

# *Another Month in Honduras...*

## Human Rights Monitor – September 2018

September should have been the month in which the material authors in the murder case of Berta Cáceres go to trial. But only 10min into the trial on September 17, it was already postponed once more without specifying a new date. Instead of decreasing impunity in Honduras, its political and business elite prepared the ground for new cases of impunity through a widespread defamation and criminalization campaign against local communities and human rights defenders resisting imposed extractive industry projects. Welcome to another month in Honduras.

In solidarity,

Daniel Langmeier

Honduras Forum Switzerland

## Executive Summary

In the first days of September, the evidentiary hearing in the Berta Cáceres murder trial took place. COPINH presented legal challenges so that the court would recognize them as victims of the murder and together with Berta's family they also demanded that the upcoming trial would be live-streamed. Both challenges were denied and throughout the evidentiary hearing, the defense team tried to divert the attention away from the culpability of DESA. COPINH denounced that the court rejected much of the evidence of their accusation that was intended to contextualize the climate of systematic attacks suffered by Berta. On September 17, the trial started but was postponed again after just 10min. COPINH had presented legal challenges against the judges of the trial court for failing to guarantee their rights as victims and even the rights of the accused by allowing the Public Prosecutor to conceal information. Instead of resolving the challenge in 72 hours as the law establishes, the courts took nine days only to reject it and still without offering a new trial date.

Such as Berta previously to her assassination, Honduran human rights defenders suffered a new wave of defamation and criminalization this month. State and business actors presented them as enemies of development and accused them in press releases and newspaper articles of costing Hondurans millions in investment and thousands of jobs. Journalists daring to question this picture suffered another difficult month and even international journalists were targeted as the case of Nina Lakhani reporting for the Guardian showed.

September is the month of the independence commemorations and the alternative march on September 15 by civil society was attacked by state security forces and journalists covering it were beaten. Radio Progreso was especially targeted and this just a month after OACNUDH emitted two press releases expressing its concerns about the threats, denigration and attacks suffered by their journalists. September also brought about another assassination of someone working in the media. On September 28, the cameraman Héctor Clara Cruz was found murdered wrapped in bed covers in the residential area Las Uvas, Tegucigalpa and already on September 5, the 20-year old son of the director of Radio Congolón had been murdered.

The fight against corruption failed to make positive headlines this month. Several new corruption cases were made public, one involving the privatizing body Coalianza and on September 18, the CNA informed about acts of corruption from the last three years worth 3 billion Lempiras. The CNA also informed about new acts of corruption, among them one involving children of public officials and the social program "Bono Diez Mil". The Supreme Court once more showed its unwillingness to fight corruption by ordering the suspension of an investigation against Congress' president Mauricio Oliva and lowering the charges against the former members of the Judiciary Council, therefore, allowing them to leave pre-trial detention.

ATIC made negative headlines because two young students were found murdered shortly after having been detained by men wearing ATIC uniforms. ATIC's press speaker denied their involvement, but there remain several open questions and instead of investigating, the JOH regime tried to denigrate the students by claiming they were gang members. State security members were further involved in various acts of repression and in once case two COBRAS special force agents threatened the HRD Henry Rodriguez when he was observing with another HRD a peaceful protest in Choluteca. The police agents told them: "We will kill you and make you disappear."

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## Abbreviations

ASJ	Association for a More Just Society
ATIC	Technical Bureau for Criminal Investigation
BID	Inter-American Development Bank
CABEI	Central American Bank for Economic Integration
CDM	Center for Women's Rights
CIPRODEH	Center for Human Rights Research and Promotion
CMH	Medical Association Honduras
CNA	National Anti-Corruption Council
COFADEH	Committee of Families of the Detained-Disappeared in Honduras
COIPRODEN	Coordination of Private Institutions for Children's Rights
CONADEH	National Human Rights Commission
COPINH	Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras
FEPRODDHH	Special Public Prosecutor Unit for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Journalists, Social Communicators and Justice Operators
FOSDEH	Social Forum on the External Debt of Honduras
FOSDEH	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
HRDs	Human Rights Defenders
IACHR	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
IACtHR	Inter-American Court of Human Rights
ILO	International Labor Organization
ISHR	International Service for Human Rights
MACCIH	Support Mission against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras
MADJ	Broad Movement for Dignity and Justice
MP	Attorney General's Office
OACNUDH	UN Human Rights Office in Honduras
TSC	Supreme Audit Court
UFECIC	Anti-Corruption Unit of the Attorney General's Office
UNAH	National Autonomous University of Honduras
ZEDE	Zone for Employment and Economic Development

## Human Rights and Their Defenders

The America's director of Amnesty International, Erika Guevara-Rosas, denounced an increase in the criminalization and defamation of HRDs and the lack of response by the State to protect them.<sup>1</sup> September was a prime example of this. Radio Progreso published an important overview of the defamatory campaign against communities in peaceful resistance against mining and hydroelectric projects as well as human rights organizations accompanying them. Even though the JOH regime has promised on the international stage to uphold the work of HRDs, it helps promote a dangerous environment for defending human rights as does Honduras' business lobby for example in the form of COHEP. On September 19, they held a press conference presenting human rights organizations as the main obstacle for millions in investment in Honduras.<sup>2</sup> This is just one of many press conferences and press releases on this topic in the last few weeks.

## Assassinations

### Lawyers

It is the fourth month in a row that a lawyer was murdered in Honduras. Louis Rivera Valladares, the son of the former judge Blanca Valladares and the former congressman Luis Alonso Tábora Valladares, was assassinated on September 27.<sup>3</sup>

## Attacks, Criminalization and Harassment

This month we have witness a further increase in defamation and criminalization campaigns which will be reflected in this section, as well as the sections on indigenous peoples, journalists and the extractive industries. MADJ and especially Martín Fernández and Víctor Fernández were particularly targeted.<sup>4</sup> They reacted by writing an open letter to Honduras' business people, among them COHEP and AHPER, to demand a stop to their smear campaigns and their attempts to criminalize the work of local communities peacefully opposing extractive projects and the HRDs accompanying them.<sup>5</sup> OACNUDH also denounced them and Padre Melo from Radio Progreso.<sup>6</sup> Witness for Peace published a statement in solidarity with MADJ.<sup>7</sup>

On September 6, the general secretary of ANACH, Gerardo Navarro, denounced the persecution and harassment of Marcial López, the president of the La Despertar cooperative in Santa Lucía, Trujillo, Colón. López is supposed to benefit from special protection measures granted by the IACHR.<sup>8</sup> According to the coordinator of Vía Campesina in Honduras, Rafael Alegría, there are at

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1 <https://criterio.hn/2018/09/30/honduras-las-autoridades-deben-garantizar-la-seguridad-de-los-defensores-y-periodistas-objeto-de-campanas-de-desprestigio/>

2 <https://confidencialhn.com/cohep-asegura-que-perdidas-por-proyectos-renovables-son-multimillonarios/>

3 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/sucesos/1220322-466/en-video-queda-grabado-crimen-contra-abogado>

4 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2268-gobierno-orquesta-campana-de-odio-y-desprestigio-en-contra-de-defensores-de-ddhh>

5 <https://www.movimientoamplo.org/single-post/2018/09/18/Se%C3%B1ores-empresarios-Basta-de-tantas-mentiras-y-violencia>

6 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1043163580957425666>

7 <http://witnessforpeace.org/statement-on-solidarity-with-madj-in-light-of-recent-defamation-campaignsdeclaracion-en-solidaridad-con-madj-ante-de-reciente-campanas-de-difamacion/>

8 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/no-se-respetan-medidas-de-proteccion-otorgadas-por-la-cidh-a-campesinos-del-aguan/>

least 7000 campesinxs in Honduras who face legal proceedings, the majority due to land conflicts.<sup>9</sup> On September 28, the Agrarian Platform and the Campesino Cooperative Gregorio Chávez denounced the arrival of some 20 armed men in the Panamá community spreading terror.<sup>10</sup>

ACI-PARTICIPA had a difficult month as well. Armed and hooded assailants entered the apartment of the HRD Henry Rodriguez stealing evidence gathered by ACI-PARTICIPA for a report on the risks HRDs face.<sup>11</sup> Two days earlier, Rodriguez had been threatened by police agents belonging to the COBRAS special force (see State Security Forces section).<sup>12</sup> In Honduras' south, four inhabitants of Playa Blanca, a community in Zacate Grande, face up to five years in prison for their efforts to defend the use of the public beaches for fishing.<sup>13</sup>

## Indigenous Peoples

This month, Honduras commemorated on September 5 the International Day of the Indigenous Woman. The National Network of Indigenous Lenca Human Rights Defenders from La Paz (Redhil-Paz) demanded justice in the case of Berta Cáceres as well as the protection of all indigenous women defending their commons, their bodies and their land.<sup>14</sup> On September 13, Honduras' indigenous people commemorated the 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN Declaration on Indigenous Rights. "11 years after the adoption by the United Nations of the Declaration on Indigenous Peoples, COPINH once again claims the right of the Lenca people and the indigenous peoples of Honduras to self-determination, to the non-imposition of projects that violate the mere existence of the communities. In the face of the media attacks against the indigenous and popular communities in resistance against projects that generate death and desolation in the people and that destroy the common good and the natural inheritance, which, as the only one, can guarantee the life of humanity, COPINH demands the respect of the rights of the indigenous communities that is enshrined in the UN declaration of September 13, 2007."<sup>15</sup> Honduras' business lobby had other plans and launched an "insidious campaign against the defenders of Mother Earth"<sup>16</sup> this month denouncing that violent protests "impede economic development."<sup>17</sup> In this context, it is important to call to mind an article by Defensores en Línea: "De-legitimization and hate campaigns always precede death".<sup>18</sup>

## FPIC

This month's reports documents a worrisome increase in defamatory attacks against local communities and popular movements opposed to extractive industry projects (see further below). At

9 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/siete-mil-campesinos-tienen-procesos-judiciales-en-honduras-denuncia-rafael-alegria.html>

10 <http://www.honduratierralibre.com/2018/09/honduras-comunicado-urgente-la-empresa.html>

