

# *Another Month in Honduras...*

## Human Rights Monitor – March 2019

The MACCIH and UFEVIC presented two new corruption cases, one of them linked with the assassination of Berta Cáceres. Meanwhile, those journalists reporting on corruption, such as David Romero, are arrested or worse. On March 17, the journalist Gabriel Hernández was murdered, the 34<sup>th</sup> under the JOH regime. The same month, Honduran-US relations went from a “historic agreement” to a cutting of aid in less than 24 hours. 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

OACNUDH presented its annual report this month, available in Spanish<sup>1</sup> and English<sup>2</sup>. In the accompanying press release, OACNUDH reiterated its concern regarding the ongoing militarization of public security and the impunity of the crimes during the post-electoral repression.<sup>3</sup> They also highlighted a worrisome "pattern of criminalization of human rights defenders, including indigenous, campesino and environmental activists".<sup>4</sup> <sup>5</sup> Radio Progreso summarized the report by OACNUDH as "a report which exposes the grave human rights situation in the country".<sup>6</sup>

On the international women's day, CESPAD talked to three women human rights defenders and feminists to ask them about the current challenges faced by Honduran women.<sup>7</sup> Honduran women took to the streets<sup>8</sup> and many civil society organizations published press releases.<sup>9</sup> <sup>10</sup> <sup>11</sup>

## Attacks, Criminalization and Harassment

CESPAD director Gustavo Irías published an analysis on the use of criminal law to criminalize HRDs in Honduras. The Guapinol case (see Mining sub-section) set a worrisome precedent as the case was handled by a national court initially set up to try cases of organized crime and drug trafficking.<sup>12</sup> A mural dedicated to women defenders on the office wall of the Ecumenical Women for the Right to Chose (EED) was partially disfigured. EED has suffered various attacks in the recent months.<sup>13</sup> The same week, the HRD Nivia Vargas suffered an attack. Vargas is part of ACI-Participa and she was harassed by a group of men affiliated with the National Party during a protest in Choluteca against the Nationalist president of Congress, Mauricio Oliva.<sup>14</sup> Then, there was a new defamatory online campaign against the three HRDs Reina Rivera Joya, Wilfredo Méndez and Edy Tábor.<sup>15</sup> Labor leader Waldin Banegas fled Honduras this month after receiving death threats. He is the president of the labor union Sitrastar in El Progreso, Yoro.<sup>16</sup>

The International Observatory of at risk Lawyers wrote an open letter to JOH expressing their concerns about the security of the HRD and lawyer Víctor Fernández. He coordinates MADJ and is also the legal representative of COPINH.<sup>17</sup> On March 22, Ed Tábor, director of C-Libre, warned of a new escalation by the JOH regime against unwelcome civil society organizations and media outlets. "Now they are resorting to closing bank accounts of organizations that are not in tune with the government of Juan Hernandez."<sup>18</sup> Reporteros de Investigación denounced that the JOH regime

1 [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1k\\_VKjWDTngmlQzGEfeLkVTcxQYPK3bz0/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1k_VKjWDTngmlQzGEfeLkVTcxQYPK3bz0/view)

2 [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HY84yNMEhw3jFHINTB434eS\\_d6pBH8o1/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HY84yNMEhw3jFHINTB434eS_d6pBH8o1/view)

3 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/funciones-de-la-policia-militar-se-han-normalizado-en-honduras-senala-oficina-del-alto-comisionado-de-naciones-unidas/>

4 <https://tiempo.hn/informe-onu-desmilitarizacion-funciones-orden-publico/>

5 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/la-impunidad-es-generalizada-en-honduras-senala-informe-de-la-onu.html>

6 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/un-informe-que-desnuda-la-grave-situacion-de-derechos-humanos-en-el-pais/>

7 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/03/07/a-mas-de-un-siglo-de-conmemoracion-el-dia-internacional-de-la-mujer-que-pasa-en-honduras/>

8 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2422-mujeres-se-plantan-en-el-mp-y-exigen-justicia-por-crime-impunes>

9 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/03/08/8-de-marzo-una-conmemoracion-mas-con-violencia-e-impunidad-para-las-mujeres/>

10 <https://copinh.org/2019/03/1-trashed-2/>

11 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/mujeres-en-honduras-nuestro-cuerpo-no-es-un-campo-de-batalla/>

12 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/03/07/analisis-derecho-penal-del-enemigo-la-logica-que-utiliza-el-estado-de-honduras-para-judicializar-defensores-de-bienes-comunes-de-la-naturaleza/>

13 <http://im-defensoras.org/2019/03/alertadefensoras-honduras-atacan-instalaciones-de-ecumenicas-por-el-derecho-a-decidir-y-causan-desperfectos-a-mural-dedicado-a-berta-caceres-margarita-murillo-y-las-hermanas-mirabal/>

14 <http://im-defensoras.org/2019/03/alertadefensoras-honduras-agresion-sexual-agresion-fisica-y-amenazas-contra-nivia-vargas-de-aci-participa/>

15 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/969-persiste-desprestigio-contra-defensores-entre-ellos-director-de-c-libre>

16 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/lider-sindical-maquillero-abandona-el-pais-tras-sufrir-una-serie-de-amenazas-a-muerte/>

17 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/22/como-si-no-supiera-oiad-informa-a-joh-de-peligro-sobre-victor-fernandez/>

18 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/22/gobierno-practica-escalada-de-criminalizacion-contra-organizaciones-de-sociedad-civil/>

treats the students who had protested last year against the high fuel prices as a criminal organization and it ordered surveillance on some of them.<sup>19</sup> COPINH, OFRANEH, the Association of Judges for Democracy (AJD) and Libre were also affected by state surveillance.<sup>20</sup> Reporteros de Investigación spoke with the coordinator of the Association of Judges for Democracy (AJD), Guillermo López Lone, about this.<sup>21</sup>

Campesinxs once more were especially targeted by the JOH regime. Two members of the Empresa Campesina 11 de Marzo, José Santos Vázquez and Juan Mejía, were arrested yesterday in El Porvenir near Siguatepeque, Comayagua. They are being criminalized for land recuperation efforts. They were brought to court, where members of their collective protested outside.<sup>22</sup> Then the police arrived and arrested the president of the collective, Vicente Castro.<sup>23</sup> In court, meanwhile, the judge decided that the two campesinos had to await trial in prison<sup>24</sup> - the same day that high-level officials accused of corruption were allowed to return home to await trial in the Gualcarque Fraud case (see Corruption section). COPINH denounces an attack against a community member of La Alianza, near Siguatepeque, a peasant community in the process to recuperate land which has been ongoing for 18 years.<sup>25</sup>

## Indigenous Peoples

COPINH looked back on 26 years of "struggle and revolution" this month. They were founded on March 27, 1993 in La Esperanza, or as they write: "Nace la Esperanza en La Esperanza".<sup>26</sup> And the struggle for Honduras' indigenous peoples continues. The MP cited the indigenous Garífuna defender and coordinator of OFRANEH, Miriam Miranda, on the anniversary of Berta's assassination.<sup>27 28</sup> It is fear that this will be a new attempt to criminalize her.<sup>29</sup>

Later in the month, a group of indigenous Lencas - initially 11, but only 9 remained - sought refuge in the embassy of Taiwan demanding a tripartite commission to guarantee them access to their territory without persecution.<sup>30</sup> They occupied the reception area of the embassy.<sup>31</sup> They chose this embassy for its support of the JOH regime denouncing that they did not benefit from this aid, rather it led to their dispossession.<sup>32</sup> After a week, a court ordered the eviction of their community from their land, affecting some 90 families. The JOH regime also demanded the arrest of four of them.<sup>33</sup>

19 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/03/25/interceptadas-comunicaciones-de-33-universitarios-del-meu-participantes-de-protestas-y-de-defensores-de-derechos-humanos-los-quieren-vincular-al-narcotrafico%ef%bb%bf/>

20 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/03/26/inteligencia-intercepto-no-solo-al-meu-sino-al-copinh-ajd-ofraneh-y-al-5-de-julio-denuncia-ex-precandidato-presidencial/>

21 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/03/27/infiltracion-militar-preocupa-a-organizaciones-de-derechos-humanos/>

22 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/miembros-de-la-empresa-campesina-11-de-marzo-a-la-espera-de-audiencia-de-declaracion-de-imputados/>

23 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/alerta-detienen-a-presidente-de-base-campesina-en-siguatepeque-cuando-se-solidarizaba-con-companeros-en-los-juzgados/>

24 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/sin-objetividad-dictan-detencion-judicial-a-campesinos-de-la-11-de-marzo/>

25 <https://copinh.org/2019/03/alerta-el-copinh-denuncia-hostigamientos-amenazas-e-intento-de-demolicion-de-una-casa-en-la-comunidad-de-la-alianza-municipio-de-siguatepeque-2/>

26 <https://copinh.org/2019/03/26-anos-de-lucha-y-revolucion/>

27 <http://im-defensoras.org/2019/03/alertadefensoras-honduras-intimidacion-y-hostigamiento-judicial-contra-miriam-miranda-coordinadora-de-la-ofraneh/>

28 <https://tiempo.hn/ministerio-publico-cita-a-la-ambientalista-garifuna-miriam-miranda/>

29 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2420-ahora-otro-juicio-contra-miriam-miranda-incesante-la-caceria-del-ministerio-publico-contra-defensores-y-defensoras-de-los-territorios>

30 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/silencio-total-para-indigenas-refugiados-en-embajada-de-taiwan/>

31 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/por-que-refugiarse-en-la-embajada-de-china-taiwan/>

32 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/22/lencas-de-tierras-del-padre-temen-perder-la-vida-por-la-ambicion-de-un-terratiente/amp/>

33 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/25/orden-de-desalojo-y-captura-contra-pobladores-de-las-tierras-del-padre/>

## The Case of Berta Cáceres

Three years have passed since the assassination of Berta Cáceres. On the anniversary, CEJIL demanded that "the State comply with its obligation to investigate, prosecute and punish all persons responsible for this crime and we denounce the serious situation of risk faced by human rights defenders in Honduras".<sup>34</sup> Amnesty International's Americas director Erika Guevara-Rosas reminded us that "[t]he Honduran justice system still has a responsibility to pursue a thorough investigation into her death. It must identify all those responsible for this crime – not just those directly involved – and ensure that it does not go unpunished".<sup>35</sup> OACNUDH tweeted that "justice is only served with the prosecution of the material and intellectual authors"<sup>36 37</sup> and the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders Michel Forst published an OpEd in the Spanish newspaper El País on Berta.<sup>38</sup>

In the US, Senator Jeff Merkley highlighted the lack of investigation into the intellectual authors and also linked her case to the ongoing criminalization of HRDs. "While seven men who helped orchestrate the murder were recently convicted, many Hondurans are still wondering if the senior government and business figures involved in this assassination will ever face justice. Sadly, Berta's case is not an anomaly; it is a symptom of a much larger system of corruption. To see that this corruption is alive and well, you only have to look to the recent arrest of 12 environmental activists in retaliation for their protests."<sup>39</sup> US Senator Patrick Leahy published a powerful press release highlighting that it was not an isolated case and that justice in the case of the intellectual authors still needs to be served. He went on: "Beyond Berta Cáceres' case, the central question is whether the Honduran Government is serious about fighting the corruption that permeates not only the justice system, but practically every crevice of Honduran society and government. (...) The Honduran Government, which professes to be a partner of the United States in fighting corruption, is not doing any of these things. The inescapable truth is that it is not serious about fighting corruption, which is apparent to anyone who is not easily fooled. Until that changes, and until all those involved in the murder of Berta Cáceres are brought to justice, and until Hondurans who speak out against corruption and impunity are no longer vilified and attacked, the amount of assistance we provide to the Honduran Government will be far less than it would otherwise be."<sup>40 41</sup> Representative Hank Johnson also published a press release.<sup>42</sup> The US embassy, meanwhile, did not mention the intellectual authors but calls for "free, fair, and transparent legal processes grounded in due process and respect for the rule of law".<sup>43</sup>

