



Another Month in Honduras...

Human Rights Monitor – April 2019

Two murdered lawyers, a 17-year old protester assassinated and a 90-year old woman attacked by tear gas in front of her house, non-state and state violence remains high in Honduras. Human rights defenders and journalists reporting on this violence were once more especially targeted. But Hondurans stood up, they returned to the streets for the weekly Torch Marches against the JOH regime and corruption and April ended with nationwide protests and strikes against a privatization bill. 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

Assassinations

Lawyers

Two lawyers were murdered in Honduras in April. Ana Lourdes Arriaga Martínez was driving with a family member in San Pedro Sula when they were shot.¹ She was the lawyer of the 2014 extradited drug trafficker Carlos Arnoldo “Negro” Lobo.² Later the same month, Jairo Samuel Medina was shot in Tegucigalpa.³ The Lawyers Association of Honduras (CAH) asked the MACCIH for support in following up on the 149 cases of murdered lawyers in Honduras. Only in ten cases, there have been sentences.⁴

Attacks, Criminalization and Harassment

The Association for Democracy and Human Rights (ASOPODEHU) documented 118 violent attacks, e.g. assassinations, torture, and threats, but also criminalization, against HRDs in Honduras between April 2018 and March 2019.⁵ This monthly monitor will show that April 2019 was not better.

The human rights organization ADEPZA from the Zacate Grande peninsula denounced a threat against its members by the landowner Jorge Luis Cassis. REDEHSUR, a southern human rights network, condemned that the police does not pay attention to the threats and sides with the landowner.⁶ Over semana santa, human rights defenders in Playa Blanca, Zacate Grande suffered new threats by persons linked to Jorge Luís Cassis.⁷ Also in Honduras’ south, ACI-PARTICPA denounced that the National Police threw a tear gas grenade against the 90-year old Doña Julia Vargas who was sitting outside her house in a wheelchair in Choluteca. "For ACI PARTICIPA, this criminal act is highly suspect and we consider that the launching of the tear gas bomb against the humanity of Mrs. Vargas is a reprisal towards the work that is carried out by the organization that her daughter Hedme Castro directs and that as a deterrent action they are persecuting, repressing and harassing all the members of her family and all this for the repeated denunciations of human rights violations that ACI PARTICIPA investigates, documents and denounces, in addition for the opening of the regional office in Choluteca, from where [ACI PARTICIPA] documents the police brutality against the population of the city of Choluteca, which every week manifests itself against the regime of Juan Orlando Hernández, who with the support of the government of the United States of America, occupies the presidency." Front Line Defenders condemned the attack.⁸

1 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/matan-a-una-pareja-en-colonia-el-pedregal-de-sps.html>

2 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/sucesos/1275836-466/con-armas-largas-le-dispararon-a-abogada-ana-arriaga-y-su-cu%C3%B1ado>

3 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/asesinan-a-balazos-a-abogado-en-la-colonia-kennedy.html>

4 <https://tiempo.hn/cah-pide-ayuda-a-la-macch-abogados-asesinados-en-honduras/>

5 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2440-honduras-12-meses-de-violencia-estigmatizacion-y-campanas-de-odio-contra-defensores-de-derechos-humanos>

6 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/redehsur-condena-aptitud-policial-en-favor-de-terateniente/>

7 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/persisten-amenazas-contra-pobladores-y-pobladoras-de-playa-blanca/>

8 <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/police-launches-tear-gas-family-members-and-individuals-connected-hedme-castro>

Further north, the Agrarian Platform of the Aguán Region denounced that a member of an armed group intimidating and attacking the campesino movement was released shortly after having been arrested for setting fire to the fields of families belonging to the Movimiento Campesino “Gregorio Chavez”.⁹ Defensores en Línea denounced a new attack against the campesino organization 5 de Abril in Lepaguare, San Pedro de Tutule, La Paz. State security forces accompanied by armed civilians came to them on Sunday night and shot at them making them run for their lives. They fear that this is the first step of another violent eviction.¹⁰

On social media, there are ongoing campaigns against Honduran human rights organizations and social movements. MADJ is one of those especially targeted and recently there was a new wave of attacks accusing them to be at fault for the high energy prices in Honduras. MADJ reacted with a detailed description of how corruption and impunity are the main culprits of high energy costs.¹¹ A few days later, Gerardo Salgado, commissioner at the Regulating Commission of Electric Energy (CREE), blamed on TV the environmental movements for high electricity prices for their opposition to hydroelectric projects.¹²

Indigenous Peoples

April started with a group of some 300 indigenous Lencas belonging to CINPH traveling from Intibucá to Tegucigalpa to protest outside of the casa presidencial.¹³ They denounced that six CINPH members were sent to prison and they highlighted the dire conditions under which they work their land due to failed promises by the government.^{14 15} The next day, they held another protest in front of the Supreme Court.¹⁶ The Central American Parliament (Parlacen) sent a statement to the JOH regime reminding it about signed international treaties which recognize the rights of indigenous peoples to their land.¹⁷

On April 6, the presumed murder of the three indigenous Tolupán defenders María Matute, Armando Fúnez and Ricardo Soto was sent to prison. Selin Eliazar Fúnez Bonilla is accused of the murders which took place in 2013. Previously, Carlos Roberto Varela Luque had already been found guilty of the crime, but he escaped prison and was later found dead. His death remains unresolved. MADJ denounces that the intellectual authors of the assassinations are still unaccounted for and as impunity continues, the assassinations continue as shown by the murders of Juan Samael and José Salomón Matute this February.¹⁸

222 years ago, the Garífuna people arrived in Honduras 222 years.¹⁹ "The 47 Garífuna communities distributed along the Honduran Atlantic coast are not only synonymous with struggle, dignity and endurance, they also represent living traditions, traditional dances, natural beauty and foods that

9 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/39-conflictos/1031-grupo-armado-en-el-bajo-aguan-mantiene-en-zozobra-a-comunidades-campesinas>

10 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/nuevo-ataque-a-campesinos-de-la-paz-que-se-encuentran-en-recuperacion-de-tierras/>

11 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/10/la-corrupcion-y-la-impunidad-encarecen-la-energia-electrica-madj/>

12 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/1033-comisionado-de-la-cree-acusa-ambientalistas-por-alto-costo-de-la-energia>

13 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3302-lencas-en-tegucigalpa-se-apoderan-de-lucha-social-hondurena>

14 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3290-campesinos-no-se-iran-de-tegucigalpa-hasta-lograr-acuerdo-con-gobierno>

15 <https://www.hispantv.com/noticias/honduras/425085/indigenas-protesta-represion-gobierno-hermandez>

16 <http://elpulso.hn/continuan-protestas-de-campesinos-hoy-en-la-capital/>

17 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3329-parlacen-demanda-al-estado-hondureno-resolver-conflicto-en-tierras-del-palud>

18 <https://movimientoamplio.org/2019/04/a-prision-supuesto-asesino-de-tres-indigenas-tolupanes-integrantes-del-movimiento-amplio/>

19 <https://ofraneh.wordpress.com/2019/04/15/a-los-222-anos-de-presencia-garifuna-arrecia-el-racismo/>

recall their way of surviving and resisting through the ages."²⁰ An occasion of celebration turned fast into another attack on the Garífuna people. Some weeks ago, Miriam Miranda, the coordinator of OFRANEH, was cited to the MP, an indication of a new attempt of criminalization. On April 19, the police and military police detained her together with Aurelia Arzú.²¹ Both HRDs should benefit from special protection measures.²² They were released later the same day without any explanation by the state security forces of why they were arrested.²³ A week later, Miriam Miranda denounced the death threats received by OFRANEH member Kerlin Teresa Colón and her family. Colón is demanding answers for the death of her brother in 2015 by state security forces.²⁴ And before the month had ended, OFRANEH had to denounce that the mayor of La Ceiba intends to turn through a town hall meeting two indigenous Garífuna communities into neighborhoods of La Ceiba making them vulnerable to "development" projects.²⁵

The Case of Berta Cáceres

Six years ago this month, a protest camp was set up to defend the Gualcarque river against the Agua Zarca hydroelectric project. COPINH commemorated the anniversary²⁶ and reminded us that "[t]he intellectual authors of the murder of Berta are also responsible for the illegal concessions of the indigenous territories and they remain unpunished."²⁷ COPINH also published mug shots of the 16 public functionaries they hold responsible for handing over the Gualcarque river to DESA, the company behind Agua Zarca.²⁸ Later in April, they published the complete transcript of the sentence from last November in the murder case of Berta Cáceres and the attempted murder case of Gustavo Castro Soto.²⁹ Four months have passed and the court has so far failed to present the final conviction ruling which includes the individualization of the penalties. "Could it be that there is an intention to revoke this sentence? Who do they want to protect? Those who paid and ordered the murder of Berta Cáceres, are not being prosecuted or tried."³⁰

On April 4, the Berta Cáceres trial started its second turn with the preliminary hearing against the director of DESA, David Castillo.³¹ According to COPINH, people paid by DESA gathered outside the court to provoke and incite members of the communities belonging to COPINH.³² In court, Castillo was officially accused highlighting his role as a middleman between the hit men and the owners of DESA.³³ COPINH summarized the accusation against DESA director David Castillo made in the preliminary hearing. "Authorized the provision of resources for people who had to perform functions of infiltration, monitoring and attacks on communities in which Agua Zarca was built, as well as against COPINH and Berta Isabel Cáceres." Objective: "Control, neutralize and eliminate social demands for human rights violations [caused] by granting the concession and