11 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2018/09/07/hombres-encapuchados-entran-en-la-madrugada-a-vivienda-para-atacar-equipo-de-aci-participa/>

12 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2274-hombres-encapuchados-entran-en-la-madrugada-a-vivienda-para-atacar-equipo-de-aci-participa>

13 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/mirada-al-sur/807-pobladores-podrian-pasar-cinco-anos-en-la-carcel-por-defender-las-playas>

14 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/exigimos-justicia-y-respeto-para-las-mujeres-indigenas-hondurenas/>

15 <https://copinh.org/2018/09/13-de-septiembre-a-11-anos-de-la-adopcion-por-parte-de-la-onu-de-la-declaracion-sobre-pueblos-indigenas/>

16 <https://ofraneh.wordpress.com/2018/09/13/la-aher-y-su-campana-insidiosa-contr-defensores-de-la-madre-tierra/>

17 <https://confidencialhn.com/sera-cierto-cohep-denuncia-que-grupos-delictivos-han-paralizado-la-economia/>

18 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/de-legitimization-and-hate-campaigns-always-precede-death/>

the same time, the business lobby works towards a disputed consultation bill.<sup>19 20</sup> On September 26, OFRANEH denounced a distorted application of a free, prior and informed consultation in the Garífuna community Corozal by the mayoralty of La Ceiba and the business group LAEISZ.<sup>21</sup>

## The Case of Berta Cáceres

This month marked the 30-month anniversary of the murder of Berta Cáceres: "Two and a half years after the vile crime against Berta, we continue to refuse to accept the violent and unpunished death that was imposed on the Lenca people in resistance and the social movement in Honduras on the night of March 2, 2016. Today is a day in which people from disperse parts of the world join their voices to call for justice, as was done every day since the morning after the crime when we learned of the repugnant deed."<sup>2223</sup>

After months of stalling, the evidentiary trial finally took place this month.<sup>24</sup> It started on August 31 and took until September 4. Already on Day 1, the missing political will to solve the crime became once more apparent when the National Police denied entry to Laura Zúniga, one of Berta's daughters, and further members of COPINH.<sup>25</sup> On Day 2<sup>26</sup>, Supreme Court staff discriminated against members of COPINH, limiting their access to the building and checking their bags while letting other people go through unchecked. COPINH denounced this to the judge, but she just responded that the security staff of the Supreme Court was not her jurisdiction.<sup>27</sup> Throughout the evidentiary hearing, the defense team of the accused tried to shift attention away from the company DESA willfully ignoring that Rodríguez Orellana<sup>28</sup> is a DESA engineer and Douglas Geovanny Bustillo the former head of DESA's private security team.<sup>29</sup> As a response, COPINH launched the campaign "DESA Guilty"<sup>30</sup> as well as a website to accompany the trial with information, news and analysis.<sup>31</sup>

After a weekend break, the evidentiary hearing continued on September 3. The legal team accompanying Berta's family and COPINH presented a writ of Amparo against the court resolution denying members of COPINH the status of victims in the murder trial.<sup>32</sup> This led InSight Crime to conclude: "[t]he murder trial of environmental activist Berta Cáceres in Honduras could open a small window into the nexus between criminal networks and elites, but will more likely illustrate

19 <https://confidencialhn.com/renovables-piden-al-parlamento-aprobar-ley-de-consulta-para-neutralizar-protestas/>

20 <http://radiohn.hn/2018/09/13/la-asociacion-hondurena-de-energia-renovable-solicita-a-los-diputados-del-congreso-nacional-actuar/>

21 <https://ofraneh.wordpress.com/2018/09/26/el-caso-de-la-termoelectrica-en-la-ensenada-y-la-distorsion-de-la-consulta-previa-libre-e-informada/>

22 <https://copinh.org/2018/09/a-30-meses-de-la-siembra-de-berta/>

23 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxsO\\_jd1s9Q&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxsO_jd1s9Q&feature=youtu.be)

24 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/component/k2/item/2265-en-juicio-por-crimen-de-berta-caceres-hidroelectrica-de-sa-a-la-carga-con-bufete-internacional-para-desprestigiar-al-copinh>

25 <https://www.facebook.com/1602956593311447/posts/2136471223293312/>

26 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/component/k2/item/2266-audiencia-en-caso-de-berta-caceres-defensa-de-empleados-de-sa-se-oponen-a-que-directivo-de-la-empresa-sea-citado-a-declarar>

27 <https://copinh.org/2018/09/denuncia-publica-2/>

28 <https://contracorriente.red/2018/09/18/juicio-berta-caceres-dudas-al-sistema-y-un-imputado-especial/>

29 <https://copinh.org/2018/09/3180/>

30 <https://copinh.org/2018/09/3241/>

31 <https://berta.copinh.org/>

32 [https://www.facebook.com/1602956593311447/posts/2142951782645256/?\\_fb\\_noscript=1](https://www.facebook.com/1602956593311447/posts/2142951782645256/?_fb_noscript=1)

just how difficult it is to prosecute powerful families."<sup>33</sup> The same day, the court further rejected the demand to have the owners of DESA and the Atala Zablah family testify.<sup>34</sup> On September 4, the evidentiary hearing came to an end.<sup>35</sup> COPINH denounced that the court rejected "much of the evidence of our accusation that was intended to contextualize the climate of systematic attacks suffered by Berta for fulfilling her role as coordinator of COPINH that were part of the plan to neutralize and attack the struggle in defense of the territories against the plundering of private enterprises."<sup>36</sup> The Coalition against Impunity held a press conference denouncing the lack of access to important information granted to COPINH's and the family's legal team as well as the negation by the court to recognize COPINH as a victim in the process. They further denounced the lack of investigation into the intellectual authorship by the MP and the dozens of complaints filed by Berta Cáceres before her death. The Coalition against Impunity also condemned the defamation and misinformation campaign against COPINH by DESA using a private law practice.<sup>37</sup>

Before the official trial was to start on September 17, the MP unexpectedly announced that they will legally pursue several local councilors in San Francisco de Ojuera for granting the permit to construct the reservoir for Agua Zarca.<sup>38</sup> 17 national and international human rights organizations formed an Observation Mission of the Oral and Public Trial to accompany the process.<sup>39</sup> <sup>40</sup> On September 16, one day before the trial, national human rights organizations held a protest outside the Supreme Court in solidarity with Berta's family and COPINH. On the day of the trial, COPINH sent out an alert that DESA had paid protesters to seek a confrontation with them in front of the Supreme Court. The police did not intervene.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, COPINH presented legal challenges against the judges of the trial court because "[t]he three judge panel responsible for this case has failed to guarantee our rights as victims and even the rights of the accused by allowing the Public Prosecutor to conceal information, and as a consequence, the truth, showing partiality constitutive of a crime."<sup>42</sup>

As the trial finally began, it was suspended again within 10 minutes without offering a new date.<sup>43</sup> This raised many problems, one is that Honduran law does not allow for pre-trial detention longer than 2.5 years without an actual trial. Four of the eight accused reach this limit by November 2. Nina Lakhani, the criminalized journalist writing for the Guardian (see section of Journalists), summarized the events: "The long-awaited trial into one of Central America's most notorious murders has been thrown into disarray after the judges were formally accused of abuse of authority and a cover-up."<sup>44</sup> According to the law, the State had 72 hours to answer to the complaints

33 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/familia-de-bertha-caceres-y-copinh-recusan-a-tribunal-de-sentencia/>

34 <http://voicesinmovement.org/impunity-corruption-bertha-caceres/>

35 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/component/k2/item/2271-tribunal-de-sentencia-protector-a-los-autores-intelectuales-del-crimen-contra-bertha-caceres>

36 <https://copinh.org/2018/09/el-copinh-informa-sobre-las-conclusiones-de-las-audiencias-de-proposicion-de-pruebas/>

37 <https://copinh.org/2018/09/pronunciamiento-de-la-coalicion-contra-la-impunidad-ante-el-juicio-de-la-causa-bertha-caceres/>

38 <https://confidencialhnh.com/formalizan-acusacion-penal-contra-exregidores-que-violaron-la-ley-respecto-al-embalse-agua-zarca/>

39 <https://copinh.org/2018/09/organizaciones-conforman-mision-de-expertos-para-observar-el-primer-juicio-por-el-asesinato-de-bertha-caceres/>

40 <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/comision-de-expertos-seguira-juicio-por-crimen-de-ambientalista-bertha-caceres.html>

41 <https://copinh.org/2018/09/video-alerta-desa-ha-enviado-un-grupo-de-personas-a-confrontarse-con-copinh/>

42 <https://copinh.org/2018/09/nota-de-prensa-del-copinh-17-de-septiembre-2018-espanol-english/>

43 <https://copinh.org/2018/09/video-se-suspende-la-audiencia/>

44 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/17/bertha-caceres-trial-postponed-judges-accused>

presented by COPINH, but they failed to do so.<sup>45 46</sup> On September 5, COPINH presented a further challenge, this time against the court ruling which did not allow them to be an official part of the Berta Cáceres trial as victims of her murder. An appeal court admitted the challenge but it did not authorize COPINH's incorporation in the trial.<sup>47</sup> On September 26, the appeals court also rejected the legal challenge against the three judge panel.<sup>48</sup>

While these legal battles were fought in Tegucigalpa, in Río Blanco, members of the Madrid Family with links to DESA attacked community members with machetes.<sup>49 50</sup> September ended without any new trial date being set. Furthermore, the appeals court also rejected the demand by COPINH and Berta's family to live stream the trial.<sup>51</sup> To end on a more positive note, the Appeals Court of Francisco Morazán, meanwhile, upheld the accusations against a current and a former member of the police. They are accused of fabricating and altering evidence in the investigation into Berta's murder.<sup>52</sup>

## Freedom of Expression and Journalists

On January 13, the journalist César Silva was attacked by a man with a knife while on air. A nearby police agent was able to stop the attacker. This month, a hearing against the attacker, Abelardo Mendoza Erazo, took place. Neither the MP, nor Mendoza Erazo appeared to the hearing, but the judge still decided on provisionally dropping the case.<sup>53</sup>

On September 1, Radio Progreso journalist Héctor Maradiga was followed for various minutes by car when he left the radio station.<sup>54</sup> A week later, police agents attacked journalists belonging to Radio Progreso when the latter covered a student protest on the highway to El Progreso.<sup>55</sup> The journalist Inmer Gerardo Chévez was brutally attacked by the police. He was covering a student protest, when two police agents attacked him without warning, spraying tear gas directly into his face. According to the protection mechanism for HRDs, he should benefit from special state protection,<sup>56</sup> This happened just a month after OACNUDH emitted two press releases expressing its concerns about the threats, denigration and attacks suffered by journalists at Radio Progreso.

