Policing Democracy

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Glossary

arraigo: A form of preventive detention used an alternative to arrest, in which a suspect is placed in a facility such as a “safe house” guarded by police during the investigation.

averiguación de antecedentes: The police act of detaining someone to check his or her police record.

barrio: A low-income urban neighborhood in Venezuela and other countries.

cifra negra: Number or percentage of unreported crimes.

cocaleros: Coca growers who formed a powerful movement in Bolivia.

código de faltas/contravenciones: Misdemeanor code.

colonias: Defined residential areas in Honduras.

comisaría: Police station.

comisario: Police office.

criterio de oportunidad: A rule allowing prosecutors to refrain from prosecuting, often needed to decongest the prisons of petty criminals and those who cooperate with an investigation.

cuadrantes: Urban blocks used in community-oriented policing, in which separate units are responsible for all areas of security.

defensoría del pueblo: Ombudsman.

desestimadas: Dismissed or overruled cases.
expediente: Generally meaning a file or record, but usually used as the term for police report on a crime presented to prosecutors (*fiscale*)

*fiscal* Public prosecutor

**Fiscalía General/Ministerio Público:** Public prosecutor’s office, in charge of criminal investigation and prosecution

*inspector:* Police detective

**Judicial Police:** The police agency conducting a criminal investigation, usually under the direction of the Public Ministry

*juez de ejecución:* Judge of the sentencing court

*Mara 18:* One of the largest youth gangs—one of the two *super-clikas*—in Central and North America

*Mara Salvatrucha (MS):* One of the principal *maras* in Honduras and the rest of Central America

*maras:* The criminally oriented gangs of Central America, Mexico, and the United States

*medidas cautelares:* Preventive measures

*mesas:* The term commonly used for citizen forums

*organic law:* The founding and basic law in an area of the law

*patronato:* In some countries, the title of the head council of a neighborhood

*penal code:* The legal code specifying and defining acts that constitute crime

*penal process code:* The legal code specifying the processes for investigating crimes and prosecuting suspects

**Preventive Police:** The main division in most police agencies responsible for basic street policing

**Proceso:** Short for Proceso de Reorganización Nacional (Process of National Reorganization), the official name of Argentina’s 1976–83 military regime

*razzias:* Mass police roundups, usually in poor neighborhoods

*tutela:* Direct legal suit

*villa:* The term used for low-income neighborhoods in most of Argentina