it's closest to being a clean force, the same for the army, for the other forces. That's the only way to actually confront the problem.

From an executive point of view, we have to work with the police and with the military to actually confront the problems. They do the operations, but if you don't have -- if have corruption inside, who are you working with, can you trust them on who they are working for.

So I think that's -- in Columbia that's been a success story that started long time

ago. It's been sustained I think. It's hard to think of recent scandals of high rank police officers in Columbia.

You have corruption at the very low rank levels, but we don't have those scandals like we used to see in the '70s in Columbia and that's a political wheel of people who have taken the difficult decisions to take out of the force -- police force, generals or colonels who have been involved in corruption scandals. That's the only way to actually confront the types of crimes or the types of violence that Columbia has confronted for the last 30 or 40 years to have clean police and armed forces.

MR. ORTEGA: So the twist to this question for Chris is: What are the determinates of state building?

MR. BLATTMAN: I can't say I've -- I have not cracked that nut. In fact the optimism which you both express about the ability to clean up a police is not an optimism -- not knowing anything I would have shared, so I'm now more optimistic.

I live in the city, Chicago, which -- where the police enjoy a slightly better reputation than in Rio but where corruption and legitimacy are really deeply set problems. So, this makes me a little bit more hopeful about the next ten years.

MR. ORTEGA: So we're going to open up for questions or comments from the audience. I have two gentlemen over here, one over there, lady in the back, so let's do one, two over here, whichever order, than three, four in the back, five over here.

SPEAKER: Thanks for the (inaudible, off mic) interesting conversation. So something that seems to be touched on a few times is perhaps a conflict or different priorities and the people who might be within the bureaucracy and responsive to political pressure.

I'm wondering if there's any thoughts in -- considering the diversity of criminal justice structures around the world, what is the proper level of political influence?

I think in D.C. there's an interesting thing where the prosecutors aren't really responsive to the voters, because it's a (inaudible) prosecution system for most crimes.

Are there systems that would work better, that would be more removed from the political process but at the same time potentially risking even greater pushback from voters who now have no say; any thoughts on that?

MR. ORTEGA: Why don't we do this, why don't we take a couple of questions and then -- is that okay? We'll take another one here. This mic is not working.

So we do the back. Then when we get a properly functioning mic, we'll get your question.

SPEAKER: (off mic)

MS. MONTEIRO: That's not working.

MR. ORTEGA: That's not working either. You'll have to speak up.

MS. SHAKLEE: I can speak very loudly. Hopefully this is okay. Marilyn Shaklee with (inaudible). I really appreciate your (off mic)

Going back to the beginning of the conversation, it sounds like data analysis has led to a decrease in violence or could be a part of that in terms of specifically Columbia is looking at addressing these issues.

If that is the case, we were hoping to hear a little bit more about how the international community can help other countries start to improve their data analysis around crime and urban violence.

In particular we're working in Guatemala in partnership with the government of Guatemala to start to track national violence and analyze crimes.

So any best practices that you can share on that front would be appreciated.

MR. ORTEGA: Then we have a third question over here and then we'll take

some answers and -- here.

SPEAKER: Hi, my name is Daniel. I'm a graduate student. So this is a two-part question. Do Latin American countries see the United States as a partner in this process of trying to work on urban violence?

If so, are there any lessons that be adapted from the counterterrorism operations that were developed for dismantling terrorist organizations and their financing that can be adapted for these non-state actors?

MR. ORTEGA: Interesting. Who wants to go first?

MS. MONTEIRO: Let me get this last question. The U.S. cooperation for Columbia was crucial for dismantling some of the biggest drug cartels. I think although you can question some of the things that have been done, if that help from the U.S. had been absent, we wouldn't be in the situation we are today.

We've been able to reduce the levels of violence from a homicide rate which reached 72 in 2000 -- in 1993 to now homicide rate which is around 23, less than a third. In (inaudible) it comes from more than 300 to something like 25. So it's a huge decrease.

Of course we would love if that was faster, but that's fast enough to call it a success story I think. Many of the things that happen in Columbia, we've been able to implement, in part, a result of the joint work with the U.S. I think we have to be clear on this.

And (inaudible) to answer that, the point of the lady in the back. I think a success story in Columbia is -- I'm not sure if I'm going out of the way with this answer.