Berta's daughter and Libre congresswoman Olivia Marcela Zúniga Cáceres presented one year ago a Berta Cáceres Bill. This month, she held a press conference to inform about its status.<sup>44 45</sup> In the US, Congresswo/men Hank Johnson, Jan Schakowsky, José Serrano and Marcia Kaptur (OH-09)

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.cejil.org/es/3-anos-del-asesinato-bera-caceres-honduras-debe-garantizar-justicia-integral>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/02/honduras-authorities-must-bring-all-those-suspected-of-responsibility-for-the-murder-of-bera-caceres-to-justice/>

<sup>36</sup> <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1101892031335620608>

<sup>37</sup> <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1101891615705219072>

<sup>38</sup> [https://elpais.com/elpais/2019/02/28/planeta\\_futuro/1551371737\\_913365.amp.html?\\_twitter\\_impression=true](https://elpais.com/elpais/2019/02/28/planeta_futuro/1551371737_913365.amp.html?_twitter_impression=true)

<sup>39</sup> <https://twitter.com/SenJeffMerkley/status/1101878284097413120>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.leahy.senate.gov/press/030419bertacacerasanniversarystmt>

<sup>41</sup> <https://twitter.com/SenatorLeahy/status/1102692618134306816>

<sup>42</sup> <https://hankjohnson.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/rep-johnson-commemorates-death-bera-c-ceres>

<sup>43</sup> <https://twitter.com/USAmbHonduras/status/1101859864882626561>

<sup>44</sup> <http://defensoresenlinea.com/familia-de-bera-caceres-espera-ver-presos-a-los-autores-intelectuales-de-su-asesinato/>

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/1000-que-se-desengavete-ley-bera-caceres-exigen-sus-familiares>

reintroduced with the support of 43 Members of Congress, the Berta Cáceres Human Rights in Honduras Act. "This bill will work to ensure that the Honduran government, military, and police cannot commit crimes or act of violence against the Honduran people with impunity. Berta Cáceres's legacy of activism inspired the world, but the Honduran government failed to protect her. This legislation serves as a stern check on the Honduran government, and a beacon of long-sought justice for the people of Honduras."<sup>46</sup>

## LGBTQ

The IACHR expressed its concerns regarding recent acts of violence and discrimination against the LGBTQ community and it calls out to its members states to better protect them.

### Assassinations<sup>47</sup>

A trans woman was murdered in Roatán on March 2.<sup>48</sup>

## Freedom of Expression and Journalists

It was another dark month for freedom of expression in Honduras. While the situation of journalists had not improved much these last months and some even chose self-imposed exile, there were at least no more assassinations for a while. This changed this month with the murder of the social communicator Gabriel Hernández in Nacaome (see sub-section below). The other main case in the news was the one of journalist and director of Radio Globo, David Romero. Last month, he had a ten-year prison sentence for defamation against him confirmed and he feared his imminent arrest.<sup>49</sup> On March 14, it was made public that the arrest warrant against him was about to be executed.<sup>50</sup> Romero's defense team presented a legal challenge to stop this.<sup>51</sup> The vice-president of Congress, Mario Noé Villafranca, called the JOH regime a threat to freedom of expression.<sup>52</sup> The journalist Lidieth Díaz denounced it as a tool to silence voices uncovering corruption cases.<sup>53</sup> And even the sometimes rather aligned president of the Journalists Association of Honduras (CPH), Dagoberto Rodríguez, spoke of a regime of censorship and a precarious situation for freedom of expression.<sup>54</sup>

A week later, a court admitted a legal challenge by Romero<sup>55</sup> and the IACHR asked the State of Honduras to suspend the sentence against him.<sup>56</sup> To better protect himself against an arrest, Romero decided to stay in hiding. On March 25, he reappeared in the program Interpreting the News when the police arrived at the installations of Radio Globo to arrest him. Romero denounced this on air and people came to the building in solidarity with him. Romero stayed the night inside the facilities.<sup>57</sup> C-Libre demanded that the Judicial Power complied with the IACHR and suspended the

46 <https://hankjohnson.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/rep-johnson-reintroduces-bertha-c-ceres-human-rights-honduras-act>

47 <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2019/065.asp>

48 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/apunalan-y-asesinan-a-miembro-de-lgbti-en-roatan.html>

49 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/periodista-david-romero-a-la-espera-que-se-ejecute-orden-de-captura-en-su-contra.html>

50 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1267381-466/libran-orden-de-captura-contra-el-periodista-hondure%C3%B1o-david-romero>

51 <https://tiempo.hn/recurso-para-suspender-captura-david-romero/>

52 <https://confidencialhn.com/un-gobierno-que-condena-periodistas-es-una-amenaza-para-la-libertad-de-expresion/>

53 <https://confidencialhn.com/joh-pretende-silenciar-con-carcel-a-periodistas-que-denuncian-actos-de-corrupcion-lidieth-diaz/>

54 <https://tiempo.hn/cph-sobre-david-romero-perro-guardian/>

55 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/19/corte-admite-recurso-en-favor-de-periodista-david-romero/amp/>

56 <https://tiempo.hn/cidh-suspender-captura-david-romero-ellner/>

57 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/25/david-romero-pernoctara-en-radio-globo-para-evitar-ser-encarcelado/>



sentence.<sup>58</sup> Even CONADEH demanded protection for Romero.<sup>59</sup> The police, meanwhile, claimed that the arrest warrant was still valid and later the night, the Appeals Court announced that they dismissed an appeal by the defense of Romero.<sup>60</sup>

After a three-day stand-off, the police joined by Military Police and TIGRES agents arrested Romero through forced entry into the installations of Radio Globo.<sup>61</sup> <sup>62</sup> This meant that the JOH regime once more had ignored a petition by the IACHR.<sup>63</sup> Romero was then brought to the Second Battalion of the Special Tactics Forces in Támara, Francisco Morazán.<sup>64</sup> Defensores en Línea made the link to the coup d'état, during which Radio Globo was shut down<sup>65</sup>, and the School of Journalism at UNAH called it an dictatorial act.<sup>66</sup> C-Libre denounced that the presidential secretary Ebal Díaz used hate speech when he commented on Romero's arrest directed not only against Romero, but also other journalists and HRDs.<sup>67</sup>

OACNUDH tweeted as a response: "OACNUDH reiterates that in relation to the crime of defamation it is advisable to adopt appropriate solutions through civil and non-criminal procedures, while remembering that human rights mechanisms, #EPU #ComiteDDHH #Relatorlibertadexpresión have requested the State of Honduras to consider the possibility of decriminalizing crimes against honor."<sup>68</sup> The IACHR disapproved Romero's arrest citing the special protection measures granted for him.<sup>69</sup> Human rights scholar Joaquín Mejía lists 10 reasons of why the special protection measures by the IACHR are mandatory and why, therefore, Honduras failed to comply weakening the Inter-American Human Rights System.<sup>70</sup> Libre presented a bill to decriminalize crimes against honor<sup>71</sup> and CONADEH also demanded it.<sup>72</sup> A day previous to his arrest, CESPAD published a helpful analysis shining some light on the "judicial and political labyrinth of the David Romero case".<sup>73</sup>

Next to Romero's case, there were many more painting a very bleak panorama for Honduras' journalists. The journalist Rogelio Trejo had covered a violent eviction by the police of street vendors in Choloma, Cortés last month. Now he faces harassment and criminalization.<sup>74</sup> A private security guard physically harassed the social communicator and journalism student Nancy García on the UNAH campus.<sup>75</sup> She was filming how the guard attacked a group of children when the guard went after her, hitting her, taking her phone and even pointed his gun at her.<sup>76</sup> A police agent threatened to imprison the social communicator Mauricio Ortega for covering a news event in Omoa, Cortés.<sup>77</sup> While the journalist Miriam Elvir continued to suffer from ongoing attacks and

58 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/pronunciamientos/977-c-libre-exige-aplicacion-de-medidas-cautelares-en-favor-de-david-romero>

59 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/03/25/conadeh-pide-proteccion-para-periodista-romero-ellner/>

60 <https://tiempo.hn/csj-inadmisible-amparo-david-romero-ellner/>

61 <https://apnews.com/0ff1b0b5cbb4f56bc61fd2783c43d>

62 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/979-fuerzas-policiales-imponen-terror-a-periodistas-de-radio-globo>

63 <https://tiempo.hn/csj-sobre-captura-david-romero-sin-lugar-cidh/>

64 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/28/david-romero-fue-llevado-al-segundo-batallon-tactico-especial/>

65 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/allanamiento-de-radio-globo-revive-el-golpe-de-estado-del-2009/>

66 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3283-propio-de-dictaduras-escuela-de-periodismo-sobre-captura-de-david>

67 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/29/el-ministerio-publico-deberia-acusar-a-ebal-diaz-por-el-delito-de-apologia-al-odio/amp/>

68 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1111347786417606656>

69 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/29/la-cidh-reprueba-la-detencion-del-periodista-david-romero/amp/>

70 <https://confidencialhn.com/honduras-incumple-con-sus-obligaciones-internacionales-al-no-acatar-las-medidas-cautelares-de-la-comision-interamericana-de-derechos-humanos/>

71 <https://tiempo.hn/libre-despenalizar-delitos-contra-honor/>

72 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/sancion-penal-de-delitos-contra-el-honor-intimida-a-periodistas-y-particulares-ombudsman.html>

73 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/03/27/el-laberinto-juridico-y-politico-del-caso-david-romero/>

74 <http://www.pasosdeanmalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2421-represion-contra-la-prensa-en-investigacion-periodista-por-cubrir-desalojo-violento-de-policias-municipales-en-choloma>

75 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/970-guardia-de-seguridad-agrede-fisicamente-a-comunicadora-y-estudiante-de-la-unah>

76 <https://avispa.org/agreden-fisicamente-a-colaboradora-de-avispa-midia-en-honduras/>

77 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/971-policia-amenaza-con-meter-presos-a-comunicador-mientras-cubre-suceso>



harassment, the MP informed her that they stopped looking into the death threats she had received.<sup>78</sup> The journalist Rigoberto Mendoza suffers persecution by Adán Fúnez, the mayor of Tocoa, Colón, for covering the situation in Guapinol - the community resistance against a mining project.<sup>79</sup> After an ATIC official told journalist Edgar Francescoly Serrano Portillo that they know of a plan to murder him, he left Honduras for the US.<sup>80</sup>

But journalists also face problems with access of information. According to the expert on access to public information and national security at the Open Society Institute, Mariana Mas, "Honduras has become the country in Latin America with the greatest abuse of exceptional national security for the management of public information."<sup>81</sup> C-Libre presented a constitutional challenge against the National Intelligence Law, i.e. two of its articles which drastically limit access to information.<sup>82</sup>

Women journalists face additional obstacles as highlighted by the IACHR in the study "Women Journalists and Freedom of Expression."<sup>83</sup> But journalists do not take this face down. Due to the ongoing and sometimes even increasing insecurity faced by journalists in Honduras, a group of them in the Valle department came together to form the Journalists Association of Valle "Gabriel Hernández" (APV Gabriel Hernández) in honor of the recently murdered journalist Gabriel Hernández.<sup>84</sup> They also work on their skills, e.g. with a workshop by C-Libre, FOSDEH and AJD on investigative journalism.<sup>85</sup> There may also be some more future support from the international level. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) demanded a new "UN instrument with binding mechanisms to protect journalists and media professionals".<sup>86</sup>

## Assassinations

The social communicator Gabriel Hernández was murdered on his way home in Nacaome, Valle. He was the director of the TV program "El pueblo habla" ("The people speak") and was very critical of the JOH regime.<sup>87</sup> Reporteros de Investigación explained that he was murdered in a place with a low homicide rate counteracting the narrative by the JOH regime that journalists or HRDs fall victim to common crime.<sup>88</sup> He was the 34th journalist to be murdered during JOH's presidency which began in January 2014. C-Libre denounces that he had requested support from the protection mechanism but was denied.<sup>89</sup> <sup>90</sup> A colleague of Hernández, the journalist Leonel García, recently received death threats and also asked for protection. It was denied as well and he fears for the worst.<sup>91</sup>