20 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/comunidades-garifunas-destinos-turisticos-que-resisten-al-despojo/>
 21 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/19/policia-detiene-ilegalmente-a-miriam-miranda-y-aurelia-arzu/amp/>
 22 <https://hondurasresists.blogspot.com/2019/04/miriam-miranda-and-other-ofraneh.html>
 23 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1119288674036985858>
 24 <https://twitter.com/baraudawaguchu/status/1119649492058411010>
 25 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1123219933280776194>
 26 <https://copinh.org/2019/04/este-1-de-abril-celebramos-6-anos-de-resistencia-y-lucha-de-rio-blanco-fotos/>
 27 <https://copinh.org/2019/04/rio-blanco-a-6-anos-seguimos-en-resistencia/>
 28 <https://copinh.org/2019/04/lxs-16-funcionaris-publicos-responsables-de-entregar-el-rio-gualcarque-a-la-empresa-desa/>
 29 <https://copinh.org/2019/04/1er-juicio-por-el-asesinato-de-bertha-caceres/>
 30 <https://copinh.org/2019/04/video-1er-juicio-aun-no-dictan-sentencia/>
 31 <https://www.cejil.org/es/arranca-nueva-audiencia-causa-bertha-caceres-sin-sentencia-firme-contra-autores-materiales>
 32 <https://copinh.org/2019/04/que-paso-hoy-en-la-audiencia/>
 33 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1113784077226795008>

construction of the referred project to the company of which he is still a part". "[Castillo] was kept informed of the movements executed by Berta Cáceres through communications developed with senior executives of the company and employees" Offenses: "The actions of Mr. Castillo [...] are related to the realization of the violation of the right to life of Bertha Isabel Cáceres Flores, as well as that of Gustavo Castro Soto, which was about to be consummated."³⁴

The MP conducted the Operation Ant ("Hormiga") III this month. As part of the operation, they announced to gather the statement of the accused former mayor of San Francisco de Ojuera, Santa Bárbara, Raúl Pineda. He is accused of abuse of authority and illegally granting a permission to DESA.³⁵

LGBTQ

At the end of 2018, the LGBTQ community presented another legal challenge against the prohibition to marry and adopt. On April 6, CONADEH requested an answer by the courts.³⁶ April brought also forward the disturbing situation of the Honduran trans woman Nicole García Aguilar. She was detained in the US by ICE for over six months even though she had received asylum.³⁷ In mid-April she was finally released. "Nicole García Aguilar was freed from the Cibola County detention facility in New Mexico on Wednesday night, a week after lawyers filed a habeas corpus writ challenging her unjustified and prolonged detention by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (Ice). García's ordeal, which included several stints in solitary confinement, highlights the ongoing arbitrary detention of asylum seekers under the Trump administration, which has triggered multiple legal challenges."³⁸ But only a week later, she was re-detained by ICE.³⁹

Freedom of Expression and Journalists

April started with a press conference by C-Libre together with journalist Bartolo Fuentes. They denounced the disinformation campaigns by the JOH regime as well as the criminalization of journalist such as Fuentes reporting on Honduran migration. "The organization, through a press release, demanded that the State of Honduras guarantee journalists and defenders of the rights of migrants the exercise of their work and that they recognize their work in the public interest, since journalists risk their physical integrity and carry out their work in precarious conditions, accompanying the journey of thousands of people expelled from their country. They [C-Libre] also urged the Public Prosecutor's Office (MP) to present an accusation for the crime of hate speech against the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, María Dolores Agüero. Also, that the government refrain from creating false criminal accusations against the journalist Bartolo Fuentes and against other communicators who comply with their informative work."⁴⁰ In an interview with Criterio, Fuentes

34 <https://copinh.org/2019/04/de-que-se-le-acusa-a-david-castillo/>

35 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/133-abril-2019/4101-operacion-hormiga-iii>

36 <https://tiempo.hn/conadeh-respuesta-a-comunidad-lgbti/>

37 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/minisitios/hondurenosenelmundo/1275574-471/hondure%C3%B1o-transgenero-sigue-detenido-por-ice-pese-a-recibir-asilo-en-eeuu>

38 https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/apr/19/honduran-transgender-woman-nicole-garcia-aguilar-freed-us-detention?CMP=share_btn_tw

39 <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/apr/26/transgender-asylum-seeker-nicole-garcia-aguilar-detained>

40 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/libertad-de-expresion/1024-estigmatizacion-enfrentan-periodistas-que-cubren-caravanas-de-migrantes>

voiced fear that the JOH regime wants to try him as a human trafficker as a sign of force for the Trump administration claiming that Honduras is doing something to reduce migration to the north.⁴¹

Last month, the arrest of journalist David Romero was widely criticized. His case will be presented to the IACHR during its next session Kingston, Jamaica in May.⁴² Romero is accused of defamation. The president of the Lawyers Association of Honduras (CAH), Any Ochoa, suggested this month that crimes against honor would be moved to civil courts away from criminal courts.⁴³ Already in 2007, C-Libre had elaborated a proposal to decriminalize crime against honor, but its proposal is still very topical. Since 2003, C-Libre documented 40 criminal trials for this crime, 15 directed against journalists.⁴⁴ On April 15, the Nationalist congresswoman Wesly Vásquez announced that Congress would discuss a decriminalization of crimes against honors.⁴⁵

Journalists suffered various direct attacks as well as aggression as part of more widespread repression of protests.⁴⁶ Luis Rodríguez, journalist in Comayagua, denounced receiving death threats for his coverage of corruption by local mayors, former mayors and congresswo/men.⁴⁷ Among the eight arrested environmental and human rights defenders resisting the solar energy project Los Prados (see Extractive Industries section) was the journalist and correspondent of Radio Namasigüe, Félix Pastrana.⁴⁸ In Choluteca, Metro TV, which covers the regular protests taking place in Choluteca is being monitored by state security forces.⁴⁹ TV and radio editor Nelson Humberto Santos Núñez suffered an attack by the police, hitting him with their rifles. One of the police agents who attacked him was the police escort assigned by the protection mechanism for journalist Leonel García after he had received death threats last month.⁵⁰ Victims of previous acts of aggression, e.g. UNE TV journalist Geovanny Sierra who was shot last November by state security forces and needs a prosthesis for part of his arm, continue to suffer as the medical cost are very high.⁵¹

Given all of the above, it is no surprise that Honduras under the JOH regime further dropped in the Freedom of Press ranking by Reporters without Borders reaching its worst ranking so far, 146th out of 180 countries.^{52 53}

Violence against Women

82 women were murdered in the first three months of 2019 in Honduras⁵⁴, but at the same time, the Violence Observatory at UNAH reported that every 16 hour a woman was murdered in Honduras.⁵⁵ This would mean an even higher femicide rate. At the same time, the new Penal Code lowered the punishment for sexual abuse, femicide, human trafficking and gender violence.⁵⁶

41 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2441-vo-no-soy-coyote-periodista-bartolo-fuentes-perseguido-por-honduras-mexico-y-usa>

42 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/05/caso-de-david-romero-sera-conocido-por-la-cidh-en-jamaica-el-proximo-7-de-mayo/amp/>

43 <https://confidencialhn.com/colegio-de-abogados-de-honduras-sugiere-trasladar-delitos-contra-el-honor-al-codigo-civil/>

44 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/noticias/987-conoce-usted-la-propuesta-de-c-libre-para-despenalizar-los-delitos-contra-el-honor>

45 <https://confidencialhn.com/diputados-bipolares-dicen-que-despenalizaran-delitos-contra-el-honor-pero-respetan-fallo-por-captura-de-david/>

46 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/985-extrema-violencia-policia-irrumpe-en-canales-televisivos-de-choluteca>

47 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2443-ayudennos-gringos-a-sacar-esta-dictadura-periodista-luis-rodriguez>

48 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/992-comunicador-de-zona-sur-en-prision-junto-a-defensores-y-defensoras-del-territorio>

49 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/993-canal-de-tv-en-choluteca-en-alerta-por-continua-vigilancia>

50 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/04/17/escolta-policia-de-comunicador-leonel-garcia-denunciado-por-atacar-a-su-editor-a-un-mes-de-impunidad-por-asesinato-de-otro-periodista/>

51 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2450-mientras-la-justicia-va-a-paso-de-tortuga-periodista-tiroteado-debe-enfrentar-onerosos-gastos-para-la-recuperacion>

52 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2451-clasificacion-mundial-de-la-libertad-de-prensa-2019-la-mecanica-del-miedo>

53 <https://rsf.org/en/2019-world-press-freedom-index-cycle-fear>

54 <https://tiempo.hn/ov-unah-82-mujeres-muertes-violentas/>

55 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/sucesos/1277695-466/cada-16-horas-una-mujer-es-asesinada-en-honduras-seg%C3%BAAn-ov-unah>

56 <http://www.web.elibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3336-hondurenas-en-alerta-justicia-bajo-penas-a-delincuentes-sexuales>

Women's rights and feminist organizations organized a workshop on access to justice for women and girls who were victim of violence. "The exercise indicated serious setbacks in terms of human rights faced by Honduran women, which in turn have an impact on a weakened institutional framework that does not respond to the demands of justice for women to live a life free of violence and femicide and to the exercise of sexual and reproductive rights, the right to political participation under conditions of substantive equality and equity that allows for ethical transformations in political practice, among other aspects."⁵⁷ They also launched a campaign to legalize emergency contraception⁵⁸ and presented a report on human trafficking in Honduras.⁵⁹

Protection Mechanism

The TV and radio editor Nelson Humberto Santos Núñez recently suffered an attack by the police, hitting him with their rifles. One of the police agents who attacked him was the police escort assigned by the protection mechanism for journalist Leonel García after he had received death threats.⁶⁰

Political Prisoners

An international human rights delegation was in Honduras for a week and visited the political prisoners Edwin Espinal and Raúl Álvarez. They expressed grave concern about the deteriorating state of the two men.⁶¹ Edwin Espinal has been held for 15 months in the "high-security" prison La Tolva and both men have limited contact with the outside world including their families.⁶²

Extractive Industries

This month, Honduras' judicial system once more tricked human rights and environmental defenders. Similar to the Guapinol case, the Honduran judicial system used a dirty trick to invite seven local environmental defenders and one social communicator resisting the Los Prados solar energy plant to court only to have them arrested.⁶³ The court invited them as witnesses, but when they arrived, the Bureau of Police Investigation (DPI) arrested them and sent them to jail.⁶⁴ In the case of Jenny Aguilar, her nine-month old baby was taken away from her to arrest her. Fortunately, a member of ACI-Participa was present and was able to take the baby.⁶⁵ ⁶⁶ On April 24, two weeks later, the initial hearing took place⁶⁷ and to some surprise, the judge dropped the case.⁶⁸