Another media outlet which often suffers attacks is UNE-TV. Pasos de Animal Grande spoke with one of its directors about the recent acts of state violence on several occasions they suffered from during the last months.<sup>57</sup> C-Libre denounced that the director of the municipal justice system in

45 <https://copinh.org/2018/09/juicio-por-el-asesinato-de-berta-caceres-se-suspende-ante-violaciones-al-debido-proceso-de-parte-del-tribunal/>

46 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/component/k2/item/2283-recusan-tribunal-de-sentencia-para-que-no-siga-conociendo-del-caso-del-asesinato-de-berta-caceres>

47 <https://copinh.org/2018/09/video-corte-hondurena-admite-amparo-interpuesto-por-socios-de-copinh-pero-sin-autorizar-su-incorporacion-inmediata-en-el-proceso/>

48 <https://copinh.org/2018/09/sin-lugar-la-recusacion/>

49 <https://copinh.org/2018/09/alerta-familia-madrid-empleados-de-la-empresa-desa-ataca-a-comunidad-de-rio-blanco/>

50 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/component/k2/item/2291-siguen-acciones-violentas-contraindigenas-empleados-de-hidroelectrica-desa-ataca-a-comunidad-lenca-de-rio-blanco>

51 <https://copinh.org/2018/09/la-corte-de-apelaciones-niega-el-derecho-a-audiencias-publicas-mediante-transmision-en-vivo-en-la-causa-berta-caceres/>

52 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/confirman-auto-de-formal-procesamiento-contrapolicias-que-pretendieron-desviar-investigacion-en-crimen-de-ambientalista.html>

53 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2269-mp-no-fue-al-juicio-contrahombre-que-pretendio-apunalar-a-periodista-cesar-silva>

54 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/alertas/intimidacion/899-seguimiento-a-periodista-al-salir-de-la-estacion-radial>

55 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/alertas/criminalizacion-de-la-protesta-publica/901-fuerzas-policiales-golpean-y-lanzan-gas-pimienta-a-periodistas-de-radio-progreso>

56 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2275-enesimo-ataque-policias-pretendian-dejar-ciego-de-por-vida-a-periodista-de-radio-progreso>

57 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2282-une-tv-en-la-mira-del-gobierno-de-joh-dice-coordinador-de-prensa>

Santa Bárbara verbally and physically attacked the two cameramen Cristófer Cantarero and Antonio Reyes.<sup>58</sup> On September 27, ConexiHon made public that the journalist Fabricio Garibaldi Mejía faces a trial for slander for denouncing acts of corruption on his private Facebook page.<sup>59</sup>

The Meso-American Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders emitted an alert denouncing the defamation and criminalization of the international journalist Nina Lakhani. Lakhani, who regularly writes on Honduras for the Guardian. She was in Honduras covering the Berta Cáceres trial. The Independent Campesinos of the Aguán (ACIVA) accused her in a press release of international interference and they asked the JOH regime to prosecute her. We have not previously heard of this organizations and it sounds rather like an astroturf-organization, i.e. a fake grassroots organizations founded by powerful interests groups.<sup>60</sup> A week later, ACIVA emitted another defamatory attack against Lakhani as well as the international human rights defender Annie Bird.<sup>61</sup>

Pasos de Animal Grande documented a worrisome trend in Honduras. They denounce a decrease of transparency by the JOH regime as more and more information (and power) is concentrated in the 'casa presidencial'. When journalists consult public officials, they hear more and more than no information can be given on a certain topic because "this is managed from the 'casa presidencial'".<sup>62</sup>

63

The month ended with some good news, as the journalist Jairo López was acquitted after having been criminalized for three years by a man believed to work in representation of Congress' president Mauricio Oliva.<sup>64</sup>

## Assassination

On September 5, the 20-year old son of the director of Radio Congolón was murdered.<sup>65</sup> On September 28, the cameraman Héctor Clara Cruz was found murdered wrapped in bed covers in the residential area Las Uvas, Tegucigalpa.<sup>66</sup>

## LGBTI

The new UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, held a speech on the situation of the LGBTI community. "Seventy years ago, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed that everyone, without distinction "has the right to life, liberty and security of the person." When there is a pattern of hate-motivated violence – one, for example, based on gender,

58 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/alertas/impedimento-informativo/909-director-de-justicia-municipal-agrede-a-camarografos>

59 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/libertad-de-expresion/817-por-denuncia-en-redes-sociales-cooperativa-querella-a-periodista>

60 [https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=2150840808523020&id=1602956593311447](https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=2150840808523020&id=1602956593311447)

61 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2292-se-arrecia-campana-de-odio-en-peligro-periodista-londinense-nina-lakhani-y-activista-de-ddhh-anie-bird>

62 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2287-periodistas-denuncian-que-funcionarios-no-hablan-porque-hay-concentracion-de-la-informacion-en-casa-presidencial>

63 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/monitoreo-de-compromisos-internacionales/item/2294-un-dia-sin-celebraciones-en-honduras-estado-de-honduras-restringe-cada-vez-el-derecho-de-acceso-a-la-informacion>

64 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2289-hoy-audiencia-para-notificar-a-las-partes-tribunal-de-sentencia-de-choluteca-sobresevo-querella-contra-el-periodista-jairo-lopez>

65 <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/hijo-de-periodista-es-asesinado-a-cuadra-y-media-de-posta-policia-en-gracias.html>

66 <https://tiempo.hn/cadaver-encontrado-en-las-uvas-era-exfotografo-de-el-heraldo/>

sexual orientation or gender identity – and the State does not act to prevent, and effectively address, those attacks, it is failing to live up to that obligation."<sup>67</sup>

## Femicide

According to feminist and women's rights organizations, 260 women violently lost their lives from January to August this year. Radio Progreso finds two main culprits, a cultural violence in which machismo and the devaluation of women dominates as well as a state violence in which the State does not allow women the needed spaces to participate: "The State represses with laws."<sup>68</sup> Nancy Perdomo denounced a normalization of violence against women<sup>69</sup> taking place in Honduras and the role of the main media outlets.<sup>70</sup> The JOH regime tried to explain the increase in femicides by claiming that women became more involved in organized crime.<sup>71</sup> While femicide in itself does not get the attention such a grave problem would deserve, even less attention is paid to the thousands of orphans that result from the widespread murder of women.<sup>72</sup> In 2016, 8% of Honduras' children were orphans.<sup>73</sup>

On September 24, Honduras' women's rights and feminist organizations denounced that the budget allocated to the prevention of violence against women has been decreased in the 2019 state budget without any explication.<sup>74</sup> They demanded a higher share for the prevention of violence against women and the investigation of femicide.<sup>75</sup> The Women's Tribunal against Femicide "Gladys Lanza" condemned the high level of violence against women and state indifference. Since 2005, 5440 women have violently lost their lives and 96% of their cases remain in impunity.<sup>76</sup>

## Protection Mechanism

The journalist Gilda Silvestrucci suffered various attacks in the recent past, including a beating by soldiers in January this year. She is also the victim of constant harassment via social media. Her own investigation has shown that the son of a Supreme Court judge is behind the harassment but neither the MP nor the Protection Mechanism have reacted to her officially filed complaint.<sup>77</sup>

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67 <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23630&LangID=E>

68 <http://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/violencia-feminicida-29-septiembre-2018/>

69 <http://elpulso.hn/violencia-contra-la-mujer/>

70 <http://elpulso.hn/violencia-mujeres-medios-de-comunicacion/>

71 <https://criterio.hn/2018/09/04/cordial-invitation/>

72 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.org.files.wordpress.com/2018/09/estudio-acv-2018.pdf>

73 <https://criterio.hn/2018/09/11/las-victimas-invisibles-en-honduras-y-la-desidia-del-estado/>

74 <https://criterio.hn/2018/09/24/gobierno-de-honduras-invisibiliza-la-violencia-contra-las-mujeres-en-el-presupuesto/>

75 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/35-mujeres/811-feministas-exigen-se-cumpla-con-el-presupuesto-para-investigar-y-prevenir-femicidios>

76 <https://criterio.hn/2018/09/17/por-enesima-vez-mujeres-de-honduras-exigen-justicia-por-femicidios/>

77 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2277-hijo-de-magistrada-amenaza-por-redes-sociales-a-la-periodista-gilda-silvestrucci>

## Political Prisoners

The IACHR granted a hearing on the situation of the political prisoners in Honduras during the 169th session from October 1-5, 2018. Next month's report will further report on this.<sup>78</sup> This month, the political prisoners were topic at the National Dialogue, where the team of Salvador Nasralla presented a bill which would give amnesty to the political prisoners.<sup>79</sup> COFADEH found that in El Progreso alone, some 60 people have by now been criminalized for their participation in the post-electoral protests.<sup>80</sup>

## Extractive Industries

Extractive industry projects are resisted by Honduras' communities and social movements on the ground but also through legal measures. The second approach has been further weakened by a development which came to light this month. Without any public oversight, the JOH regime declared in a ministerial decision the environmental licenses and other environmental procedures presented to the Natural Resources and Environment Secretariat (MiAmbiente) as secrets.<sup>81</sup> <sup>82</sup> In a pure act of cynicism, the next day the regime signed the Open Government Pact.<sup>83</sup> In an analysis of the ministerial decision, OFRANEH highlighted the undue role played by the MiAmbiente.<sup>84</sup> Javier Suazo linked this "environmental silence" and with State efforts to promote investment by reducing all possible obstacles such as preparing an environmental impact study. According to him, an environmental license can now be granted in as little time as one day.<sup>85</sup> Twelve environmental and human rights organizations demanded the derogation of the ministerial decision<sup>86</sup> and C-Libre deemed it illegal.<sup>87</sup>