78 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2432-balas-y-persecucion-no-aplican-mecanismo-y-la-fiscalia-de-proteccion-desampan-a-periodista-amenazada-de-muerte>

79 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2434-periodista-asegura-que-el-alcaldede-adan-funez-lo-persigue-hasta-en-su-casa-en-tocoa-colon>

80 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/investigaciones/1017-honduras-el-pais-del-que-huyen-los-periodistas>

81 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/20/en-honduras-hay-un-excesivo-y-abusivo-uso-de-la-excepcion-de-seguridad-nacional/amp/>

82 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/noticias/974-deben-declarar-inconstitucional-los-articulos-18-y-19-de-la-ley-de-inteligencia>

83 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2423-segun-la-cidh-entornos-amenazantes-restringen-la-libertad-de-expresion-de-mujeres-periodistas-en-las-americas>

84 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/03/29/nace-asociacion-de-periodistas-de-valle-gabriel-herandez-ante-alto-riesgo-de-la-prensa-del-sur-de-honduras-%ef%bb%bf/>

85 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/libertad-de-expresion/1001-el-periodismo-de-investigacion-en-honduras-una-necesidad-que-se-debe-fortalecer>

86 [https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/politics/media-under-pressure\\_proposed-un-convention-aims-to-better-protect-journalists/44832164](https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/politics/media-under-pressure_proposed-un-convention-aims-to-better-protect-journalists/44832164)

87 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/972-urgente-asesinan-a-periodista-en-departamento-de-valle>

88 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/03/17/asesinan-periodista-critico-de-alcaldede-y-diputado-habia-pedido-medidas-de-proteccion/>

89 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/17/comunicador-asesinado-en-nacaome-la-victima-numero-77-del-gremio-segun-conadeh/>

90 <https://tiempo.hn/proteccion-solicitado-negaron-a-gabriel-herandez/>

91 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/03/17/periodista-leonel-garcia-corre-alto-riesgo-tras-asesinato-de-su-companero-el-mecanismo-de-proteccion-le-nego-medidas/>

Forensics initially did not conduct an autopsy of Hernández. Once he was about to be buried, they arrived at the funeral, removed the body from the coffin and took him back to conduct the autopsy.<sup>92</sup>  
<sup>93</sup> <sup>94</sup> HRD Dina Meza believes that Hernández was murdered for reporting on misconduct by the local mayor and congresswo/men.<sup>95</sup> <sup>96</sup>

## Violence against Women

Gender violence, especially against women by their partners, continues to rise. 2018, there were more than 10'000 cases, over a 1000 cases more than in 2017.<sup>97</sup> Some of the survivors find shelter in safe houses.<sup>98</sup> Two studies presented this month also looked at violence against women focusing on human trafficking. The Life Quality Association presented "The socioeconomic impact of female victims of human trafficking after their reintegration in social life".<sup>99</sup> <sup>100</sup> The following day, the NORC institute of the University of Chicago presented the USAID-funded "Study on the Knowledge, Perception and Identification of Victims of Human Trafficking in Honduras". They found that 14 persons per month fall victim to human trafficking in Honduras.<sup>101</sup>

The murder of Gabriel Hernández also caused an international outcry.<sup>102</sup> The Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression at the IACHR condemned the murder and demanded an investigation into his murder also looking into the link to his work as a journalist.<sup>103</sup> But the opposite took place. The JOH regime tried to present his murder as one by Maras.<sup>104</sup> They even already arrested two MS members as the presumed culprits.<sup>105</sup> <sup>106</sup> They also try to blame the victim, claiming that he has not sought the help of the protection mechanism while it was the mechanism that denied him support.<sup>107</sup>

## Protection Mechanism

This month, OACNUDH published a report on the human rights situation in Honduras. Pasos de Animal Grande highlighted its findings regarding the protection mechanism. "The document also assures that despite the fact that in 2018 the Protection Mechanism enlarged its range of traditional protection measures, with the implementation of police escorts, emergency contact numbers and infrastructure improvements, the National Protection Council remains weak, due to the lack of commitment by member State institutions. Among these institutions, OACNUDH mentions the MP and the Supreme Court of Justice, organizations that for lack of interest of their leaders do not participate in the meetings of the Protection Mechanism Council, of which they are a part. Until November 2018, the Council held eight meetings, but of the total, the MP only participated in one, while the Judiciary [participated] in two. This situation creates distrust in the people who lead the

<sup>92</sup> <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/03/18/impunidad-sin-autopsia-periodista-asesinado-ademas-habia-rechazado-escolta-de-la-policia-porque-temia-que-ellos-mismos-le-harian-algo/>

<sup>93</sup> <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/03/18/un-dia-despues-de-su-asesinato-sacan-de-ataud-a-periodista-para-hacerle-autopsia/>

<sup>94</sup> <https://tiempo.hn/forenses-irrumpen-velorio-de-periodista-autopsia/>

<sup>95</sup> <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/03/18/periodista-asesinado-cuestionaba-a-politicos-de-nacaome/>

<sup>96</sup> <https://tiempo.hn/dina-meza-sobre-periodista-en-valle/>

<sup>97</sup> <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1271777-466/honduras-345-casos-de-violencia-dom%C3%A9stica-al-mes-lleva-el-ministerio-p%C3%ABblico>

<sup>98</sup> <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/03/12/un-mundo-de-sobrevivientes-en-desamparo-estatal/>

<sup>99</sup> <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/06/mujeres-victimas-de-trata-de-personas-viven-precaria-situacion-revela-estudio-video/>

<sup>100</sup> <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/03/06/el-tormento-despues-de-la-trata-de-personas-en-honduras/>

<sup>101</sup> <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1265353-466/14-menores-al-mes-son-v%C3%AAdctimas-de-trata-de-personas-en-honduras>

<sup>102</sup> <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/libertad-de-expresion/1011-organismos-internacionales-demandan-esclarecer-asesinato-de-periodista-gabriel-herandez>

<sup>103</sup> <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/expression/showarticle.asp?artID=1135&IID=2>

<sup>104</sup> <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/03/20/con-falsos-positivos-quieren-desprestigar-a-periodista-asesinado-que-cuestionaba-a-diputado-alfredo-saavedra/>

<sup>105</sup> <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/20/policia-dice-haber-capturado-sospechosos-de-dar-muerte-a-periodista-en-nacaome/>

<sup>106</sup> <https://tiempo.hn/capturan-implicados-asesinato-periodista-en-nacaome/>

<sup>107</sup> <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/secretaria-de-ddhh-niega-que-periodista-herandez-se-acogio-a-mecanismo-de-proteccion-y-piden-esclarecer-muerte.html>

human rights organizations and aggravates the context in which the actions of advocacy and the exercise of journalism are conducted."<sup>108</sup>

One case in point is the situation of HRD and coordinator of MASSVIDA, Germán Chirinos. He sought out the help of the protection mechanism, but his case once more highlights some of the problem with the mechanism. The decision if one gets help is based on a security analysis, which is not automatically updated if new incidents take place. He laments: "At the meeting on February 25 the mechanism committee stated that they can not grant measures without conducting the risk analysis again (...), but according to the law, the risk analysis is done every six months."<sup>109</sup> On other occasions, the mechanisms outright fails to recognize HRDs in danger. COFADEH denounced that the protection mechanism negated protection to the councilor of Marcala, La Paz, Marlon Calles. He had received death threats for going after the illegal logging in the ecological reserve El Jilguero.<sup>110</sup>

There are additional problems with the MP body supposed to accompany the protection mechanism, the Special Public Prosecutor Unit for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Journalists, Social Communicators and Justice Operators. Pasos de Animal Grande made use of the Transparency and Access to Public Information Law to force the MP to finally inform about the work of the unit. Up to March, the unit had received 80 complaints, but it did not emit any indictments.<sup>111</sup>

## Political Prisoners

An international delegation traveled to Honduras this month. They held an "ecumenical vigil for political prisoners" outside the US embassy together with the Convergence against Continuity and the Committee for the Liberation of Political Prisoners.<sup>112 113</sup>

## Extractive Industries

Extractive industry projects have caused much harm in Honduras. Using the case of Guapinol as an example, Radio Progreso highlighted the collaboration of the national and the local level to force through concessions against the will of the people. "But for the implementation of this type of projects not only the approval of a concession in Congress is needed, as it happened in this case of the community of Guapinol in Tocoa, Colón, the national promoters need allies, faithful allies that allow the installation of the machinery and refuse to listen to the people who oppose these projects."<sup>114</sup> One tool widely used by communities to oppose such projects is to declare their territory free of such projects. This month, San Nicolás and Nuevo Celilac in Santa Bárbara did so. Their department is especially affected with 96 approved mining concessions and some 300 further

108 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2425-fiscalia-y-poder-judicial-debilitan-trabajo-del-mecanismo-de-proteccion-a-periodistas-y-defensores-de-ddhh>

109 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/el-mecanismo-de-proteccion-para-quien/>

110 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/estado-no-toma-en-serio-las-denuncias-sobre-el-riesgo-que-corre-regidor-marcialino/>

111 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2426-al-ras-del-suelo-la-fiscalia-de-proteccion-para-periodistas-y-defensores-de-ddhh>

112 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/ecumenical-vigil-in-front-of-the-us-embassy-for-political-prisoners-and-for-those-who-are-politically-persecuted-in-honduras/>

113 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/frente-a-embajada-de-eeuu-se-realizo-vigilia-ecumenica-por-los-presos-y-perseguidos-politicos-en-honduras/>

114 <https://wp.radioprogreso.net/adan-funez-entre-el-repudio-de-la-base-y-la-proteccion-de-la-dirigencia-de-libre/>

being requested as well as 32 concessions for hydroelectric projects.<sup>115</sup> Net to Santa Bárbara, another focus lies on the south of Honduras. "There is no doubt that, the South of Honduras does not hide anything - on the contrary - all its beauty has shone since forever, despite the fact that it has come to be seen as abandoned and that there is a political disinterest. But now there is a supposed attempt to rescue the area, through the state program "the hour of the south" which rather poses a threat for its inhabitants."<sup>116</sup>

## Mining

February had ended with a court date in the case of the criminalized HRDs of Guapinol whose outcome remained unknown (see last month's monitor). Radio Progreso presented it as a case of "judicial authoritarianism". They "are being subjected to a political rather than a criminal trial, in a court with territorial national jurisdiction, specialized in organized crime. These environmentalists are victims of influence peddling to the benefit of mining entrepreneur Lenir Pérez and his wife Ana Facussé. representing a clear violation of the fundamental rights of the accused, as reported by the technical defense team."<sup>117</sup> Fortunately, this improved this month. The judge Víctor Méndez ordered to drop the charges of usurpation and damages against the company Inversiones Los Pinares of the 13 HRDs.<sup>118</sup> These were the the charges filed in the first indictment, there was also a second indictment for unjust deprivation of freedom, theft, aggravated fire and illicit association. For another day, it remained unclear if the second indictment would stick, something the MP heavily pushed for.<sup>119</sup> <sup>120</sup> Then, the judge agreed with the criticism coming from national and international human rights organization<sup>121</sup> and dropped all the charges against them.<sup>122</sup>

The next afternoon, the HRDs from Guapinol were finally able to leave the prison.<sup>123</sup> OACNUDH welcomed the court decision in the Guapinol case, highlighting the important work of HRDs in Honduras and called out to the State of Honduras to recognize their work and to promote their protection. OACNUDH also reminded media outlets about their important role in reporting on these issues without denigrating HRDs.<sup>124</sup> COFADEH called out to everyone to stay vigilant. "The case of Guapinol is not a closed one, it is a case for which we must call out to the world to take care of it and we will take care of it; because the lives and freedom of many compatriots are at risk. We should not say that the case was won, a small step has been taken because it is half-way, other comrades are still facing charges and there are also actions that the Attorney General's Office (MP) can take to not give up on its manipulation to justify the case".<sup>125</sup> An important battle was won but that the struggle still continues.<sup>126</sup>