Max Radwin reported for Mongobay on palm oil production in Honduras. "Production of oil palm has risen by nearly 560 percent in Honduras over the past two decades, making the country the

57 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/28/mujeres-analizan-proceso-de-justicia-para-victimas-de-violencia/>

58 <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/apr/24/campaigners-fight-to-lift-ban-on-morning-after-pill-in-honduras>

59 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.org/files.wordpress.com/2019/04/caso-2-trata-de-personas-en-bc3basqueda-de-la-justicia.pdf>

60 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/04/17/escolta-policial-de-comunicador-leonel-garcia-denunciado-por-atacar-a-su-editor-a-un-mes-de-impunidad-por-asesinato-de-otro-periodista/>

61 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/mision-internacional-verifico-deteriorado-estado-de-salud-de-presos-politicos-en-la-tolva/>

62 <https://twitter.com/EdwinLibertad/status/1119458156076306434>

63 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2446-dpi-les-tendio-una-trampa-encarcelan-a-ochos-defensores-del-ambiente-en-choluteca>

64 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/mirada-al-sur/1032-crisis-en-choluteca-a-la-carcel-ochos-defensores-del-medio-ambiente>

65 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/11/con-artimanas-actuan-juzgados-y-policia-en-choluteca-para-encarcelar-8-defensores-del-ambiente/>

66 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/por-oponerse-a-proyecto-fotovoltaico-detienen-a-ochos-personas/>

67 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/a-audiencia-inicial-ambientalista-de-namasigue/>

68 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/mirada-al-sur/1040-justicia-parcial-reciben-defensores-ambientalistas-en-costa-azul>

eighth-largest producer worldwide and number three in the Americas. (...) Fifteen companies make up Honduras's oil palm industry, which generated \$365 million in 2017 as the country's fifth-largest export, according to the World Bank. Municipal records show that five of those companies — Palcasa, Agrotor, Corapsa, HonduPalma and Dinant — operate inside Jeanette Kawas National Park because they owned land there before it was established or were able to purchase land and obtain municipal, federal and international certification."⁶⁹

And then, at the end of April, there was some news on the Zones for Employment and Economic Development (ZEDEs). Out of the blue, the Secretary for Economic Development (SDE) Arnaldo Castillo claimed that the first ZEDE would start working within two months. At the same time, he still could not say where it would be located.⁷⁰

Mining

Even though the most outright physical confrontation and state repression has decreased, the situation in Guapinol remains tense. Communities affected by the mining project presented another constitutional challenge against the bill that decreased the size of the local national park making possible the mining concession.⁷¹ Radio Progreso reported on forced migration due to extractive project focusing on the Guapinol case.⁷² Another prominent case of resistance against a mining project concerns Azacualpa, Copán. This month, 19 environmental defenders from there faced criminalization for their protest against the mining project, especially its expansion leading to the destruction of a local cemetery.⁷³

A new study by Oxfam and FOSDEH in collaboration with UNAH found that by July 2018, Honduras counted with 540 registered mining concessions and 307 energy projects. Mining concessions affect 156 municipalities and energy projects 100 communities.^{74 75} At the same time, those challenging the concessions are being criminalized and denigrated. La Tribuna unconvincingly claimed that Honduras lost out on \$750 million in two years because environmentalist challenged six articles of the General Mining Law concerning the amount of money to be handed over by mining companies. First, the Supreme Court accepted their challenge, i.e. confirming that the amount was too low. Second, it ordered Congress to improve the law. Congress failed to do so. One congressman told La Tribuna, that they need a draft bill coming from the executive, which has not happened yet. Either way, if Honduras is losing out on money it is because of Congress and the JOH regime.⁷⁶ But there was also some good news regarding mining this month. The inhabitants of El Triunfo, Choluteca declared their community free of mining.⁷⁷

69 <https://news.mongabay.com/2019/04/its-getting-worse-national-parks-in-honduras-hit-hard-by-palm-oil/>

70 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1277988-466/primera-zede-de-honduras-iniciara-en-dos-meses>

71 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/24/interponen-nuevo-recurso-de-inconstitucionalidad-contra-decreto-que-dio-vida-a-proyecto-minero-en-guapinol/>

72 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/proyecto-minero-desplaza-familias-enteras-en-colon/>

73 <https://hch.tv/2019/04/02/en-audiencia-inicial-19-ambientalistas-que-minera-de-la-union-copan-pretende-enviar-a-prision/>

74 <http://www.fosdeh.com/2019/04/presentacion-del-geoportal-y-el-estudio-territorios-en-riesgos-mineria-generacion-de-energia-electrica-e-hidrocarburos-en-honduras/>

75 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/04/en-el-65-del-territorio-de-honduras-hay-concesiones-mineras-y-de-energia/amp/>

76 https://www.latribuna.hn/2019/04/24/por-trabaja-legales-mineria-deja-de-pagar-750-millones-al-fisco#disqus_thread

77 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/mirada-al-sur/1026-el-triunfo-se-declara-libre-de-mineria-en-cabildo-abierto>

Hydroelectricity

This month, once more, the Protection Committee of the Reitoca River was violently evicted.⁷⁸ The police, COBRAS and security guards hired by the dam company PROGELSA attacked the camp, even opening fire and hurting a member of the committee.⁷⁹ This was accompanied by an ongoing denigration and even criminalization in the main media.⁸⁰

Corruption and Its Enemies

The MACCIH and UFECIC did not reveal any new corruption case this month, but corruption was still constantly in the headlines. Be it for events in the US (see US sub-section below) or for the publication of a new book by CEDOH on corruption, impunity and insecurity in the first year of JOH's second illegal term.⁸¹ ⁸² On April 17, the Supreme Audit Court (TSC) informed about new investigations into illicit enrichment of some 60 million Lempiras by former and current officials.⁸³ Four days later, the additionally reported on 30 cases of corruption worth 103.9 million Lempiras.⁸⁴ ContraCorriente later reported on a very disturbing corruption case in little league soccer, where money was stolen meant to build safe fields for some 25'000 kids.⁸⁵ Last but not least, the coordinator of the MACCIH, Luiz Marrey, handed over its regular report to the OAS.⁸⁶

The Onslaught against the Anti-Corruption Bodies

The MACCIH's work in Honduras has been accompanied by overt and covert pressure. This month, the initially got some support from the executive power for the approval of the Efficient Collaboration Bill.⁸⁷ But the presidential adviser Marvin Ponce later said that Congress would renew the contract with the MACCIH due to outside pressure. This can explain on the one side, why the Efficient Collaboration Bill got support from the executive power, but at the same time it undermines it.⁸⁸ The MACCIH once more is presented as a foreign agent pushed through by outside powers, even though it was a consequence of Hondurans demanding an end to impunity for corruption cases. And the bill is not through yet. Odir Fernández, head of investigation at the National Anti-Corruption Council (CNA), fears that Congress may modify the Efficient Collaboration Bill to continue guaranteeing their impunity.⁸⁹ On April 24, Congress nominated a commission to prepare the bill. This had already happened back in 2017, but to no avail.⁹⁰ US Chargé d'Affaires Heide Fulton met with Congress' president Mauricio Oliva to voice her support for the bill.⁹¹ She also demanded the prolongation of the contract of the MACCIH.⁹² Nevertheless,

78 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/04/25/alerta-por-defensa-del-rio-petacon-pobladores-de-reitoca-son-violentamente-desalojados/>

79 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1121466488379138048>

80 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/culpan-a-exaspirante-edilicio-de-libre-de-orquestrar-quema-en-proyecto-petacon.html>

81 <http://www.cedoh.org/recursos/Libros/Libro-gobierno.pdf>

82 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/07/impunidad-y-corrupcion-letal/>

83 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1277692-466/tribunal-superior-de-cuentas-detecta-anomalia-en-manejo-de-1103-millones>

84 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1276876-466/tsc-detecta-23-casos-con-enriquecimiento-de-140-millones-de-lempiras>

85 <https://contracorriente.red/2019/04/24/99712/>

86 <https://confidencialhn.com/jefe-de-la-maccih-entrega-informe-sobre-corrupcion-en-honduras-a-almagro/>

87 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/poder-ejecutivo-envia-al-congreso-proyecto-de-decreto-sobre-ley-de-colaboracion-eficaz.html>

88 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/cn-ratificara-convenio-de-la-maccih-por-presiones-externas-vaticina-marvin-ponce.html>

89 <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/cna-advierte-de-posibles-modificaciones-a-ley-de-colaboracion-eficaz-en-el-cn.html>

90 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/23/por-segunda-vez-congreso-de-honduras-nombra-comision-dictaminadora-de-ley-de-colaboracion-eficaz/>

91 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/24/fulton-le-ordena-a-oliva-aprobar-reformas-electorales-ley-de-colaboracion-eficaz-y-extension-del-convenio-de-la-maccih/>

92 <https://twitter.com/USAmbHonduras/status/1121176095930368005>

the bill alone, without an institutional strengthening of the MP, TSC and the Supreme Court, will not be effective.⁹³

Another case this month highlighted the ongoing impunity for Honduras' elite. The former commissioner of the privatizing body Coalianza, José Antonio Pineda Cano, was acquitted. He was accused of illegally taking over the role of a congressman for voting in Congress in 2014. He was even caught on camera doing so, but the judge decided there was not sufficient proof.⁹⁴