As in previous months, communities facing extractive industry projects met in open town hall meetings to voice their opposition. One such meeting took place in Tela. A local Libre councilor wanted to present a draft talking up the grievances of the inhabitants, when the Nationalist mayor started to attack him on stage.<sup>88</sup> This did not stop the communities of Tela to declare their region free of mining.<sup>89</sup> The National Party gets support by the main Honduran media outlets in their efforts to silence resistance to their neoliberal development model. Radio Progreso highlighted how their role in promoting an extractivist vision while denigrating social movements opposing it.<sup>90</sup> Another important actor is the business lobby. MADJ wrote an open letter to them this month

78 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/cidh-otorga-audiencia-tematica-sobre-los-presos-politicos-en-honduras/>

79 <https://confidencialhn.com/asesor-de-nasralla-espera-que-los-presos-politicos-sean-absueltos-de-sus-pecados/>

80 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/mas-de-60-presos-politicos-habria-en-el-progreso/>

81 <https://criterio.hn/2018/08/31/gobierno-de-honduras-declara-en-secreto-las-licencias-y-todos-los-tramites-ambientales/>

82 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2267-diputados-interpelaran-a-ministro-de-miambiente-por-acuerdo-de-secretividad-en-licencias-ambientales>

83 <https://criterio.hn/2018/09/01/con-ley-de-secretos-encima-herandez-ratifica-pacto-de-gobierno-abierto/>

84 <https://ofraneh.wordpress.com/2018/09/11/honduras-licencias-ambientales-y-la-ley-del-silencio/>

85 <https://www.alainet.org/es/articulo/195282>

86 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/transparencia/792-organizaciones-y-ambientalistas-exigen-derogar-acuerdo-que-mantendra-informacion-de-concesiones-en-secretividad>

87 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/transparencia/803-acuerdo-de-mi-ambiente-es-illegal-en-el-fondo-y-en-la-forma-denuncia-c-libre>

88 <http://www.latribuna.hn/2018/09/02/alcalde-y-regidor-de-tela-se-van-a-los-punos-durante-cabildo-abierto-video/>

89 <http://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/tela-se-suma-a-los-municipios-libre-de-proyectos-extractivistas/>

90 <http://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/una-misma-mirada-de-dos-juan-es-14-sept-2018/>

demanding that they stop their smear campaigns the their attempts to criminalize the work of local communities peacefully opposing extractive projects and the HRDs accompanying them.<sup>91</sup> FOSDEH joined the debate emphasizing that Honduras does not have to rely on an extractive development model.<sup>92</sup> The mining ministry INHGEOMIN claimed that mining exports had increased by \$30 million this year compared to the same period last year.<sup>93</sup>

Before we turn to the worrisome events happening around hydroelectric and mining projects this month, there are two further articles worth highlighting. ContraCorriente reported from Zacata Grande in Honduras' south about "expulsion and resistance between mangroves". The journalist talked to Nancy, who two years ago had been deported from the US and returned to Zacate Grande, where she may be expelled once more due to a planned Zone for Employment and Economic Development (ZEDE).<sup>94</sup> OFRANEH denounced that the JOH regime signed a contract with BG Group to explore and exploit oil reserves in the Caribbean Sea without consulting the affected indigenous communities. The project risks leading to the eviction of Miskitu, Garífuna, Pech and Tawahka indigenous communities.<sup>95</sup> The Environmental Law Institute of Honduras (IDAMHO) warns of the possibly devastating consequences of an oil spill just outside the Honduran Caribbean coast.<sup>96</sup>

## Hydroelectricity

September began with a request by the IACHR to COFADEH for more information regarding the situation of the indigenous Lenca peacefully resisting a hydroelectric plant on the Reitoca river. The concession for the project lies with Progelsa and the company responsible for building the dam is SERMACO, which belongs to the head of the Liberal Party in Congress Elvin Santos (Santos is currently being investigated as part of the Pandora corruption case).<sup>97</sup> The local indigenous Lenca community denounced a defamation campaign by the business lobby and especially Elsa Paz, who not only is the president of the Association of Renewable Energy Producers but also a representative of the company Progelsa.<sup>98</sup> She denigrated all social movements opposed to hydroelectric projects claiming that they are violent and they cost Honduras millions of foreign investment.<sup>99</sup> The Indigenous Lenca Council of Reitoca further accused the company to harm the local environment and the Petacón river.<sup>100</sup>

Not only local communities and HRDs face harassment and threats, the young PINU councilor Marlon Calles from Marcala, La Paz denounced being harassed and threatened for accompanying

91 <https://www.movimientoamplio.org/single-post/2018/09/18/Se%C3%B1ores-empresarios-Basta-de-tantas-mentiras-y-violencia>

92 <http://wp.radioprogreso.net/honduras-puede-vivir-sin-modelo-extractivo-sostiene-economista-del-fosdeh/>

93 <http://radiohn.hn/2018/09/07/en-mas-de-30-millones-de-dolares-se-ha-incrementado-las-exportaciones-mineras/>

94 <https://contracorriente.red/2018/09/07/expulsion-y-resistencia-entre-los-manglares/>

95 <https://criterio.hn/2018/09/21/sin-consultar-a-comunidades-gobierno-de-honduras-suscribio-contrato-con-bg-group/>

96 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/transparencia/810-sombrio-contrato-petrolero-amenaza-el-caribe-hondureno>

97 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/la-cidh-solicita-informacion-sobre-indigenas-lencas-de-reitoca-que-rechazan-proyecto-hidroelectrico/>

98 <https://confidencialhn.com/comunidad-lenca-advierte-que-impedira-construccion-de-represa-en-rio-petacon/>

99 <https://confidencialhn.com/denuncian-que-grupos-violentos-tienen-en-suspense-265-millones-de-dolares/>

100 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/mirada-al-sur/808-pueblo-lenca-denuncia-campana-de-desprestigio-y-contaminacion-del-rio-petacon>

local opposition to hydroelectric projects and denouncing acts of corruption.<sup>101</sup> The Indigenous Lenca community in Chinda, Santa Bárbara, reject the hydroelectric project El Tornillito which was imposed against their will last year.<sup>102</sup> And once more, the situation in Pajuiles made headlines this month. MADJ denounced that the flow of the Pajuiles river decreased due to the construction activities of the hydroelectric company HIDROCEP.<sup>103</sup>

## Mining

This month, Rights Again published a welcome overview with a lot of photos on the peaceful resistance by the inhabitants of Azacualpa against the mining company MINOSA, a subsidiary of the Canadian mining firm Aura Minerals. It listed several infractions by the company, the last being the cutting down of "hundreds of pine trees, just down the mountain side from the community of Azacualpa itself, even though they did not have a deforestation permit."<sup>104</sup> In a press conference, MADJ's coordinator Víctor Fernández denounced the threats and the criminalization campaign they and the inhabitants in Azacualpa face for peacefully protesting against MINOSA and its ongoing practice of exhumations in the local graveyard, against court orders.<sup>105</sup>

Apart from the situation in Azacualpa, the events in Guapinol near Tocoa, Colón are especially worrisome. MADJ denounced an attack against members of a local protest camp in Shots were fired at them gravely wounding the young man Rigoberto Hernández López.<sup>106</sup> MADJ denounced it as part of a harassment strategy by the mining company Inversiones Los Pinares.<sup>107</sup> Both COPA<sup>108</sup> and COPINH<sup>109</sup> published press releases condemning the attack as well as the indifference of the JOH regime. The local Municipal Committee in Defense of the Commons in Tocoa demanded an end to the mining projects in the region.<sup>110</sup> El Tiempo reported that the men who shot at the inhabitants were security guards of the mining company belonging to Lenir Pérez.<sup>111</sup>

A day later, Avispa Midia now reported that Inversiones Los Pinares announced the close shop in Guapinol.<sup>112</sup> Even though La Prensa confirmed this<sup>113</sup>, the remaining days of September raised doubts about its veracity. Inversiones Los Pinares aided by Honduras' main media outlets increased its defamation campaign against the local protesters and the human rights organizations accompanying them. They blamed them that international investors will go to other countries and

101 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/regidor-de-la-alianza-de-oposicion-en-marcala-se-encuentra-en-condicion-de-riesgo/>

102 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/el-tornillito-la-amenaza-en-chinda/>

103 <https://www.movimientoamplio.org/single-post/2018/09/21/Reducido-el-caudal-del-r%C3%ADo-Mezapa-en-Pajuiles-Tela-1>

104 <https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/no-to-aura-minerals-destruction-of-azacualpa-cemetery>

105 <http://elpulso.hn/el-cementerio-y-la-mina-de-azacualpa/>

106 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2273-grupo-armado-enviado-por-minera-ataca-campamento-y-deja-un-herido-en-guapinol-colon>

107 <https://www.movimientoamplio.org/single-post/2018/09/08/Solidaridad-ante-ataque-en-Guapinol>

108 <http://movimientom4.org/2018/09/comunicado-copa-empresa-inversiones-los-pinares-con-capital-financiero-nacional-e-internacional-y-familia-facusse-contrata-grupos-armados-y-derrama-sangre-en-tocoa-colon/>

109 <https://copinh.org/2018/09/condenamos-de-manera-contundente-las-acciones-de-la-empresa-minera-inversiones-pinares/>

110 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/tension-en-campamento-por-la-vida-en-tocoa/>

111 <https://tiempo.hn/disputa-minera-guardias-de-lenir-perez-disparan-contrapobladores-varios-heridos/>

112 <https://avispa.org/honduras-tras-represion-violenta-anuncian-cierre-de-mina-en-el-aguan/>

113 <http://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1214745-410/honduras-miner%C3%ADa-cierre-minera-tocoa->

2000 people will lose their jobs.<sup>114</sup> According to FOSDEH, mining is responsible for only 0.67% of GDP and employs 0.0005% of the active labor force. Its social and environmental impact, meanwhile, are enormous.<sup>115</sup> As with previous protests, the JOH regime pretends that the local communities are in favor of the project and that "external forces" which are behind the protest.<sup>116</sup> The San Isidro Labrador Parish of Tocoa published a press release in support of the local community and it denounced the smear campaign against the local leader Juan López.<sup>117</sup>