<sup>115</sup> <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/san-nicolas-y-nuevo-celilac-los-primeros-municipios-declarados-verdes-libres-de-extractivismo-en-honduras/>

<sup>116</sup> <http://defensoresenlinea.com/el-atractivo-sol-del-sur/>

<sup>117</sup> <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/autoritarismo-judicial-se-impone-en-audiencia-contra-ambientalistas-de-colon/>

<sup>118</sup> <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/02/ambientalistas-de-guapinol-sobrescidos-por-delitos-de-usurpacion-y-danos/amp/>

<sup>119</sup> <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/03/las-contundentes-pruebas-del-fiscal-cinco-estrellas-contra-ambientalistas-de-guapinol/amp/>

<sup>120</sup> <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/03/a-pandoros-y-asesinos-de-berta-caceres-no-los-acusan-de-asociacion-ilicita-omar-menjivar/amp/>

<sup>121</sup> <http://defensoresenlinea.com/presion-nacional-e-internacional-aporto-al-sobresimiento-definitivo-para-defensores-de-guapinol/>

<sup>122</sup> <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/declaran-sobresimiento-definitivo-a-favor-de-ambientalistas-de-guapinol/>

<sup>123</sup> <http://www.pasosdeaniamalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2419-por-fin-en-libertad-definitiva-defensores-de-guapinol-criminalizados>

<sup>124</sup> <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1102945258755772421>

<sup>125</sup> <http://defensoresenlinea.com/cofadeh-llama-a-mantener-la-atencion-constante-sobre-guapinol/>

<sup>126</sup> <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/03/04/guapinol-se-gano-una-batalla-no-la-guerra/>

Another battle will turn around the mining concession.<sup>127</sup> Libre congresswoman Patricia Murillo presented a motion demanding the investigation of the circumstances that led to the concession of the land in Guapinol.<sup>128</sup> Nationalist congresswo/men left Congress in protest when Murillo presented her motion.<sup>129</sup> At the end of March, CESPAD published a helpful analysis and overview of the situation in Guapinol. Media coverage decreased substantially after the criminalization charges were dropped, but the situation there remains tense.<sup>130</sup>

While the focus was, rightly, on the Guapinol case these last weeks, there are several cases of criminalization against HRDs active in Honduras. Another one involving a mining company, MINOSA, takes place in Azacualpa, Copán. 19 criminalized community leaders had to appear before court this month. The judge did not order pre-trial detention, but they still got alternative measures to imprisonment meaning regular and cumbersome trips to the court to sign in.<sup>131</sup> There are also fears of new mining concessions in Copán. The journalist Alessandra Bueso reports on the fear of 14 communities in Copán that there is uranium in their area. Already in 2015, the mining company Sociedad Mercantil Minerales Chortí presented four concessions requests for the area. One of the concessions is lies just outside the Archaeological Park of Copán Ruinas.<sup>132 133</sup>

## Hydroelectricity

On March 12, Criterio reported on the imminent ruling against the former deputy secretary of SERNA, Marco Jonathan Láinez Ordóñez. He is accused of illegally granting a license for a hydroelectric project on the Petacón river.<sup>134</sup> Nevertheless, there was no more media coverage on the case in the remainder of the month. It could be that the ruling was postponed. In another case, the members of the Indigenous Lenca Council of Reitoca, Francisco Morazán (CILRF) held a press conference this month denouncing the usurpation of their land by PROGELSA. They further denounced a lack of free, prior and informed consent and the damages suffered by the river.<sup>135</sup>

## Corruption and Its Enemies

The MACCIH was very active this month. It organized a public forum on judicial independence and the rule of law.<sup>136</sup> Then it presented together with the Justice Study Center of the Americas the report "Proposals for the Honduran Criminal Law System on Treating and Managing Cases of High Social Impact and Corruption".<sup>137 138</sup> Their findings are based on an investigation of four departments and they revolve around five main areas, e.g. systematic problems with the Honduran state affecting the judicial system.<sup>139</sup> The US embassy tweeted that it supports the

127 Some helpful background on the mining concession: <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/05/guapinol-con-la-mirada-de-la-corrupcion-e-impunidad-institucional-en-honduras/>

128 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/06/diputada-mocionada-para-que-se-investigue-proceso-de-concesion-minera-de-guapinol/amp/>

129 <https://tiempo.hn/nacionalistas-dejan-cn-propuesta-conflicto-en-guapinol/>

130 <http://cespad.org.hn/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Guapinol-WEB-1.pdf>

131 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2418-mp-se-luce-en-la-ilegalidad-medidas-sustitutivas-dicta-juez-para-defensores-criminalizados-por-minera-en-copan>

132 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/03/11/uranio-en-honduras-en-alerta-comunidades-del-occidente-del-pais/>

133 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/03/15/copan-ruinas-un-pueblo-que-detuvo-la-exploracion-minera-en-el-occidente-de-honduras/>

134 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/12/jonathan-lainez-podria-ir-a-la-carcel-por-otorgar-licencia-a-represa-petacon/>

135 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/continua-persecucion-contra-ambientalistas-de-reitoca-e-impunidad-para-detractores/>

136 [https://twitter.com/OEA\\_MACCIH/status/1102982355290071041](https://twitter.com/OEA_MACCIH/status/1102982355290071041)

137 [http://biblioteca.cejamerica.org/bitstream/handle/2015/5627/Resumen%20Ejecutivo%20Investigaci%C3%B3n%20Honduras\\_completo.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y&fbclid=IwAR0X8rFGQnq\\_rQ8m-rFVrKyRI-KR\\_Lqw\\_y-dTlh\\_hcB0\\_BCEU\\_BiCSehm98](http://biblioteca.cejamerica.org/bitstream/handle/2015/5627/Resumen%20Ejecutivo%20Investigaci%C3%B3n%20Honduras_completo.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y&fbclid=IwAR0X8rFGQnq_rQ8m-rFVrKyRI-KR_Lqw_y-dTlh_hcB0_BCEU_BiCSehm98)

138 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/14/ceja-y-maccih-presentan-propuestas-para-el-sistema-de-justicia-penal-hondureno/>

139 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1267384-466/fortalecer-la-persecuci%C3%B3n-penal-sugiere-centro-de-estudios-de-justicia-de-las>

recommendations.<sup>140</sup> The MACCIH also held a seminary on the costs of corruption in the case of Honduras.<sup>141</sup> And at the end of March, Luiz Antonio Guimarães, the head of the MACCIH, told media outlets that a law by itself won't solve Honduras' corruption problem and neither can't just one law protect HRDs or journalists. Referring to the recent murder of journalist Gabriel Hernández, he said that impunity drives new crimes.<sup>142</sup>

There was also a new corruption case that came to light this month, this time it is not one investigate by the MACCIH and UFECIC. It concerns the National Institute for Vocational Training (Infop), where at least 5 million Lempiras are spent per month on employees recommended by politicians.<sup>143</sup> The case came to light accompanied by an announcement of mass lay-offs at the institution. CESPAD published a short overview of the situation<sup>144</sup> and so did Javier Suazo.<sup>145</sup> Two more corruption case, apart from the main ones (see below) made headlines this moth. First, in the Shalom corruption case involving the former vice-president of the Judiciary Council, Teodoro Bonilla Euceda, two of his relatives were found guilty. Teodoro Bonilla Euceda himself had already been sentenced in 2017 to six years in prison.<sup>146</sup> Second, Honduras' soccer association, Fenafuth, continues to be plagued by corruption.<sup>147</sup>

## The Onslaught against the Anti-Corruption Bodies

The month started with some uncertainty. First, it was made public that the Supreme Court ordered the suspension of the corruption investigation by UFECIC into Congress' president Mauricio Oliva. Then, its president Rolando Argueta seemed to backtrack claiming that this is not the case. Rather than ordering the suspension of the investigation, they just had ordered UFECIC to inform Oliva about the investigation.<sup>148</sup> According to the former public prosecutor Aldo Santos, the Supreme Court would not be allowed to order the MP to stop an investigation.<sup>149</sup> Nevertheless, for the remainder of the month, there was no more news coverage of this case and it is not clear if the investigation continued.

The MACCIH was also once more in the crossfire this month. The business lobby COHEP attacked it after the MACCIH had revealed the new Gualcarque Fraud case (see sub-section below on the case).<sup>150</sup> <sup>151</sup> The next day, their criticism was joined by the notorious Honduran Association of Electric Energy Producers (AHPEE).<sup>152</sup> One of the accused, the former ENEE director Roberto Martínez Lozano, claims that the MACCIH is invading the judicial sovereignty of Honduras.<sup>153</sup> To counteract some of the criticism, the MACCIH co-organized a forum on the role of journalists and the media in building a stable democracy. During the event, it was highlighted that the corporate Honduran media outlets play a counterproductive role by giving weight to those voices trying to

140 <https://twitter.com/USAmbHonduras/status/1106366968003809282>

141 [https://twitter.com/OEA\\_MACCIH/status/1110636178225680384](https://twitter.com/OEA_MACCIH/status/1110636178225680384)

142 <https://tiempo.hn/maccih-una-ley-no-basta-corupcion-en-honduras/> +

143 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/denuncian-pinata-politica-en-planilla-de-1-5-millones-mensuales-en-infop.html>

144 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/03/18/cronologia-restrukturacion-del-infop-dejara-sin-oportunidades-de-formacion-a-miles-de-jovenes-que-ni-trabajan-ni-estudian/>

145 <https://www.alainet.org/es/articulo/198830>

146 <https://confidencialhn.com/condenan-a-15-anos-de-reclusion-a-primos-de-exconcejal-por-trama-corrupta-shalom/>

147 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/denunciaran-ante-fifa-irregularidades-en-eleccion-de-nuevo-presidente-de-fenafuth/>

148 <https://tiempo.hn/presidente-de-la-csj-niega-paralizar-proceso-contra-mauricio-oliva/>

149 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/csj-no-puede-ordenarle-al-mp-detener-una-investigacion-segun-exfiscal.html>

150 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/presidente-del-cohep-cuestiona-la-maccih-y-pide-respetar-honor-y-presuncion-de-inocencia.html>

151 <https://confidencialhn.com/afirman-que-denuncias-de-la-maccih-provocan-trastornos-y-muerte-en-imputados/>

152 <http://www.proceso.hn/economia/6-economia/declaraciones-de-maccih-atentan-contra-proyectos-de-inversion-segun-ahpee-y-cohep.html>

153 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/implicados-en-caso-fraude-sobre-el-rio-gualcarque-senalan-a-la-maccih-de-invadir-soberania-judicial/>



undermine corruption investigations.<sup>154</sup> Another approach to undermine the work of the MACCIH and UFECIC is by not adopting the Efficient Collaboration Bill. CESPAD published a helpful analysis on this issue. "This analysis leads us to reflect on three central aspects: Why has the law not been approved? What would be its potential to deal with the big cases of corruption in a judicial system such as the Honduran, which is characterized by guaranteeing impunity for corrupt networks? In short, could the intellectual authors behind the corruption be imprisoned with this law?"<sup>155</sup>

Due to the ongoing rumors of an imminent disappearance of the MACCIH, Libre congressman Yahvé Sabillón called out to all Hondurans to defend the MACCIH and not allow its withdrawal from Honduras.<sup>156</sup> Radio Progreso reported on the importance of defending the MACCIH from the corrupt elite wanting it gone.<sup>157</sup> The MACCIH's spokesperson Luis Guimarães Marrey appeared on TN5 yesterday. He reacted to recent demands to investigate JOH that they are conducting investigation into facts not persons. According to the political analyst Edgar Soriano, the future of the MACCIH will depend on the US State Department and it will need further support to reach the higher strata of corruption.<sup>158</sup>