Corruption around JOH

Last month, ConfidencialHN started a series on acts of corruption by JOH and his allies. They continued this month publishing part eight⁹⁵, nine⁹⁶, ten⁹⁷, eleven⁹⁸ and twelve⁹⁹. Part nine focused on the presidential couple. "The atypical practices incurred by the Hernández García couple coincided with the laundering of money, as there were massive purchases of properties, real estate, large tracts of land and the development of projects that allowed them to keep hidden for a short time resources coming from corruption and organized crime."¹⁰⁰ Part ten, meanwhile, highlighted a possible impunity pact between JOH and the Attorney General Óscar Chinchilla. The latter's wife Catherine Chang Carías had benefited from high paying jobs in the JOH administration.¹⁰¹ The revelations in article eleven concerned the misuse of a foundation by the former Secretary of Education to divert public money.¹⁰² Part twelve focused on a scheme by Ana Rosalinda García Carías who sold overpriced houses to people using funds by the Honduran Bank for Production and Housing (Banhprovi).¹⁰³ Nevertheless, there was no official information of any investigation into JOH. Even worse, ConfidencialHN reported that the Attorney General Óscar Chinchilla ordered Luis Santos, the head of UFECIC, and other public prosecutors to stay away from accepting files based on investigations not started by an official order. This took place after ConfidencialHN had started to publish information on JOH and corruption.¹⁰⁴

Spurred by such revelations, the Alignment against Continuity called on the Honduran people to take up again the Friday protests against the JOH regime and corruption.¹⁰⁵ They took place on all Fridays this month¹⁰⁶ and even Proceso Digital acknowledged them.¹⁰⁷ Their first march was accompanied by a press release in which they demanded among other things the resignation of JOH and his investigation for corruption, the permanence of the MACCIH in Honduras, and no political interference in the investigations of the MACCIH and UFECIC.¹⁰⁸ On April 9, the platform Citizen Action against the Dictatorship presented legal charges at the MP against JOH and his family for

93 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/sin-fortalecimiento-institucional-de-nada-servira-la-ley-de-colaboracion-eficaz-coinciden-analistas.html>

94 <https://confidencialhn.com/a-pesar-de-video-que-lo-delata-usurpando-funciones-absuelven-a-excomisionado-de-coalianza/>

95 <https://confidencialhn.com/76121-2/>

96 <https://confidencialhn.com/banco-dio-a-joh-una-hipoteca-de-17-millones-a-joh-por-un-modesto-terreno/>

97 <https://confidencialhn.com/por-que-chinchilla-no-persigue-penalmente-a-joh-esposa-del-fiscal-sera-directora-en-el-bcie/>

98 <https://confidencialhn.com/joh-uso-la-fundacion-del-exsecretario-de-educacion-para-saquear-millones-de-lempiras/>

99 <https://confidencialhn.com/la-estafa-maestra-los-herandez-blanquearon-capitales-con-villa-verde-y-enganaron-a-clientes/>

100 <https://confidencialhn.com/banco-dio-a-joh-una-hipoteca-de-17-millones-a-joh-por-un-modesto-terreno/>

101 <https://confidencialhn.com/por-que-chinchilla-no-persigue-penalmente-a-joh-esposa-del-fiscal-sera-directora-en-el-bcie/>

102 <https://confidencialhn.com/joh-uso-la-fundacion-del-exsecretario-de-educacion-para-saquear-millones-de-lempiras/>

103 <https://confidencialhn.com/la-estafa-maestra-los-herandez-blanquearon-capitales-con-villa-verde-y-enganaron-a-clientes/>

104 <https://confidencialhn.com/temor-chinchilla-quiere-aplicar-ley-mordaza-al-jefe-de-ufecic-para-no-abordar-denuncias-contra-joh/>

105 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/denuncias-que-retratan-la-dictadura/>

106 <https://twitter.com/hondurasol/status/1116875434094993408>

107 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/nueva-marcha-contra-la-corrupcion-en-tegucigalpa.html>

108 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/04/07/declaracion-de-ciudadanos-y-movimientos-indignados-en-tegucigalpa/>

corruption and organized crime.¹⁰⁹ At the end of April, ConfidencialHN interpreted a statement by the president of the Supreme Audit Court (TSC) as an indication of a possible investigation of JOH for corruption.¹¹⁰

The Gualcarque Fraud case

On April 12, the initial hearing in the Gualcarque Fraud case came to a close. The judge ordered pre-trial detention for the director of DESA Roberto David Castillo Mejía and alternative measures to imprisonment for the 15 other accused.¹¹¹

The Patuca III Case

Last month, the majority of the accused in the Patuca III corruption case were allowed to await trial outside prison. On April 4, a court ordered pre-trial detention against Francisco Arturo Mejía, Roberto Arturo Mejía Salgado and Waldina Lizzette Salgado Pérez. The three of them were also accused of having been figureheads for the Los Cachiros drug cartel.¹¹² A few days later, UFECIC had the accusations against all the accused in the Pandora case confirmed.¹¹³ Nevertheless, only three of the has actually to await trial in prison.¹¹⁴

The Pandora Case

After months on the run. another accused in the Pandora corruption case, Sixto Pineda Hernández, presented himself to court this month.¹¹⁵ Initially it was reported that he would serve pre-trial detention¹¹⁶, but as in the cases before, he was allowed to await trial outside prison.¹¹⁷

The Case against the Former First Lady Rosa Elena de Lobo

The trial of the former first lady continued this month¹¹⁸ amongst her ongoing claims of innocence.¹¹⁹ On April 11, it was made public in court that she had continued to manage state funds even after she had stopped being the first lady.¹²⁰ In another court date, the defense of de Lobo abstained from presenting five listed witnesses because they could not find them anymore.¹²¹ After seven weeks in court¹²², the MP demanded a prison sentence between 81 to 128 years.¹²³ De Lobo once more presented herself as a victim insinuating that the judges was being intimidated by the MACCIH.¹²⁴ Then she claimed that her case was being used to veil other corruption cases.¹²⁵

109 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/09/accd-presenta-denuncia-criminal-contrajoh-y-su-familia-vea-texto-completo/amp/>

110 <https://confidencialhn.com/tsc-podria-abrir-una-investigacion-de-oficio-a-joh-por-denuncias-de-corrupcion/>

111 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1275576-466/prisi%C3%B3n-preventiva-a-castillo-mej%C3%ADa-y-medidas-cautelares-a-otros-15-implicados>

112 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/detencion-judicial-para-tres-implicados-en-caso-patuca-iii-colusion-y-corrupcion.html>

113 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1274305-466/la-ufecic-ratifica-acusaci%C3%B3n-en-el-caso-patuca-iii>

114 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1275332-466/bajo-arresto-quedan-tres-acusados-del-caso-patuca-iii>

115 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/se-presenta-ante-la-jueza-otro-imputado-en-caso-pandora.html>

116 <https://tiempo.hn/profugo-caso-pandora-se-entrega/>

117 <https://confidencialhn.com/honduras-acusado-por-causa-pandora-se-defendera-en-libertad/>

118 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1272296-466/pericia-ratifica-que-mi-rosa-abrió-cuenta-en-cheques>

119 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/defensa-insiste-que-exprimera-dama-no-se-apropio-de-fondos-publicos.html>

120 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1274997-466/mi-rosa-emiti%C3%B3-cheques-cuando-ya-no-ejerc%C3%ADa-el-cargo>

121 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/defensa-de-exprimera-dama-renuncia-a-cinco-testigos-por-no-ubicarlos.html>

122 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1278008-410/juicio-rosa-lobo-caso-caja-chica-dama-honduras-corrupcion->

123 <https://confidencialhn.com/fiscalia-de-honduras-pide-128-anos-de-carcel-para-ex-primera-dama-por-supuestos-delitos/>

124 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/defensa-de-exprimera-dama-pide-a-jueces-no-dejarse-presionar-por-la-maccih-al-momento-de-dictar-fallo.html>

125 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1279228-466/rosa-elena-de-lobo-tras-finalizar-su-juicio-quieren-tapar-cosas-tir%C3%A1ndome>

The Astropharma Case

The Astropharma corruption case involving the important Nationalist Gutiérrez family was elevated to an oral and public trial.¹²⁶

The IHSS Case

There was an interesting turn in one of the many sub-cases of the IHSS corruption case. An appeal court ordered the re-imprisonment of the former board members of the IHSS as part of pre-trial detention. A lower court judge had previously let them go.¹²⁷ The Supreme Court confirmed this.¹²⁸ By the end of April, they still had not returned to prison¹²⁹ and they presented another legal challenge.¹³⁰

In another IHSS case, against Mario Zelaya and José Bertetty, they were sentenced to 30 years in prison. Four more people were sentenced to between 17 and 26 years in prison.¹³¹ Proceso Digital published a summary of the IHSS corruption case. So far, 15 people received sentences and in total 300 million Lempiras in goods were seized.¹³²

State Security Forces

The former director of Forensic Medicine, Julissa Villanueva, demanded per judicial order to be re-instituted.¹³³ She was let go under suspicious circumstances insisting on the investigation of the murder of the regional head of ATIC Sherill Yubissa Hernández Mancía, which the agency tried to cover up (see also the Migration sub-section for more on this case). The Bureau of Disciplinary Police Matters (Didapol) announced this month that at least 35 high-ranking police officials are being investigated for drug trafficking, murder and more.¹³⁴ Nationalist congressman Tomás Zambrano presented a bill giving them 6.2 million Lempiras to open four regional offices.¹³⁵ On April 30, InSight Crime reported on the fight against extortion in Honduras and the problems that came with it. "Honduras' private sector, under the banner of regional chambers of commerce, joined forces with the country's elite anti-extortion unit in what was a fruitful collaboration. But the collaboration between businessmen and state security forces does not bode well for the country's anti-extortion efforts."¹³⁶

Post-Electoral Human Rights Violations

At the end of March, the MP announced that the Military Police officer, Second Sergeant Denis Omar Cáceres Ramírez, had been arrested and charged for the murder of 32-year old David Octavio

126 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/133-abril-2019/4131-22-personas-son-sometidas-a-diferentes-audiencias-por-casos-de-corrupcion-entre-estas-imputados-por-caso-astropharma-cuyo-proceso-es-elevado-a-juicio-oral-y-publico>