On September 13, El Tiempo labeled the announced withdrawal by Inversiones Los Pinares as a PR strategy to raise the pressure on the local communities presenting them as enemies of development and getting the JOH regime involved.<sup>118</sup> In a second article, El Tiempo reported on the work of Jessenia Molina who uncovered that Congress reduced the size of a national park in 2013 to benefit the mining operations of Inversiones Los Pinares.<sup>119</sup> The Trujillo Diocese further denounced that the state body INHGEOMIN illegally granted Inversiones Los Pinares an environmental license.<sup>120</sup> According to El Tiempo, a meeting between the municipality and community representatives took place at the end of September. The latter demanded a public consultation about the mining activities in their area.<sup>121</sup>

## Corruption and Its Enemies

September started with an interesting analysis by CESPAD's director Gustavo Irías of the US interests in the fight against corruption in Honduras. His analysis was inspired by the seizure of the party headquarters in corruption investigation in August (see last month's report). "However, their [US'] current interest in national security requires them to corral and displace a sector of the traditional elite, probably the most corrupt and, therefore, the most uncomfortable one. But that does not mean facilitating the modification, nor putting at risk, the status quo prevailing in Honduras, which is functional to US interests. For that very reason, in the end it is not a simple strategy against corruption, rather there is an interest in reconfiguring the internal political forces. Hence, it was not a coincidence that the seizures [of the party headquarters] coincided on the same day and time, with the signing of the agreement to start the political dialogue between the National Party, the Liberal Party and Salvador Nasralla." Irías concludes that the US is trying to build a political opposition close to their interests consisting of the Liberal Party (in the hand of Luis Zelaya and, therefore, they need to weaken his internal rival Elvin Santos) and Salvador Nasralla, while weakening Libre.<sup>122</sup> His analysis caused an interesting debate, of which the political analyst Moisés Ulloa offered a helpful summary.<sup>123</sup>

114 <http://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1214745-410/honduras-miner%C3%ADa-cierre-minera-tocoa->

115 <https://criterio.hn/2018/09/11/resistencia-en-comunidades-frente-a-modelo-extractivo-tiene-sus-razones/>

116 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1215458-466/fuerzas-externas-estarian-detras-de-boicot-a-minera-de-colon>

117 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2278-iglesia-catolica-de-tocoa-respalda-lucha-por-el-agua-y-la-vida>

118 <https://tiempo.hn/minera-de-lenir-perez-inicia-campana-para-que-gobierno-intervenga-en-conflicto/>

119 <https://tiempo.hn/minera-de-liner-perez-inversiones-pinares/>

120 <https://criterio.hn/2018/09/17/inhgeomin-ha-concedido-licencia-ambiental-a-la-empresa-los-pinares-con-una-serie-de-ilegalidades/>

121 <https://tiempo.hn/alcalde-y-protestan-buscan-solucion-problematica-mina-lenir-perez/>

122 <https://criterio.hn/2018/09/06/politica-anti-corrupcion-intentan-los-eeuu-desplazar-al-partido-nacional-del-poder-en-honduras/>

123 <https://criterio.hn/2018/09/10/el-nuevo-orden/>

In the remaining days of September, old and new corruption cases made headlines. The MP informed that they have four line of investigations into the failed infrastructure project Trans-450.<sup>124</sup> This did not stop the Tegucigalpa's Nationalist mayor Nasry Asfura to claim that Trans450 will be ready in 2019.<sup>125</sup> On September 2, ASJ presented a report<sup>126</sup> on irregularities involving the privatizing body Coalianza. They highlighted no less than 14 irregularities including the lack of permits to starts constructing to the explosions of the costs to twice or even three times the offered costs.<sup>127</sup> According to the Honduran Transparency International chapter, the "bad deals" by Coalianza may cost Honduras 2.4 billion Lempiras.<sup>128</sup> In response, the JOH regime announced an audit of the Public Private Partnerships granted by the Coalianza.<sup>129</sup>

ASJ not only made headlines uncovering possible acts of corruption, it was also accused of only selectively report on corruption cases. ConfidentialHN denounced that they lowered its anti-corruption fighting profile since Carlos Hernández and Omar Rivera had been included in the purging committee of the National Police Force.<sup>130</sup> In a three-parts series, ConfidentialHN concentrate on the public health sector to make their point.<sup>131</sup> <sup>132</sup> They also link it to a warning emitted in August by FOSDEH that some 67 trusts in Honduras worth 18 billion Lempiras which are managed without much oversight. According to ConfidentialHN, ASJ was aware of irregularities in one of the trusts managed by the Health Secretariat but it remained silent for receiving favors.<sup>133</sup> ASJ disputed the allegations.<sup>134</sup>

On September 18, the CNA held a public event in San Pedro Sula informing about acts of corruption from the last three years worth 3 billion Lempiras.<sup>135</sup> The CNA also informed about new acts of corruption, among them one involving children of public officials and the social program "Bono Diez Mil".<sup>136</sup>

## The Onslaught against the Anti-Corruption Bodies

Over the years, the CNA turned from a mere talking shop into an important actor in the fight against corruption in Honduras.<sup>137</sup> But this made it also the target of powerful groups wishing to continue with their corrupt business. Its director Gabriela Castellanos is especially in the crossfire because since she took over, the CNA had become much more public in its fight against corruption. Once

124 <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/fiscalia-tiene-abiertas-cuatro-lineas-de-investigacion-del-proyecto-trans-450.html>

125 <https://confidencialhn.com/annuncian-aporte-de-ocho-millones-de-dolares-para-concluir-obras-del-trans450/>

126 <http://wp.radioprogreso.hn/informe-revela-irregularidades-en-concesion-de-corredor-turistico/>

127 <https://criterio.hn/2018/09/03/conozca-las-irregularidades-y-actos-renidos-con-la-ley-realizados-por-coalianza-en-el-corredor-turistico/>

128 <https://tiempo.hn/ti-honduras-pagar-300-millones-mala-negociacion-coalianza/>

129 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1216884-466/gobierno-auditar%C3%A1-los-proyectos-concesionados-por-coalianza>

130 <https://confidencialhn.com/a-cambio-de-privilegios-carlos-herandez-y-asj-ha-callado-profunda-corrupcion-en-salud/>

131 <https://confidencialhn.com/padrinos-de-la-corrupcion-asj-jugo-a-dos-aguas-para-ser-la-consentida-del-poder/>

132 <https://confidencialhn.com/asj-callo-despilfarro-por-cambio-de-software-para-controlar-medicamentos/>

133 <https://confidencialhn.com/conflictos-de-asj-silenciaron-anomalias-del-fideicomiso-de-salud-a-cambio-de-favores/>

134 <https://confidencialhn.com/asj-niega-ocultamiento-de-informacion-en-caso-de-corrupcion-en-salud/>

135 <https://criterio.hn/2018/09/18/cna-destapa-nuevos-actos-de-corrupcion-por-mas-de-3-mil-millones-de-lempiras/>

136 <https://tiempo.hn/cna-hijos-de-funcionarios-esta-involucrados-en-programa-bono-diez-mil/>

137 <https://criterio.hn/2018/09/18/lo-delicado-de-la-politica-anti-corrupcion-en-honduras/>

more this month she denounced new attacks to get rid of her as the director of the CNA.<sup>138</sup> Pressure comes also from actors inside the CNA. Its assembly forbade Castellanos "to use her position for making politics".<sup>139</sup> La Prensa published a longer article on this internal dispute which further weakens the fight against corruption in Honduras.<sup>140</sup>

Another target is the Article 184 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which came under pressure because based on it persons accused of acts of corruption can be held in pre-trial detention (see also last month's report).<sup>141</sup> C-Libre director Edy Tábora presented a useful explanation on the discussion about the article, its origin and its importance. He proposed to expand the discussion to include the control of state institutions by powerful actors. One of the actors he has in mind is Congress' president Mauricio Oliva. "[He] has a conflict of interests and the law of the legislative power establishes that nobody is allowed to participate in the discussion of bills causing conflicts of interests. But he is being investigated for corruption which may include money laundering and so this article applies to him and he is not allowed to participate in the discussion in Congress; he may do so as a citizen, but not as a congressman."<sup>142</sup> Instead of taking up his suggestion, the Judicial Power once more showed on which side its stand. Last month, the Constitutional Chamber accepted an appeal by Congress' president Mauricio Oliva to protect him from a corruption investigation. Because the decision was not unanimously, the plenary session of the Supreme Court had to decide, which they did this month. The Supreme Court ordered the outright suspension of the investigation by UFEICIC. Criterio fears that many officials and congresswo/men investigated for corruption will demand the same treatment.<sup>143</sup>

The president of the Supreme Court, Rolando Argueta Pérez, defended the Judicial Power for accepting an appeal by Oliva.<sup>144</sup> The same day, Argueta Pérez demanded a higher share for the Judicial Power of the funds coming from the security tax ('tasa de seguridad').<sup>145</sup> Maybe Oliva has now an open ear for this. Accordingly, the head of the investigation unit at the CNA, Odír Fernández, denounced the role of the Supreme Court in impeding corruption investigations.<sup>146</sup>

The situation in Guatemala and the CICIG may further worsen the fight against corruption in Honduras. Antonio Rivera Callejas, Nationalist congressman, commented that although things in Honduras are different than in Guatemala, a profound analysis is needed to determine if MACCIH's contract should be renewed or not.<sup>147</sup>

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138 <https://confidencialhn.com/coordinador-del-cna-denuncia-a-oposicion-por-campanita-para-provocar-salida-de-castellanos/>

139 <https://tiempo.hn/titular-del-cna-hay-quienes-se-indignan-por-un-twitter-y-no-asi-por-la-corrupcion/>

140 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1221010-410/crispan-relaciones-entre-asamblea-directora-cna-gabriela-castellanos>

141 <http://elpulso.hn/no-combatir-la-corrupcion-es-mas-grave-que-lo-relativo-al-respeto-de-los-ddhh-doris-gutierrez/>

142 <http://elpulso.hn/los-jueces-fueron-cooptados-por-la-corrupcion-edy-tabora/>

143 <https://criterio.hn/2018/09/13/corte-ordena-suspender-investigacion-contr-mauricio-oliva/>