There are also voices demanding more from the MACCIH and UFECIC, especially the investigation of JOH. UFECIC reacted to the challenges brought forward against them. "Faced with questions from a sector of the population, the UFECIC reports: Currently, we are working with the accompaniment of the MACCIH on the assigned investigations. Our work is professional, silent and objective. Currently, we work beyond our schedule, we expose our lives, we neglect our family, we do not have a social life, we dedicate ourselves completely to our work. The investigations advance, but for them to have legitimacy they must be supported in proof obtained respecting due process. Trust in what we do is essential. We must remember that corruption harms us all, except the corrupt."<sup>159 160 161</sup>

## Corruption around JOH

As a response to the imminent arrest of journalist David Romero, ConfidencialHN started to publish a series of articles on presumed acts of corruption by JOH, his family and his allies going back to at least December 2010. It is a sign of force by ConfidencialHN emphasizing that they won't be silenced. The **first** article looks at a criminal network created by JOH et al. to launder money later used for his 2013 presidential campaign – according to ConfidencialHN, the sum laundered reaches some 4 billion Lempiras.<sup>162</sup> The **second** article delves further into the money laundering focusing on the agro-industrial sector, media and the use of NGOs.<sup>163</sup> In a **third** article, ConfidencialHN explains how NGOs linked to the first lady Ana Rosalinda García Carías misused money meant for

154 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/07/medios-de-prensa-favorecen-conspiracion-de-corruptos-contrala-maccih/>

155 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/03/20/con-ley-de-colaboracion-eficaz-en-verdad-se-podra-investigar-y-procesar-a-los-corruptos-en-honduras/>

156 <https://tiempo.hn/yahve-sabillon-sobre-salida-maccih/>

157 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/analistas-llaman-a-defender-la-maccih-de-los-sectores-corruptos-que-pretender-desaparecerla/>

158 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/maccih-no-ha-tenido-capacidad-de-llegar-a-altos-estamentos-del-poder-segun-analista.html>

159 <https://twitter.com/UFECIC1/status/1111489833778794497>

160 <https://twitter.com/UFECIC1/status/1111492480128770053>

161 <https://twitter.com/UFECIC1/status/1111495278127972353>

162 <https://confidencialhn.com/joh-y-su-esposa-lavaron-mas-cuatro-mil-millones-de-la-corrupcion-y-narcotrafico/fb/>

163 <https://confidencialhn.com/los-hermandez-garcia-blanquearon-capitales-en-agroindustria-medios-y-oeneges/>



social projects.<sup>164</sup> The **fourth** article continues with its focus on the first lady expanding the circle to her mother and one sister.<sup>165</sup> The accusations in the **fifth** article are especially heavy. According to ConfidencialHN, JOH contemplated the assassination of his former vice-president Lorena Herrera de Enamorado after she had found out about his corrupt behavior not wanting to play along.<sup>166</sup>

The work by ConfidencialHN was accompanied by Reporteros de Investigación which uncovered a suspicions deal between an evangelical church and the JOH regime – the former being an important pillar of the regime.<sup>167</sup> At the end of the month, the journalist Lidieth Díaz presented all the evidence published by ConfidencialHN to the MACCIH. Díaz is the wife of David Romero and she was informed about his arrest just after presenting the evidence to the MACCIH.<sup>168</sup> Its spokesperson, Luiz Antonio Guimarães Marrey, said that they will hand over the evidence to the MP.<sup>169</sup>

The revelations by ConfidencialHN were also accompanied by public calls to the MACCIH to start investigating JOH directly<sup>170</sup>, e.g. his campaign financing.<sup>171</sup> A group of Hondurans set up camp outside the MACCIH to demand an investigation.<sup>172</sup> The Bishop of San Pedro Sula also reacted: "If they don't act, they send a message to the people that they do not deserve all the confidence that we put in them, it is a message of lack of credibility and what we have to insist on is that the institutions behave in such a way that the citizens believe in them, but their results and sociological studies that have been conducted indicate that there is generally a credibility in our institutions."<sup>173</sup> In Congress, Pinu congressman David Reyes presented a motion demanding an investigation based on the publications by ConfidencialHN. While he presented the motion, he was cut off.<sup>174</sup> Radio Progreso cites some political analysts who believe that the MACCIH and Ufecic are aware of the cases and they are currently investigating it but need more time. Others expressed their concern about a possibility of an impunity pact protecting the big fish such as JOH or Mauricio Oliva.<sup>175</sup>

## The Gualcarque Case

The MACCIH and UFECIC presented its ninth corruption case to the public.<sup>176</sup> They investigated corruption around the concession for the Gualcarque river and the Agua Zarca hydroelectric project. The investigation goes back to a legal complaint filed by Berta Cáceres and COPINH. They presented indictments against 16 people for various crimes, such as the falsification of documents and fraud. Among the accused is also Roberto David Castillo Mejía who currently faces trial for the murder of Berta. While COPINH welcomed the indictment, they criticized that it does not include the owners of DESA, the Atala family.<sup>177</sup> ConfidencialHN questioned why they did not also

164 <https://confidencialhn.com/oeneges-de-la-primera-dama-drenaron-68-por-ciento-del-fondo-de-solidaridad-creado-por-joh/>

165 <https://confidencialhn.com/primera-dama-uso-a-la-alcurmia-en-blanqueo-y-sobrevaloracion-de-capitales-a-oeneges/>

166 <https://confidencialhn.com/joh-ordeno-matar-a-vicepresidenta-por-no-apoyarlo-en-maniobras-continuistas-y-mafiosas/>

167 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/03/23/iglesia-alquilo-su-edificio-para-oficina-del-gobierno-por-mas-de-400000-lempiras/>

168 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/28/presentan-ante-la-maccih-pruebas-de-corrupcion-contr-juan-herandez-y-su-entorno-familiar/amp/>

169 <https://tiempo.hn/documentos-romero-enviaran-mp-anuncia-maccih/>

170 <https://confidencialhn.com/exigen-a-la-maccih-dejarse-de-pajas-y-comenzar-investigacion-contr-joh/>

171 <https://confidencialhn.com/politica-limpia-no-tiene-presente-el-origen-de-inversion-en-campana-de-joh/>

172 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/27/sentados-esperan-que-la-maccih-comience-a-investigar-a-juan-herandez-por-corrupcion/>

173 <https://confidencialhn.com/piden-a-justicia-hondurena-actuar-contr-pareja-presidencial-por-actos-de-corrupcion/>

174 <https://confidencialhn.com/diputado-propone-en-el-legislativo-investigar-denuncias-de-romero-le-quitan-la-palabra/>

175 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/demandan-agilizar-investigacion-de-casos-de-corrupcion-que-involucra-a-juan-orlando-herandez-y-familia/>

176 <https://www.oas.org/es/sap/dsdme/maccih/new/docs/MCH-004.MACCIH-OEA-y-UFECIC-MP-presentan-noveno-caso-de-investigacion-penal-integrada-Fraude-sobre-el-Gualcarque.pdf>

sCodigo=MCH-004/19

177 <https://copinh.org/2019/03/proyectos-de-energia-renovable-en-honduras-corrupcion-asesinatos-y-muerte-2/>

investigate the role of the former Deputy Attorney General Rigoberto Cuéllar.<sup>178</sup> Radio Progreso published a helpful summary of the case.<sup>179</sup>

The first day in court took place on March 13. As with previous corruption case, the accused were allowed to await trial outside prison.<sup>180</sup> The former ENEE director Roberto Martínez Lozano used his appearance before court to denounce the MACCIH as a foreign agent.<sup>181</sup> The initial hearing took place two weeks later. UFECIC demanded that 7 of the 16 accused in the Gualcarque Fraud case would be additionally accused of fraud.<sup>182</sup> COPINH denounced that the defense team claimed in court that there are no indigenous peoples in Río Blanco, a defense tactic that has been used since 2013, but which has been rejected times and times again.<sup>183</sup> In a video statement, Laura Zúniga Cáceres denounces the recent aggression suffered by COPINH during the Gualcarque Fraud hearing after they were recognized as a victim in the process.<sup>184</sup>

After the presentation of the corruption case, Honduras Culture and Politics summarized the Agua Zarca hydroelectric project as follows: "All in all, not only does the project have the problems we knew with community consultation and approval; as an engineering project, its feasibility was uncertain. The record of approvals and contradictory roles of individuals involved is a clear indication of violation of law. And it seems the main purpose in setting the project up the way it finally was approved and was to be implemented might have had more to do with extracting more government money, than with any actual power production."<sup>185</sup>

## The Patuca III Case

The MACCIH and UFECIC also presented their tenth corruption case this month. Again the case is linked to a hydroelectric project, Patuca III. They accuse ten individuals to have defrauded the State of Honduras through the National Electric Energy Company (ENEE) and the Cachiros drug cartel is also implicated.<sup>186</sup> The sum in question is more than 4 million Lempiras.<sup>187</sup> In a carbon copy of the Gualcarque Case, the accused in the Patuca III case were allowed to await trial outside prison.<sup>188</sup>

## Impunity Pacts

Almost every month, there seems to be a new attempt by Congress to legislate away its crimes. March was not different<sup>189</sup> and as with previous attempts, their efforts seem to violate the constitution.<sup>190</sup> CEDOH director Víctor Meza highlighted this tendency by Congress to promote impunity as one of the main tendencies of the first year of JOH's second illegal mandate.<sup>192</sup> The hypocrisy of Congress became even more evident, when on March 21, they wanted to offer the

178 <https://confidencialhn.com/maccih-rehuye-a-hablar-de-presuntos-vinculos-corrupcion-de-cuellar-en-gualcarque/>

179 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/los-grandes-ausentes-en-los-requerimientos-de-la-maccih/>

180 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3264-imputados-anuncian-acciones-por-acusacion-de-fraude-sobre-el-gualcarque>

181 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/maccih-lanza-anzuelo-a-sardinitas-mientras-tiburones-de-corrupcion-siguen-libres-cuestiona-martinez-lozano.html>

182 <http://www.latribuna.hn/2019/03/25/ufecic-amplia-acusacion-contra-siete-imputados/>

183 <https://copinh.org/2019/03/ha-iniciado-la-audiencia-del-caso-fraude-sobre-el-gualcarque/>

184 <https://copinh.org/2019/03/video-laura-zuniga-caceres-denuncia-agresiones-en-audiencia-por-caso-fraude-sobre-el-gualcarque/>

185 <https://hondurasculturepolitics.blogspot.com/2019/03/desa-fraud-and-corruption.html>

186 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1268727-466/honduras-155-millones-de-lempiras-recibi%C3%B3-abogado-de-los-cachiros-en-cuatro>

187 <https://www.oas.org/es/sap/dsdme/maccih/new/docs/MCH-006.Equipo-MACCIHOEA-UFECICMP-presenta-casoPatuca-III-Colusion-y-corrupcion.pdf>

188 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/a-audiencia-de-imputados-en-caso-patuca-iii-colusion-y-corrupcion.html>

189 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/07/diputados-hondurenos-geston-nuevo-pacto-de-impunidad-video/>

190 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/07/intentona-de-nuevo-pacto-de-impunidad-es-inconstitucional-como-el-primero-edmundo-orellana/amp/>

191 <https://confidencialhn.com/exfiscal-general-no-ve-futuro-para-la-maccih-en-honduras/>

192 <https://confidencialhn.com/a-un-ano-del-segundo-mandato-de-joh-advierten-tendencia-para-reforzar-impunidad/>

Nationalist congressman Tomás Zambrano a gold medal for forming a congressional prayer group.. Zambrano was accused of corruption linked to the first Impunity Pact.<sup>193</sup>

## The Case against Pepe Lobo

La Prensa reported on new corruption charges leveled at Pepe Lobo. He is accused of having misused 160 million Lempiras designated to the National Child Welfare Agency (Pani).<sup>194</sup>