127 <https://confidencialhn.com/ordenen-el-reingreso-a-prision-de-exdirectivos-del-ihss-acusados-por-ilicitos/>

128 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3314-a-la-carcel-directivos-vinculados-a-estafa-del-seguro-social>

129 <https://confidencialhn.com/exdirectivos-del-ihss-deberan-ingresar-al-presidio-hasta-el-30-de-abril/>

130 <https://confidencialhn.com/presentan-amparo-para-evitar-que-exdirectivos-del-ihss-vayan-a-la-carcel/>

131 <https://tiempo.hn/30-anos-zelaya-bertetty-saqueo-recursos-ihss/>

132 <http://www.proceso.hn/nacionales/9-nacionales/desfalco-ihss-13-sentencias-condenatorias-en-honduras-y-dos-en-el-exterior.html>

133 <https://tiempo.hn/julissa-villanueva-exigira-directora-forense/>

134 <https://confidencialhn.com/afirman-investigacion-a-35-agentes-policiales-por-actos-ilicitos/>

135 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1279496-466/62-millones-lempiras-para-abrir-4-regionales-de-la-didapol>

136 <https://www.insightcrime.org/investigations/honduras-private-sector-anti-extortion-police-unholy-alliance/>

Quiroz, who was murdered in Guacamaya, Cortés on December 15, 2017 during the post-electoral protests. On April 1, a judge decided to open trial against him.¹³⁷ But at the end of the month, it was made public that the Military Police is trying to stop their investigation into the post-electoral assassinations.^{138 139}

Also back in December 2017, the COBRAS special forces protested against orders by the JOH regime to repress the Honduran people. One of them spoke this month with Radio Globo and El Tiempo, denouncing persecution and that hitmen were sent after him.¹⁴⁰ Shortly afterwards, El Heraldo reported of the end of the COBRAS special forces after 39 year. They were completely replaced by the TIGRES special forces.¹⁴¹

Repressions

Repression by state security forces reached, literally, a new level this month when they used Army helicopters to tear gas protesting students at the UNAH in Tegucigalpa.¹⁴² The Coalition against Impunity condemned the attack¹⁴³ and so did the UNAH faculty.¹⁴⁴ As part of the violent repression of protests, journalist are regularly targeted. C-Libre denounced that by April 22, journalist and social communicators had been attacked by state security forces three times.¹⁴⁵

But repression does not always take physical force and in Honduras, the force of the (unjust) law is commonly used. A judge in Tegucigalpa emitted arrest warrants against 20 protesters in Choluteca further criminalizing the bi-weekly protests against the JOH regime.¹⁴⁶ According to ACI-PARTICIPA, 86 people have been criminalized so far for participating in protests.¹⁴⁷ Meanwhile, assassinations by state security forces remain unpunished.

Assassinations

The inhabitants of Choluteca have taken to the street one to twice per week ever since the electoral fraud of 2017. They face constant repression and criminalization. This month, things turned even worse, as state security forces shot a 17-old protester who later died in the hospital.¹⁴⁸ The murder of Wilfredo de Jesús Moncada caused widespread condemnation in Honduras. Human rights movement in the south of Honduras demanded a thorough investigation and the persecution of the culprits. They also demanded the de-militarization of the south and the respect of the right to protest.¹⁴⁹ US Congresswoman Norma Torres reacted on Twitter. "17-year-old Wilfredo de Jesús Moncada was killed during a protest in Choluteca, Honduras last night. Honduran authorities must carry out an independent investigation and the perpetrators must be brought to justice."¹⁵⁰ Casa

¹³⁷ <https://tiempo.hn/carcel-sargento-militar-muerte-post-electoral/>

¹³⁸ <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/23/policia-militar-se-opone-a-investigacion-de-muertes-postelectorales/amp/>

¹³⁹ <https://tiempo.hn/policia-militar-obstaculiza-investigacion-de-muertes-post-electorales/>

¹⁴⁰ <https://confidencialhn.com/exagente-cobra-revela-oscura-corrupcion-en-la-policia-nacional-de-honduras/>

¹⁴¹ <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1268124-466/despu%C3%A9s-de-39-a%C3%B1os-la-unidad-%C3%A9lite-cobra-pas%C3%B3-a-ser-historia>

¹⁴² <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/09/desde-helicopteros-militares-gasean-estudiantes-en-la-unah/>

¹⁴³ <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/09/coalicion-contra-la-impunidad-condena-uso-de-equipo-militar-para-limitar-la-libertad-de-expresion/amp/>

¹⁴⁴ <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/10/catedraticos-de-la-unah-condenan-brutal-represion-policial/amp/>

¹⁴⁵ <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/995-tercer-ataque-contra-la-prensa-de-choluteca-en-abril>

¹⁴⁶ <https://tiempo.hn/orden-captura-20-presuntos-manifestantes-de-choluteca/>

¹⁴⁷ <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/net/mas-de-80-personas-han-sido-criminalizadas-por-manifestarse-en-la-zona-sur-de-honduras/>

¹⁴⁸ <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2444-acusan-que-policia-nacional-mato-a-menor-en-manifestacion-en-choluteca>

¹⁴⁹ <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2445-mientras-altos-mandos-proceden-a-lavar-la-imagen-represiva-muere-joven-tiroteado-por-la-policia>

¹⁵⁰ <https://twitter.com/NormaTorres/status/1116445386753880064>

Alianza condemned the silence by the Human Rights Secretariat regarding the murder.¹⁵¹ But given that it is Honduras under the JOH regime, police repression did not seized, rather it got worse. State security forces even attacked with tear gas the burial ceremony of Wilfredo de Jesús Moncada.^{152 153}

In an unrelated case, the MP informed at the end of the month that the military police agent Joel Isaías Hernández Ramírez would serve pre-trial detention accused of murdering a couple.¹⁵⁴

Penitentiary System

The deputy director of the National Penitentiary Institute (INP) announced to construct more prisons as a response to the prison overpopulation.¹⁵⁵ Maybe as a first step, the construction of the prison in Naco, San Pedro Sula, restarted this month.¹⁵⁶

Militarization

CESPAD published an analysis on the hard- and software of the Armed Forces with a special focus on its surveillance equipment. "Drones, hot air balloons, airplanes, ships, patrol boats, military stores, radars, rifles, communication systems, are some of the weapons, war equipment and espionage equipment that the State of Honduras has purchased since 2013, during the governments of Porfirio Lobo Sosa and Juan Orlando Hernández, the current president of Honduras. The acquisition of equipment for the Armed Forces has unleashed various opinions due to the lack of transparency in the information on the purchase and because not less than \$342 million 800 thousand (about 8 thousand 344 million lempiras) have been spent."¹⁵⁷ Money is also spent on loyalty. Pinu congresswoman Doris Gutiérrez denounced that Congress approved 90 million Lempiras for the retirement of members of the Armed Forces.¹⁵⁸

International Community

There have been better months for the JOH regime regarding its international standing (see also JOH section under Varia). First, Henrietta Fore, director of UNICEF, visited Honduras this month highlighting that "Honduras remains a dangerous place for too many children and young people."¹⁵⁹ Then the relationship with El Salvador further worsened. Ever since the election of the new El Salvadorian president, Nayib Bukele, the tension between the two countries increased. This month, a verbal dispute broke out between Honduras and El Salvador. JOH's presidential adviser Ebal Díaz claimed Bukele made an agreement with the countries Maras before coming to power.^{160 161} Bukele answered by calling Honduras a "drug dictatorship" in fear of losing US support.¹⁶² Díaz countered

151 <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/casa-alianza-condena-silencio-en-la-secretaria-de-ddhh-por-muerte-de-menor-en-choluteca.html>

152 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/13/policia-reprime-con-gases-entierro-de-joven-que-ellos-asesinaron-en-choluteca-video/amp/>

153 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/entierro-de-menor-en-choluteca-concluye-en-enfrentamiento-entre-manifestantes-y-policias.html>

154 https://twitter.com/MP_Honduras/status/1119413683334127617

155 <https://tiempo.hn/german-mcneil-pide-carceles-sobrepoblacion/>

156 <https://www.laprensa.hn/sanpedro/1279667-410/reanudar%C3%A1n-construcci%C3%B3n-centro-penal-naco>

157 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/04/02/para-que-y-cuanto-equipo-belico-y-de-espionaje-tiene-las-fuerzas-armadas-de-honduras/>

158 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/doris-gutierrez-cuestiona-al-cn-por-aprobacion-de-fondos-para-militares-jubilados.html>

159 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3297-unicef-honduras-es-un-lugar-peligroso-para-menores>

160 <https://confidencialhn.com/mientras-recrudece-violencia-en-honduras-gobierno-esta-preocupado-por-pactos-de-bukele-con-pandillas/>

161 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/preocupa-supuesto-trato-del-presidente-electo-de-el-salvador-con-pandillas-ebal-diaz.html>

162 <https://confidencialhn.com/responde-bukele-a-criticas-del-orlandismo-la-narcodictadura-teme-perder-apoyo-de-ee-uu/>

that El Salvador tried to spoil the image of Honduras (sic!) to attract investment.¹⁶³ But the JOH regime can still count on the BCIE. New details were made public about its investment in the Gulf of Fonseca.¹⁶⁴ ¹⁶⁵ At the end of the month, JOH met with the secretary general of the Central American Integration System (Sica), Vinicio Cerezo.¹⁶⁶

US

Last month's announcement by Trump to cut aid continues to make headlines. NACLA summarized the whole thing as follows: "U.S. security and development assistance has caused great harm in Central America. But Trump's decision to cut it off is nothing to be celebrated."¹⁶⁷ And there are still various open questions. "The Trump administration is still reviewing what to do about nearly \$1 billion in already-approved aid to three Central American countries, nearly two weeks after President Trump announced he had cut the funding and planned to spend the money elsewhere, according to U.S. officials. The lag provided the latest example of a government bureaucracy racing to catch up to the whims of a president whose brief remarks March 29 put scores of anti-poverty, anti-gang and counternarcotics programs in jeopardy and raised a flurry of questions in Congress."¹⁶⁸ James Phillips highlighted an even bigger problem. "News reports indicate that the aid to be cut is economic and humanitarian, but that "security" aid (to police and military) will be maintained."¹⁶⁹

