

[News](#) [Venezuela](#)

Venezuela's Most Wanted List Notable for Its Absences

by Venezuela Investigative Unit

18 Oct 2023



The Justice Ministry published a list of the eleven most wanted criminals in Venezuela.

A recently released list of Venezuela's most wanted criminals has brought attention to some of the country's most important organized crime figures, but also underlines the government's refusal to acknowledge some of its most significant security threats.

The Venezuelan Justice Ministry released an updated [list](#) showing the 11 most sought-after criminals on October 4, having released a nearly identical one nine days earlier from which gang leader Deiber Johan González, alias "Carlos Capa" was curiously absent.

The ministry's list provides only a partial snapshot of the country's criminal landscape and many of those who feature on it present a regional, rather than national, threat. It also contains some noteworthy differences when compared with a list of the country's top 10 most dangerous criminal organizations that InSight Crime [released](#) in February 2023.

However, the government's decision to publish the list now shows its desire to portray itself as increasingly serious about cracking down on crime, and reveals both to the public and the underworld which groups are squarely in the authorities' crosshairs.

Who Made The List?

Venezuela's most wanted individual, Héctor Rusthenford Guerrero Flores, alias "**Niño Guerrero**," leads one of the country's most notorious crime groups, **Tren de Aragua**. While InSight Crime classified the gang as Venezuela's **most dangerous** homegrown criminal organization, Tren de Aragua's top figures were missing from previous government **most wanted** lists. While this may be chalked up to its main leader being behind bars, other leaders remained at large and in powerful positions, both home and abroad, **maintaining alliances** with state institutions and actors.

In an about-face on the government's part, Niño Guerrero and one of his top lieutenants, Josué Ángel Santana, alias "El Santanita," are now number one and two on the list. Their inclusion may have been one of the main reasons for its publication.

SEE ALSO: Venezuela Security Policy: Combating Gang and Police-Driven Extortion

The ministry released the original list just under a week after 11,000 soldiers and officials on September 20 **took over** Tocarón prison, which had been functioning as Tren de Aragua's base of operations. The operation's success quickly came into question when the authorities announced that Niño Guerrero and El Santanita **had both escaped before the operation**, suggesting they maintain their capacity to penetrate the state despite becoming a target of the security forces.

Tren de Aragua's **transnational reach** means a number of countries, including Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, are on alert for the pair's possible presence. Interpol warned Niño Guerrero could even have fled to the United States, according to a **document** published on social media by Venezuelan journalist Eligio Rojas.

Three Caracas-based gang leaders take the third, fourth, and fifth places on the list. The first of these is Wilexis Acevedo, alias "**Wilexis**," who runs an approximately 200-strong gang in the José Félix Ribas neighborhood within Petare, in the Caracas metropolitan area. Wilexis has also so far evaded **capture** despite several large-scale security operations targeting the gang.

Following Wilexis are Carlos Calderón, alias "El Vampi," and Garbis Ochoa Ruíz, alias "El Garbis" (also spelled Garvis). Both had previously worked alongside Carlos Luis Revete, alias "**El Koki**," who ruled the Cota 905 neighborhood in Caracas prior to a 2021 operation that drove his gang out. El Koki later **died** after months on the run. Little has been heard of El Vampi and El Garbis recently. While local media reports claim El Vampi may have fled to **Colombia**, and El Garbis to **Brazil**, their positions on the list shows they remain government targets.

Security forces have also launched operations against sixth place Darwin Antonio Rivas García, alias "El Cagón," but these have failed to diminish his Trujillo-based organization, which has reportedly **expanded** into the states of Lara and Zulia.

The seventh, eighth, and ninth positions belong to figures heading extortion gangs in the state of Zulia, where the **chaotic criminal landscape has fueled a security crisis.**

Former police officer Óscar Guzmán, alias “**El Conas,**” became the subject of an Interpol red notice after ordering an attack with explosives against Maracaibo’s Palace of Justice in March 2022 in an apparent attempt to apply pressure on the judiciary.

Guillermo Rafael Boscán Bracho, alias “**Yiyi,**” remained on the list despite having been **arrested** in Argentina earlier in the month. He was captured at least partly thanks to the work of Venezuelan investigators, according to an Instagram post by **Douglas Rico,** director of Venezuela’s Criminal Investigations Unit (Cuerpo de Investigaciones Científicas, Penales y Criminalísticas – CICPC).

Yiyi’s arrest hints at a newfound willingness among Venezuelan authorities to work with their neighbors to track down fugitives. This may spell trouble for other figures on the list who are suspected to be hiding out outside Venezuela, such as ninth place Erick Parra, alias “**Yeico Masacre,**” as well as El Conas.

