

Another Month in Honduras...

Human Rights Monitor – February 2019

Four human rights defenders violently lost their lives in February in Honduras, two of them should have benefited from special protection measures granted by the IACHR. Instead of promoting the security of HRDs, the JOH regime continues to criminalize them and announced an increase in state security forces – the source of over 20 still not prosecuted assassinations between November 2017 and January 2018. The former president Pepe Lobo, whose son is in a US prison and whose wife is accused of corruption, now himself faces corruption charges. Welcome to another month in Honduras.

In solidarity,

Daniel Langmeier

Honduras Forum Switzerland

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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

A delegation from the Basque Country visited Honduras this month investigating the human rights situation. They expressed their concern about the situation of "human rights defenders, indigenous peoples, afro-descendant and campesino communities, defenders of land and territory, sexual diversity and women's rights".¹ The two Swiss NGOs HEKS and PWS published together with four national human rights organization a report on the human rights situation in the south of Honduras. The presented struggles are around extractive industry projects. The sub-section by COFADEH makes a direct link between extractivism and militarization. The report "is a collection of dialogues between people who resist the extractive projects and the partner organizations that accompany them."² At the end of February, the UN Human Rights Council started to convene in Geneva. In preparation of this, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders published another report on his visit last year to Honduras.³ Last but not least, the Human Rights Board, an alliance of Honduran human rights organizations, published their annual report on the human rights situation in Honduras.⁴

Assassinations

February began and ended with the murder of HRDs. On February 4, two community leaders were murdered within hours in La Ceibita, near Tocoa, Colón. C-Libre connected the increased violence with the presence of the mining company Inversiones Los Pinares.⁵ On February 25, Salomon Matute and his son Juan Matute were murdered in San Francisco de Locomapa, Yoro. The two TolupánTolupan indigenous defenders were both members of MADJ and should have benefited from protection measures granted by the IACHR.^{6 7} OACNUDH condemned the murder^{8 9} and so did the IACHR¹⁰. They also challenged the JOH regime regarding the lack of protection. "The Commission does not have specific information indicating that at the time the murder was perpetuated, Salomón Matute benefited of protection measures implemented by the State. In 2018, the Commission convened the State of Honduras at the 167th sessions in Bogotá, Colombia, and the 169th in Boulder, United States, to monitor the implementation of the protection measures. As reported by the State to the Commission, on October 20, 2017, the Directorate General of the Protection System was requested to consider transferring the status of the beneficiaries of the protection measure to the Protection Mechanism. According to the State, said transfer had taken place on March 23, 2018 given that the beneficiaries were covered by the Protection Law for Human Rights Defenders, Journalists, Social Communicators and Justice Operators. The

1 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/comunicado-delegacion-vasca-mision-de-observacion-a-la-situacion-de-los-derechos-humanos-en-honduras/>

2 <https://honduras-forum.ch/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Final-De-la-mano-con-el-sur-25.01.2019.pdf>

3 https://drive.google.com/file/d/132q9sfcHYLXRaAj2hDs-oH2qvgrBd_Qa/view

4 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2412-estado-critico-de-la-nacion-informe-de-la-mesa-de-ddhh-sobre-la-situacion-de-los-derechos-fundamentales-en-honduras>

5 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/955-bajo-aguan-asesinatos-y-criminalizacion-continuan-contra-dirigentes-campesinos-2>

6 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/defensores-indigenas-tolupanes-son-asesinados-en-locomapa/>

7 <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/asesinan-a-dos-indigenas-que-defendian-los-bosques-en-honduras.html>

8 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3238-urgente-onu-condena-asesinato-de-indigenas-tolupanes-en-honduras>

9 <https://tiempo.hn/oacnudh-condena-muerte-lideres-indigenas/>

10 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/02/cidh-repudia-asesinato-de-indigenas-tolupanes/>

Commission has proceeded to immediately request information from Honduras to know its observations in relation to the events that occurred."¹¹

On February 27, Felipe Benítez, the coordinator of MILPAH, denounced that a kill list of indigenous Lenca leaders is circulating.¹²

Lawyers

Last month, two sons of a former Parlacen congressman were murdered in two different instances in Juticalpa, Olancho. One of them was a lawyer. On February 12, Carlos Augusto Muñoz Saucedo, another lawyer and son of a former Libre congressman was murdered in the same place.¹³

Attacks, Criminalization and Harassment

On February 4, 17 campesino families in Tutule, La Paz were violently evicted. The police violently evicted the families from the land they have been cultivating since 2010.¹⁴ ¹⁵ Groups of campesinxs started to block the road from La Paz to Marcala as a protest against the eviction.¹⁶ COFADEH denounced that the same indigenous communities lack of access to the judicial system to defend their rights due to state-imposed obstacles.¹⁷ In the south of Honduras, members of the human rights network REDEHSUR occupied a church in El Triunfo, Choluteca to protest the collusion of the central church with political and economic interests and to protect the local priests who have shown solidarity with them.¹⁸ Further south, HRD and member of ADEPZA, Santos Hernández, was attacked in Playa Blanca on Zacate Grande. He suffered a wound on his head and needed medical support.¹⁹ ²⁰ In the north, MUCA speaker Johny Rivas denounced that as the situation in the Bajo Aguán continues to be very difficult and even though they have filed many complaints at the Violent Deaths in the Aguán Unit at the MP, the State does nothing to help them, rather it protects those forces going after the campesinxs.²¹ La Vía Campesina organized a workshop on the access to land for Honduras' campesinxs. Representatives of the National Agrarian Institute (INA) also participated claiming that there is no land to give to campesinxs nor money to buy it. According to La Vía Campesina, more than 12'000 hectares of land are in the process of being recuperated, at the same time, according to the CNTC, more than 5200 campesinxs are being criminalized for it.²²

11 <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2019/053.asp>

12 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/milpah-denuncia-que-existe-una-lista-perfilando-a-lideres-que-podrian-ser-ejecutados/>

13 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/12/asesinan-en-juticalpa-abogado-hijo-de-exdiputado-de-libre/>

14 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/con-motosierra-machetes-y-bombas-lacrimogenas-policias-desalojan-a-campesinos-de-la-paz/>

15 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2396-estado-de-honduras-violento-tratados-internacionales-al-desalojar-violentamente-de-sus-tierras-a-campesinos>

16 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/04/campesinos-se-toman-carretera-en-tutule-la-paz/>

17 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/obstaculos-que-enfrentan-las-comunidades-indigenas-para-el-acceso-a-justicia/>

18 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/defensores-de-la-redehsur-estan-alerta-ante-las-violaciones-a-los-derechos-humanos-que-se-puedan-dar-en-el-triunfo/>

19 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/por-defender-la-tierra-hieren-a-integrante-de-adepza/>

20 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/04/pobladores-de-playa-blanca-en-zacate-grande-son-agredidos-por-guardia-privada-de-jorge-cassis/>

21 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/07/mp-no-hace-nada-ante-situacion-de-zozobra-que-vive-el-bajo-aguan/>

22 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/no-hay-tierra-para-los-campesinos/>

Indigenous Peoples

February started with a protest outside the MP by OFRANEH to demand justice for the murder of the Garífuna woman Belkis García in Sambo Creek on January 27.²³ Later this month, indigenous peoples demanded from the Secretary of Education Arnaldo Bueso to respect multicultural and multilingual education - a right, they denounce, which has been regularly violated in Honduras.²⁴ On February 14, the former director of the Bureau of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Hondurans (DINAFROH) ad himself an indigenous Miskito, Maylo Wood Granwell, and his wife suffered an attack in Puerto Lempira, Gracias a Dios.²⁵

The Case of Berta Cáceres

On February 5, the MP informed in a press release that they requested the opening of the trial against the ninth accused in the Berta Cáceres trial, Roberto David Castillo Mejía. He is accused by the MP as a intellectual author of the assassination.²⁶ Four hours later, the MP published another press release writing that Castillo's lawyers requested a rescheduling of the trial. The trial was suspended without a new date being set.²⁷

On February 12, the UN organized an event on the reduction of violence against women in Honduras. Libre congresswoman and daughter of Berta Cáceres, Olivia Cáceres interrupted JOH's speech during the event demanding justice for Berta and yelling "Fuera JOH". She was forced to leave the conference.²⁸ UN Honduras published a press release a day later. In it, the UN seems to try to justify that their security guards expelled Olivia Cáceres from the room. Even worse, the event was about violence against women, but the UN failed to mention in the press release why Olivia Cáceres protested, the murder of Berta Cáceres, and they did not even mention her full name, but wrote Olivia Zúniga, instead of Olivia Zúniga Cáceres, undermining the legitimacy of the protest.²⁹ Women and feminist organization denounce the treatment of Olivia Cáceres as well as that of the magistrate María Fernanda Castro who was not allowed to attend, even though she was supposed to hold a presentation at the event.³⁰ ³¹ Olivia Cáceres reacts with a open letter of her own.³²

On February 20, COPINH published a statement of solidarity with María Luisa Borjas, criminalized by the Honduran judicial system for linking Camilo Atala with the murder of Berta Cáceres in a complaint filed at CONADEH.³³ Showing no sign of intimidation, COPINH continued to highlight the responsibility of the Atala family. "The Atalas can never get rid of their responsibility in the

23 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2394-piden-justicia-para-luchadora-garifuna-asesinada-en-sambo-creek>

24 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/secretaria-de-educacion-pretende-matar-la-cultura-indigena/>

25 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/57-pueblos-indigenas/968-ex-director-de-la-dinafroh-sufre-ataentado>

26 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/autor-login/129-febrero2019/3816-mp-solicitar-auto-de-apertura-a-juicio-contra-expresidente-de-desa-noveno-implicado-en-crimen-de-la-ambientalista-bertha-caceres>

27 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/autor-login/129-febrero2019/3817-mp-listo-para-audiencia-preliminar-contra-presidente-de-desa-pero-acusadores-privados-pidieron-reprogramacion>

28 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/13/seguridad-de-joh-saca-a-la-fuerza-a-hija-de-bertha-caceres-de-un-hotel-capitalino/>