144 <https://confidencialhn.com/recurso-a-favor-de-oliva-ante-investigacion-secreta-fue-basada-en-ley-presidente-del-judicial/>

145 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/presidente-de-csj-lamenta-que-poder-judicial-no-ha-recibido-tantos-fondos-de-la-tasa-de-seguridad.html>

146 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2280-cna-sala-constitucional-de-la-csj-favorece-con-fallos-a-sectores-privilegiados>

147 <https://tiempo.hn/rivera-callejas-analizar-ampliacion-convenio-maccih/>

## Judiciary Council

In July, we highlighted the unexpected good news regarding the trial against the former members of the Judiciary Council. A higher court revoked their alternative measures to imprisonment and in August they were arrested. Now, a month later, the Supreme Court decided that all the accused can leave pre-trial detention.<sup>148</sup> This was possible because the charges against them were changed.<sup>149</sup> Even though they initially face over 600 counts of corruption<sup>150</sup>, they will only be tried for abuse of authority and embezzlement of public funds.<sup>151</sup> The director of the CNA, Gabriela Castellanos, denounced the Judicial Power for releasing them.<sup>152</sup>

## The IHSS Case

A further case inside the IHSS corruption scandal went to court this month. The businessman and former IHSS board member Benjamín Bográn faced trial for inappropriate passive bribery and money laundering.<sup>153</sup> A week into the trial, the Sentencing Tribunal dropped the charges of money laundering. As a result, he was able to leave pre-trial detention. The court found him guilty of bribery, but the resulting prison sentence can be turned into paying a fine.<sup>154</sup>

La Prensa got access this month to a report by the Intervention Committee of the IHSS. The report highlights that the financial aftermath of the corruption scandal will be felt until 2048.<sup>155</sup>

## The Case against Congresswo/men

In the corruption case involving two Nationalists congressmen and the falsification of documents, Tomás Zambrano Molina has been acquitted. The charges against Román Villeda Aguilar were decreased but he remained charged with abuse of authority and falsification of documents.<sup>156</sup> Zambrano Molina is also the Congressional Secretary and a powerful actor inside the National Party.

## State Security Forces

FOSDEH published a two part analysis of Honduras' public spending on security and defense.<sup>157 158</sup> The ineffectiveness of this spending became evident this month by the ranking of Honduras in the World Justice Project.<sup>159</sup> Honduras has the third worst position in Latin America and the Caribbean

148 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1216000-466/corte-suprema-de-justicia-admite-recurso-de-amparo-a-favor-de-exconcejales>

149 <https://confidencialhn.com/enjuiciaran-a-exconcejales-de-la-judicatura-por-abuso-de-autoridad-y-malversacion-de-dinero-publico/>

150 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1218535-410/ma%C3%B1ana-saldr%C3%A1n-en-libertad-exconsejeros-de-la-judicatura>

151 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1218535-410/ma%C3%B1ana-saldr%C3%A1n-en-libertad-exconsejeros-de-la-judicatura>

152 <http://proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/en-la-casa-de-la-justicia-solo-falto-darle-viaticos-a-exconcejales-por-paseo-que-dieron-directora-cna.html>

153 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1212645-466/el-ministerio-p%C3%BAblico-busca-decimoquinta-sentencia-por-corrupci%C3%B3n-en-el-ihss>

154 <http://www.web.elibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2972-justicia-hondurena-absuelve-a-implicado-en-desfalco-de-ihss>

155 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1219042-410/saqueo-ihss-casos-corrupcion-mario-zelaya-honduras-robo->

156 <https://criterio.hn/2018/09/25/ratifican-el-sobreseimiento-definitivo-para-tomas-zambrano/>

157 <http://www.fosdeh.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Seguimiento-y-Evaluacion-Gasto-Publico-en-Seguridad-y-Defensa-2002-2018.pdf>

158 <http://www.fosdeh.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Alerta-monitoreo-gasto-seguridad-defensa.pdf>

159 [https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/WJP-ROLI-2018-June-Online-Edition\\_0.pdf](https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/WJP-ROLI-2018-June-Online-Edition_0.pdf)

in the Rule of Law Index and ranks 103rd out of 113 countries. In matters of criminal justice, Honduras even ranks 111th out of 113 countries. Radio Progreso argued that Article 1 of the Constitution is being violated as Honduras does not guarantee the rule of law.<sup>160</sup>

The purging commission returned to the headlines this month, when it announced the purge of some 70 police agents.<sup>161</sup> Just days later, La Prensa reported on irregularities with the police purge. Some officials and agents should have been purged months ago, but they still received their paychecks.<sup>162</sup> And then there is the case of the police official Juan Francisco Sosa who was wrongly imprisoned for two years after having been accused of wrong doing by the purging committee. This month a court acquitted him.<sup>163</sup>

## Post-Electoral Human Rights Violations

In July, just a day before a IACHR delegation arrived in Honduras, the MP presented charges against 11 police agents and officials as well as soldiers for the post-electoral human rights violations. One media outlet reported on this, then, the silence returned. This month, the MP announced that ATIC arrested the preventive police agent Olvin Fernando Gonzáles Velásquez.<sup>164</sup> He is held responsible for the murder of the minor Virgilio Jared Ávila Gonzáles in December 2017 during the post-electoral protests. Pasos de Animal Grande denounced that the leadership of the National Police supported the accused and payed with state funds for his lawyers.<sup>165</sup> To divert attention away from human rights violation by state actors, JOH demanded at the UN General Assembly that the UN to declared gangs and drug traffickers as the main human rights violators in Honduras.<sup>166</sup>

## Repressions

Honduras' security forces did not seem to have heard the message from the command center that gangs and drug traffickers are supposed to be the main human rights violators. Throughout the month, the police was involved in violent repression of its citizens. On September 3, inhabitants in Quimistán, Santa Bárbara were violently repressed when protesting against the high fuel prices and the public transport fares.<sup>167</sup> Two days later, the human rights defender Henry Rodriguez was threatened by police agents belonging to the COBRAS special force when he was observing with another HRD a peaceful protest in Choluteca. The police agents told them: "We will kill you and make you disappear." Two days after the threat, armed men entered his apartment taking with them

<sup>160</sup> <http://wp.radioprogreso.hn/es-honduras-un-estado-de-derecha/>

<sup>161</sup> <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/comision-depuradora-cancela-a-70-policias->

<sup>162</sup> <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1217205-410/policia-acusado-narco-salario-honduras-comision-depuradora->

<sup>163</sup> <https://confidencial.hn.com/absuelven-a-oficial-de-policia-que-llamo-jeton-al-depurador-omar-rivera/>

<sup>164</sup> <https://criterio.hn/2018/09/18/orden-de-captura-a-policia-por-muerte-de-menor-durante-protesta-despues-de-las-elecciones/>

<sup>165</sup> <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2284-el-pueblo-asumira-los-costos-de-la-impunidad-policia-que-asesino-a-manifestante-tendra-abogados-pagados-por-la-secretaria-de-seguridad>

<sup>166</sup> <https://criterio.hn/2018/09/24/hernandez-pide-a-la-onu-que-reconozca-a-las-maras-y-pandillas-como-violadores-de-dd-hh/>

<sup>167</sup> <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/alertas/criminalizacion-de-la-protesta-publica/900-reprimen-a-pobladores-que-protestaban-por-altos-precios-a-combustible-y-al-pasaje-del-transporte-publico>

his computer and files about documented cases of human rights violations (see also the HRDs section above).<sup>168</sup>

Every September 15, Honduras commemorates its independence. Since the coup d'état in 2009, there have always been two parallel marches, one by the regime, one by civil society and the opposition. State security forces repressed the popular march both in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula.<sup>169 170</sup> In Tegucigalpa, C-Libre reported on the arrest of at least 6 protesters.<sup>171</sup> UNE-TV journalists and camera persons were attacked by the police and soldiers covering the march and its repression.<sup>172</sup>

The majority of these cases rest unpunished, but at the end of September a trial began against two police agents. During the coup d'état in 2009, the teacher and human rights defender Agustina Flores (she is also the sister of Berta Cáceres) was tortured by police agents while being held in custody for 21 days.<sup>173</sup> A second trial will start in October. On August 12, 2009, members of the police force violently repressed a protest against the coup d'état. They arrested 24 protesters and tortured them. Five police agents were charged but on December 12, 2013, a judge decided to release them. COFADEH appealed this decision and now, five years later, the appeal was confirmed and the police agents will face trial starting on October 24.<sup>174</sup>

## Assassinations

A Military Police lieutenant was found guilty this month of simple homicide committed in 2016.<sup>175</sup> For the remainder of the month, the aftermath of the murder of two students continued to make headlines. On August 30, the 19-year old Mario Enrique Suárez Gómez and the 18-year old Gerson Daniel Meza Medina were disappeared after they participated in the protest march by the Alignment against the Reelection (CCC) (see last month's report).<sup>176</sup> They were found murdered the next day and video footage showed that they had been arrested by men wearing ATIC uniforms. Investigative journalists Wendy Funes made the link to the murdered regional head of ATIC, Sherill Yubissa Hernández, which ATIC officials wanted to portray as a suicide but forensic medicine contradicted this version (also see last month's report).<sup>177 178</sup> ATIC's press speaker immediately claimed that they weren't real ATIC agents.<sup>179</sup> Instead of announcing a thorough investigation, the director of the National Anti Maras and Pandillas Force (FANAMP), Amílcar Hernández, alluded in a TV interview that the two students were members of a Mara or pandilla.<sup>180</sup> Against the will of Libre,

168 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2274-hombres-encapuchados-entran-en-la-madugada-a-vivienda-para-atacar-equipos-de-aci-participa>

169 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2974-brutal-represion-policia-irrupcion-en-desfile-de-oposicion-hondurena>

170 <http://wp.radioprogreso.net/con-represion-culmina-movilizacion-del-15-de-septiembre-en-capital-hondurena/>

171 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/alertas/criminalizacion-de-la-protesta-publica/903-gas-lacrimogeno-y-violencia-contra-manifestantes-en-el-dia-de-la-independencia-patria>