We've been talking about evidence and evidence based policy decisions and impact evaluations and all this, but this is impossible to do without good data. A success story in Columbia has been to build good data on crime, on violence.

I think we -- I wouldn't be wrong to say that Columbia has the best crime data

and the best data on violence that is in Latin America, in Latin America in general. That has allowed us to take more informed, on the data, policy decisions, and that I think is a success story.

There was a political willingness to actually invest in datasets, in collecting -- in the collection methods and this was really important for Columbia to actually make the right decisions at the right time.

MR. ORTEGA: Chris or Joana.

MS. MONTEIRO: I just want to answer the question the data, what can be done. I think I was very pessimistic in the role of data. Actually I think we need political will to take decisions, but -- based on data, but the simple fact of disclosing data is quite powerful, because it -- politicians cannot tell the story that they want.

At least you have -- you disclose the information and at least they cannot tell, oh, I decrease the -- crime trends were that rather than that, because the data is there. Everybody can check.

So I think the last sense really you need to have some office in the Gorman dedicated to build the data and to disclose that in a regular manner. If you do that, that's the first step to do all the rest. Without this, we cannot do -- to have informative decisions.

MR. ORTEGA: Chris.

MR. BLATTMAN: I don't have a lot of expertise on those questions. We should just get other questions maybe.

MR. ORTEGA: There's the gentleman over here and then over here -- well, we'll get to you next.

MR. KRAVETZ: Thank you very much. Alex Kravetz, I'm a former Salvadorian government official. I have two questions for professor.

I think implicit in this prioritization question is that some things are not going to get done. So I would be curious in the examples that you cited for Rio, organized crime, the stealing of cargo you listed like five different ones.

I'm wondering if you could walk us through which were -- or a hypothetical example of these are the top five categories of crime that we selected and we're going to prioritize on these two and why, kind of what's the sort of pros and cons.

Then the second question is about let's say educating the public about crime and violence prevention so that when you talk about -- everybody can check the data, I mean it goes a little bit beyond inflation rate was 2.3 and everybody gets it, or most people get it. It's more complex than that.

In order to prevent -- in order to help build kind of a generalized support that would prevent the governor from changing and then the example that you cited and then everything kind of changes after he leaves. Thank you.

MR. ORTEGA: Gentleman back here.

SPEAKER: My name is AJ from the University of Maryland. Just a quick question for Chris about the transferability of your previous experiences and studies, whether it's in Liberia or elsewhere, can you just clarify the extent to what you're seeing in Columbia, or Latin America more broadly, are transferable from lessons and what you found to be unique or not unique about the Latin America problems?

MR. ORTEGA: Do we have someone way in the back, way far in the back.

SPEAKER: My name is (inaudible). I'm a Fulbright Scholar at GW. I have a basic question. How do you define security for us, because you've used security as meaning public safety, meaning criminality, organized violence, these organized violence, what do you consider security and to what level of analysis; do we focus -- do you focus only on security at

committee level, individual level, what is the focus? Thank you.

SPEAKER: That's like a deep question.

MR. ORTEGA: So let's give this to Joana, because I think the main question was focused on you.

MS. MONTEIRO: I will skip the question about security.

SPEAKER: We can attempt a response, we'll provide something.

MS. MONTEIRO: I think this is very good question. So first where is the priority, well, I can give you my opinion, but I think this must be socially constructed. I think it's not -- somehow it's not that there are some crimes that nobody's going to care about it, but you may think about different institutions having different priorities.

I'm going give you example. For instance, in Rio the military police is responsible for patrolling the streets. They spend incredible amount of time dealing with turf wars, which is when one gang decide to start a gun fight with another.

The capacity of the military -- the main institution of the state that deal with that is the military police. What they do, they go into the slums and try to control the situation. It's completely inefficient. This is only increasing more the violence and they cannot really avoid this -- diminish this conflict. We need to -- you need another type of approach to be able to like reduce -- it's not easy at all.

But if the police is doing that, the military police, it's not doing patrolling -- the basic patrolling. This is actually one of the problems with Rio that the police actually forgot about doing basic patrolling, the pedestrian robber, take care about of pedestrian robbers and vehicle robbers and property crime in general, which they are the most important institution to do that.

So I really thinking like it's the governments as a whole must have the -- and

then have the main institution, the main approach in thinking. When you think about this approach, you need to think who would be there -- has the main role on that. Then inside institution, you may separate the (inaudible) to focus on different stuff.

