

Tren de Aragua

OVERVIEW

AS OF JANUARY 2026

Tren de Aragua is a transnational gang network that engages in violence and criminal activity throughout the Western Hemisphere. Tren de Aragua originated as a prison gang at Tocoron Prison in Venezuela in the mid 2010s, where the gang conducted kidnappings, extortion, and drug trafficking to generate revenue and recruit members. Venezuela's raid on Tocoron Prison in 2023 accelerated Tren de Aragua's efforts to expand its transnational presence by exploiting the Venezuelan migrant crisis. The gang evolved into a decentralized group with more autonomous local leaders, which has led to fragmentation and less coordination among cells, some of which operate independently or under different names. In January 2026, former disputed Venezuelan President Nicholas Maduro was indicted for partnering with Tren de Aragua, including its leader, Hector Guerrero Flores, to distribute drugs into the United States.

Operating Area

Primarily Venezuela; has a presence in the United States, many Latin American countries, and Spain.

Members

Approximately 2,500 to 5,000

Tactics And Targets

Tren de Aragua engages in public displays of violence; extortion; kidnapping; human trafficking for sexual exploitation; contraband and migrant smuggling; illegal mining; drug trafficking; and theft. The gang uses violence and intimidation, often employing targeted violence to establish control over local criminal markets. Tren de Aragua initially targeted inmates in Tocoron Prison, both for recruitment and as victims of its criminal activity. The gang established international cells as it expanded outside Venezuela, adapting to local conditions and exploiting vulnerable populations, particularly Venezuelan migrants, to further its illegal operations.

Terrorist Group Designation

The US State Department designated Tren de Aragua as a foreign terrorist organization in February 2025. The US Treasury Department designated seven individuals and four entities affiliated with Tren de Aragua as Specially Designated Global Terrorists in December 2025.



Tren de Aragua *(continued)*

KEY LEADERS



Hector Guerrero Flores

a.k.a. Nino Guerrero

Co-founder and leader



Giovanni Vincente Mosquera Serrano

a.k.a. El Viejo

Leader



Johan Petricia

a.k.a. Yohan Jose Romero

Co-founder; Guerrero's lieutenant

