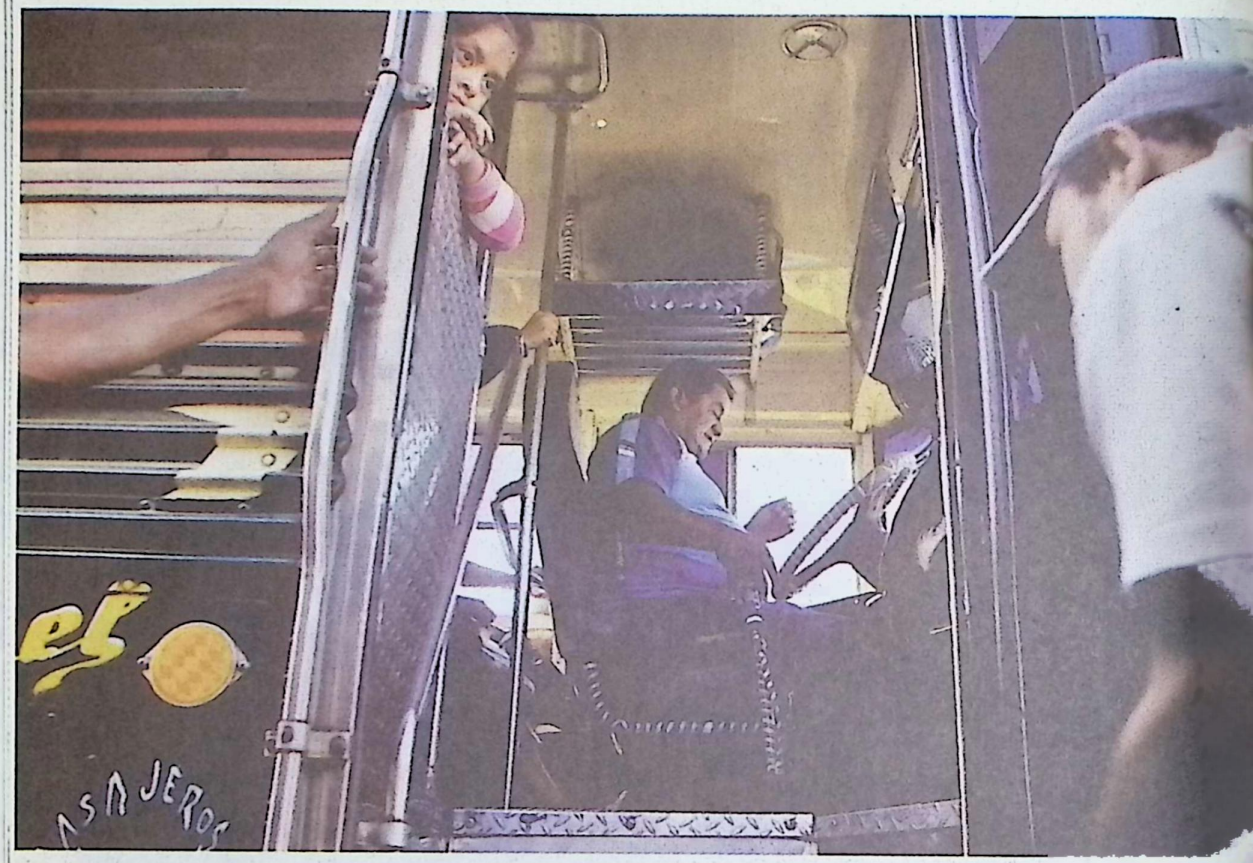


As a bus driver in Guatemala, you never know if you will return from work alive. A national report newly stated bus driver as the most dangerous occupation one can have in Guatemala. Last year more than 170 bus driver got killed in the country. So far this year, close to 40 drivers have been shot dead in Guatemala City alone.

Innocent bus drivers have become the target of dangerous street gangs, called *Las Maras*. The *maras* extort money from the drivers, or their companies, in order to allow them to pass through areas under control of the *maras*. If you don't pay the amount you're told, you're dead. The drivers are often poor, and the only alternative to keep driving the bus, is often unemployment.

Some areas of Guatemala City is said to be under total control of the *maras*. Some estimates goes as far as considering that the two largest *maras*, *Mara Salvatrutcha* and *Mara 18*, has 200,000 members. Just in Guatemala.

The origin of the *Maras* can be traced back to El Salvadorian refugees in Los Angeles in the early nineties. Both El Salvador and Guatemala was torn apart by years of civil war. Many of the refugees had war-experience. In the United States, many of them had a hard time finding jobs.