29 <https://twitter.com/ONUHN/status/1096168950197563392>

30 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/15/mujeres-condenan-violencia-de-parte-de-organismos-internacionales-y-gubernamentales/>

31 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/956-expulsan-de-evento-de-la-onu-a-diputada-e-hija-de-bertha-caceres-tras-gritar-fuera-joh>

32 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3217-por-que-no-sacaron-a-las-mujeres-que-gritaron-viva-joh-pregunta-olivia-caceres>

33 <https://copinh.org/2019/02/solidaridad-con-maria-luisa-borjas-los-atala-si-son-responsables-del-asesinato-de-bertha-caceres/>

murder of Berta Cáceres. Neither with bought judges nor with gray paint on the Berta Vive signs throughout the cities and roads of Honduras."³⁴

LGBTI

The Constitutional Chamber admitted a legal challenge by Arcoíris demanding the legalization of same-sex marriage.³⁵ As expected, the evangelical churches in Honduras did not welcome that decision.³⁶ CIPRODEH produced an info-bulletin on same-sex marriage and the Gender Identity Law.³⁷

Freedom of Expression and Journalists

2019 started with another blow to freedom of expression in Honduras (see last month's report). Radio Progreso made an important connection between the trial for defamation against the now deceased human rights defender Gladys Lanza in 2015 to the one against María Luisa Borjas last month. "The conviction of María Luisa Borjas is a clear example of how the criminal acts of insults, slander and defamation can have an inhibiting effect on citizen complaints when it comes to issues of public interest such as the murder of Berta Cáceres and the responsibility of some people linked to the economic and political power of the country. And it is also a sentence that confirms the partisan politicization of the judiciary and its use as a judicial hit-man at the orders of the country's powers".³⁸ According to ConfidencialHN, Borjas faces up to 3.5 years in prison.³⁹ The legal representation of the accused, banker Camilo Atala, demanded five years and her disqualification as a congresswoman.⁴⁰ A few days later, Rolando Argueta, the president of the Supreme court who found Borjas guilty, said that he does not believe that such crimes should be punished by prison.⁴¹ Did the national and international pressure which erupted after first journalist David Romero's sentencing and then Borjas' conviction help? Not at all, four days later Borjas was stripped of her seat in Congress⁴² and the same Rolando Argueta sentenced her to 2 years and 8 months in prison.⁴³ OACNUDH expressed its concerns regarding freedom of expression in the country and reminded the State of Honduras about the recommendations by the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right of freedom of opinion and expression.^{44 45}

There were also several attacks against journalists which took place in February. Transit police agents illegally detained the cameraman Carlos Martínez for "lack of respect to authority". He was

34 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1098341117207171072>

35 <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/sala-de-lo-constitucional-admite-nuevo-recurso-que-permita-matrimonio-gay.html>

36 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1257144-466/nueva-pol%C3%A9mica-causa-recurso-a-favor-de-bodas-gais-en-honduras>

37 http://ciprodeh.org.hn/images/Doc/Articulo_de_Erick.pdf

38 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/ayer-fue-gladys-hoy-es-maria-luisa/>

39 <https://confidencialhn.com/piden-tres-anos-y-seis-meses-de-carcel-para-legisladora-por-difamacion/>

40 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/07/camilo-atala-pide-que-inhabiliten-a-la-diputada-maria-luisa-borjas/>

41 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/11/delitos-contr-el-honor-no-deberian-ser-pagados-con-carcel-rolando-argueta/>

42 <https://apnews.com/b1b4253f53ed42eca4d30d919f5489b9>

43 <https://tiempo.hn/maria-luisa-borjas-condenada-a-prision/>

44 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1097945248578367490>

45 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/preocupa-a-la-oficina-del-alto-comisionado-de-onu-recientes-condenas-por-difamacion-en-honduras.html>

released the same day.⁴⁶ Journalist and director of "El Patrullero de Choluteca", Edgar Andino, denounced that he was being harassed and threatened by National Party activists and leaders in his region.⁴⁷ A few days later, someone tried to break into his house through a window.⁴⁸ ⁴⁹ Journalist Selvin López Anariba together with his wife Dulce Valle (also a journalist) and daughter Abigail (a student of journalism) left Honduras after receiving death threats.⁵⁰ ⁵¹ The journalist Douglas Varela was harassed by police agents while reporting on the discovery of a body.⁵²

CONADEH published a press release expressing concern about the high rights of impunity in crimes against journalists and its detrimental effect on social peace.⁵³ While political prisoners remain incarcerated on trumped up charges in Honduras and their bail is being denied, a man who violently attacked a journalist on air and who is accused of attempted murder is allowed to await trial in freedom.⁵⁴ Looking back at the first two months of 2019 shows that things have not improved this year.⁵⁵

Violence against Women

According to the newest numbers by CONADEH, 350 women were violently murdered in 2018 and 3053 complaints were filed at CONADEH by women regarding the right to life and personal integrity, e.g. death threats or domestic violence.⁵⁶ Over 50'000 calls were made to the National Emergency System in Honduras last year for domestic violence.⁵⁷ This unbearable situation continued in 2019 as at least 30 women were violently murdered in January.⁵⁸ One group of women suffering violence are domestic workers. CESPAD published a study on their situation this month. "The findings are overwhelming: 36.2% of paid domestic workers expressed suffering violence from employers (men); 20.7% of the families of the female patrons and 17.2% of the families of the patrons. The study also reveals that 8.6% suffer violence from their partner; 3 out of 10 who have a partner violence violence from their spouse; 6.9% suffer violence from their families and 10.3% from strangers."⁵⁹ The Center for Women's Studies Honduras (CEM-H) and the Network of Domestic Workers informed about the importance of the Domestic Work Bill. Nevertheless, Congress only debated 8 out of its 41 articles and this almost a year ago.⁶⁰

46 <http://www.latribuna.hn/2019/02/09/un-agente-de-transito-se-ensana-contracamara-grafo/>

47 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2403-el-objetivo-es-enterrar-el-periodismo-critico-hombres-en-carros-y-motocicletas-vigilan-permanentemente-al-periodista-edgar-andino>

48 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2406-el-peligro-acecha-al-periodista-edgar-andino-hay-un-hombre-que-quiere-meterse-por-la-ventana-de-mi-cuarto-ayudeme-por-favor>

49 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/960-periodista-en-choluteca-denuncia-amenazas-a-su-vida>

50 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2410-honduras-periodistas-criticos-al-gobierno-de-joh-estan-siendo-desplazados-en-las-ultimas-semanas>

51 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/periodistas-abandonan-el-pais-por-amenazas-de-muerte/>

52 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/957-policia-impide-cobertura-y-agrede-a-periodista>

53 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/libertad-de-expresion/977-crimenes-contraperiodistas-en-impunidad-problema-que-afecta-la-paz-social>

54 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/libertad-de-expresion/962-en-libertad-se-defendera-agresor-que-atento-contrala-vida-de-periodista>

55 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2415-imparables-las-violaciones-a-la-libertad-de-la-prensa-opositora-en-honduras>

56 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/35-mujeres/945-incrementa-violencia-contrala-mujer-y-los-homicidios-se-mantienen-en-impunidad>

57 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/02/21/huye-una-casa-refugio-puede-salvarte-la-vida/>

58 <https://confidencialhn.com/30-mujeres-fueron-asesinadas-durante-enero-en-honduras/>

59 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/02/01/abri-las-piernas-los-abusos-sexuales-de-las-trabajadoras-domesticas-en-honduras/>

60 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/35-mujeres/948-honduras-ley-de-trabajo-domestico-un-paso-para-frenar-la-violencia-invisible>

Protection Mechanism

The previous months have already highlighted various weaknesses of the Protection Mechanism and this continued this month. C-Libre published a helpful overview.⁶¹ The HRD Ruth García Cárcamo denounced that the aggression she suffers have increased even though she should benefit from the protection mechanism.⁶² Even worse, two indigenous Tolupeño defenders who should have benefited from state protection were murdered this month (see Assassinations section above).⁶³

Additionally, there are also problem with its counterpart at the MP, the Special Public Prosecutor Unit for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Journalists, Social Communicators and Justice Operators (FEPRODDHH). Pasos de Animal Grande denounced that the MP once more prolonged the time they have to inform about their work.⁶⁴ A week later, another attempt by Pasos de Animal Grande to access their statistics was denied.⁶⁵

Political Prisoners

COFADEH published a report on the criminalization of the political opposition in Honduras. The reports highlighted the use of laws meant to combat terrorism and organized crime to silence and imprison the political opposition.⁶⁶ The Convergence against the Reelection together with the Committee for the Liberation of the Political Prisoners published a statement expressing their profound concern regarding the ongoing imprisonment of Eduardo Raúl Álvarez, Edwin Róbelo Espinal and Gustavo Cáceres while at the same time the murders by state security forces remain unpunished. In total, Honduran human rights organizations have documented 171 cases of criminalization linked to the post-electoral protests. 18% of them have suffered cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and at least 13 were tortured inside Honduras' prisons. They demanded the immediate release of the political prisoners, due process in their trials and special protection for Edwin Róbelo Espinal and Raúl Eduardo Álvarez who suffer from constant intimidation and harassment.^{67,68}

Edwin Espinal is married to the Canadian human rights defender Karen Spring who reported on her experience with the Honduran prison system, i.e. "US-Style Torture Centers", this month. She concluded about the so-called high-security prisons: "These torture centres do nothing to ensure the safety of the prison population or the safety of the general Honduran population. Honduran women are the people most affected by this new security policy implemented under the Juan Orlando Hernandez and with the positive view of the US government that promotes US economic interests

61 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/989-gobierno-incumple-con-el-traslado-de-fondos-al-mecanismo-de-proteccion>

62 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/02/09/defensora-denuncia-mayor-riesgo-tras-acudir-al-sistema-nacional-de-proteccion-de-honduras/>

63 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/988-mecanismo-nacional-de-proteccion-ineficaz-para-implementar-medidas-de-la-cidh>

64 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2397-mp-retrasa-la-entrega-de-informacion-publica-sobre-amenazas-contradefensores-y-periodistas>