While Trump pretended to be tough on Honduras with his announcement, the reality is very different. Last year, the US congresswoman Norma J. Torres presented the End Corruption in the Northern Triangle Act. It demanded the publication of a list of elected or government officials from Central America who were known to have committed acts related to drug trafficking and corruption. This month, this list was published, but Torres is not satisfied. "This list is a sham. It is unbelievable that the State Department was 53 days late on this report and this is what they gave us. If Congress wanted a list of officials who were sentenced or sanctioned, we would have Googled it. (...) By willfully concealing the names of corrupt government officials in Central America, in defiance of Congress' intent, the Trump administration is engaging in a cover-up. This is not the first time this administration has been complicit in Central American corruption. (...) It is the same administration that looked the other way while the President of Honduras' brother and associates allegedly engaged in drug trafficking."¹⁷⁰ InSight Crime agreed. "By naming only officials already convicted of their crimes, the State Department's report lets Northern Triangle governments off the hook at a time when all three have current administrations linked to alleged corruption and drug trafficking. (...) In 2015, Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández confessed to using funds from supposed acts of corruption to help finance his bid to become president during the previous year. Hernández was re-elected in November 2017, despite allegations of voter fraud. In addition the President's brother,

163 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/hay-una-estrategia-para-desprestigar-a-honduras-y-atraer-inversion-a-el-salvador-ebal-diaz.html>

164 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1276091-466/con-8-millones-de-d%C3%B3lares-iniciar%C3%A1-plan-de-inversi%C3%B3n-del-golfo-de>

165 <http://elpulso.hn/presentan-proyecto-trinacional-para-golfo-de-fonseca/>

166 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1280447-410/juan-orlando-herandez-secretario-sica-revisan-avances-integracion-honduras->

167 <https://nacla.org/news/2019/04/03/aid-paradox>

168 https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/trumps-aid-cuts-to-central-america-still-undetermined-despite-announcement/2019/04/09/ff468967-6b7d-4e25-b619-99e520e4535e_story.html?utm_term=.5fd4cb67fa7f

169 <https://www.counterpunch.org/2019/04/08/pardon-the-confusion-aid-to-central-america-and-the-crisis-at-the-border/>

170 <https://torres.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/torres-statement-state-department-list-corrupt-central-american>

Juan Antonio Hernández Alvarado, was arrested in Miami on drug trafficking charges. Tony Hernández, as he is better known, is the latest in a string of Honduran officials close to the country's president who have been accused by US prosecutors of drug trafficking."¹⁷¹

At the end of April. US Assistant Secretary Breier traveled to Honduras to meet with JOH and First Lady Ana Garcia de Hernandez.¹⁷² The meeting focused on migration.¹⁷³ But during her visit, Breier also highlighted the important work by the MACCIH and UFECIC.¹⁷⁴

EU

An EU delegation traveled to Honduras this month to accompany the RNP reforms.¹⁷⁵

Drug Trafficking

Last month, a ship carrying drugs from Honduras was stopped in Italy. In May, the same happened in Belgium.¹⁷⁶ But in general, Honduran drug trafficking makes most headlines abroad in the US. The Honduran drug cartel leader, Noé Montes Bobadilla, was sentenced to 37 years in prison in the US.¹⁷⁷ ¹⁷⁸ Another presumed drug trafficker, Amaya Argueta, joined him at the end of the month.¹⁷⁹ El Libertador reported that the former member of the Valle Valle drug cartel, Digna Valle Valle, had become a key informant of the US government.¹⁸⁰ The former head of the Valle Valle cartel, Miguel Arnulfo Valle, testified that members of the Honduran Naval Force are also linked to drug trafficking activities.¹⁸¹

At the end of the month, another DEA informant once more linked the close JOH ally, the current Security Minister Julián Pacheco Tinoco, to drug trafficking.¹⁸² This came as no surprise. "In an authentic democracy, this man would have already resigned or the de facto president would have dismissed him, the Public Ministry would have already initiated the corresponding investigations or the US State Department would have taken away its support and protection. The case of General Pacheco Tinoco confirms the popular wisdom reflected in the public opinion poll of ERIC-SJ in which 70.3% of the population state that drug trafficking controls state institutions."¹⁸³ ConfidencialHN claims, the US has been investigating for at least four years Julián Pacheco Tinoco for drug trafficking.¹⁸⁴

171 <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/us-corruption-list-omits-key-central-american-officials/>

172 <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2019/04/291256.htm>

173 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/eeuu-esta-comprometido-a-trabajar-de-forma-conjunta-frente-al-tema-migratorio-kimberly-breier.html>

174 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/eeuu-esta-comprometido-a-trabajar-de-forma-conjunta-frente-al-tema-migratorio-kimberly-breier.html>

175 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1274680-466/misi%C3%B3n-de-la-uni%C3%B3n-europea-explora-proyecto-de-la-nueva-tarjeta-de>

176 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1273528-466/contenedor-hondure%C3%B1o-es-reportado-con-droga-en-b%C3%A9lgica>

177 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1273363-466/sentencian-a-37-a%C3%B1os-de-c%C3%A1rcel-al-cabecilla-del-clan-montes-bobadilla>

178 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/04/07/narcofuncionarios-de-honduras-mencionados-en-corte-de-virginia-estados-unidos/>

179 <https://confidencialhn.com/extraditan-a-ee-uu-a-operador-del-cartel-de-los-hermanos-valle-valle/>

180 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3310-narcotrafico-digna-valle-salio-de-prision-y-es-testigo-estrella-para-ee-uu>

181 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3331-exlider-de-los-valle-vincula-en-corte-de-ee-uu-a-militares-con-narcotrafico>

182 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/22/testimonios-nuevamente-involucran-a-julian-pacheco-con-el-narcotrafico/>

183 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/otra-vez-julian-pacheco-tinoco/>

184 <https://confidencialhn.com/julian-pacheco-es-investigado-desde-hace-cuatro-anos-por-presuntos-vinculos-al-narco/>

Tony Hernández

Criterion criticizes that the main corporate media outlets almost do not cover the case of Tony Hernández.¹⁸⁵

Varia

JOH

The JOH regime continues to be under pressure, even though it initially subsided a bit this month, it became apparent again with the protests at the end of the month (see next sub-section). Criterion summarized the current situation as follows. "First, there is a regime that is cornered and its situation is exacerbated by the loss of legitimacy and confidence. (...) Second, in terms of corruption, there are still huge shields protecting the highest levels of government from investigations (...). And third, (...) beyond a series of dichotomies and problems that arise in the specific case of journalist David Romero, the underlying issue is very clear, the defense of freedom of expression".¹⁸⁶ The ongoing lack of legitimacy was also apparent in the yearly public opinion poll by Radio Progreso and ERIC.¹⁸⁷ They summarized the results as "an echo of a decade without democracy"¹⁸⁸ concluding that the regime is based on brute force and foreign interference.¹⁸⁹ JOH received the worst score up to know, 3.6 out of 10. 8 out of 10 Hondurans believe that the country is worse of than just before the coup d'état 10 years ago.¹⁹⁰ Another poll, by Consulta-Mitofsky, found that the approval rating of JOH is only 33%.¹⁹¹ A recent survey by the Institute of Democracy, Peace and Security of UNAH found that 42.8% of Hondurans perceive insecurity as the main problem of the country. They also found that over 70% of the population do not trust Congress, nor the Presidency nor the Judicial Power.¹⁹²

The regime also made negative headlines this month involving another neighboring country (for the dispute with El Salvador, see International Community section). Thelma Aldana, a potential Guatemalan presidential candidate and former public prosecutor, was held at the airport Toncontín in Tegucigalpa. She planned to attend a meeting in Honduras, but was not allowed to leave the country. On Twitter she wrote: "It seems that the Impunity Pact has expanded to the Honduras of JOH".¹⁹³ ¹⁹⁴ Initially, the regime claimed that Aldana was not held back, but rather that she decided not to come to Honduras after all.¹⁹⁵ After Aldana disputed this, they change their story. The National Institute of Migration suddenly claimed that Aldana made contradictory statements when questioned and this is why they had not let her into the country.¹⁹⁶ The UNAH Institute for

185 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/21/tony-herandez-no-fue-a-la-playa/amp/>

186 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/01/el-regimen-de-joh-esta-acorralado-y-se-agudiza-su-perdida-de-legitimidad/>

187 <https://eric-sj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/boletin.pdf>

188 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/sondeo-de-opinion-publica-2019-ecos-de-una-decada-de-democracia-ausente/>

189 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/gestion-de-juan-orlando-herandez-se-sostiene-en-la-fuerza-e-injerencia-externa/>

190 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/joh-obtiene-la-calificacion-historicamente-mas-baja/>

191 <https://criterio.hn/2019/03/12/solo-el-33-de-los-hondurenos-aprueba-gestion-de-herandez-segun-encuesta-internacional/amp/>

192 <https://blogs.unah.edu.hn/iudpas/presentacion-de-resultados-de-encuesta-de-percepcion-ciudadana-sobre-inseguridad-y-victimizacion-en-honduras>

193 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3317-parece-que-el-pacto-de-corrutos-se-ha-extendido-a-honduras-con-joh-exfiscal-guatemalteca>

194 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/11/joh-esta-en-alianza-con-los-corrutos-de-guatemala-thelma-aldana/amp/>

195 <https://tiempo.hn/a-thelma-aldana-retenida-en-toncontin/>

196 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/12/conozca-la-nueva-version-del-gobierno-de-joh-en-torno-a-retencion-de-thelma-aldana/amp/>

Democracy, Peace and Security (IUDPAS) denounced the affair feeling reminded of the 1970s and 80s when one did not if one can return home or be arrested on the way there.¹⁹⁷

