



# UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Small Central American states such as El Salvador and Honduras might not be at war, but they have levels of violent deaths per capita that are exceeded only by Syria. The combination of ferocious gangs and inadequate law enforcement has also led to a dramatic refugee crisis, although this receives little attention from governments.

In response to this crisis, David Cantor, reader in human rights law at the School of Advanced Study, University of London, secured a Future Research Leader grant from the Economic and Social Research Council for a “Pushing the Boundaries” project to carry out extensive fieldwork in the region and produce the first serious study of forced migration caused by organised criminal groups.

After the results were presented at an intergovernmental meeting in Nicaragua, they led to the announcement of the Brazil Declaration, the first international instrument to recognise and respond to this specific form of forced migration.

The research bore further fruit when Dr Cantor was seconded for a year to the Americas Bureau of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and drafted a protection policy to guide the actions of refugee agencies and governments. A framework for a regional protection approach was subsequently adopted by nine governments and many other participants as the San José Action Statement.

The judges were “impressed with the quality and originality of the University of London’s research on the effect of organised criminal gangs on forced migration in Mexico and Central America. The adoption by 28 Latin American and Caribbean countries of a 10-year road map for action to resolve this problem demonstrates the significant impact that this project has had on international public policy.”