65 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/monitoreo-de-compromisos-internacionales/item/2408-fiscalia-general-niega-estadisticas-de-casos-de-ataques-a-periodistas-argumentando-reserva-de-informacion>

66 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/INFORME-PP-final.pdf>

67 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/la-ccc-denuncia-nuevas-criminalizaciones-por-razones-politicas-en-honduras/>

68 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/13/honduras-171-personas-han-sido-criminalizadas-desde-2017-por-protestar/>

in Honduras over human rights and prisoners' rights. These jails must be closed down. In normal Honduran jails, conditions must be improved."⁶⁹

On February 17, a criminal court with national jurisdiction decided that it cannot try the two political prisoners Edwin Espinal and Raúl Álvarez.⁷⁰ Omar Menjívar, lawyer of Espinal, interpreted this as follows: "With today's resolution, what has become clear is that Edwin and Raúl have been deprived of their liberty by an authority that had no authority and the Constitution says that no one can be deprived of his freedom except by order of a competent authority, a competent judge".⁷¹

Extractive Industries

February started with a press release by the private business lobby COHEP denigrating and criminalizing community resistance to extractive projects. MADJ denounced it: "From the Broad Movement we deplore the extreme shortsightedness with which COHEP addresses this national problem that has been implemented by a caste of businessmen and officials who have engaged in the illegal, abusive, corrupt and criminal handling of the natural assets of the Honduran community."⁷² Shortly afterwards, an even worse attack came, once more, from Elsie Paz, the president of the Honduran Association for Renewable Energy (AHER). According to her, due to a lack of food indigenous communities cannot think straight and are therefore against energy projects in their communities. She went on to denigrate members of indigenous communities traveling to Geneva "to speak badly of Honduras" and she also attacks the national and international organizations supporting them.⁷³ Her attack also targeted national and international human rights organizations accompanying local communities.⁷⁴ CIPRODEH denounced these attacks.⁷⁵

This month also once more has shown that there is ample reason to resist. Radio Progreso reported on the situation in Santa Bárbara, where people and nature are threatened by at least 15 hydroelectric and 23 mining concessions.⁷⁶ The collective GeoComunes elaborated a helpful interactive map of the Central American energy grid and some of the projects responsible for protests.⁷⁷ Once such project was visited by COFADEH together with a group of indigenous Lenca defenders from La Paz and environmental defenders from Choluteca: the local resistance against the solar plantation Los Prados in Namasigue, Choluteca.⁷⁸ But there are also problems with other forms of extractive industries. A councilor of Marcala, La Paz, for example, received threats after having denounced illegal logging in the ecological reserve area El Jilguero.⁷⁹ Different social

69 <http://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2019/2/2/one-year-in-us-style-torture-centres-in-honduras-espaol-abajo-1>

70 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2405-tribunal-natural-de-sentencias-se-declara-incompetente-para-conocer-causas-de-presos-politicos>

71 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/18/tribunal-se-declara-incompetente-de-conocer-caso-de-los-presos-politicos/>

72 <https://movimientoampio.org/2019/02/el-cohep-oculta-la-verdadera-realidad-sobre-las-minas-y-la-energia-en-honduras/>

73 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/05/en-las-comunidades-no-piensen-bien-porque-no-comen-los-tres-tiempos-elsia-paz/>

74 <https://www.televicentro.hn/tvcpplay/detalle/59542eb1b40402438151059b/Frente-a-Frente>

75 <http://ciprodeh.org.hn/index.php/noticias-principales/443-ciprodeh-rechaza-y-condena-acusaciones-de-la-asociacion-hondurena-de-energia-renovable-aher>

76 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/hidroelectricas-y-mineras-amenazan-al-departamento-de-santa-barbara/>

77 <http://geocomunes.org/Visualizadores/Centroamerica/>

78 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/comunidad-los-prados-1-recibe-el-respaldo-de-defensores-de-los-territorios-de-la-paz/>

79 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/corre-peligro-regidor-marcalino-que-denuncio-gran-deforestacion-en-zona-protegida/>

movements and human rights organizations denounced in a joint press conference that the palm oil plantations in Honduras violate the constitution, i.e. its article 347 which stipulates that the agricultural production should be directed towards the alimentary needs of the Honduran people. According to the organization Madre Tierra, 90% of palm oil production is turned into bio fuel.⁸⁰ CESPAD published a new analysis of such socio-territorial conflicts as a consequence of the extractivist development model.⁸¹

As in previous months, communities not only protest, but they are also on the offensive declaring their territory free of extractive projects. This month, the inhabitants of Atima, Santa Bárbara did so.⁸² An additional 40 communities declared a state of emergency due to "the abuses committed by the public institutions when concessioning the territory to extractive companies without prior, free and informed consent".⁸³

Mining

While there are various conflicts around mining project in Honduras, one dominated the headlines – the case of Guapinol and the local resistance against the mining company Inversiones Los Pinares. The Municipal Community for the Defense of Public Goods and Commons of Tocoa, representing the communities of Guapinol, Colón as well as social movements such as COPA, held a press conference outside the MP in Tegucigalpa on February 7.⁸⁴ They reiterated their demand to have the mining concessions in their region canceled which have generated so much violence, the death of six people and the criminalization of local leaders.⁸⁵ Radio Progreso described a situation of "criminalization, defamation campaigns and even death threats" that the defenders daring to challenge the mining project face.⁸⁶ The demand of the local community was later accompanied by a complaint for abuse of authority against the state officials involved in the case presented at the MP by the Coalition against Impunity.⁸⁷ Nevertheless shortly afterwards, a HRD at the San Alonso Rodríguez Foundation was illegally detained.⁸⁸ The foundation had been accompanying the local resistance. Another local HRD, Esly Banegas, representative of COPA and beneficiary of special protection measures by the IACHR, denounced online harassment and denigration. She sought help from the MP but to no avail. According to Defensores en Línea, more local community leaders are victims of the same defamatory campaign.⁸⁹

By the end of the month, the situation had turned from bad to worse. Initially 18 local HRDs had been criminalized for usurpation - a common offense to criminalize protest. On February 21, the 18 voluntarily presented themselves at the court in La Ceiba where it was made public that the MP

80 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/967-monocultivo-de-palma-viola-articulo-347-de-la-constitucion-de-honduras>

81 <http://cespad.org.hn/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Bienes-Naturales-WEB.pdf>

82 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/declaran-santa-barbara-municipio-libre-de-hidroelectricas-y-mineras/>

83 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/en-estado-de-alerta-se-declaran-comunidades-hondurenas-que-se-oponen-al-modelo-extractivo/>

84 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/el-estado-la-alcaldia-de-tocoa-e-inversiones-pinares-serian-responsable-de-cualquier-atentado-contra-defensores-del-bajo-aguan/>

85 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2399-campana-de-criminalizacion-y-desprestigio-denuncian-defensoras-de-los-derechos-humanos-de-colon>

86 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/oleada-de-amenazas-pone-en-mayor-riesgo-a-defensores-de-derechos-humanos-en-tocoa-colon/>

87 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/21/a-sangre-y-fuego-se-impuso-proyecto-minero-en-el-guapinol/>

88 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1096507481054998528>

89 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/con-nombres-y-perfiles-falsos-continua-campana-de-desprestigio-contra-defensora-esly-banegaspor/>

additionally charged them with further crimes such as illicit association and theft.⁹⁰ Even worse, the charges were leveled against 32 local HRDs.⁹¹ When the HRDs showed up at the MP, 12 of them were arrested and held in pre-trial detention together with another previously arrested HRD.^{92 93} Padre Melo denounced this new deterioration. "12 people were sent to prison for their love and commitment with their community Guapinol and the defense of the environment and human rights. They are victims of the Law of the Strong. They continue the struggle and the love of Berta Cáceres. They are my brothers and sisters, I know them, and I vouch for their integrity and faith. Let's protect them!"⁹⁴ The Coalition against Impunity called for national and international accompaniment.⁹⁵ OACNUDH announced that it would accompany the case and observe if due process is guaranteed.^{96 97}

On February 25, the Municipal Committee for the Defense of Public Goods and Commons of Tocoa, Colón and the Coalition against Impunity presented a constitutional challenge against a decree from 2013 which allowed the concession for mining 217 hectares of the national park Montaña de Botaderos, Carlos Escaleras. This concession is the origin of the fierce criminalization campaign.⁹⁸ According to the Coalition against Impunity, the approval of the concession represented a legislative fraud.⁹⁹

The case of Guapinol was met with further national and international criticism. CEJIL denounced that "[t]hese events take place on the eve of the third anniversary of the murder of the human rights and land rights defender, Berta Cáceres, and account for the debt of the Honduran State to guarantee the right to defend human rights."¹⁰⁰ OFRANEH also linked their criminalization with the murder of Berta Cáceres. "The case of Guapinol, and the premeditated destruction of the Carlos Escaleras National Park is further proof that the murder of Berta Cáceres was not an isolated event, but a state policy, promoted by sinister "Nationalists", who have used the National Congress, the Ministry of the Environment (MIAMBIENTE), the judicial apparatus and the security forces to carry out ecocides with the aim of obtaining profits at all costs, including the physical elimination of opponents of the looting of mother earth."¹⁰¹ MADJ highlighted parts of the legal background of the struggle to defend their water from pollution. According to them, the General Water Law even convokes citizens to organize to manage water resources and it proscribes the priority of human consumption (of water) compared to other uses (mining, for example).¹⁰²

90 <https://wp.radioprogreso.net/justicia-se-ensana-con-ambientalistas-de-tocoa-colon/>

91 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/en-el-limbo-juridico-estan-los-18-defensores-de-guapinol/>

92 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/prision-preventiva-para-defensores-de-guapinol/>

93 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/24/estos-son-los-criminales-y-delincuentes-de-guapinol/amp/>

94 <https://tiempo.hn/padre-melo-sobre-caso-guapinol/>

95 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/pronunciamientos/961-comunicado-de-la-coalicion-contrala-impunidad-sobre-audiencia-contraliderazgos-de-guapinol>

96 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1099105353428553729>

97 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1100112080944971776>

98 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2411-presentan-recurso-de-inconstitucionalidad-contradecreto-que-le-da-vida-a-empresa-minera>