## The Case against the Former First Lady Rosa Elena de Lobo

The trial against Rosa Elena Bonilla e Lobo continued throughout March. It included a statement by a protected witness,<sup>195</sup> the revelation that \$385'000 were found in her house in Santa Lucía<sup>196</sup> and phone records implicating her brother-in-law.<sup>197</sup> The MACCIH and UFECIC requested the seizure of goods worth 3.6 million Lempiras<sup>198</sup>, which was executed over the coming days.<sup>199</sup> By the end of the month, El Heraldo reported that there were still 143 items of evidence to be looked at in the case.<sup>200</sup>

## The IHSS Case

ConfidencialHN denounced that the MP failed to answer to collaboration requests from Costa Rica and Colombia into illicit financial flows linked to the IHSS corruption case and the former deputy attorney General Rigoberto Cuéllar.<sup>201</sup>

## State Security Forces

On March 5, the the Purging Committee and Didapol jointly announced that they would present six cases of high-level police corruption.<sup>202</sup> Media outlets did not take this up again in the coming days and weeks. Rather, the magistrate Edgardo Cáceres, made public that the courts had not received yet nor looked at the case files of purged members of the police force.<sup>203</sup> Two days later, in a separate case, the Purging Committee announced that 20 police agents and officials were about to face discharge hearings.<sup>204</sup> Another police official, John Cole Altamirano, was also arrested this month. He is accused of homicide.<sup>205</sup> Last but not least, the former police commissioner, Ambrosio Maradiaga Ordóñez, was arrested for money laundering.<sup>206</sup> <sup>207</sup> Shortly afterwards, his possessions were seized<sup>208</sup> and he was additionally accused of link to organized crime.<sup>209</sup>

193 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/21/piden-medalla-de-oro-para-diputado-tomas-zambrano-por-promover-grupo-de-oracion/>

194 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1264090-410/investigacion-expresidente-pepe-lobo-desv%C3%ADo-millones-honduras-corrupcion->

195 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1266721-466/testigo-en-caso-caja-chica-de-la-dama-dice-que-fue-utilizado>

196 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/evacuan-pruebas-del-dinero-encontrado-a-exprimera-dama.html>

197 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1268759-466/escuchas-telef%C3%B3nicas-hunden-a-cu%C3%B1ado-de-la-ex-primera-dama-rosa-elena>

198 <https://www.oas.org/es/sap/dsdme/macchi/new/docs/MCH-007.UFECIC-y-MACCIH-solicitan-aseguramiento-de-bienes-en-caso-Caja-chica-de-la-Dama.pdf>

199 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1269327-466/fiscal%C3%ADa-lujosa-caba%C3%B1a-de-mi-rosa-tiene-mezcla-de-dinero-corrupcio>

200 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1270999-466/caso-rosa-elena-de-lobo-143-pruebas-por-evacuar-en-juicio-de>

201 <https://confidencialhn.com/ministerio-publico-protecte-al-exfiscal-cuellar-para-no-mandar-lo-a-la-carcel-por-corrupcion/>

202 <https://tiempo.hn/didapol-investigacion-vincula-policias-actos-ilicitos/>

203 <https://confidencialhn.com/poder-judicial-todavia-no-conoce-expedientes-de-policias-depurados/>

204 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1265355-466/20-polic%C3%ADas-a-audiencias-de-descargo-por-anomal%C3%ADas>

205 <https://www.laprensa.hn/sucesos/1266591-410/capturan-john-antony-cole-altamirano->

206 <https://tiempo.hn/capturan-excomisionado-de-la-policia-guaimaca/>

207 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1266056-466/fiscal%C3%ADa-anuncia-m%C3%A1s-capturas-de-exjefes-de-la-polic%C3%ADa>

208 <http://www.proceso.hn/nacionales/9-nacionales/ministerio-publico-asegura-23-bienes-del-exjefe-policial-ambrosio-maradiaga.html>

209 <https://tiempo.hn/investigaran-ambrosio-maradiaga-crimen-organizado/>

## Post-Electoral Human Rights Violations

On March 12, over a year after the post-electoral repression which led to the assassination of at least 24 Hondurans by state security forces, a court in Choluteca opened trial against two members of the Armed Forces. But they are not accused of homicide. Rather they are accused of ill treatment of a citizen and violations of the duties of a public servant.<sup>210</sup> Later in March, the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, commented on the situation in Honduras. She lamented the lack of investigation into the human rights violations by state security forces during the post-electoral violence and demanded more efforts to demilitarize public security.<sup>211 212 213</sup> Coincidence or not, just a few days later, MP announced in a press release that they emitted an arrest warrant against a Military Police officer, the second sergeant Denis Omar Cáceres Ramírez, accused of murder on December 15, 2017, during the post-electoral repression.<sup>214</sup> He was arrested the same day<sup>215</sup> and he is only the second agent from a state security force that has been arrested for deaths related to the post-electoral crisis.<sup>216</sup> OACNUDH welcomed the arrest emphasizing that their report documented at least 23 murders by state security forces and other crimes which demand investigation.<sup>217 218</sup>

## Repressions

Ely Portillo, lawyer at the Human Rights Defenders Lawyers Network of the South, denounced that a police operation in Choluteca, "Operación Hormiga", was aimed at social leaders organizing the weekly protests against the JOH regime.<sup>219</sup> During the International Women's Day, women and children participating in a protest outside San Pedro Sula's courts were victims of aggression by members of the Armed Forces.<sup>220</sup> Furthermore, the head of PAC, Marlene Alvarenga, denounced police repression against a group of people protesting against the Electric Energy Company (EEH).<sup>221</sup>

A new investigation by Avispa Midia published this month looked at forced displacement by state security forces. "According to official data from the last four years, through FUSINA, the executive branch has carried out more than one million preventive operations in which police and military security forces have participated in the poorest neighborhoods throughout the country. In these places, young people become targets of institutional and criminal violence. Specifically, at the end of 2016, through a series of three operations called Typhoon, the government of Hernández conducted more than 100 raids, arrests, seizures and captures throughout the country. The operatives were declared a success. However, this success was accompanied by death squads,

210 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/12/aplican-justicia-a-medias-a-militares-que-violaron-derechos-en-choluteca-en-protestas-del-fraude/>

211 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/bachelet-a-favor-de-enjuiciar-las-violaciones-de-derechos-humanos-en-honduras/>

212 <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/bachelet-a-favor-de-enjuiciar-las-violaciones-de-derechos-humanos-en-honduras.html>

213 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1108391025972834304>

214 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/132-marzo2019/4034-requerimiento-fiscal-con-orden-de-captura-contr-sargento-de-las-fuerzas-armadas-por-muerte-postelectoral>

215 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/132-marzo2019/4035-detencion-judicial-a-policia-militar-acusado-de-muerte-postelectoral>

216 <http://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2019/3/24/impunity-amp-delayed-prosecution-of-crimes-committed-by-state-security-forces-during-post-electoral-crisis>

217 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1110221397949845506>

218 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1110221401129189377>

219 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/995-costoso-allanamiento-un-fracaso-que-busca-desmovilizar-manifestantes-en-choluteca>

220 <http://im-defensoras.org/2019/03/alertadefensoras-honduras-militares-agreden-amenazan-intimidan-con-armas-de-grueso-caliber-y-arrebatan-celulares-a-manifestantes-por-el-8marzo-en-san-pedro-sula/>

221 <https://confidencialhn.com/tras-ser-gaseada-jefa-del-pac-promete-tirarle-riata-a-la-policia-nacional/>

enforced disappearances, assassinations, torture and exile. This is the story of one of the survivors."<sup>222</sup>

## Penitentiary System

According to the director of the National Penitentiary System, 15-20 new inmates per day are registered in Honduras.<sup>223</sup> No wonder, Conaprev's president Orles Solís warned of the steadily growing prison population.<sup>224</sup> <sup>225</sup> At the end of March, two inmates got hurt during a riot at the Támara prison.<sup>226</sup>

## Militarization

March started with a public forum on "Palmerola, Militarization and Imperialist Aggression in the Region".<sup>227</sup> <sup>228</sup> The militarization was also an important topic last month, when the JOH regime promoted several military officials (see last month's monitor). This had repercussions this month. The Social Citizen Platform presented a complaint at the MP against some 50 congresswo/men, JOH, Mauricio Oliva, the Minister of Defense Fredy Díaz and the head of the Armed Forces Rene Ponce for the promotions which serve, according to the plaintiffs, only to increase the power base of the JOH regime.<sup>229</sup> Pinu congressman Luis Redondo challenged the promotions with a bill in Congress.<sup>230</sup> <sup>231</sup> Unabated, JOH shortly afterwards announced that he wanted to redouble the amount of Military Police agents to 10'000.<sup>232</sup> His presidential secretary Ebal Díaz then went on to claim that the regime somehow can double the amount of Military Police agents without increasing the budget nor taking away money from other budgetary positions.<sup>233</sup> For more on the strategy by JOH, please go to the sub-section "JOH" under "Varia".

## International Community

The Honduran representative of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) announced on March 1 that his institution had approved a new strategy for Honduras focused on health, education security and infrastructure as well as "human capital development" and productive activities.<sup>234</sup> The same week, the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (BCIE) offered support to Honduras in restructuring ENEE's debt.<sup>235</sup> According to La Tribuna, BCIE disposes some \$296 million this year for Honduras.<sup>236</sup>

222 <https://avispa.org/violencia-y-pobreza-motores-de-la-migracion-forzada-en-honduras/>

223 <https://confidencialhn.com/sistema-penitenciario-alerta-sobrepoblacion-carcelaria-y-pide-revision-de-medidas/>

224 <https://confidencialhn.com/capturas-sin-investigar-y-jueces-timoratos-han-saturado-las-carceles-hondurenas/>

225 <https://confidencialhn.com/alertan-sobre-masivo-incremento-en-poblacion-penitenciaria/>

226 <http://www.latribuna.hn/2019/03/23/dos-privados-de-libertad-de-la-pn-resultan-heridos-en-enfrentamiento/>

227 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/foro-palmerola-militarizacion-y-agresiones-imperialistas-en-la-region/>

228 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/la-estrategia-del-regimen-para-ejercer-control-terror-y-restriccion-de-derechos-en-honduras/>

229 <https://confidencialhn.com/piden-a-jefe-de-las-fuerzas-armadas-no-involucrarse-en-mas-delitos-con-joh/>

230 <https://tiempo.hn/luis-redondo-exige-jefe-ffaa-explique-renuncia-raynel-funez/>

231 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/08/capitan-rodriguez-orellana-confirma-inconformidad-de-promocion-22-de-las-ff-aa/amp/>

232 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1265352-466/el-ejecutivo-busca-duplicar-los-efectivos-de-la-policia-militar-de-orden>

233 <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/para-financiar-incremento-de-policia-militares-no-se-revisaran-presupuestos-de-salud-y-educacion-ebal-diaz.html>

234 <https://radiohm.hn/2019/03/01/bid-focalizara-su-apoyo-a-honduras-en-energia-capital-humano-y-produccion/>

235 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/economia/1266715-466/el-bcie-dar%C3%ADa-garant%C3%ADa-para-readecuar-deudas-de-la-enee>

236 <http://www.latribuna.hn/2019/03/29/bcie-dispone-de-296-millones-para-proyectos-en-honduras-en-2019/>

In need of international allies, the JOH regime traveled to the US to participate in the AIPAC summit on US-Israel relations. On this occasions, JOH announced that Honduras will open a trade office in Jerusalem as part of an extension of the embassy in Tel Aviv. Last year, it was reported that Honduras would transfer its entire embassy to Jerusalem.<sup>237</sup> Some media outlets mistakenly presented this new announcement as a transfer of the embassy but JOH explicitly wrote that "Honduras will immediately open an official diplomatic mission in Jerusalem that will extend our Embassy to the capital city of Israel".<sup>238 239</sup>