The way it works right now is you have the judicial system -- the criminal justice system that start with the military police, the civil police, the attorney's office, judiciary system, and the prison system. Interior they do everything and they don't do nothing.

They have like different bodies of institutions to focus on specific crimes. About how to inform data, I think it's pretty easy to inform crime records.

This at least say for instance we are in Rio under federal intervention and the security area. So the president cannot say this was enacted by the president. The president cannot tell what he wants about it, because we have crime records telling how much the numbers decreased or increased, but it's much harder to inform about the causes of increases in -- of crime trends.

It's difficult because we don't have a lot of data on what has happened, how police -- what the police did, what the attorney's office did. But also because in terms of statistical analysis, it's quite difficult in terms of methodology to really understand the impact of each policy and to like really need the counter-factual, you need to impact assessment, so it's much more harder.

But I'm saying at least the basic trends must be common knowledge. Even if -- you may have websites that it's very easy to get information but at least the media can go there and check and do not rely only on the politicians telling what's going on.

MR. ORTEGA: Thank you. Chris, do you want to talk about Liberia and Latin America?

MR. BLATTMAN: First I'll tackle the last question. So in times like this a nice

rule of thumb is I just fall back on the march of sin and I think about capabilities and freedoms. It's actually a very useful orienting point for just thinking about anything in political economic development for me.

So if I have to think about what is security, it's freedom from violence, it's freedom from not just the risk that you or your daughter is going to be killed or raped or what other terrible thing would happen, but free from that dread and that fear that would come whether it's walking home alone at night on a dark street or fearful that someone's going to -- that every creek in the night is a burglar in your home.

Not just freedom from violence, but from the perspective of this order, I think it's very important not to forget access to justice and freedom from basically arbitrary rule, arbitrary violence.

Quite honestly, I think where the whole development apparatus has gone wrong in fragile states is to forget that that's primary and to forget that -- to think that they -- to transfer the thing that they've been striving to do in stable countries, which is provide other freedoms, and this is why they provide health and education, and then to go to that place and transfer that and basically try to create a 20th century welfare state in a place that doesn't have a 14th century state.

So we actually don't root ourselves in what this means and leads to a lot of bad policy in places that are weaker than Columbia, like Liberia.

So Liberia is like Northern Uganda where I spent most of the last ten years before working in Columbia are those -- that area of West Africa and that area of Central Africa say where Sudan and Northern Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the eastern areas, those are two of the more historically stateless regions on the planet.

The criminals are very disorganized there, the state is very disorganized, society

is very disorganized, everybody is disorganized. So it's actually -- it would be very easy to counterviolence in criminality, except the capacity of the state and civil society actors is still very weak. I think there are generations or centuries of community and state organization that take time to develop that other parts of the continent you'll see that. Ethiopia is completely the opposite.

So going to a place where both the criminals or the rebels are strong and the state is strong is a completely new experience for me.

Maybe the only thing that I carried over -- I like to tease my -- I good naturedly tease my Columbian researcher friends that this availability of the world's best data -- which is true, it's luxurious how much administrative fabulous data there is -- has made them lazy or they've been spoiled.

So the hard work of when you confront something where often the thing you want to measure or the thing you want to understand, nobody has measured it. It's inherently difficult to measure. You need to go out and do the hard work of collecting your own data and that might be going to the prisons for two years to interview Mafia and gang leaders or it might be running a door-to-door survey.

So from the perspective of evidence generating, I think to take this to the next level in the stronger states with great data is -- that's been a really useful skill. You had to do that. There's no data in these parts of Africa that I was working in, so you had to create it. That's also true in a lot of these unsecure contexts.

MR. ORTEGA: The lady over here, then the gentleman black shirt.

MS. MONTEIRO: You have two questions here.

MR. ORTEGA: I'll get you next.

SPEAKER: I have a question for Daniel Mejia. I've worked as an analyst and

reporter in Mexico and Central America for many years and also back in the '90s in Columbia.

Columbia is often cited as you well know, and as you pointed out, as a success story. Particularly as we look at Mexico right now, which is in the middle of violence that just keeps on increasing and doesn't go away.

One of the lessons that a lot of people point to in Mexico he is negative effect of deploying the military. Now, Columbia would seem to suggest the opposite, that it was a combination of military and police work.