172 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/alertas/agresion-fisica/904-nuevamente-policias-y-militares-atacan-a-periodistas-y-camarografos-de-une-tv>

173 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/agustina-flores-primer-presa-politica-del-2009-encarara-al-sistema-judicial/>

174 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/revocan-libertad-definitiva-a-policias-torturadores-en-el-golpe-de-estado-del-2009/>

175 <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/declaran-culpable-a-subteniente-de-la-policia-militar-por-homicidio-simple.html>

176 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/alertas/asesinato/898-secuestran-y-ejecutan-a-dos-estudiantes-que-participaron-en-acciones-de-protesta-publica>

177 <https://reporteroseinvestigacion.com/2018/09/01/opera-desde-la-atic-un-escuadron-de-muerte-con-la-ms/>

178 <http://expedientepublico.org/index.php/perfiles/105-las-amenazas-de-la-impunidad-en-contra-de-la-directora-de-medicina-forense>

179 <http://www.proceso.hn/caliente/12-caliente/jovenes-encontrados-sin-vida-en-la-montanita-fueron-previamente-detenido-por-falsos-agentes-de-atic.html>

180 <https://confidencialhn.com/fusina-investigara-asesinato-de-dos-jovenes-a-manos-de-la-atic/>

Congress denied questioning the head of ATIC.<sup>181</sup> Casa Alianza denounced that the JOH regime only cares about washing its hands.<sup>182</sup>

Human rights organizations held a rally outside the UN building in Tegucigalpa demanding an exhaustive investigation.<sup>183</sup> The mother of Gerson Meza said that after the arrest they had been called by the tribunal to be present for their arrest contradicting the State's claims that they were not involved.<sup>184</sup>

Sadly, the murder of the two students were just two of many. 11 days after the murder of Mario Enrique and Gerson Daniel, four persons (among them two minors) were murdered by men in police uniform.<sup>185</sup> According to El Tiempo, at least 121 UNAH students have been murdered in the last ten years.<sup>186</sup> Both CIPRODEH<sup>187</sup> and Casa Alianza<sup>188</sup> also emitted press releases condemning the violence against Honduras' youth. According to numbers by Casa Alianza, some 60 youths are murdered on average every month in Honduras.<sup>189</sup> In July, the most recent statistics available by Casa Alianza, 82 Hondurans below 30 were murdered, 57 of them were younger than 23. These numbers are based on the study of media reports and are likely to underestimated the gravity of the situation. Casa Alianza cites UNAH's Violence Observatory which says that only about 40% of all murders are covered by the media.<sup>190</sup>

## Penitentiary System

On September 9, five inmates attempted to escape from the El Porvenir prison in Francisco Morazán.<sup>191</sup> The deputy director of Honduras penitentiary system, German McNeil, later confirmed the escape but he claimed that only one inmate had successfully escaped.<sup>192</sup> The situation in Honduras prison is not just troublesome regarding the security, but inmates also regularly suffer mistreatment. Conaprev denounced that by September this year they had received double the amount of complaints regarding mistreatments of inmates compared to 2017.<sup>193</sup> And there is also the worrisome health situation. El Tiempo reported on a mumps outbreak in the Támara prison.<sup>194</sup> The month ended with the death of two inmates and seven injured in what prison authorities called a

181 <https://criterio.hn/2018/09/06/congreso-de-honduras-se-niega-a-interpelar-a-director-de-la-atic-por-crimen-de-estudiantes/>

182 <https://tiempo.hn/casa-alianza-estado-le-preocupa-mas-lavarse-la-cara-que-investigar-ejecuciones/>

183 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/en-planton-exigen-una-investigacion-exhaustiva-del-asesinato-de-2-jovenes-del-ith/>

184 <https://criterio.hn/2018/09/04/madre-de-joven-asesinado-confirma-que-fueron-entes-del-estado-audio/>

185 <https://tiempo.hn/sujetos-vestidos-de-policias-asesinaron-a-las-cuatro-personas-en-la-smith/>

186 <https://criterio.hn/2018/09/03/una-ejecucion-extrajudicial-que-embarra-a-la-atic/>

187 <https://criterio.hn/2018/09/05/ciprodeh-condena-la-violencia-contra-la-ninez-adolescencia-y-juventud/>

188 <http://www.hondurastierralibre.com/2018/09/honduras-ante-el-secuestro-tortura-y.html>

189 <https://www.alainet.org/es/articulo/195332>

190 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/163-personas-murieron-en-forma-violenta-durante-julio-57-eran-jovenes-menores-de-23-anos/>

191 <https://confidencialhn.com/cinco-reos-se-escapan-del-penal-de-minima-seguridad-de-el-porvenir/>

192 <https://confidencialhn.com/1-o-5-subjefe-penitenciario-admite-fuga-de-reos-de-penal-de-minima-seguridad/>

193 <https://confidencialhn.com/alertan-que-abusos-contra-privados-de-libertad-se-duplicaron-durante-el-2018/>

194 <https://tiempo.hn/al-menos-62-reos-tienen-paperas-en-tamara-confirmando-la-secretaria-de-salud/>

confrontation between inmates.<sup>195</sup> It took place in the so-called high-security prison La Tolva where two political prisoners are held.<sup>196</sup>

## Militarization

This month, Honduras commemorated Children's Day. This offered an important opportunity to remind the international community about the worrisome militarization program for children in place in Honduras: "The Guards of the Fatherland".<sup>197</sup> And according to information by the Military Police, 45 schools are currently militarized in Honduras.<sup>198</sup>

## International Community

Honduras renewed a cooperation agreement this month worth \$254 million with various international donors to fight poverty.<sup>199</sup> Furthermore, the JOH regime signed two more agreements to fight the effects of the drought, one with the BID<sup>200</sup> and one with Taiwan.<sup>201</sup>

## US

UN Women in Honduras signed a cooperation agreement with Development Alternatives Inc. (DAI) and the project is financed by USAID.<sup>202</sup> The US Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) the FBI held workshops to the MP's special unit to investigate violent deaths in the Bajo Aguán.<sup>203</sup> The same month, the United States Government Accountability Office reported the following: "[US] Agencies have established objectives and delivered training to professionalize police in Central America's Northern Triangle but have not consistently done so to promote police respect for human rights. U.S. strategies include objectives to professionalize police, and the Departments of State (State) and Defense (DOD) and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) have delivered related training (see figure). These strategies also highlight the importance of police respect for human rights, but agencies have few objectives or other control mechanisms to ensure police receive related training."<sup>204</sup> The month ended with the US emitting its usual travel warning to Honduras, seemingly unaware of the irony that it undermines its narrative that things in Honduras are improving.<sup>205 206</sup>

195 <https://tiempo.hn/dos-personas-muertas-la-tolva/>

196 <https://www.laprensa.hn/sucesos/1220990-410/amotinamiento-en-la-tolva-deja-dos-muertos-y-al-menos-siete-heridos>

197 <https://criterio.hn/2018/09/10/lavado-militar-de-cerebro-en-las-mentes-de-los-ninos-de-honduras/>

198 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2978-alarante-45-colegios-de-honduras-estan-militarizados>

199 <http://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1214030-410/gobierno-convenio-combatir-pobreza-honduras-hambruna->

200 <https://confidencialhn.com/honduras-bid-establece-cooperacion-tecnica-para-mejorar-el-corredor-seco/>

201 <http://www.latribuna.hn/2018/09/18/taiwan-apoyara-con-asistencia-alimentaria/>

202 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/onu-mujeres-y-dai-firman-memorandum-de-entendimiento.html>

203 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/autor-login/3351-clausuran-seminario-sobre-investigacion-de-casos-frios-impartido-por-agentes-del-fbi-tocca-la-unidad-de-investigacion-de-muertes-violentas-del-bajo-aguan-umviba-participo-en-el-seminario-investigacion-de-casos-frios-auspiciado-por-la-oficina-de-asuntos-antinarcoticos-y-aplicacion-de-la-ley-inl-de-la-embajada-de-estados-unidos-se-le-conoce-como-casos-frios-a-aquellas-muertes-violentas-que-ocurren-y>

204 <https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/694282.pdf>

205 <https://criterio.hn/2018/09/21/ee-uu-pide-a-sus-ciudadanos-reconsiderar-viajar-a-honduras-por-altos-niveles-de-inseguridad/>

206 <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/honduras-travel-advisory.html>

## EU

The Spanish cooperation agency announced a collaboration with the National Council on Drinking Water and Sanitation (CONASA).<sup>207</sup>

## Drug Trafficking

The most important Honduran drug trafficking cases are not on trial in the country but rather in US courts. A recent trial held in New York “illustrated the depth of police collusion with criminal groups in Honduras, which included murdering rivals and safeguarding drug loads. (...) On one occasion in October 2011, Valladares mounted a death squad partly composed of police officers to assassinate a Cachiros’ rival known as “El Sapo,” or “The Toad.” (...) Valladares, who pleaded guilty in May 2018 and admitted to conspiring with the Cachiros for nearly a decade, also recruited between eight and ten police commissioners for the Cachiros, according to El Heraldo. Once on the Cachiros’ payroll, these commissioners were tasked with ensuring the safe passage of drug shipments. (...) Despite the gravity of the situation, the political will needed to lastingly deal with corruption appears lacking. Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández had promised to tackle the issue during his campaign in 2017, but his contested reelection has left him with little political capital. What’s more, Hernández’ own brother has been implicated by Rivera Maradiaga’s court testimony.”<sup>208</sup> The above-mentioned former Honduran police official Carlos Alberto Valladares García was sentenced to 14 years in prison for drug trafficking. in a US court.<sup>209</sup>

Also in September, another Honduran citizen accused of drug trafficking was extradited to the US<sup>210</sup> and the MP confiscated more goods belonging to the Urbina Soto family.<sup>211</sup> Its head, Arnaldo Urbina Soto, has been sentenced for money laundering and other crimes. He was the Nationalist mayor of Yoro and the manager of JOH's 2013 presidential campaign.<sup>212</sup>

## Varia

### Social Progress Index

This month the newest edition of the Social Progress Index was published. Honduras once again ranks last of the Central American countries.<sup>213</sup>

207 <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/firman-convenios-para-proyectos-de-agua-y-saneamientos-apoyados-por-la-cooperacion-espanola.html>