## US

US-Honduran relations once more came under strain this month due to hearing against JOH's brother Tony Hernández for drug trafficking (see next section). In other news, the the US Chargé d'Affaires Heide Fulton returned to Honduras after conducting her military service.<sup>240</sup> The US embassy promoted its collaboration with the MP. "We are proud to support @MP\_Honduras in its fight against crime and corruption. This course is part of our evolving programming that aims to support all institutions trying to break the cycle of impunity."<sup>241</sup> Proceso Digital reported that public prosecutors at the MP have to do a lie detector test to qualify for a workshop to improve their work. This requirements is based on an agreement with the US.<sup>242</sup> Honduras and the US also renewed a memorandum of understanding on the protection of cultural heritage this month.<sup>243</sup>

The US is currently planning to build a new embassy in Honduras.<sup>244</sup> Heide Fulton called it "a tribute to our beloved Honduras".<sup>245</sup> Another, more deadly, tribute was made public by Foreign Policy reporting on US gun exports to Honduras. "When Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández was re-elected in November 2017, in a vote that outside monitors described as tainted by fraud, protesters around the country took to the streets. Hernández's first term had been marked by violent crime and corruption; many voters wanted change. In the ensuing days, military police opened fire on the demonstrators, killing more than 30 people and wounding hundreds. Photos published in the Miami Herald showed officers shooting some protesters in the back. They also revealed something else: The troops were using U.S.-made M4 rifles, the military version of the AR-15. (...) In early February, the Trump administration finalized a rule change that will make the deals even easier—ending congressional oversight of many overseas gun sales. The president is set to turn over the export control process from the State Department to the Commerce Department, which is charged first and foremost with increasing sales for U.S. companies. As a result, bureaucrats will no longer have to notify Congress of many gun sales worth \$1 million or more."<sup>246</sup>

In the last week of March, JOH first met with John Bolton, the US Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (NSA).<sup>247 248</sup> This was followed by a meeting with the Assistant Secretary

237 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/24/joh-abrira-oficina-comercial-en-jerusalen/amp/>

238 <https://tiempo.hn/primer-paso-trasladar-embajada-a-jerusalen-joh-tel-aviv/>

239 <http://www.proceso.hn/component/k2/38-politica-nacional/honduras-anuncia-apertura-de-oficina-comercial-en-jerusalen.html>

240 <https://twitter.com/USAmbHonduras/status/1102579730807689216>

241 <https://twitter.com/USAmbHonduras/status/1103040317148880896>

242 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/fiscales-del-mp-deberan-hacer-pruebas-de-poligrafo-por-acceso-a-cursos-de-capacitacion.html>

243 <http://elpulso.hn/gobiernos-de-usa-y-honduras-prorrogan-acuerdo-de-proteccion-al-patrimonio-cultural/>

244 <http://elpulso.hn/nuevo-edificio-de-la-embajada-de-los-estados-unidos-en-tegucigalpa/>

245 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/15/la-nueva-embajada-de-ee-uu-es-un-homenaje-a-nuestra-querida-honduras-heide-fulton/>

246 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/03/08/trump-guns-honduras-central-america/>

247 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/26/joh-fue-a-ee-uu-a-hablar-de-venezuela-mientras-es-senalado-por-actos-de-corrupcion/amp/>

248 <https://twitter.com/USAenEspanol/status/1110627591969533952>



of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Kimberly Breier.<sup>249</sup> <sup>250</sup> Before the month had ended, JOH then welcomed US Secretary of Homeland Security, Kirstjen M. Nielsen and his Guatemalan and El Salvadorian counterparts.<sup>251</sup> "The governments of Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and the United States said in a statement they had agreed to a series of measures, including joint police work, improved border security, and efforts to deter international crime and curb "irregular migration."<sup>252</sup> <sup>253</sup> <sup>254</sup> The US embassy went on to call the agreement "historic".<sup>255</sup>

So things seemed to look up for the JOH regime and the only sore spot was a press release by US Congresswoman Norma J. Torres criticizing the deal.<sup>256</sup> But then Trump got access to his phone and Twitter account again and the situation of JOH rapidly deteriorated. Trump once more attacked his southern neighbors and threatened to close the border.<sup>257</sup> A day later. "[i]n a stunning about-face, State Department officials said that President Donald Trump is cutting off all direct assistance to the so-called Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala."<sup>258</sup> According to the acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney, "the countries "could do more" to mitigate the "humanitarian crisis" at the southern border."<sup>259</sup> Democrats were not amused. "Democratic lawmakers and other supporters of foreign aid to Central America fumed over the weekend following President Donald Trump's announcement Friday that he will cut hundreds of millions in assistance to El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras."<sup>260</sup> The Honduras Solidarity Network denounced that only non-military aid is cut.

## EU

In the first three months of 2019, Honduras suffered from various wild fires.<sup>261</sup> According to La Prensa, the JOH regime and the EU are currently negotiating an agreement on forest governance.<sup>262</sup>

## Drug Trafficking

In March, two more presumed Honduran drug traffickers were extradited to the US. First, Osman Donay Martínez from the Valle Valle drug cartel<sup>263</sup> and then José Manuel Fúnez Suárez.<sup>264</sup> According to Radio Globo, the latter has links to the National Party and financed their campaigns.<sup>265</sup> Last but not least, on May 6, a judge will decide on the extradition of the former mayor of Yoro and JOH ally, Arnaldo Urbina Soto. He is accused of links to drug trafficking.<sup>266</sup> More bad news for JOH came from an unexpected source. According to El Heraldó, the JOH regime spent more than

<sup>249</sup> <https://www.laprensa.hn/inicio/1268452-417/jefa-seguridad-nacional-eeuu-kirstjen-nielsen-visita-honduras>

<sup>250</sup> <https://twitter.com/WHAAstSecy/status/1110306072160546819>

<sup>251</sup> <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/26/secretaria-de-seguridad-de-ee-uu-se-reunira-el-miercoles-en-tegucigalpa-con-los-gobiernos-del-triangulo-norte/>

<sup>252</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-immigration-centralamerica-idUSKCN1R82LM>

<sup>253</sup> <https://hn.usembassy.gov/opening-remarks-secretary-homeland-security-kirstjen-nielsen-meeting-northern-triangle-governments/>

<sup>254</sup> <https://hn.usembassy.gov/closing-statement-by-dhs-secretary-kirstjen-m-nielsen-at-v-meeting-of-security-ministers-of-the-northern-triangle/>

<sup>255</sup> <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2019/03/28/secretary-nielsen-signs-historic-regional-compact-central-america-stem-irregular>

<sup>256</sup> <https://torres.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/torres-statement-new-security-agreement-between-us-and-northern-triangle>

<sup>257</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/28/us/politics/trump-central-america-immigration.html>

<sup>258</sup> <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trump-cuts-direct-assistance-honduras-el-salvador-guatemala/story?>

<sup>259</sup> <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/03/31/politics/mick-mulvaney-northern-triangle-countries-aid-cnntv/index.html>

<sup>260</sup> <https://www.politico.com/story/2019/03/31/trump-central-america-democrats-1308680>

<sup>261</sup> <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/opiniones/1003-las-plagas-de-los-bosques-de-honduras>

<sup>262</sup> <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1268416-410/honduras-ue-avanzan-negociaciones-concretar-acuerdo-forestal>

<sup>263</sup> <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3261-extraditan-a-ee-uu-otro-socio-del-cartel-de-los-valle>

<sup>264</sup> <https://www.elheraldo.hn/minisitios/hondurenoselmundo/1264631-471/guatemala-extradita-a-estados-unidos-a-byron-ruiz-presunto-narcotraficante-hondure%C3%B1o>

<sup>265</sup> <https://confidencialhn.com/extraditan-hacia-ee-uu-a-hondureno-vinculado-al-narcotrafico-tiene-nexos-con-politicos-nacionalistas/>

<sup>266</sup> <https://confidencialhn.com/audiencia-para-excalcalde-extraditable-sera-el-proximo-6-de-mayo/>



220 millions for airstrips that are not commercially used. El Heraldo hinted at their possible use for drug trafficking.<sup>267</sup>

## Tony Hernández

JOH's brother has been kept in pre-trial arrest for several months now in the US for drug trafficking, but when a DEA delegation visited Honduras this month, they felt compelled to praise JOH for his fight against drug trafficking.<sup>268</sup> <sup>269</sup> Criterio highlighted the hypocrisy of this and reiterating the unlikelihood that JOH was not aware of his brother's activities.<sup>270</sup> Criticism also came from the US Congresswoman Norma Torres. "Very upsetting statement by the DEA administrator since the President's brother has been indicted by the DOJ for narcotics trafficking and the Honduran military is capturing less than an estimated 1% of drugs that go through Honduras."<sup>271</sup> But JOH continued to claim that he had never thought people close to him were involved in organized crime. As the president of the National Defense and Security Council, such a statement is less than convincing.<sup>272</sup> Furthermore, the former police commissioner Leandro Osorio reiterated that he had fallen out of grace with JOH after busting a drug processing plantation by Tony Hernández in 2014.<sup>273</sup> Back in the presence and to divert attention away from this, the same day it was announced that three persons were sentenced in Honduras for having planned to assassinate JOH - a very convenient way to show that one is fighting drug traffickers.<sup>274</sup> Later in March, C-Libre denounced that the disputed National Intelligence Law helped to cover-up the activities of Tony Hernández.<sup>275</sup>

Tony Hernández, meanwhile, lost another of his lawyers (see last month's report). The court ordered his substitution raising alarm regarding the reputation of the lawyer.<sup>276</sup> Shortly afterwards, his trial was postponed again.<sup>277</sup> There seemed to be problems with his new lawyer.<sup>278</sup> The hearing was supposed to continue on March 22<sup>279</sup>, but it was suspended again.<sup>280</sup> The first date of trial was later set for September 30.<sup>281</sup>

## Varia

### JOH

The last months have highlighted some rifts inside the National Party, especially between the former president Pepe Lobo and JOH. The former famously stated: "The evil of the National Party

267 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1268126-466/unos-220-millones-de-lempiras-invirti%C3%B3-honduras-en-aer%C3%B3dromos-que-no-se>

268 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1263852-410/dea-agradece-joh-lucha-narcotrafico-presidencia-honduras>

269 <http://www.latribuna.hn/2019/03/02/dea-felicita-a-joh-por-fuertes-golpes-a-carteles/>

270 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/04/luego-de-proteger-a-su-hermano-tony-la-dea-felicita-a-hermanez/amp/>

271 <https://twitter.com/NormaTorres/status/1103079821284904960>

272 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/06/hermanez-dice-que-nunca-penso-que-personas-que-conocia-se-verian-involucradas-en-el-crimen-organizado/amp/>

273 <https://confidencialhn.com/caida-en-desgracia-de-exjefe-policia-fue-por-desarticular-narcolaboratorio-de-tony/>

274 <http://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1265031-466/16-a%C3%B1os-de-prisi%C3%B3n-a-extraditible-que-plane%C3%B3-matar-a-juan-orlando>

275 <https://confidencialhn.com/por-ocultar-narcoactividad-de-tony-exigen-inconstitucionalidad-de-ley-de-inteligencia/>

276 <https://confidencialhn.com/quitan-por-el-momento-a-defensor-de-tony-hermanez-por-dudosa-reputacion/>

277 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/08/por-debil-defensa-posponen-audiencia-de-tony-hermanez/amp/>

278 <https://confidencialhn.com/abogado-de-tony-se-va-de-vacaciones-mientras-su-cliente-queda-en-prision/>

279 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3262-tony-fue-presentado-ayer-con-ropa-carcelaria-en-corte-de-new-york>

280 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/mision-de-eeuu-pide-suspension-de-ayuda-militar-a-honduras-por-violaciones-de-ddhh.html>