So what can you say about whether military deployments actually weaken police and, therefore, make long-term solutions to violence harder or whether there is a way to find the perfect balance so that you're actually going after perhaps the most egregious and brutal drug lords without provoking these horrible turf wars that we've seen in Mexico when you decapitate different cartels. I think you've had similar phenomenons in Columbia, but you've somehow managed to get out of at least the worst violence of the past.

MR. ORTEGA: Over here.

SPEAKER: Thank you. I have a question for Joana and one for Chris. Joana, first I'd like to hear as a fellow (inaudible). How would you reform the police if you could, easy question, and specifically the size? Because police force in Brazil covered the whole state, which is a huge area or the fact you have a military police, how would you approach that?

And for Chris maybe a provocative question, what if there is -- what if there are off-the-shelf solutions, thinking of ulcer, people thought it had to be lifestyle and all sorts of things and coffee and diet and then some guy discovered it was actually because of a bacteria in your stomach, and that was an off-the-shelf solution, which is just (inaudible), and should we keep exploring the possibility that there could be very easy solutions for these things we just haven't reached yet?

MR. ORTEGA: Give a chance to Daniel to answer.

MR. MEJIA: To answer your question, I think it's a matter of, as you said, finding the right balance. Let me give you an example of this.

Many times during my term in Secretary of Security, we have among the 17 metropolitan police force -- the metropolitan police that we have in Columbia, Bogota has the lowest number of police per capita, of policemen per capita.

One of the things after waves of crimes in the public transportation system -- and this has to do with political influence as well -- was to say militarize the city, militarize the public bus system, and that's -- that might be very effective for public communications, you are doing something, but that might get you into a lot of trouble.

So it's a matter of using the resources -- the right resources for the right problems. I think Columbia in a sense used the combination of the use of intelligence from the police, and joint operations between the army and the police was crucial for dismantling drug cartels but it's a mistake I think. I told this to many politicians in Bogota that tried to convince me that one way of solving the lack of police resources was to use the army, was to restrict ourselves from doing this. Even if we had a lack of policemen in Bogota, we never resorted to the army to solve the problems and I think we were correct in doing so.

But that doesn't mean that you have to have joint operations for certain type of things outside or in the countryside and I think those have been successful so far.

I think the examples that we have in the region for military operations in (inaudible) areas have been a huge mistake. We had one in Medellin a few decades ago I think. The case of Mexico I think has been a mistake to use the army to do operations inside an urban context. You have to resort on the police and knowing that you have scarce resources within the police, but you have to work with them.

SPEAKER: Not very (off mic)

MR. BLATTMAN: I just want to add like two thoughts, maybe questions, to see if you agree. One is I think there's a tendency to -- like the Mexico/Columbia case is a great comparison because you see similar strategies pursued and different outcomes.

I think it's really important I think to emphasize how uncertain probabilistic a lot of strategies are, so the right strategy can still fail very often and there's just a lot of unpredictability and that's what partly makes these kinds of policies so difficult, there's so few opportunities to, quote/unquote, experiment, so we can't read too much into successes and failures individually.

Having said that, I mean one structural factor that always struck me as different is the U.S. border and the access to the world's biggest market for drugs is immobile, it's there, but the drug production seems strikingly mobile.

Drug trafficking routes from South America upwards can get pushed from country to country and to some extent as a response to different countries' increase in (inaudible) or increase the tax, you've seen movements of production back and forth between Peru, Ecuador, and Columbia. So the immobility of that asset, which is access to the U.S. border, is always inherently going to make that a much harder and longer and difficult fight, but I've never been to Mexico, so you should just ignore everything I've just said.

SPEAKER: (off mic)

MR. ORTEGA: Do you want to say something about off the shelf --

MR. BLATTMAN: No, if you find the cure, let's go for it. It's not very provocative. Very seldom do we see the cure in public policy. If it only it were as simple as the bacterium with an antibiotic.

MR. ORTEGA: Do you want to say something about how you would reform the

police? You can say I don't know.

MS. MONTEIRO: The thing is it's again -- first of all, it has never been a priority. There are very good reasons why.

First of all, the politicians doesn't want a very strong police, because they can be investigated by the police. This has happened and this is true. So there are a lot of politicians involved with crime, so this is one of the problems, for instance.

The second reason is that bad cops have a lot of power to retaliate in the short term in the sense that they can simply stop working, really stop working, and then you may have (inaudible) in the city, nobody going to sustain the reform.