The Zulia gang bosses are followed by **Tren del Llano** leader Óscar de Jesús Noguera Hernández, alias “Óscar del Llano,” or “El Pipi.” Tren del Llano has been diminished in reach and power following a series of security force operations that targeted it beginning in April 2022. However, “El Pipi,” seems to have consolidated his leadership according to Venezuelan **security forces,** and his inclusion on the list at tenth place reflects the group’s possible resurgence.

The final addition to the list, Deiber Johan González, alias “**Carlos Capa,**” leads one of the most established criminal organizations in the Valle del Tuy region to the south of Caracas, and has survived numerous attempts to wipe him out by taking shelter in the region’s mountains.

Venezuela's Most Wanted Criminals



Héctor Guerrero

Alias: “Niño Guerrero”

Group: Tren de Aragua

States: Aragua, Bolívar, Carabobo, Guárico, Miranda, Sucre, Trujillo, Lara



Josué Santana

Alias: "El Santanita"

Group: Tren de Aragua

States: Lara, Aragua, Bolívar, Carabobo, Guárico, Miranda, Sucre, Trujillo



Wilexis Acevedo

Alias: "El Wilexis"

Group: The Wilexis gang

State: Miranda



Carlos Calderón

Alias: "El Vampi"

Group: The Cota 905 gang

State: Capital District



Garbis Ochoa Ruíz

Alias: "El Garbis"

Group: The Cota 905 gang

State: Capital District



Darwin Rivas

Alias: "El Cagón"

Group: The El Cagón gang

State: Trujillo, Zulia

**Óscar Guzmán***Alias: "El Conas"**Group: The El Conas gang**State: Zulia***Guillermo Boscán***Alias: "Yiyi"**Group: The Yiyi gang**State: Zulia***Erik Parra***Alias: "Yeico Masacre"**Group: The Yeico Masacre gang**State: Zulia***Óscar Noguera***Alias: "Óscar del Llano"**Group: Tren del Llano**States: Guárico, Miranda***Déiber González***Alias: "Carlos Capa"**Group: The Carlos Capa gang**State: Miranda*

Conspicuous Absences

While the Justice Ministry's list included many of the country's most notorious criminals, it also had some conspicuous absences.

President Nicolás Maduro has focused extensively in recent years on the threat posed by so-called "**Tancol**," which stands for Armed Colombian Terrorist Drug Traffickers (Terroristas Armados Narcotraficantes de Colombia). But while this term is often used as a catch-all reference to guerrilla groups, no leaders of these groups were included in the government's list.

The omissions include Gustavo Aníbal Giraldo, alias '**Pablito**,' one of the commanders of the guerrilla group the National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional – **ELN**), which controls territory and **trafficking routes** all along the border region and beyond. Another is Miguel Díaz Sanmartín, alias "Jota Jota" or "Julián Chollo," commander of the ex-FARC mafia faction the **Acacio Medina Front**, which, along with the ELN, controls much of the mining operations in Yapacana National Park in Amazonas state.

SEE ALSO: Tren de Aragua Brand Spurs Criminal Imposters Outside Venezuela

In the case of the ELN, this may be largely explained by the fact that it is currently participating in **peace talks** with the Colombian government, which are being facilitated by Venezuela. However, the immunity the guerrillas enjoy from security operations predates this, and can also be explained by the government's relationship with these groups. The ELN in particular has positioned itself as Maduro's ideological ally and has **developed alliances** with political leaders and elements of the security forces, which have in turn protected the guerrillas.

Leaders of groups that control informal mining in the state of Bolívar were also missing. Among them was Tren de Aragua co-founder Yohan José Romero, alias "Johan Petrica," who InSight Crime investigations suggest clandestinely leads the Bolívar-based **Las Claritas Sindicato**, which is publicly led by Juan Gabriel Rivas Núñez, alias "Juancho." While it may not operate on as grand a scale as the ELN, this group has similarly thrived thanks to protection from figures within the state.

Several other important gang bosses in Bolívar's mining regions were also notably absent, suggesting combating illegal mining kingpins is not a priority for the regime, despite the large-scale **anti-mining military operations** it has conducted over the past year. Among the gang bosses left off the list were Ronny Jackson Colomé Cruz, alias "Ronny Matón," the leader of another powerful mining group **Tren de Guayana**, Eduardo José Natera Balboa, alias "Run," who leads the R Organization (Organización R – **OR**), and Fabio Enrique González Isaza, alias "Negro Fabio."

While both **Tren de Guayana** and **the OR** have, at least in the past, allegedly maintained ties to corrupt elements of the state, both have recently faced pressure from security **operations**. Negro Fabio, on the other hand, has largely escaped the attention of the security forces during recent deployments despite authorities issuing a warrant for his arrest two years before in a **prominent human trafficking case**.