281 <https://tiempo.hn/el-30-de-septiembre-inicia-juicio-a-tony-hermanez-decide-juez-de-una-corte-de-eeuu/>

is the evil of one person who is also the evil of Honduras."<sup>282</sup> But there is more widespread fear by party members fear that JOH may betray them, i.e. allow corruption investigation against them.<sup>283</sup>  
<sup>284</sup> JOH is also under pressure due to an increase in mass killings which does not square well with his narrative of a more secure Honduras. To counter act this, the Security Secretariat claimed this month that the number of homicides dropped by 19.2% in the first two months of 2019 compared to last year.<sup>285</sup> Just a day later, the president of UNAH's Violence Observatory, Migdonia Ayestas, said that the homicide rate actually increased in the first two months of 2019 from 11 to 13 murders per day.<sup>286</sup>

Either way, the JOH regime intends to increase security spending and promote militarization. CESPAD published an important analysis on these efforts. "False positives, as the strategy adopted from Colombia to justify the growing militarization of the society is called, has gained strength in recent weeks in Honduras and it imposed on the national agenda the need to increase the budget to the defense cabinet and security as well as to expand the number of military and police personnel. It is no coincidence that a few days after the head of government, Juan Hernández, announced that he would send a bill to the National Congress in that sense, he immediately began to observe a greater number of crimes and massacres. Nor is it a coincidence that the corporate media, uniformly reported about the dismantling of a supposed criminal gang in the department of Olancho and that videos are coming to light where alleged criminals threaten with death Hernandez and the military forces."<sup>287</sup>

JOH's strategy is widely criticized<sup>288</sup> and the political opposition announced that they would not support JOH's demands in Congress.<sup>289</sup> According to Migdonia Ayestas, the structural causes of violence are not addressed by increasing the number of battalions.<sup>290</sup> Sociologist Leticia Salomón did not mince words when talking about JOH's security policies: "This government has already lost all shame asking for more resources to increase the number of military police or police agents while their already exaggerated budget has not given the results corresponding to the magnitude of their investment. At the same time, practically 70% of the Security Tax [tasa de seguridad] is assigned to them, so what are they doing with that money that they are investing in security.". She further comments on JOH's apparent knowledge of his brother's drug trafficking activities and the problems with the purge of the National Police Force.<sup>291</sup> And even the former coup general Romeo Vásquez Velásquez is against JOH's militarization plans.<sup>292</sup> According to the newest numbers by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Honduras' military spending is higher than that of at least 46 other countries in the world. It is for example \$80 million higher than in Guatemala and the highest in Central America.<sup>293</sup> Nevertheless, the Secretary of Defense Fredy Santiago Díaz claimed that the Honduran people demand more Military Police agents in the streets.<sup>294</sup>

282 <https://confidencialhn.com/sera-el-presidente-segun-pepe-el-partido-nacional-y-toda-honduras-comparten-el-mismo-mal/>

283 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/08/temeran-los-cachurecos-que-joh-los-traicione/amp/>

284 <https://confidencialhn.com/analisis-unidad-granitica-o-todos-contrajoh-oliva-reune-a-lideres-azules-en-natalicio/>

285 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/honduras-registra-526-homicidios-en-primeros-dos-meses-un-19-2-menos.html>

286 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/aumentan-las-muertes-violentas-en-honduras-durante-enero-y-febrero-de-2019.html>

287 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/03/11/cronologia-los-falsos-positivos-para-aumentar-el-presupuesto-en-seguridad/>

288 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/11/gobierno-de-joh-le-ha-tomado-la-medida-a-organismos-como-la-oea-y-la-onu/amp/>

289 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1266422-466/partido-libre-y-liberales-en-contra-de-reforma-a-ley-de-la>

290 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/mas-presupuesto-a-seguridad-no-es-necesario-para-logros-contra-la-criminalidad-segun-el-ijudpas.html>

291 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/gobierno-perdio-toda-verguenza-al-pedir-mas-militares-y-fondos-para-seguridad-asegura-sociologa-leticia-salomon/>

292 <https://confidencialhn.com/alianza-patriotica-rechaza-idea-de-contratar-mas-policias-militares/>

293 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1269995-410/honduras-supera-inversion-milita-46-paises-mundo>

294 <https://confidencialhn.com/reafirmen-que-atenderan-clamor-popular-con-mas-policias-militares-en-la-calle/>

Ignoring these voices, JOH continued unabashed. On March 11, JOH presented the new National Urban Transport Security Force (FNSTU) to the public which will form part of FUSINA.<sup>295</sup> During the presentation, JOH once more demanded more security forces.<sup>296</sup> Some analyst belief that the attempted increase by JOH in the number of Military Police agents may even serve him to force through a third term.<sup>297</sup> JOH, meanwhile, reiterated that he would not run for president again nor would his wife Ana García de Hernández.<sup>298</sup>

## Electoral Reforms

An OAS delegation arrived in Honduras this month to support Congress on electoral reforms.<sup>299</sup> On this occasion, the deputy magistrate of the TSE, Marco Ramiro Lobo, called out for a thorough investigation of the electoral fraud of 2017.<sup>300</sup> He also denounced the lack of impartiality of the current TSE and its control by the National Party.<sup>301</sup> Another unfinished task is the purge of the electoral census. According to El Heraldo, there are still some 400'000 deceased Hondurans registered.<sup>302</sup> Evangelical pastors, meanwhile, wanted to use the presence of the OAS delegation to presented their own party<sup>303</sup> and their will to change the constitution to legally form it.<sup>304</sup>

## Poverty

Since the beginning of 2019, fuel prices are on the rise in Honduras<sup>305</sup> and Radio Progreso fears negative effects on food prices.<sup>306</sup> Pinu congresswoman Doris Gutiérrez denounced a VAT increase through the back door hitting poor Hondurans once more especially hard.<sup>307</sup> At the same time, the ENEE labor union denounced that energy prices will dramatically increase next month.<sup>308</sup> On March 31, the JOH regime announced a 10% price increase for electricity.<sup>309</sup> CONADEH warned that this would further push Hondurans to migrate.<sup>310</sup> CONADEH further warned about the negative effects on child nutrition due to the widespread drought in Honduras.<sup>311</sup> Remittances still help partially to counter the worsening situation in Honduras. So far in 2019, the amount sent to Honduras has increased by 12.4% compared to 2018.<sup>312</sup>

295 <http://elpulso.hn/presentacion-de-la-fuerza-nacional-de-seguridad-del-transporte-urbano/>

296 <https://confidencialhn.com/en-lanzamiento-de-nueva-fuerza-joh-pide-mas-militares-y-policias/>

297 <https://confidencialhn.com/si-va-lo-hizo-una-vez-alertan-jugada-de-joh-para-seguir-gobernando-con-apoyo-de-militares/>

298 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/ni-ana-ni-yo-participaremos-en-las-proximas-elecciones-asegura-presidente-herandez.html>

299 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/19/hoy-inicia-foro-internacional-para-analizar-cosmeticas-reformas-electorales-en-honduras/>

300 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/19/magistrado-suplente-del-tse-insta-al-mp-investigue-el-fraude-electoral-del-2017/amp/>

301 <https://confidencialhn.com/reiteran-falta-de-imparcialidad-del-actual-tse-controlado-por-el-partido-nacional/>

302 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1266724-466/el-censo-nacional-actual-tiene-400-mil-hondure%C3%B1os-muertos>

303 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/19/pastores-cansados-de-orar-se-lanzan-por-el-poder-liderados-por-mario-tomas-barahona/amp/>

304 <https://confidencialhn.com/exigen-reforma-que-permita-a-pastores-participar-en-cargos-de-eleccion-publica/>

305 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/31/gobierno-de-honduras-aplica-decima-alza-consecutiva-en-los-precios-de-los-combustibles/>

306 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/consumidores-temen-aumento-a-la-canasta-basica-por-incremento-en-combustibles/>

307 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/15/doris-gutierrez-advierte-que-la-sar-pretende-incrementar-del-15-al-18-el-isy/amp/>

308 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/15/aumentos-de-hasta-52-registraran-las-tarifas-de-la-energia-en-abril-segun-stenee/amp/>

309 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/31/gobierno-de-joh-confirma-tarifazo-a-energia-electrica/>

310 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/16/aumento-a-las-tarifas-de-energia-electrica-provoca-migracion-forzada-de-hondurenos-advierte-el-conadeh/amp/>

311 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/la-sequia-afecta-a-50-de-familias-hondurenas-e-incide-en-nutricion-infantil.html>

312 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/diadora-hondurena-ha-enviado-886-millones-de-dolares-en-2019-un-12-4-mas-que-en-2018.html>

## Migration

Even though migration has disappeared again from the daily headlines, Ciprodeh estimates that there are still some 300 Hondurans per day who leave the country migrating north.<sup>313</sup> The political analyst Ricardo Puerta agrees saying that up to 100'000 Hondurans will migrate to the US.<sup>314</sup> At the same time, the US and Mexico continue to deport record numbers of Hondurans.<sup>315</sup> There were also some good news from the US. "The Trump administration has agreed to temporarily halt the termination of humanitarian protections for more than 100,000 people from Honduras and Nepal, the American Civil Liberties Union announced Tuesday. (...) Also Tuesday, House Democrats unveiled a new version of the Dream Act, formally called the Dream and Promise Act, including a path to citizenship for beneficiaries of TPS. Arulanantham said immigrants with TPS, many of whom have lived in the U.S. for decades, deserve stability."<sup>316 317</sup>

Also this month, ContraCorriente published an important analysis on Honduran migration. "Between October 2018 and January 2019, the massive exodus of Hondurans—approximately 20 thousand people, towards the United States, has highlighted the profound political and humanitarian crisis Honduras has been going through since the last half century. The self-proclaimed "migrant caravan" is a form of protest against the systematic policy of social exclusion in the country, a hard blow of fortune for the Honduran social body, a hard awakening towards memories trapped in oblivion. This catastrophic event has allowed silenced narratives, emotional wounds, fears, desires and long repressed intimate aspirations to emerge that have marked the individual and collective corporeal memory of the Honduran population, evidencing a torn social fabric still not mended."<sup>318</sup> Forced displacement is a key driver of migration and the Inter-Institutional Commission for the Protection of Persons Displaced by Violence (CIPPDV) presented a bill to Congress this month aiming to prevent forced displacement or then attend and protect those affected by it.<sup>319</sup>

## Violence

There were 12 mass killings in Honduras in a bit more than two months. In all of 2018, there were 39 mass killings.<sup>320</sup>

## And Light at the End of a Month

Last year, the notorious international corporation Fyffes had already lost its Fair Trade USA certificate due to its ongoing labor violations in Honduras. This month, it also lost its Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) membership.<sup>321 322</sup>

313 <https://confidencialhn.com/unas-300-personas-salen-a-diario-de-honduras-rumbo-a-ee-uu-huyendo-de-la-pobreza/>

314 <http://www.proceso.hn/migrantes/1-migrantes/migracion-de-hondurenos-no-se-detendra-y-cada-ano-saldran-entre-60-mil-y-100-mil-personas-segun-experto.html>

315 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/suman-mas-de-15-mil-hondurenos-retornados-en-2019.html>

316 <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-tps-nepal-honduras-20190312-story.html>

317 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/12/el-gobierno-de-ee-uu-deja-en-suspenso-la-cancelacion-del-tps-para-honduras/>

318 <https://contracorriente.red/2019/03/21/cuerpo-territorio-memoria-identidad-y-su-relacion-con-la-migracion/>

319 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/27/presentan-ante-el-congreso-de-honduras-ley-para-prevenir-y-atender-a-personas-desplazadas/>

320 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3253-emergencia-42-hondurenos-asesinados-en-12-masacres-en-lo-que-va-de-2019>

321 <https://www.ethicaltrade.org/blog/eti-terminates-fyffes-membership-statement-8>

322 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/1028-eti-expulsa-a-fyffes-chiquita-despide-ilegalmente>



**Another Month at the Honduras Forum Switzerland**

Past Activities:

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Upcoming Activities:

-

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