The public discontent was visible due to the revival of the torch marches against corruption but also the JOH regime in general.¹⁹⁸ They took place on all Fridays this month¹⁹⁹ and even Proceso Digital acknowledged them.²⁰⁰ While it still benefits from support from the US, there are also critical voices. US Congresswoman Norma Torres went on the offensive. "We have a lot of information not only from the president's brother, but also from members of Congress. The State Department has information that many of them are involved in drug trafficking."²⁰¹ On CNN, she went on to say: "In Honduras, they have a president who committed fraud, electoral fraud."²⁰² Maybe a bit to hopeful, ConfidencialHN interpreted these statements as an indicator that the US is investigating JOH for links to drug trafficking as well.²⁰³ Tomás Andino Mencía agreed in so far as that the international circumstances for the JOH regime had worsened and that together with renewed criticism at home his position had weakened.²⁰⁴

On April 9, the platform Citizen Action against the Dictatorship presented legal charges at the MP against JOH and his family for corruption and organized crime.²⁰⁵ While this seems to be a good approach, it is not as clear-cut as one may wish. "Honduras is at a crossroads: its President is accused of being linked to drug trafficking and corruption networks. And, on the other hand, from the public administration of justice, the country does not give strong indications of trying to investigate him, let alone take him to court. But why is the president of Honduras and his family not investigated? Will the MACCIH investigate them for the cases of corruption with which they are linked? These are some questions that are constantly asked by the Honduran population. But, when analyzing the context of the country, another question arises: Is it appropriate at this time to investigate and prosecute Juan Orlando Hernández?"²⁰⁶

Criticism continues to come from the former Nationalist president Porfirio 'Pepe' Lobo.²⁰⁷ On Twitter, he asked various sectors, erg. the Armed Forces or Congress not to play the game of JOH, "who is repressive, dictatorial and hurts the people".²⁰⁸ But this month saw also a group of unknown army officials publishing a press release denouncing the political interference in the Armed Forces by the JOH regime.²⁰⁹ At the end of the month, it was made public that close JOH ally, his presidential secretary Ebal Díaz, is accused of sexual harassment.^{210 211}

197 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3319-instituto-de-la-democracia-exige-a-fiscalia-investigar-retencion-de-exfiscal-aldana>

198 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/06/medios-internacionales-destacan-reactivacion-de-las-antorchas-contra-la-corrupcion-en-honduras/>

199 <https://twitter.com/hondurasol/status/1116875434094993408>

200 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/nueva-marcha-contra-la-corrupcion-en-tegucigalpa.html>

201 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/06/departamento-de-estado-tiene-informacion-que-muchos-diputados-de-honduras-están-involucrados-en-narcotrafico-2/>

202 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/06/en-honduras-tienen-un-presidente-que-cometio-fraude-norma-torres/amp/>

203 <https://confidencialhn.com/ee-uu-esta-investigando-a-joh-por-vinculos-con-el-narcotrafico/>

204 <http://elpulso.hn/joh-en-jaque-se-le-cae-el-cielo-y-se-le-hunde-el-piso/>

205 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/09/accd-presenta-denuncia-criminal-contra-joh-y-su-familia-vea-texto-completo/amp/>

206 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/04/22/los-pro-y-contras-de-llevar-a-juicio-a-juan-orlando-herandez/>

207 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/ex-presidente-pepe-lobo-dice-no-temer-que-joh-lo-mande-a-la-carcel/>

208 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1280400-466/pepe-lobo-arremete-contra-el-presidente-juan-orlando-hern%C3%A1ndez>

209 <https://confidencialhn.com/militares-exigen-castigo-a-la-cupula-por-traicion-a-la-patria/>

210 <https://confidencialhn.com/bajos-instintos-secretario-de-la-presidencia-quiso-seducir-y-abusar-de-asistente-a-punta-de-poemas/>

211 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1278643-466/denuncia-contra-ebal-d%C3%A1z-por-hostigamiento-sexual-y-privaci%C3%B3n-de-la-libertad>

LIBRE

The Honduras Solidarity Network denounced on April 28 that the 23-year old " Junior Javier Rivas "was violently shot 10 times & then burned in Tegucigalpa yesterday. He was an active member of LIRE party & member of Honduran resistance".²¹²

Public Health and Education

The public health and education sector has been under attack for a while by the JOH regime, be it for a lack of budget or due to open or stealth attempts to privatize public services. This month, a new attack was launched in the form of the Restructuring and Transformation of the National Health and Education System Bill.²¹³ As soon as the bill was announced, the two sectors reacted with strike actions.²¹⁴ ²¹⁵ These initial protests were met with some success as the discussion was suspended in Congress.²¹⁶ Congress' president Mauricio Oliva even promised that without a consensus the bill would not be implemented.²¹⁷ The labor unions were wary and rightly so.²¹⁸ Shortly afterwards, Congress went on to approve two legal opinions of the Restructuring Bill, which would have led to its implementation.²¹⁹ The political opposition opposed the bill but lost in Congress. The public sector immediately announced a general strike.²²⁰²²¹

The attempt to force through this bill is linked to discussions by the JOH regime and the IMF held this week.²²² ²²³ There are also links to the announced closure of the Vocational Training Institute (In fop) last month.²²⁴ This all against the backdrop of some one million Honduran children without access to education.²²⁵

The national strike began on April 26.²²⁶ ²²⁷ They were widely supported and there were protests all over Honduras.²²⁸ The UNAH teachers union ADUNAH condemned the law as another tool to misuse public money for the gains of the regime and its supporters.²²⁹ UNAH demanded that controversial articles would be revised.²³⁰ Students also joined in, but they were heavily repressed by state security forces.²³¹ The next day, as the protests continued, the repression grew with reports of the use of live ammunition against protesters.²³² UNE TV documented two civilians surrounded by police shooting at protesters.²³³ One was later identified as working for the municipal police.²³⁴ Several protesters were badly injured.²³⁵ When the human rights organizations COFADEH opened

212 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1122689734067802114>

213 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/alerta-sobre-privatizacion-que-provocara-ley-de-reestructuracion-en-salud-y-educacion/>

214 <https://tiempo.hn/nuevas-normativas-de-lev-salud-paro/>

215 <https://tiempo.hn/dirigente-magisterial-reunion-ley-despidos-masivos/>

216 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/23/trabajadores-y-cn-suspenden-decreto-que-contempla-masivos-despidos-en-salud-y-educacion/amp/>

217 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/no-se-aprobara-ley-de-transformacion-de-educacion-y-salud-sin-consensos-promete-presidente-del-cn.html>

218 <https://confidencial.hn.com/sindicalistas-desconfian-del-legislativo-y-exigen-retiro-de-la-ley-de-masacre-laboral/>

219 <https://contracorriente.red/2019/04/25/medicos-maestros-y-sindicatos-anuncian-paro-nacional-ante-aprobacion-de-ley-en-el-congreso-nacional/>

220 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3337-alerta-medicos-y-maestros-a-paro-nacional-indefinido-en-honduras>

221 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/gobierno-impone-ley-medicos-y-maestros-convocan-a-paro-nacional/>

222 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/26/joh-y-fmi-contra-la-educacion-y-la-salud-publica/amp/>

223 <https://www.alainet.org/es/articulo/199589>

224 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/27/que-hay-detras-del-cierre-del-infop-efecto-domino-video/>

225 <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/lamentan-que-mas-de-un-millon-de-ninos-hondurenos-no-tengan-acceso-a-educacion.html>

226 <https://tiempo.hn/salud-y-educacion-cumplen-amenaza-paro-nacional/>

227 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/04/29/cronologia-aprobacion-de-ley-provoca-crisis-en-salud-y-educacion-en-honduras/>

228 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1121817685770297344>

229 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/adunah-dice-leyes-aprobadas-son-carta-abierta-para-manejar-presupuesto-con-proselitismo-politico.html>

230 <https://tiempo.hn/unah-pide-revisar-decretos-aprobados-por-el-cn-salud-y-educacion/>

231 <https://confidencial.hn.com/reprimen-estudiantes-que-se-manifestaban-en-la-colonia-kennedy-de-tegucigalpa/>

232 <http://www.pasosdeanmalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2455-honduras-balas-detenciones-toletazos-y-gases-contra-poblacion-que-reclama-no-privatizar-educacion-y-salud>

233 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/29/video-de-unetv-muestra-a-hombres-disparando-en-protesta-en-medio-de-policias/amp/>

234 <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/hombre-que-disparo-en-protesta-es-miembro-de-policia-municipal-y-se-presenta-ante-autoridades.html>

235 <https://confidencial.hn.com/terror-escuadrones-de-la-muerte-hiere-de-gravedad-a-docente-en-protestas/>

their office doors to fleeing protesters in Tegucigalpa, state security forces threw tear gas grenades into the building.²³⁶ COFADEH also reported on the arrest of at least five protesters, all of them students, and the disappearance of two Tolupán teachers.²³⁷

OACNUDH and the IACHR published a press release insisting that the Honduran authorities respect the right to social protest and they demand an investigation of the men shooting at protesters "in places close to the deployment of security forces in the center of the capital".²³⁸ ²³⁹ The Coalition against Impunity also emitted a press release condemning the state repression. According to them, at least eight people were detained, among them three university students being tortured at the police station El Manchén. Three minors (12, 14 and 16 years old) were illegally held at the metropolitan police headquarter.²⁴⁰ C-Libre denounced that journalists once more were especially targeted.²⁴¹ ²⁴² But even facing this violence, the protests continued.²⁴³

On April 29, the two disputed legal opinions of the Restructuring Bill were retracted representing an important, although partial, victory of the protesters.²⁴⁴ Teachers and medical staff demanded the complete derogation of the bill as well as that the derogation of the proclaimed state of emergency in the two sectors as it allows to force through laws without much public scrutiny.²⁴⁵ ²⁴⁶