99 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/26/diputados-cometieron-un-fraude-legislativo-al-aprobar-minera-en-el-guapinol-abogados/amp/>

100 <https://www.cejil.org/es/honduras-preocupante-estallido-violencia-contrapersonas-defensoras>

101 <https://ofraneh.wordpress.com/2019/02/27/del-asesinato-de-bertha-caceres-al-encarcelamiento-de-los-defensores-del-agua-en-gupinol/>

102 <https://movimientoamplo.org/2019/02/libertad-inmediata-para-la-y-los-presos-politicos-de-guapinol/>

On February 28, in a national court (established for organized crime and drug trafficking cases), the 13 HRDs faced the confirmation of their pre-trial detention which would result in up to 2.5 years in prison before even being sentenced. By the end of the month, it was not yet clear what the result of the hearing would be. But human rights organization fear the worst. Hedme Castro, the director of ACI-PARTICIPA, denounced how the Honduran judicial system is skewed.¹⁰³ Radio Progreso agreed and explained how such a judicial system is one of three tools by the JOH regime to force through its neoliberal extractivist development model.¹⁰⁴ The other two are state security forces and the control of the media. The director of the World Organization against Torture, Miguel Martín Zumalacárregui, spoke of a two-speed justice systems prioritizing the criminalization of HRDs.¹⁰⁵ The defense team of the HRDs denounced the lack of impartiality by the judge. According to them, he acts in favor of JOH ally and president of the Supreme Court Rolando Argueta as well as the company behind the mining project, Inversiones Los Pinares.¹⁰⁶ The hearing itself was accompanied by press releases from international human rights organization all condemning the criminalization.^{107 108 109 110}

Additionally to Guapinol, other struggles around mining projects were in the news this month. CEPRODEH informed the people of Gualaco, Olancho, that they live in the municipality with the highest number of mining concessions. 7 concessions already granted occupy 10% of their land and another 10 concessions have been filed.¹¹¹ Pasos de Animal Grande reported on the situation in Azacualpa. The article concentrates on the failures by the authorities to reign in the mining company MINOSA which has ignored court rulings.¹¹² According to Radio Progreso, the situation there is still very tense.¹¹³

Hydroelectricity

2019 will be an especially dry one in the region due to a strong El Niño. Radio Progreso explained how the resulting water crisis targets the poor due to failed or missing government policies, especially by blindly promoting hydroelectric projects.¹¹⁴ One such project was set up in Reitoca in the south of Francisco Morazán.¹¹⁵ Last January 15, inhabitants of Retioca celebrated one year of peaceful resistance against the hydroelectric company PROGELSA. The company, in an attempted show of force, sent some 100 workers and security guard to the construction site the next day. The local people were not impressed and convoked the inhabitants from the surrounding communities to

103 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3239-justicia-en-honduras-esta-torcida-en-caso-guapinol>

104 <https://wp.radioprogressohn.net/guapinol-y-los-tres-cercos/>

105 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/992-justicia-hondurena-a-juicio-manana-en-criminalizacion-contraliderazgos-de-guapinol>

106 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2416-denuncian-parcialidad-del-juez-en-la-causa-contralos-ambientalistas-de-guapinol>

107 <https://cejil.org/es/honduras-mas-100-organizaciones-nacionales-e-internacionales-condenamos-criminalizacion-y-0>

108 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/monitoreo-de-compromisos-internacionales/item/2414-ammistia-internacional-demanda-garantizar-el-debido-proceso-a-las-personas-defensoras-de-ddhh-de-guapinol-encarceladas>

109 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/honduras-criminalizacion-contraliderazgos-de-guapinol-31-pobladores-que-se-han-movilizado-por-la-defensa-del-derecho-al-agua/>

110 https://eulatnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Carta-abierta-UE-Guapinol-Honduras-EULAT-Feb-2019_-002.pdf

111 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/976-pobladores-de-gualaco-en-alerta-por-concesiones-mineras-de-olancho>

112 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2409-complicidad-del-estado-de-honduras-con-minera-de-azacualpa-agrava-violaciones-a-los-ddhh>

113 <https://wp.radioprogressohn.net/sigue-vivo-conflicto-minero-en-azacualpa-la-union-copan/>

114 <https://wp.radioprogressohn.net/la-crisis-de-agua-afecta-a-los-pobres-en-honduras/>

115 <https://wp.radioprogressohn.net/comunidades-lencas-de-reitoca-francisco-morazan-resiste-ante-hidroelectrica-que-consumo-rio-petacon/>

join their protest and demand the exit of the company. They succeeded in demanding a dialogue, which later had to be aborted as PROGELSA tried to control the outcome. Local inhabitants also denounced that they tried to play the interest of the Reitoca community against the one in Lepaterique. This month, a delegation from Reitoca traveled to Tegucigalpa. They held a press conference outside the MP denouncing the criminalization they face from the MP, the Judicial Power and PROGELSA.¹¹⁶ ARTE even produced a documentary on the situation in Reitoca.¹¹⁷

MAS member Yobany Mejía denounced that the mayor of San Francisco, Santa Bárbara, intended to reactivate disputed hydroelectric projects.¹¹⁸ And in Arizona, Atlántida, inhabitants demanded a public consultation regarding the hydroelectric projects in their region.¹¹⁹ The Jilamito river is the only water source 26 municipalities of Arizona.

Corruption and Its Enemies

While the MACCIH presented no new corruption case this month, it still made headlines. It handed over a new text for the introduction of the Efficient Collaboration Bill to the Honduran government.¹²⁰ It is the newest attempt in a long series of attempts to bring Congress to approve the bill.¹²¹ The US embassy in Honduras urged the Honduran Congress to pass the bill.¹²² Tweets in support for the MACCIH also came from Manuel Zelaya.¹²³ A few days later, the MACCIH sent a proposal for a constitutional reform to the Honduran government to strengthen judicial independence.¹²⁴ The Association of Judges for Democracy (AJD) supports the proposed reform¹²⁵ and so did the human right scholar Joaquín Mejía agrees.¹²⁶ According to ConfidencialHN, the Spanish ambassador Guillermo Kirkpatrick promised to increase funding for the MACCIH this year.¹²⁷ As February came to a close, there were several meetings between the MACCIH and US representatives. The MACCIH tweeted about a meeting between its spokesperson Luiz Marrey and the US lawmaker Jim McGovern.¹²⁸ Representatives of the US State Department met with the head of the MACCIH Luis Marrey.¹²⁹ Marrey later also met with OAS General Secretary Luis Almagro.¹³⁰ In a press conference, Almagro then informed about their work.¹³¹

116 <https://peacewatch.blog/2019/02/04/reitoca-reactivacion-del-conflicto-por-el-rio-petacon-a-un-ano-de-lucha/>

117 <https://www.arte.tv/fr/videos/030273-700-A/arte-reportage/>

118 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/21/denuncian-que-alcalde-de-san-francisco-de-ojuera-pretende-reavivar-proyectos-extractivistas/>

119 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/981-cabildo-abierto-y-proyecto-de-agua-comunitaria-exigen-pobladores-del-municipio-de-arizona>

120 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/06/maccih-entrega-al-gobierno-nuevo-texto-de-ley-de-colaboracion-eficaz/>

121 <https://tiempo.hn/maccih-remitio-proyecto-de-ley-de-colaboracion-eficaz-al-poder-ejecutivo/>

122 <https://twitter.com/USAmbHonduras/status/1093669756308283392>

123 <https://tiempo.hn/manuel-zelaya-maccih-juzgar-crimenes/>

124 <https://www.oas.org/documents/spa/press/Oficio-No.017-recibido.pdf>

125 https://twitter.com/AJD_Honduras/status/1097904027168329728

126 <https://confidencialhn.com/urge-reforma-completa-en-el-sistema-de-seguridad-y-justicia-investigador/>

127 <https://confidencialhn.com/reino-de-espana-le-apuesta-a-la-estadia-de-la-maccih-en-honduras/>

128 https://twitter.com/OEA_MACCIH/status/1100517626244157441

129 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1263097-410/estados-unidos-reafirma-apoyo-maccih-corrupcion-honduras>

130 https://twitter.com/Almagro_OEA2015/status/1101235592086593536

131 https://twitter.com/OEA_MACCIH/status/1101235035053670400

The MACCIH's counterpart Ufecic also made public statements. It highlighted four things that are needed to improve the fight against corruption in Honduras: i) the approval of the Efficient Collaboration Bill; ii) that high officials be judged by special anti-corruption courts; iii) to allow Ufecic and the MP to intercept communications; and iv) more prosecutors and technical experts for Ufecic.^{132 133} Radio Progreso emphasized the importance of the Ufecic in fighting corruption in Honduras.¹³⁴

There were also some new corruption cases made public in February. ConfidencialHN informed about alleged acts of corruption having taken place during the de facto government of Micheletti after the coup d'état. According to their investigation, fake companies were used to steal millions of Lempiras.¹³⁵ A joint investigation by Criterio, Reporteros de Investigación and the journalist Melissa Hernández uncovered a red of corruption inside the Secretary of Labor.¹³⁶ Reporteros de Investigación launched a series of articles on the irregularities around the Trans 450 project, a project that has cost Honduras \$43 millions so far with nothing to show for it.^{137 138 139 140 141} Two former members of the mayoralty of Guarizama, Olancho were arrested for corruption.¹⁴² ConfidencialHN highlighted the role of officials at the National Banks and Securities Commission (CNBS) in corruption cases involving the use of public funds for political campaigns.¹⁴³ Martha Alegría Reichmann published a book on the corruption in the Honduran Catholic Church under Cardinal Óscar Andrés Rodríguez Maradiaga.¹⁴⁴