208 <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/honduras-top-cop-killed-for-cachiros/>

209 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1220583-466/revelan-c%C3%B3mo-exjefe-de-polic%C3%ADa-apoyaba-a-los-cachiros-en-sus-cr%C3%ADmenes>

210 <https://confidencialhn.com/autorizan-extradicion-a-ee-uu-de-presunto-operador-del-cartel-de-los-hermanos-valle/>

211 <https://confidencialhn.com/ministerio-publico-realiza-operativo-aquiles-para-quitar-bienes-a-los-urbina-soto/>

212 <https://www.insightcrime.org/uncategorized/honduras-political-clan-criminal-fiefdom/>

213 <https://www.socialprogress.org/?code=HND>

## Poverty

The JOH regime has increased its efforts during the last months to present its poverty reduction measures as a success. Inexplicably, it got some support by the BID. FOSDEH challenged their arguments again this month<sup>214</sup> and there are further arguments highlighting that things are not well in Honduras. According to the secretary of the CGT labor union, Daniel Durón, 85% of working Hondurans do not benefit from the minimum wage.<sup>215</sup> On the Children's Day, UNICEF informed that some 475'000 children have to work in Honduras<sup>216</sup> and Save the Children lamented that Honduras does not have a National Plan for the Protection of Children.<sup>217</sup> The FAO found in its newest report on food security that Honduras suffers from the fourth highest level of undernourishment in Latin America.<sup>218</sup>

## National Dialogue

After some uncertainty at the end of August regarding the National Dialogue, this month it officially started, i.e. there were meetings held at the four roundtables: i) the 2017 electoral process and the reelection; ii) human rights, iii) constitutional reforms and strengthening of the rule of law, and iv) electoral reforms. While this list already includes an important number of topics, the Inter-American Development Bank (BID) seemed to have its own priorities. In a press statement, they said that "the most important thing is to be sure that the dialogue does not contaminate the economic development agenda."<sup>219</sup>

The representative of Salvador Nasralla presented a draft at the human rights roundtable demanding amnesty for the political prisoners.<sup>220</sup> The next day, Nasralla also proposed moving forward the coming general elections to 2019. As a response, the National Party left the dialogue once more.<sup>221</sup> The whole process was accompanied by criticism that the dialogue has moved away from its initial intention (at least by some participants) to present binding agreements to a talking shop coming up with mere suggestions.<sup>222 223</sup> Discussions heated up again when the Liberal Party presented a document linking the National Party with Maras as well as with vote buying activities.<sup>222</sup> El Libertador published its analysis on the leaked document highlighting the role of the National Party in the IHSS corruption case and the resulting vote buying in the 2013 elections.<sup>223</sup>

At the end of the month, the failures of the dialogue became once more apparent. One idea was that the main political parties would come together to discuss and consolidate electoral reforms. But Congress took over approving an intervention committee for the National Persons Registry. A

214 <https://confidencialhn.com/el-bono-10-mil-no-ha-contribuido-a-reducir-la-pobreza-en-honduras-segun-fosdeh/>

215 <http://www.latribuna.hn/2018/09/04/daniel-duron-un-85-de-los-hondurenos-no-devengan-salario-minimo/>

216 <https://criterio.hn/2018/09/10/475-mil-ninos-en-honduras-no-celebran-su-dia-porque-estran-trabajando/>

217 <http://radiohm.hn/2018/09/10/en-el-dia-universal-del-nino-save-the-childrens-aboga-por-un-plan-nacional-de-proteccion-a-la-ninez/>

218 <http://www.fao.org/3/I9553EN/i9553en.pdf>

219 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/el-bid-espera-que-el-dialogo-en-honduras-no-contamine-la-agenda-de-desarrollo.html>

220 <http://wp.radioprogreso.hn/con-propuesta-de-amnistia-para-presos-politicos-arranca-dialogo-en-honduras/>

221 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1215473-466/el-partido-nacional-abandona-mesa-por-tuit-de-salvador-nasralla-sobre-las>

222 <https://criterio.hn/2018/09/24/partido-liberal-presenta-documento-que-vincula-al-partido-nacional-con-maras-y-compra-de-votos/>

223 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2986-lujos-viajes-y-votos-comprados-con-fondos-del-ihss-confirma-padre-de-chilena-ciuffardi>

committee will coordinate it and it consists of a member of the National and Liberal Party as well as of Libre.<sup>224</sup> The Liberal Party is split on the matter and its president called the intervention a coup against the national dialogue. As a consequence, the Liberal Party announced its withdrawal from the dialogue.<sup>225</sup> Salvador Nasralla also criticized the creation of the commission.<sup>226</sup>

## Liberal Party

The Liberal Party has suffered various internal disputes in the last month. A new one arose in September around the National Dialogue (see above) while another one goes back to the illegal reelection of JOH and the participation of some Liberal congresswo/men at his inauguration. In both cases, Luis Zelaya, the president of the Liberal Party, demanded the expulsion of the congresswo/men who acted against the party line. Regarding the intervention of the RNP, it would affect 17 congresswo/men<sup>227</sup>. While it was presented as a done deal by some media outlets, it soon became known that a disciplinary board would decide about their fate.<sup>228</sup> The TSE also joined in the debate and requested that the Liberal Party presented proof of wrongdoing by the 17 congresswo/men facing expulsion.<sup>229</sup> By the end of September, it was not yet clear of the 17 congresswo/men who voted for the intervention of the RNP or the 13 congresswo/men who participated at the inauguration of JOH would be expelled.

## General Budget 2019

September is the month in which the general budget for the next year is presented and as always, it stirred up some controversies. Civil society actors denounce that the long-term trend of the JOH regime continues, a decrease in health and education spending and an increase in security and defense spending. According to the former president of the Central Bank, the budget assigned to health dropped from 15% to 10%, the one for education from 32% to 20%. At the same time, defense spending rose by 60% and the budget by the Security Secretariat rose by 20%.<sup>230</sup> Criticism also comes from the private business lobby COHEP, which disagrees with the general increase of the budget<sup>231</sup> - the budget will reach 261'500 million Lempiras, more than 50% of the Honduran GDP.<sup>232</sup> FOSDEH<sup>233</sup> held a public forum on the budget, denouncing a lack of transparency which "has a whiff of corruption".<sup>234</sup>

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224 <https://tiempo.hn/cn-nombra-a-los-cinco-miembros-de-la-junta-interventora-del-rnp/>

225 <http://radiohm.hn/2018/09/25/partido-liberal-se-retira-del-dialogo-politico-nacional/>

226 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/nasralla-dice-que-intervencion-en-rnp-es-una-bofetada-a-las-naciones-unidas.html>

227 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2989-conozca-los-17-diputados-oscuros-expulsados-hoy-por-partido-liberal>

228 <https://confidencialhn.com/diputados-disidentes-de-la-linea-de-luis-aun-no-están-expulsados/>

229 <https://tiempo.hn/tse-citara-a-luis-zelaya-para-que-se-pronuncie-sobre-expulsion-de-diputados/>

230 <https://tiempo.hn/gasto-en-defensa-aumento-en-60-por-ciento-alerta-noe-pino/>

231 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2960-alarma-de-empresarios-hondurenos-por-gasto-publico-2019>

232 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2963-insolito-gobierno-hondureno-gastara-mas-del-50-de-la-produccion-nacional-en-2019>

233 <http://www.fosdeh.com/2018/09/boletin-del-foro-publico-un-presupuesto-para-el-desarrollo/>

234 <https://criterio.hn/2018/09/26/falta-de-transparencia-en-presupuesto-apesta-a-corrupcion/>

## Public Health

In August, the JOH regime announced the creation of an intervention committee for the public health sector. Even before they started their work, there is already the first conflict of interests. Amanda Madrid is both part of the committee as well as part of the NGO Predisan which controls a part of a regional hospital in Juticalpa.<sup>235</sup>

## Catholic Church

The Honduran Catholic Church, i.e. its Cardinal Óscar Andres Rodríguez Maradiaga, made negative headlines throughout the month. First, Rodriguez was mentioned together with other ranking Catholic officials as having covered the sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church that came to light this month. He reacted by denigrating the journalists reporting on it.<sup>236</sup> On September 10, Infovaticana reported on the claimed acts of corruption by Rodríguez.<sup>237</sup> Last but not least, the month ended with Rodríguez using his Sunday sermon to attack the political opposition.<sup>238</sup>

## And Light at the End of a Month

Last month, we failed to produce some good news, this month two separate news items instill some hope in us. Both cases began some years ago. The first started in the aftermath of the coup d'état, when the magistrate Tirza Flores Lanza and the judge Guillermo López Lone were fired. After nine years of struggle and a 2015 ruling by the IACtHR), they finally succeeded by being reintegrated into the Honduran Judicial System this month.<sup>239</sup> <sup>240</sup> The second case goes back to March, 2011, when 18 teachers participated in a protest and were arrested and charged with sedition. This month, after more than seven years with alternative measures to imprisonment they were finally acquitted.<sup>241</sup>

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235 <https://confidencialhn.com/oenege-presidida-por-interventora-de-salud-controlara-servicios-en-hospital-de-juticalpa/>

236 <http://elpulso.hn/cardenal-rodriguez-maradiaga-senala-que-acusaciones-contras-el-son-culpa-de-periodistas-sicarios/>

237 <https://infovaticana.com/2018/09/10/la-insostenible-situacion-de-maradiaga-en-honduras/>

238 <https://confidencialhn.com/maradiaga-arremete-contralibre-su-ideologia-y-vandalismo-genera-dolor-y-muerte/>

239 <http://www.cejil.org/es/honduras-magistrada-y-juez-destituidos-durante-golpe-estado-son-reincorporados-sus-puestos>

240 <http://www.poderjudicial.gob.hn/Documents/CertResCasoLopezLoneSept2018.PDF>

241 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/despues-de-siete-anos-acusados-de-sedicion-maestros-son-absueltos/>



### **Another Month at the Honduras Forum Switzerland**

#### Past Activities:

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#### Upcoming Activities:

- On October 20, the Honduras Forum Switzerland will hold its yearly retreat to discuss past activities and plan for the new year.

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