They started to commit crimes and organize in gangs instead. The gang problem escalated fast. In the end, the problem became so huge, that the US government started to deport the refugees back to their origins in Central-America. According to the magazine Foreign Affairs, 20.000 criminals were sent back to Central-America between 2000 and 2004.

Today the maras make a living out of killing, kidnapping, extortions and drugs. In Guatemala they have both police and government officials on their payroll. The killing of bus drivers is an example of what happens when a country is close to being torn apart by organized crime.

In 2008 approximately 6200 killings were committed in Guatemala, 17 each day, or one killing every second hour, making it one of the most violent countries in the world. According to the organization Amnesty International, 1% of the killings lead to sentence of a killer. Other estimates stretch the figure to 3%.

The killings can be quite grisly too. A woman's torso was found in two bags in Zona 18. Later the same day the womans head also was found, in a nearby neighborhood. Together with the head was a note reading "we want the bus money". A nine week old infant was killed onboard a bus in Canalitos in Zona 24. Very few places in Guatemala City are considered to be safe. Especially not after dark. And especially not on the bus.