I think politicians are very afraid to do that and they only going to do when they -- if they are really, really convinced that this is completely necessary otherwise they not going to do.

But you may think about like small things that can be done to improve. For instance, you can improve the way Internal Affairs body works, how does it work.

Basically like cops that work in institution, they spend sometimes in Internal Affairs. The burden that these people suffer, it's amazing, because they can be there in Internal Affairs with the chief of police by that time supporting their work.

But once the chief police leave, they stay on their own and they are -- after that they all of them report to, how to say, they suffer a lot of problems after that, because they were the ones who like investigate their colleagues, so it's a lot of pressure.

So we really have need to have Internal Affairs outside the institution or you have only put there people who are in the end of their careers. We are not really good about thinking organization incentives.

Another key thing is, for instance, the chief of civil police does not need to be

one of the persons who is at the end of their career, which means that typically the person after, being the chief, comes back to being the lower ranks, which means that this person is not going to do anything to reform the institution because there is a lot of retaliation this person can suffer.

So I think in terms of incremental reforms, we may think about really thinking about incentives to truly investigate corruption inside the police will improve a lot. But the big reform, I am kind of skeptical about it.

MR. ORTEGA: We're basically running out of time, so I'm going to take one more question -- person, yes, black shirt.

SPEAKER: Yes, I have a brief couple questions.

First, Professor Monteiro, you mentioned bias in media. I was just kind of curious, in the short term what are the sources you can rely on for reliable information or data if there's so much bias?

For Daniel Mejia, the effects of displaced populations moving into Bogota and other cities, how has that impacted the types of violence that has occurred in Bogota in the past several years as that population has increased with displacement?

MR. ORTEGA: Just very briefly.

MS. MONTEIRO: Actually I said media bias, but actually it's more media business. I have never been convinced like in this -- when the federal government enacted the federal intervention, I got complete convinced that this is pure business.

For the 15 days after an intervention, I have never seen so many news being created like -- being like, they did in the militaries who took charge of the security area, they did not disclose any information. So they media create a lot of stuff, because they knew that people were eager to read everything about it. So it's really just need a tiny information to be able to be read an article.

So I think the incentives are pretty bad. We need more competition in this market, but it's completely different agenda. So it's a very tough question and difficult thing to address.

MR. MEJIA: Regarding the displacement, Bogota didn't attract so many displaced people back in '80s and '90s. We have to be very careful on the things we say about immigration or displaced population. Right now we are facing a lot of migration from Venezuela and we have to be very clear that most of the people who are migrating from Venezuela are trying to find a job or trying to work and trying to make a living out of this.

We do have cases where people, for instance, from Venezuela or people who have migrated to cities commit a crime, but we have to be very clear not to start with the xenophobic things, because of certain cases that go out in the media and try to push for the idea that we should close down the borders so Venezuela immigration or to displace populations inside Columbia. We have to be very clear and very professional on this.

If you allow me, I think we didn't answer your question. You made a point before, which was -- which I fully agree with, which is to prioritize is to say no to some things. Let me give you an example of something that we are doing in the general attorney's office.

We have too many cases to investigate and we don't have the capacity to investigate so many cases, so we have to set priorities, what are we going to investigate and what are we going to prosecute. So I need help on this.

There are two crimes which are (speaking foreign language). I have no idea how to translate it. It's like saying something bad about someone else.

SPEAKER: (off mic).

MR. MEJIA: (Speaking foreign language) is when guy doesn't get -- that's right, child support. Those are crimes in the penal system in Columbia.

So let me give you an example of something we did just a few days ago to start really landing down that plane to prioritize. We took cases which have been inactive for the last two years on those two crimes, and that accounts for nine percent of the total number of active cases in the general attorney's office and we have to close them down.

Are we going to investigate those cases that have been completely cold cases for the last two or three years or are we going to investigate the last homicide that happened in the last two weeks, so that's to prioritize.

We're going to start to prioritize when we really start closing those cases and putting those prosecutors to actually investigate recent and more harmful crimes in a sense.

I think your point is crucial. Given the scarce resources that we have, we have to prioritize. To prioritize means to say no to some things that ideally we would like to investigate or do something about, but we just cannot.

MR. ORTEGA: Well, that's very interesting. Thank you very much to all of you for coming. Thank you to our panelists. I think that's it.

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