Some corruption cases arrived in court this month. A judge opened trial against the former director of OABI, Omar Humberto Zúniga, for abuse of authority.¹⁴⁵ OABI continued to make headlines due to its role in the Rosenthal case. A New York court accepted the law suit by the Rosenthal family against the State of Honduras demanding compensation of \$1 billion. In Honduras, their lawyer demanded the intervention of OABI, the state body which had executed the order against them.¹⁴⁶ A few days later, its director José Luis Andino resigned.¹⁴⁷ Pinu congresswoman Doris Gutiérrez thinks that his resignation may be due to internal pressure.¹⁴⁸ A court ordered the confiscation of 1.1 million Lempiras from Dinora Arámbui, the wife of the former Nationalist congressman and former Secretary of Finance Héctor 'Tito' Guillén.¹⁴⁹ The couple was not able to explain the origin of the

132 <https://twitter.com/UFECIC1/status/1096995038301732864>

133 <https://twitter.com/UFECIC1/status/1096995536052412417>

134 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/ufecic-y-la-persecucion-a-los-corrutos/>

135 <https://confidencialhn.com/regimen-de-micheletti-pago-multimillonarios-contratos-a-empresas-fantasmas/>

136 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/02/05/compra-venta-de-derechos-laborales-en-en-secretaria-del-trabajo-de-honduras/>

137 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/02/14/180-millones-de-lempiras-pagados-por-el-trans-450/>

138 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/02/18/el-trans-450-todavia-no-es-una-obra-fallida-como-el-escandalo-de-corrupcion-del-ferrocarril-interoceanico/>

139 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/02/20/la-falsa-de-la-inauguracion-del-trans-450/>

140 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/02/21/la-principal-mentira-sobre-el-trans-450/>

141 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/02/28/destruccion-ambiental-por-trans-450-corte-masivo-de-2000-arboles-%ef%bb%bf/>

142 <https://tiempo.hn/capturan-a-ex-vicealcalde-y-a-exregidor-de-guarizama-olancho/>

143 <https://confidencialhn.com/comisionado-de-bancos-uso-entidad-financiera-a-fin-de-lavar-y-sustraer-dinero-para-campanas-politicas/>

144 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/22/libro-devela-las-traiciones-sagradas-del-cardenal-oscar-rodriguez-maradiaga/amp/>

145 <https://tiempo.hn/exdirector-de-la-oabi-formal-procesamiento/>

146 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3231-intervencion-en-oabi-por-demanda-de-familia-rosenthal>

147 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3232-incautador-de-bienes-al-crimen-se-espanta-por-intervencion-y-renuncia-a-joh>

148 <https://tiempo.hn/doris-gutierrez-presume-que-por-presiones-habrian-renunciado-subjefe-de-la-ffaa-y-oabi/>

149 <https://tiempo.hn/ordenan-confiscar-millon-lempiras-esposa-tito-guillen/>

money.¹⁵⁰ The Astropharma corruption case involving Nationalist congresswoman Lena Gutiérrez also continued¹⁵¹, but the main trial was scheduled for June.¹⁵²

To protest against the widespread corruption in Honduras, FOSDEH economist Ismael Zepeda and others tried to revive the torch marches this month.¹⁵³ ¹⁵⁴ They marched on two Fridays but it did not gather the same momentum as two years ago.¹⁵⁵

The Onslaught against the Anti-Corruption Bodies

What has been only rumored in the last months, the disappearance of the MACCIH, became a bit more real in February. The president of the Supreme Court and JOH ally Rolado Argueta said that Honduras' judicial system "has to learn to walk by itself".¹⁵⁶ Proceso Digital explained the statement as a further manifestation that the MACCIH had once more become an "uncomfortable" visitor.¹⁵⁷ Radio Progreso summarized the current situation in Honduras regarding corruption as follows: "We live in times of self-shielding, all those involved with and smeared by corruption are seeking their self-protection and for this they have put to work their Machiavellian machinery which produces impunity."¹⁵⁸ They also published a helpful summary on the uncertainties regarding the MACCIH.¹⁵⁹ CESPAD criticized the position of JOH ally and president of the Supreme Court, Rolando Argueta.¹⁶⁰

The Liberal Party denounced on several occasions that there is a secret deal between the National Party and Libre to get rid of the MACCIH. Manuel Zelaya denied this and he promised that Libre would vote in Congress for the prolongation of the MACCIH's mandate. According to him, they should also investigate the electoral fraud and JOH's illegal reelection.¹⁶¹ The British Embassy tweeted in support of the MACCIH and its counterpart at the MP, UFECIC.¹⁶² A group of politicians and civil society organizations together demand from OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro and JOH to renew the contract with the MACCIH.¹⁶³ Lawyer Jair López presented the support for the Efficient Collaboration Bill as a litmus test for congresswo/men. It will show who really supports the MACCIH and who does not.¹⁶⁴

Ufecic also joined the debate. Its coordinator Luís Javier Santos highlighted the importance of their collaboration with the MACCIH and the need to renew the contract with the latter because "we've

150 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1258932-466/honduras-11-millones-de-lempiras-confiscados-a-h%C3%A9ctor-tito-guill%C3%A9n-pasan-al>

151 <https://confidencialhn.com/los-gutierrez-presentan-pruebas-ante-acusacion-de-salud-por-astropharma/>

152 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/20/juicio-contra-lena-gutierrez-y-su-familia-sigue-y-seguira-dormido/>

153 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/15/economista-del-fosdeh-reaviva-las-antorchas-de-la-indignacion/>

154 <https://tiempo.hn/convocatoria-marcha-de-las-antorchas-poco-apoyo/>

155 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3221-ciudadania-insatisfecha-asume-la-protesta-en-honduras>

156 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/11/fin-de-la-maccih-esta-medianamente-cerca-presidente-de-la-corte/>

157 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/un-ano-despues-la-maccih-vuelve-a-ser-una-visitante-incomoda.html>

158 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/tempos-de-blindajes/>

159 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/8207-2/>

160 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/02/18/cronologiacual-sera-el-futuro-de-la-maccih/>

161 <https://confidencialhn.com/mel-promete-gestionar-con-embajada-de-eeuu-ampliacion-de-estadia-de-la-maccih/>

162 <https://twitter.com/UKinHonduras/status/1096164018237202433>

163 <https://confidencialhn.com/coaliccion-de-apoyo-pide-a-almagro-y-a-joh-ampliar-convenio-de-la-maccih/>

164 <https://confidencialhn.com/pronto-conoceremos-los-que-se-oponen-a-combatir-la-corrupcion-jurista/>

just started to scratch the structures of power".¹⁶⁵ And while Congress constantly tries to shield itself from corruption investigation with their impunity pacts, a draft bill by Libre congressman Jari Dixon this month went in the other direction. His bill demands the derogation of four articles in the Criminal Procedures Code and with it the privilege for state officials.¹⁶⁶

The Pandora Case

Lawyer Omar Menjívar who currently defends one of the main witnesses in the Pandora case, Fernando Suárez, reiterated publicly that JOH is the intellectual author of the Pandora as well as the general looting of the Honduran State.^{167 168}

The Open Chest Case

The repetition of history as a farce can be observed in Honduras' corruption cases. Once more, there had been nationwide headlines when MACCIH and UFECIC revealed the Open Chest corruption case (see last month's report) only to be undermined by the Judicial Power. Of the 20 accused current and former congresswo/men, none has to go to prison, five were acquitted, six provisional acquitted and only nine face trial.¹⁶⁹ They also were allowed to continue legislating.¹⁷⁰ UFECIC tweeted that they respect but do not share the decision and that they would challenge it.¹⁷¹ The US embassy announced to some of the congresswo/men involved in the Open Chest corruption case that their visa had been suspended.¹⁷²

Impunity Pacts

Last month, it was made public that Congress was working on a second impunity pact¹⁷³ just as the Constitutional Chamber had rejected the first one as unconstitutional (see last month's report). After widespread criticism, the JOH regime initially seemed to backtrack this month.¹⁷⁴ This tactic had been widely used. Present outrageous legislation and depending on the public reaction, stick with it or withdraw it again. But Congress did not completely withdraw the bill, rather it suspended the discussion to conduct consultations with different sectors.^{175 176} The MACCIH published a press release expressing concerns about the newest attempts by Congress to shield its members from investigations.¹⁷⁷ Several Honduran NGOs organized as the Observatory of the Criminal Law

165 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/se-debe-renovar-convenio-de-la-maccih- apenas-estamos-aranando- las-estructuras-de-poder-fiscal-luis-javier/>

166 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/21/diputado-pide- quitar-privilegios-a- funcionarios-que-cometen-delitos/>

167 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/18/juan-hermandez-es-el-autor-detras-del-saqueo-al-estado-de-honduras-video/>

168 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/18/joh-es-el-hombre-de-atras-del-saqueo-del-estado-omar-menjivar/>

169 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/01/nadie-va-a-la-carcel-por-el-arca-abierta/>

170 <https://contracorriente.red/2019/02/01/caso-arca-abierta-diputados-acusados-de-malversacion-seguiran-legislando/>

171 <https://twitter.com/UFECIC.1/status/1091544934505680896>

172 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/04/eeuu-cancela-visa-a-varios-involucrados-en-el-caso-arca-abierta/>

173 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/oficialismo-busca-blindar-de-investigaciones-actos-de-corrupcion/>

174 <https://tiempo.hn/derogaran-decreto-que-establece-secretividad-en-presupuesto-de-la-republica/>

175 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1256567-466/congreso-pretende- quitar-al-ministerio-publico-la-atribucion-sobre-delitos>

176 <https://confidencial.hn.com/legislativo-entablara-consultas-sobre- posibles-reformas-al-tribunal-de-cuentas/>

177 <https://www.oas.org/es/sap/dsdme/maccih/new/docs/MCH-002.19-MACCIH-expresa-preocupacion-ante-posible-reforma-articulo-115-Ley-General-de-Administracion-Publica.pdf>

System denounced it as well.¹⁷⁸ About a week into the discussion, ContraCorriente published a concise overview.¹⁷⁹ As February ended, the future of the bill was still unclear. At the same time, it was announced that a trial for abuse of authority and the falsification of documents would be opened against the Nationalist congressman Román Villeda Aguilar in the first Impunity Pact case.¹⁸⁰