Migration

This month, Radio Progreso and ERIC published their yearly public opinion poll. It looked, among other things, at the root causes of migration. "95.7 percent of the population surveyed in the Public Opinion Survey of the Reflection, Research and Communication Team, Eric-sj, assures that the people who migrate leave due to lack of employment and opportunities to generate income, in addition to the situation of insecurity and violence. Barely 1 percent say that it is to study or for family reunification."²⁴⁷ UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore came to a similar conclusion after her visit to Honduras. "The combination of violence, poverty and lack of education opportunities is causing thousands of children and families to flee their homes. Without access to protection and safe migration pathways, most are forced onto dangerous routes where they are at risk from violence, exploitation and abuse."²⁴⁸ According to CONADEH, between 2014 and 2018 some 250'000 Hondurans were displaced by violence.²⁴⁹

In a piece for the New York Times, Sonia Nazario also focuses on the violence part, especially suffered by women. The example she chose additionally highlights the problems with Honduras' state security forces. "Ms. Hernández was a 28-year-old agent for the Agencia Técnica de Investigación Criminal, or ATIC, Honduras's F.B.I., the agency charged with investigating the

²³⁶ <http://defensoresenlinea.com/lanzan-bombas-lacrimogenas-en-las-oficinas-del-cofadeh/>

²³⁷ <http://defensoresenlinea.com/jueces-ejecutores-verifica-situacion-de-detenido-en-posta-el-manchen/>

²³⁸ <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2019/106.asp>

²³⁹ <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1123320152022507520>

²⁴⁰ <http://defensoresenlinea.com/pronunciamento-frente-al-contexto-de-violencia-desatada-por-el-regimen-de-juan-orlando-hermandez/>

²⁴¹ <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1001-ataques-hacia-la-prensa-en-manifestaciones-por-la-defensa-de-educacion-y-la-salud-en-choluteca>

²⁴² <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1002-policias-antimotines-arremeten-contra-periodista-de-hch>

²⁴³ <https://confidencialhn.com/joh-pierde-control-de-honduras-masivas-y-paralizacion-del-transporte-se-registran-hoy/>

²⁴⁴ <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/30/medicos-y-profesores-en-las-calles-logran-que-congreso-nacional-elimine-decretos-de-masacre-laboral/amp/>

²⁴⁵ <https://tiempo.hn/piden-derogar-estado-emergencia-salud-y-educacion/>

²⁴⁶ <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/salud-y-educacion-no-confian-en-retiro-de-decretos-por-parte-de-oficialismo/>

²⁴⁷ <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/pobre-e-inseguridad-principales-factores-que-obligan-a-hondurenos-a-migrar-revela-sondeo/>

²⁴⁸ <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/only-quality-education-and-end-violence-can-offer-hope-and-better-opportunities>

²⁴⁹ <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/unas-250-mil-personas-se-desplazaron-forzadamente-en-honduras-entre-2014-y-2018.html>

killings of women. She was having an affair with Wilfredo Garcia, who was the head of the agency's office in San Pedro Sula, Honduras's second-largest city. According to people involved in the case, at some point Ms. Hernández seems to have come to believe that instead of working to take down MS-13, the nation's largest gang, her lover was married to the sister of an MS-13 leader, and was aiding the criminals. On June 11, 2018, Ms. Hernández was found dead in her bed. Karla Beltrán, who works at the San Pedro Sula morgue, told me that in an unprecedented move, ATIC barred Forensic Medicine officials, along with the police and the prosecutor, from the crime scene. ATIC officials went alone and pronounced the death a suicide."²⁵⁰

Given this context, it was no surprise that a new caravan started to form this month. Some 1200 Hondurans took off in San Pedro Sula on April 9.²⁵¹ They reached Guatemala the same day.²⁵² There, some of them were met with the same violence they had fled from as four Honduran migrants were shot.²⁵³ One, the 19-year old Evin Javier M.C., died, one was badly hurt, but recovered.²⁵⁴ The caravan then got stuck at the Guatemalan-Mexican border²⁵⁵, where it even came to a confrontation with the Mexican border police after the detention of a Cuban and Honduran migrants.²⁵⁶ This was followed by a further crackdown on Central American migrants.²⁵⁷ ²⁵⁸ AP tried to explain the growing lack of solidarity with Central American migrants on their way north in Mexico. "[E]ither due to the fatigue of the residents or, as some experts point out, because of a growing narrative stoking prejudices against them".²⁵⁹

But there also weren't any better news from further north. First, a federal appeals court decided this month that the Trump administration could temporarily continue to force migrants seeking asylum in the United States to wait in Mexico while their cases are decided.²⁶⁰ While some Hondurans waited at the border, others were deported from the US back to Honduras. On April 16, over 700 arrived in Honduras.²⁶¹ Second, a Honduran family died trying to cross the Río Bravo between Mexico and the US.²⁶²

Poverty

Almost every week in 2019, fuel prices rose on Monday. April was not different²⁶³ and this development is met with growing criticism.²⁶⁴ The Liberal Party emitted a press release writing that 80% of Hondurans suffer an unbearable economic situation²⁶⁵ and Libre announced to present a bill which would disallow such price increases²⁶⁶. Since the adoption of the new General Law for the

250 <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/04/05/opinion/honduras-women-murders.html>

251 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3313-exodo-no-cesa-mas-de-mil-hondurenos-salieron-hoy-hacia-ee-uu>

252 <https://confidencialhn.com/guatemala-recibe-a-primeros-migrantes-de-nueva-caravana-salida-de-honduras/>

253 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/11/hieren-de-bala-a-cuatro-migrantes-hondurenos-en-guatemala/>

254 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/uno-de-los-4-migrantes-hondurenos-atacados-en-guatemala-tiene-muerte-cerebral.html>

255 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/los-migrantes-en-tapachula-emprenderan-esta-madrigada-su-camino-hacia-ee-uu.html>

256 <https://www.laprensa.hn/mundo/1276034-410/migrantes-agreden-polic%C3%ADas-mexicanos-albergue-chiapas>

257 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/minisitios/hondurenosenelmundo/1277935-471/arrestan-a-cientos-de-migrantes-entre-ellos-hondure%C3%B1os-en-mexico>

258 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/23/policias-mexicanos-tratan-como-animales-a-migrantes-durante-redada/>

259 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/20/falta-de-ayuda-frustra-a-migrantes-de-nueva-caravana/>

260 <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/12/us/trump-asylum-seekers-mexico.html>

261 <http://elpulso.hn/mas-de-700-hondurenos-llegaron-ayer-retornados-de-mexico-y-eeuu/>

262 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3333-tragedia-familia-hondurena-se-ahoga-en-rio-bravo-intentando-llegar-a-ee-uu>

e.g. <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3341-con-nueva-alza-precio-de-oro-tendran-combustibles-en-honduras>

264 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/01/65-de-la-energia-es-renovable-no-hay-razones-para-aumento-video/amp/>

265 <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/01/situacion-economica-y-social-es-insoportable-para-el-80-del-pueblo-hondureno-plh/>

266 <http://elpulso.hn/congreso-o-presidente-podrian-detener-aumento-a-la-energia-electrica/>

Electric Industry (LGIE) in May 2016, electricity prices have soared in Honduras. The price of the first 50 kWh used more than doubled.²⁶⁷

Javier Suazo published a helpful analysis of these price increases. "Honduras is one of the countries where the sale of energy to the State has become the most lucrative business in the world, not only because of the tax and commercial incentives offered, but also because the investments made by entrepreneurs are protected by the State itself. If the [National] Electric Power Company (ENEE) can not honor the debts, the State resorts to more debt to honor them. If there are protests from inhabitants and communities against the diversion of river channels and displacement and loss of natural habitat, the Armed Forces are sent to evict them."²⁶⁸ Radio Progreso comes to a similar conclusion. "Then, the fundamental problem of the high costs of energy is in the contracts that the State has with the energy generating companies. The state stimulated both the generation of renewable energy that is currently paying more for a megawatt of energy generated from water than a megawatt generated from diesel. This is rapidly filling the pocket of a few businessmen and impoverishing tens of thousands of families."²⁶⁹ According to FOSDEH, these and other companies have benefited from 29 billion Lempiras in tax exemptions in the last four year (2014-2018).²⁷⁰ These tax exemptions are one of the problems highlighted by the Central American Institute on Fiscal Studies (Icefi) in its newest report investigating fiscal policies in the region.²⁷¹

And Light at the End of a Month

Martín and Víctor Fernández, two HRDs and co-founders of MADJ, received a human rights award from the German city of Bremen. "This award goes to Berta Cáceres, José Salomón Matute, Juan Samael Matute, Ramón Fiallos, Geovanny Díaz, Wilmer Paredes, María Enriqueta Matute, Ricardo Soto Fúnez and Armando Fúnez, people who gave their lives for the defense of national sovereignty and the respect of the popular will".²⁷² ²⁷³ DW published a portray of and interview with Victor Fernández.²⁷⁴

²⁶⁷ <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1272946-466/con-la-nueva-ley-de-energ%C3%ADa-tarifa-ha-subido-entre-45-y>

²⁶⁸ <https://www.alainet.org/es/articulo/199120>

²⁶⁹ <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/siguen-puyando-el-macho-con-vara-corta/>

²⁷⁰ <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/04/generadoras-de-energia-electrica-han-recibido-1-29-000-millones-en-exoneraciones/>

²⁷¹ <https://criterio.hn/2019/04/04/estrategias-fiscales-de-los-paises-de-ca-no-mejoran-las-condiciones-de-vida-icefi/>

²⁷² <http://defensoresenlinea.com/madj-honra-a-martires-con-su-premio-solidaridad-bremen-2019/>

²⁷³ <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/madj-recibe-premio-internacional-por-compromiso-contra-la-corrupcion-y-a-favor-de-los-ddhh/>

²⁷⁴ https://www.dw.com/es/aqu%C3%AD-estoy-v%C3%ADctor-fern%C3%A1ndez-abogado-hondure%C3%B1o/av-48273189?fbclid=IwAR0dbAryoRFEauZ8hFyeOnudf5MDW8BFyFGwj_o7LO0TBRUmEVHtK5A41AI



Another Month at the Honduras Forum Switzerland

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