



*Dr. David Jensen Ghesquiere* was born in Costa Rica. He holds a Bachelor and Licentiate in Law (University of Costa Rica) and a Master in Laws (University of Freiburg). He worked as a research assistant in Legal History (Costa Rica), as a professor in Legal Reasoning (University of Costa Rica), and as a defense attorney (Public Defense Office, Costa Rica). He currently works as an attorney at the Constitutional Court of Costa Rica.

The maras, once regarded as a regular street gang in Los Angeles, have increasingly gained the attention of the media and national authorities due to their rapid expansion across the United States, Mexico, and Central America. Eventually, Central American governments began considering the maras, at least in their political discourses, as a threat to national security and thus started implementing measures to specifically combat them. In Honduras, the government reformed the Penal Code and conducted raids. The Salvadoran authorities, on the other hand, passed a law against the maras that ultimately remained in effect for only a couple of months. In Guatemala, the authorities failed to pass a specific law on the maras, but they still carried out massive raids.

This book provides an explanation to the origin of the maras and their territorial expansion. It analyzes the measures adopted against them in Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador, and compares the results obtained in each country. The particular set of events allows the author to study what happens when three countries with similar cultural backgrounds face the same problem in three different ways: How did the authorities enforce the measures in each country? Did the measures have an impact on national crime rates? How did the maras react to the measures? The answers to these questions will provide guidance to policy makers and a reference to researchers.

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## David Jensen Maras

A study of their origin,  
international impact, and the measures  
taken to fight them

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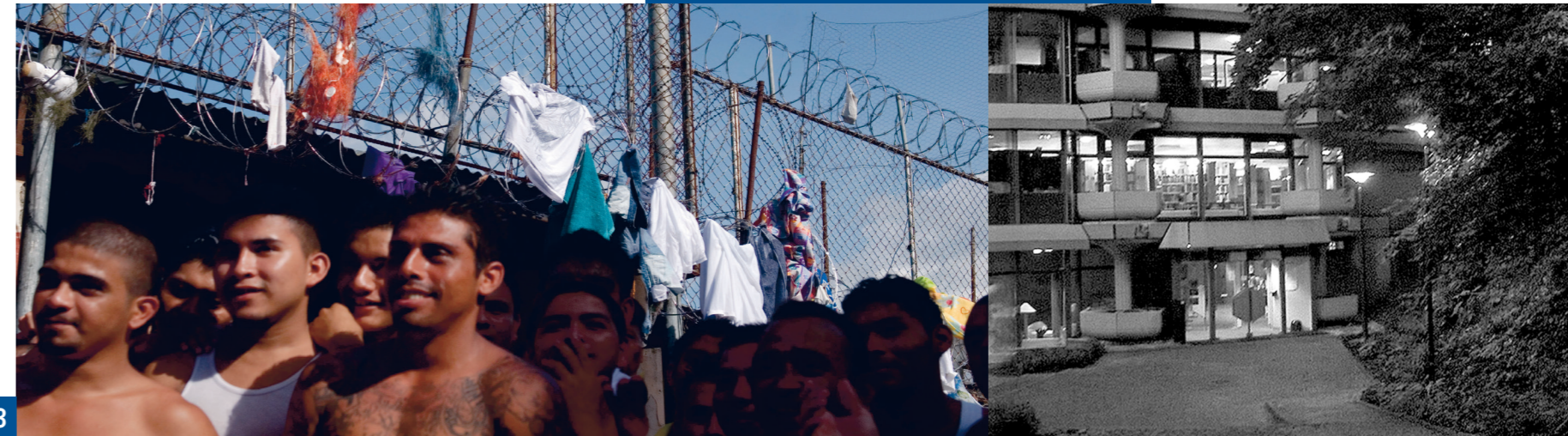
The Max Planck Institute for Foreign and International Criminal Law in Freiburg is part of the Max Planck Society, an organization dedicated to the advancement of basic research. The Institute is composed of a department of criminal law, led by Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Ulrich Sieber, and a department of criminology, headed by Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Hans-Jörg Albrecht.

In addition to the study of basic questions of criminal law, comparative law, and criminology, the Institute's research agenda focuses primarily on three central challenges epitomized by the terms "global society", "information society", and "new risk society": Crime is becoming more global; in so doing, it makes increasing use of international data networks; through the employment of technology and organization, its consequences for society as a whole – even in seemingly isolated cases – can be significant.

Thus, the Institute's current research program encompasses the goals and methods of comparative law and legal harmonization, model criminal laws, European criminal law, international law, Internet and information law, money laundering, organized crime, terrorism, crime in post-conflict societies, as well as empirical studies of criminal procedure, alternative methods of crime prevention, reactions to dangerous offenders, and victimology.

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