The Case against Pepe Lobo

On February 4, the National Anti-Corruption Council (CNA) filed a complaint against the former president Porfirio Pepe Lobo at the MP demanding his investigation for corruption.¹⁸¹ ¹⁸² The case was then taken up by Ufecic and analyzed.¹⁸³ ¹⁸⁴ As in the case of his wife¹⁸⁵, Pepe Lobo claimed to be innocent¹⁸⁶ and challenged once more the anti-corruption bodies to investigate the current government.¹⁸⁷ According to him, JOH has a deal with the US to hand over National Party leaders in order to save himself.¹⁸⁸

The case has a special political dimension as some observers commented that JOH was using the CNA against Pepe Lobo. His tactics is to use the judicial power in general to go after his enemy, show resolve regarding the fight against corruption while guaranteeing impunity for him and his allies.¹⁸⁹ ¹⁹⁰ But Gabriela Castellanos, director of the CNA, denied that she acted on behalf of the president when going after the former president for corruption.¹⁹¹ But ConfidencialHN uncovered some irregularities regarding the funding of the CNA.¹⁹² Pepe Lobo's lawyer threatened them with a counter-lawsuit.¹⁹³

The Case against the Former First Lady Rosa Elena de Lobo

After a long break, the corruption case against the former first lady Rosa Elena Bonilla de Lobo continued.¹⁹⁴ The defense team of one of the co-accused, Saúl Escobar, demanded another rescheduling of at least a month to study all the documents¹⁹⁵, but this request was rejected.¹⁹⁶ 21

178 <http://www.fosdeh.com/2019/02/comunicado-del-observatorio-sobre-la-reforma-al-art-115-de-la-ley-general-de-administracion-publica/>

179 <https://contracorriente.red/2019/02/11/el-nuevo-pacto-de-un-congreso-impune/>

180 <https://twitter.com/PJdeHonduras/status/1097664142289354755>

181 <http://elpulso.hn/cna-denuncia-a-expresidente-lobo-y-actual-presidente-del-banco-central-por-malversar-25-millones-de-lempiras/>

182 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/04/cna-pide-al-ministerio-publico-investigar-a-porfirio-lobo-por-mal-uso-de-fondos/>

183 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1256531-466/la-ufecic-analiza-denuncia-del-consejo-nacional-anticorrupci%C3%B3n-contr-pepe-lobo>

184 <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/brief/corruption-probe-catches-former-honduras-president-porfirio-lobo/>

185 <https://contracorriente.red/2019/02/19/ex-presidente-lobo-todas-las-investigaciones-tienen-una-frontera-hasta-2014/>

186 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/04/yo-no-he-malversado-fondos-pepe-lobo-ante-acusacion-del-cna/>

187 <https://tiempo.hn/pepe-lobo-cuando-investigaran-a-funcionarios-del-actual-gobierno/>

188 <https://tiempo.hn/pepe-lobo-joh-tiene-arreglos-con-ee-uu-para-entregar-miembros-del-pn-y-salvarse-el/>

189 <https://confidencialhn.com/ademas-de-criminoso-es-traidor-1ven-maniobras-de-joh-para-aparentar-lucha-contr-corrupcion/>

190 <https://confidencialhn.com/cuestionan-servilismo-de-organizaciones-civiles-para-favorecer-intereses-politicos/>

191 <https://confidencialhn.com/contraataca-directora-del-cna-dice-que-no-recibe-lineas-de-presidencial/>

192 <https://confidencialhn.com/magistrados-del-tsc-dicen-que-fondos-publicos-recibidos-por-el-cna-deben-ser-auditados/>

193 <https://tiempo.hn/defensa-pepe-lobo-demanda-cna/>

194 <https://confidencialhn.com/inician-juicio-de-esposaa-de-pepe-lobo-tras-forzosa-prorroga/>

195 <https://confidencialhn.com/defensa-publica-de-saul-escobar-pide-reprogramacion-de-juicio/>

196 <https://confidencialhn.com/%e1%bb%bb%bfrchazan-reprogramacion-de-juicio-para-implicados-en-caja-chica-de-la-dama/>

new items of evidence were admitted.¹⁹⁷ The MP added more crimes to the list of Rosa Elena Bonilla de Lobo who now faces charges for at least 12 crimes.^{198 199} This led her defense team to once more attack the MACCIH.²⁰⁰ Pepe Lobo denounced that various powerful congresswo/men accused of corruption still walk free while his wife has to await the trial in prison.^{201 202}

The IHSS Case

On February 5, a court with national jurisdiction presented new sentences in the IHSS corruption case. The former director Mario Roberto Zelaya Rojas, the former vice-secretary of health Javier Rodolfo Pastor Vásquez and the former vice-secretary of labor and social security Carlos Montes Rodríguez were all sentenced to 16 years in prison for money laundering and passive bribery.²⁰³ According to Criterio, it is the first condemnatory sentence for money laundering as a product of corruption in Honduras.²⁰⁴ The same day, an appeals court nullified the conviction against former IHSS board members. The case will return to the courts.²⁰⁵

State Security Forces

February started with several instances of misconduct of misbehavior by state security forces and ended with JOH announcing to increase their number (see Militarization subsection further below), The former head of forensic medicine, Sherill Yubissa Hernández, denounced once more that a powerful player impede the investigation into the murder of a regional ATIC head Sheryl Hernández.²⁰⁶ The director of the human rights organization CODEH, Hugo Maldonado, denounced that several agents of the Police Investigation Bureau (DPI) are "criminals disguised as police agents to persecute citizens and manipulate witnesses and documentation to imprison innocent citizens".²⁰⁷ Later on, a police official handed himself in for collaborating with a criminal gang²⁰⁸ and Didapol announced that they are in possession of further cases of collaboration between organized crime and the police.²⁰⁹ Then La Prensa reported that the JOH regime nor the Purging Committee have any idea what the claimed 5521 purged members of the National Police Force are up to these days.²¹⁰

197 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1261364-466/admiten-21-nuevas-pruebas-en-el-juicio-de-ex-primera-dama-de>

198 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1261604-466/el-ministerio-p%C3%BAblico-ampl%C3%A1a-la-lista-de-delitos-contrami-rosa>

199 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3230-fiscalia-vuelve-mas-espinoso-juicio-de-la-rosa>

200 <https://confidencialhn.com/la-maccih-esta-quedando-mal-parada-senaln-mas-irregularidades-en-juicio-contrarosa-bonilla/>

201 <https://tiempo.hn/porfirio-lobo-no-investigando-desde-el-2014-hacia-aca/>

202 <https://confidencialhn.com/pepe-fustiga-ilegalidades-en-el-juicio-contrasus-esposa/>

203 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3211-castigan-con-16-anos-de-carcel-a-mario-zelaya-y-otros-exfuncionarios>

204 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/06/16-anos-de-carcel-para-mario-zelaya-javier-pastor-y-carlos-montes/>

205 <https://confidencialhn.com/anulan-fallo-contradirectivos-del-ibss-por-supuesta-compra-irregular-de-maquinarmedica/>

206 <https://tiempo.hn/julissa-villanueva-hay-un-gran-pezo-gordo-implicado-en-la-muerte-de-exjefade-la-atic/>

207 <https://confidencialhn.com/alertan-que-criminales-vestidos-de-policias-inventan-delitos-para-encarcelar-inocentes/>

208 <https://tiempo.hn/se-entrega-socio-oqueli-mejia-tinoco/>

209 <https://tiempo.hn/didapol-policias-crimen-organizado/>

210 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1260013-410/desconocen-paradero-policias-depurados-honduras>

No wonder, analyst and director of CEDOH, Víctor Meza, felt compelled to admit that he lost all faith that the Honduran police may improve. "I must confess, at the risk of appearing naive, that I believed that the police, even in a slow and ambiguous way, were really undergoing a change. (...) However, the conversation with some people linked for different reasons with police work and, above all, the testimony of young people who are studying or have already done basic police training, forces me to reconsider my previous opinions. It seems that old practices continue to dominate performance and, therefore, block and close the way to a new model of police behavior, both in its internal relationship with agents, and in its external relationship with the rest of society. (...) I thought, I confess, that this culture was changing in the police. It seems that it is not like that. And that reaffirms my conviction that a "purge", calculated and at half-measures, is not and can not be a true reform and transformation of the police institution. It is sad but true."²¹¹

Repressions

The police evicted street vendors in Tegucigalpa. The vendors denounced the use of force which resulted in various injuries and the destruction of their goods.²¹² On February 15, he police raided the houses of social opposition leaders in Choluteca, arresting one.²¹³ In Choluteca, people have been protesting bi-weekly against the JOH regime for over a year. Two weeks later, state security forces attacked a HRD and a journalist who were covering a protest, again in Choluteca.²¹⁴

Penitentiary System

How dangerous Honduras' prison are came to light once more this month, when an inmate was found dead in the Támara prison. Previous to his death, he had received threats.²¹⁵ Reporteros de Investigación reported on the situation of mothers of alleged gang members worrying about their sons imprisoned in the so-called "maximum security" prison El Pozo. They denounce mistreatment, violence and even torture.²¹⁶ The same month, JOH announced the construction of more prisons.²¹⁷

Militarization

Things at the Armed Forces do not seem to be better than at the police. The deputy chief of the Armed Forces, Reynel Enrique Funes Ponce, handed in his resignation to JOH highlighting discomfort with how things in the Armed Forces and Honduras in general are running.²¹⁸ ²¹⁹ A few days later, another army official resigned in protest against the politicization of the institution by

211 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/15/brutalidad-policial/>

212 <https://confidencialhn.com/vendedores-heridos-y-perdidas-materiales-durante-desalojo-en-centro-de-tegucigalpa/>

213 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/15/policia-de-honduras-se-ensana-contra-pobladores-de-barrios-pobres-de-choluteca/>

214 <https://confidencialhn.com/policias-provocan-accidente-y-despues-atacan-a-periodista-y-defensor-de-ddhh/>

215 <https://confidencialhn.com/hallan-sin-vida-cuerpo-de-reo-en-la-carcel-de-tamara/>

216 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/02/17/un-drama-de-crueldad-violencias-de-genero-y-discriminacion-sufren-las-madres-de-privados-de-libertad-de-la-pandilla-18/>

217 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3233-gobernante-hondureno-aspira-a-construir-mas-carceles>

218 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/22/subjefe-de-las-ff-aa-renuncio-por-la-forma-como-honduras-esta-siendo-gobernada/>

219 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1261605-466/irrespeto-a-jerarqu%C3%A1Da-provoc%C3%B3-la-renuncia-del-subjefe-del-estado-mayor-conjunto>

JOH²²⁰ and less than a week later, so did another one.²²¹ There resignation was also caused by disputed promotions inside the Armed Forces that were interpreted as a way by JOH to shore up support.²²² According to the former army captain Santos Orellana, JOH was together with the promoted generals at the Liceo Militar del Norte.^{223 224}

Ignoring the criticism, JOH used the Catholic mass in honor of the Virgin of Suyapa to praise the Armed Forces: "It is a biblical task to work for peace".²²⁵ Even worse, reneging on a promise made at the international stage, JOH demanded more Military Police agents.²²⁶ This was followed by a call for a general increase of state security forces.²²⁷ No surprise, it was greeted with widespread criticism by human rights organizations and the opposition.^{228 229} CESPAD had an especially noteworthy reaction. "With the intention of Hernandez, it is necessary to ask what has happened with the alleged reduction in violence claimed by the government and the millionaire budget that has been rising since 2010. (...) In general terms, various civil society organizations, including CESPAD, have come to the conclusion that the citizen security approach in Honduras is mainly oriented towards punitive actions, through the participation of the military in matters of public security. In this way, we can establish that while public spending on security and defense continues to rise, the causes that foster crime, violence and insecurity such as poverty, unemployment, inequality, deterioration of health and education, among others, continue to prevail as well as corruption and impunity."²³⁰

International Community

As in January, the international community was mostly concerned with Venezuela when it came to Latin America. Fred Alvarado criticized the double standards applied by the Lima Group when it comes to Honduras and Venezuela especially highlighting the role of the Canadian government.²³¹ Nevertheless, international support for the JOH regime did not stop. The Central American Bank for Economic Integration (BCIE) offered a new line of credit worth \$15 million to the Rural Development Bank Honduras (Banrural).²³²

220 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3246-descontento-con-ascensos-de-joh-renuncia-otro-alto-mando-militar>

221 <https://confidencialhn.com/renuncia-alto-oficial-de-la-fuerzas-armadas-de-honduras/>

222 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/07/ocho-nuevos-generales-de-cuatro-estrellas-en-honduras-para-que/>

223 <https://tiempo.hn/santos-orellana-sobre-ascensos-en-f-a-h-son-mandaderos-de-politicos/>

224 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/actual-jefe-de-estado-mayor-conjunto-asigno-seguridad-a-tony-hermandez-asegura-capitan-santos-rodriuez/>

225 <https://confidencialhn.com/joh-irrumpe-en-misa-catolica-para-glorificar-a-las-fuerzas-armadas/>

226 <https://tiempo.hn/joh-urgen-mas-policias-y-militares-para-combatir-la-criminalidad/>

227 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/19/hermandez-pedira-al-congreso-ampliacion-del-presupuesto-para-mas-policias-y-tropas-militares/>

228 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/20/verguenza-es-pedir-mas-presupuesto-para-las-ff-aa-y-la-secretaria-de-seguridad-video/>

229 <https://confidencialhn.com/senalan-erronea-distribucion-presupuestaria-de-joh-para-militarizar-honduras/>

230 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/02/25/cronologia-joh-quiere-mas-dinero-para-tropas-militares-fracaso-la-politica-de-seguridad/>

231 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/editorial/item/2400-canada-incongruencias-e-hipocresias-del-grupo-de-lima-honduras-vrs-venezuela>

232 <https://confidencialhn.com/bcie-y-banrural-suscriben-linea-de-credito-de-15-millones-de-dolares/>

US

But the main role in legitimizing the JOH regime is still played by the US government. As the US chargé d'affaires Heide Fulton once more had to leave her post momentarily to fulfill her military duty²³³, Lawrence Gumbiner took over as Interim Chargé d'Affaires.²³⁴ He is a very active social media user and tweeted daily on several occasions painting a rosy picture of Honduras and its government. At the same time, Honduras has not had an official US ambassador for almost two years. Last year Trump finally came around to nominating someone, Francisco Palmieri, but his nomination was apparently blocked. "The Trump administration has abandoned its efforts to appoint the career diplomat Francisco "Paco" Palmieri as the next U.S. ambassador to Honduras, bowing to pressure from Florida Republican Sen. Marco Rubio, who seeks to promote a more hard-line approach to U.S. policy in Latin America, according to congressional sources."^{235 236}

Throughout the month, several meetings between US delegations or US organizations and the JOH regime took place. The US National Democracy Institute met with Honduras' Clean Politics Unit.²³⁷ An US congressional delegation visited Honduras to talk about migration, security and employment. According to Proceso Digital, two senators (Tom Carper and Jeff Merkley) and four members of the House of Representative (Lou Correa, Donald Norcross, Lisa Blunt Rochester and Don Beyer) were part of the delegation.²³⁸ They also met with the MACCIH and Ufecic.²³⁹ There was a further visit by the State Department's Central America Office Director Peter Brennan who met with JOH.²⁴⁰ At the same time, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras met with the US Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen, also to discuss migration.²⁴¹ After the meeting, Nielsen spoke of a "historic commitment" to reduce "irregular" migration.²⁴²

Drug Trafficking

Another MP operation targeting drug cartels took place this month in Honduras. During Operation Cerbero, Reynerio Valle Valle of the Valle Valle cartel was arrested.²⁴³ At the same time, there seem to be problems with the extradition to the US of two members of the Urbina Soto drug cartel.²⁴⁴

233 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/01/fulton-se-va-nuevamente-a-cumplir-con-su-mision-militar/>

234 <https://twitter.com/USAmbHonduras/status/1091456368358408193>

235 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/02/06/rubio-blocks-trumps-honduras-envoy-latin-america-palmieri-central-america/>

236 <http://elpulso.hn/rubio-bloquea-palmieri-hn/>

237 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/national-democracy-institute-reafirma-su-respaldo-a-la-unidad-de-politica-limpia.html>

238 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/presidente-herandez-se-reune-con-congresistas-estadounidenses-para-hablar-sobre-migracion-seguridad-y-empleo.html>

239 <https://twitter.com/USAmbHonduras/status/1097281091713597440>

240 <https://twitter.com/USAmbHonduras/status/1099465188003201024>

241 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1261055-466/honduras-y-estados-unidos-discuten-acciones-contra-impulsores-de-las-caravanas>

242 <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2019/02/21/secretary-nielsen-announces-historic-steps-northern-triangle-security-ministers>

243 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1256165-466/honduras-capturan-a-jos%C3%A9-reynerio-el-%C3%BAltimo-de-los-hermanos-valle-valle>

244 <https://tiempo.hn/desde-enero-eeuu-ha-pedido-a-honduras-captura-de-los-hermanos-urbina-soto/>

Tony Hernández

Tony Hernández was supposed to appear before court again this month, but the trial date was postponed to March 8.²⁴⁵ In the meantime, one of his lawyers resigned.²⁴⁶ Back in Honduras, one of his allies, Alexander Ardón, is still on the run.²⁴⁷ But at least, the MP officially charged Mario José Cáliz Hernández, weeks after the US had accused him of drug trafficking and had highlighted links to Tony Hernández.²⁴⁸ According to El Libertador, José Cáliz Hernández is the brother-in-law of Feryd Bascha, JOH's presidential vice-secretary.²⁴⁹ Consequently, JOH was once more challenged this month regarding his brother. The president of the Liberal Party, Luis Zelaya, believes that JOH failed to convincingly show that he was not aware of his brother's drug trafficking activities²⁵⁰ and Insight Crime wrote: "While he cracks down on gangs, the president of Honduras has largely ignored drug trafficking charges leveled at his family members and officials within his governing party, raising questions about his desire to take on corruption that implicates his inner circle."²⁵¹

Varia

JOH

After having been illegally reelected, JOH may be thinking that he cannot pull this off again and is looking for other ways to stay in power – this month he may have found one. Nationalist congressman Eder Mejía presented a bill in Congress which would integrate Honduras' representatives at the Central American Parliament at the National Congress, i.e. give them voice, vote and the power to present laws.²⁵² At the same time, criticism of his regime continued. The former president Pepe Lobo, meanwhile, asked the National Party to distance itself from JOH "for the sake of the party".²⁵³ InSight Crime raised an important problem denounced for months by the social and political opposition in Honduras. "While he cracks down on gangs, the president of Honduras has largely ignored drug trafficking charges leveled at his family members and officials within his governing party, raising questions about his desire to take on corruption that implicates his inner circle."²⁵⁴ As in the past, JOH reacted to criticism by presenting himself as the mano duro politician announcing more state security forces (see also section above on the topic). The sociologist Armando Orellana criticized the proposed increase as a failed response to the increased violence.²⁵⁵ According to the political analyst Raúl Pineda, such an increase should be interpreted as

245 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1256550-466/fiscalia-de-nueva-york-presentara-mas-pruebas-contra-tony>

246 <https://confidencialhn.com/manuel-retureta-deja-de-defender-a-tony-herandez/>

247 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1262748-466/trabadas-negociaciones-entre-la-dea-y-alexander-ard%C3%B3n>

248 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/14/hasta-que-ee-uu-presento-cargos-contra-calix-herandez-dlcn-abrio-denuncia/>

249 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3219-atencion-extraditible-es-familiar-de-alto-funcionario-de-joh>

250 <https://tiempo.hn/luis-zelaya-a-joh-es-un-narcoestado/>

251 <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/honduras-president-eyes-hardline-security-criminal-links-mount/>

252 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/14/presentan-reforma-constitucional-para-que-diputados-al-parlacen-sean-integrados-al-congreso/>

253 <https://confidencialhn.com/por-el-bien-del-partido-pepe-pide-a-nacionalistas-desmarse-de-joh/>

254 <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/honduras-president-eyes-hardline-security-criminal-links-mount/>

255 <https://confidencialhn.com/fallidas-politicas-estatales-producen-criminales-y-grupos-de-limpieza-social/>

an attempt by JOH to increase his power base and to protect himself from future prosecution.²⁵⁶ Padre Melo further explained that the JOH regime uses three bodies to fence of public dissent, the military, the media and the judicial system. '1.-The military fence (...), which are ordered to implement repression and impose fear in society. "The more fear the Honduran society suffers, the less capacity it will have to mobilize in defense of their rights." 2.-The media fence: "We have a media structure that clearly meets the objective of orienting the news according to particular interests against the interests of the opposition and even present the opposition as if it were only unruly, an enemy of development, an enemy of the good and against democracy ". 3.-The legal fence: "The law is being used more and more, along with the military and the media, to impose fear and to deter any type of opposition response which is not controlled by the Honduran regime."²⁵⁷

Electoral Reforms

These last months, the electoral reforms were a widely discussed topic, but the result once more disappointed. El Tiempo published a helpful overview of the electoral reforms, what was approved and what it entails.²⁵⁸ Reinvigorated by their apparent win regarding the limited electoral reforms, the National Party intended once more to force through the regulation of the presidential reelection this month.²⁵⁹ The most daring attempt by the National Party comes from Fernando Anduray. According to him, it is not even necessary to consult the people, as proposed by some Nationalists, as the 2017 elections already served as a public consultation.²⁶⁰ Another Nationalist congressman, Walter Chávez, requested that the primary elections be held earlier²⁶¹, but his proposal is met with criticism.²⁶²

Poverty

Remittances sent to Honduras increased by 17% this January compared to January 2018.²⁶³

Education

Teachers in El Paraíso demanded the resignation of the departmental director of education, Rolan Armando Espinal Pavón. "According to the dismissed teachers, the departmental director without any justification suspends and dismisses teachers from the area, without giving them any answer as to why. There are about 10 teachers suspended and dismissed from their positions throughout the department of El Paraíso, some of whom were dismissed without having started the school year and

256 <https://confidencialhn.com/mas-militares-y-policias-no-arreglaran-nada-analista-desbarata-promesas-de-joh/>

257 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/13/regimen-de-honduras-neutraliza-a-la-disidencia-con-tres-cercos/>

258 <https://tiempo.hn/asi-quedaron-reformas-electorales/2/>

259 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/no-se-puede-reglamentar-reeleccion-porque-es-inconstitucional-reafirma-villeda.html>

260 <https://confidencialhn.com/el-plebiscito-ya-se-hizo-anduray-exige-definir-si-la-reeleccion-sera-alterna-o-continua/>

261 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1260354-466/cinco-medidas-de-apremio-podr%C3%A1-imponer-el-tribunal-de-justicia-electoral>

262 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1260329-466/como-un-retroceso-democr%C3%A1tico-califican-adelantar-primarias-en-honduras>

263 <https://radiohm.hn/2019/02/10/en-un-17-por-ciento-incrementan-las-remesas-en-el-pais/>

without notice."²⁶⁴ Instead of listening to the teachers, representatives of the Education Secretariat did not appear at meeting to discuss the problems.²⁶⁵

Public Health

CONADEH presented a report on the public health situation in Honduras. Honduras has only 14 doctors and nurses per 10'000 inhabitants, while the regional average is 20. This number also does not reflect regional disparities in Honduras. "The report indicates that the exposed reality shows that, the Secretary of State in the Health Office violates the Health Code and human rights by not guaranteeing efficiently and effectively the protection, recovery and rehabilitation of users."²⁶⁶ No wonder that regional president of the Medical Association of Honduras (CMH), Roberto Castellanos, speaks of sick public health system is sick on the brink of collapse. He further denounced that the JOH regime is misusing the program "Code Green" to employ not-needed National Party activists in the health sector.²⁶⁷

Budget

CESPAD published a three-part series on the general budget this month. "In three linked articles, this work presents and shows, through well-founded data, that the public budget in Honduras is oriented - perhaps naively, but either way perversely - to expenses that do not solve the urgent and structural problems of the population , so the budget is NOT FRIENDLY with the needs of the population. In other words, social spending [1] is NOT a priority for the government."²⁶⁸ "In the previous article (first part), we showed in detail how in the last decade (post-coup period of 2009) the budget has prioritized payments of public debt and military spending to the detriment of social spending. In this second part we address the lack of budget management planning that is behind this prioritization. We will try to show that, for this reason, the management of public spending, as an expression of the political will of the government, is perverted as a tool meant to promote development."²⁶⁹ "While many nations of the world, and in Latin America in particular, point to a more active social budget, in Honduras (as we have highlighted in parts 1 and 2 on this subject), there is a growing abandonment of social spending to favor military spending and the payment of public debt. The analysis we have done exposes the inadequate management and lack of a vision in developing budget policies by he current government, which translates into worsening social indicators, pessimism and the loss of confidence of citizens, who see how the country moves away more and more from inclusive and sustainable development. In this third and last part, we present many of these indicators in comparison with the rest of the Central American countries. It is not an exhaustive review, due to the obvious limitations of this article. But the comparative data allow us

264 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/maestros-de-el-paraiso-exigen-la-destitucion-del-director-departamental-por-no-respetar-sus-derechos/>

265 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/representantes-de-educacion-no-asistieron-a-reunion-para-proceso-de-solventar-denuncias-magisteriales/>

266 <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/02/honduras-14-medicos-y-enfermeras-por-cada-10000-habitantes/>

267 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/salud-publica-avanza-al-descalabro-segun-doctor-roberto-castellanos-del-cmh/>

268 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/02/05/el-sin-sentido-del-presupuesto-nacional-hacia-donde-nos-lleva-el-endeudamiento-y-el-gasto-militar-crecientes/>

269 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/02/08/analisisgasto-del-dinero-del-pueblo-desquiciado-y-sin-orientacion/>

to warn, in greater detail, how budget management in Honduras moves between nonsense and improvisation, and how as a consequence this points only to a deepening of the current crisis."²⁷⁰

Nepotism

The 32-year old daughter of Congress' president Mauricio Oliva, Rina María Oliva Brizzio, was nominated to the board of directors at the Central Bank of Honduras (BCH). According to Criterio, her nomination violates the Organic Law of the BCH.²⁷¹ Even though this decision was widely criticized, the JOH regime stayed firm.²⁷²

Migration

Migration from Honduras to the North has been a constant feature of the country. These last months, migration has made headlines due to a new form it has taken, the migrant caravans. Ana Ortega presents these caravans as a new form of transnational protest²⁷³ - a protest against poverty, insecurity, corruption and more.²⁷⁴ According to the sociology professor Roque Castro Suarez, the migrants become political agents, from the excluded to the mobilized.²⁷⁵ This political dimension was especially seen in the US, where Trump used Central American migration as an excuse to declare a national emergency. Amelia Frank-Vitale challenged him in the Washington Post to come to visit Honduras, to see a the 'real emergency'. "Since I moved to San Pedro Sula, Honduras, in September 2017 to do research for my doctoral dissertation, I've accompanied a 16-year-old with three bullet holes in his body to the hospital, only to find that there was no blood for transfusions. I've looked in the face of a young mother, anguished over whether she should try to make it the United States, because the gang that she used to be a part of but had left behind wanted to pull her back in. I've gotten tearful phone calls from a single mother and her two children, who have been told by a gang that they want her house — and she has nowhere else to go. I've talked to many families whose teenagers have been taken away by police, never to be seen again. And I've also talked to police officers who have given up on law enforcement here, as their superiors undermine honest work and reward corruption."²⁷⁶

Trump did not come, but US delegations visited Honduras during February and migration was always a topic, or rather the criminalization of migration reproducing lies of centrally-organized migrant caravans.²⁷⁷ ²⁷⁸ Secretary of Homeland Security, Kirstjen M. Nielsen, spoke of a "historic

²⁷⁰ <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/02/13/honduras-entre-un-ascendente-gasto-militar-y-un-gasto-social-en-picada-una-mirada-comparativa-con-otros-paises-de-la-region/>

²⁷¹ <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/08/hija-de-mauricio-oliva-juramentada-como-directora-del-banco-central-de-honduras/>

²⁷² <http://elpulso.hn/a-pesar-de-las-protestas-de-distintos-sectores-hija-de-oliva-se-mantiene-en-el-bch/>

²⁷³ <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/02/02/son-las-caravanas-de-migrantes-una-nueva-forma-de-protesta-social-transnacional/>

²⁷⁴ <https://criterio.hn/2019/02/21/estudio-revela-que-pobreza-inseguridad-y-factores-culturales-causan-migracion-de-hondurenos/>

²⁷⁵ <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/02/16/huyendo-de-las-honduras-de-excluidos-a-movilizados/>

²⁷⁶ https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/you-want-to-see-a-real-emergency-ir-president-visit-me-in-honduras/2019/02/16/4650383c-3151-11e9-8ad3-9a5b113ecd3c_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.6c45733c8a50

²⁷⁷ <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1261055-466/honduras-y-estados-unidos-discuten-acciones-contra-impulsores-de-las-caravanas>

²⁷⁸ <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3225-insolito-ee-uu-y-honduras-encarcelaran-a-responsables-de-caravanas>



commitment" to reduce "irregular" migration.²⁷⁹ The IACHR felt compelled to remind Honduras of their citizens' right to migrate.²⁸⁰

And Light at the End of a Month

Radio Progreso spoke with the campesino group Buenos Amigos about organic agriculture in Honduras. "When the value of friendship is used to defend, care for and cultivate the land in a natural way, it is worth keeping good friends."²⁸¹

279 <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2019/02/21/secretary-nielsen-announces-historic-steps-northern-triangle-security-ministers>

280 <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2019/037.asp>

281 <https://wp.radioprogreso.net/grupo-campesino-buenos-amigos-destaca-el-valor-de-la-agricultura-organica/>



Another Month at the Honduras Forum Switzerland

Past Activities:

-

Upcoming Activities:

- The Honduras Forum Switzerland will participate in a three-day forum on human rights and Central America in Germany from March 22-24. For more information: <https://www.ev-akademie-boll.de/tagung/430119.html>

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