

Another Month in Honduras...

Human Rights Monitor – July 2019

In the beginning of July, three members of the LGBTQ community were murdered in less than a week. COPINH communities suffered several attacks throughout the months, two of them against members of the Río Blanco community - the place for which Berta Cáceres was assassinated over three years ago. Her case rests in impunity as there is still neither a sentence for the material authors nor did the trial against one of the intellectual authors continue. But Hondurans do not give up and kept demanding again almost daily a better Honduras in the streets of Choluteca, Tocoa, Tegucigalpa and the rest of the country. 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

ACI Participa launched a new campaign this month informing the general public about the important work of human rights defenders and their vulnerability in the Honduran context.¹

Assassinations

On July 6, Estefany Yolani Quiroz López, the 11-year old daughter of HRD and opposition leader Gabriel Quiroz, died after the car she was in was shot at several times in Choluteca.²

Global Witness published its annual report on the situation of land and environmental defenders. They document 164 assassinations worldwide in 2018, Latin American being the region with the highest murder rate and Guatemala being the country with the highest rate per capita. For Honduras, they documented four assassinations - the tenth highest in the world and the third highest per capita. The report focuses on the criminalization of defenders.³

Attacks, Criminalization and Harassment

Defensores en Línea portrayed the forced migration of a young HRD and social communicator from Zacate Grande. "For the general coordinator of COFADEH, Berta Oliva, the migration of human rights defenders, especially those who have been part of the Committee's formation processes (...) is a direct attack for the organization. It's a blow because we no longer have such valuable people."⁴ In a civilian car, five police agents arrested the human rights defender from ADEPZA, Santos Hernández. ADEPZA denounced that they came to his milpa to arrest him, one of them threatening him with a gun.^{5 6} CESPAD published an alert.⁷

ACI PARTICIPA emitted a press release denouncing a series of attacks and acts of harassment and intimidation against its director Hedme Castro and the organization in general.⁸ OACNUDH tweeted in solidarity with her.⁹ CONADEH received between 2015 and the beginning of 2018 some 310 complaints by HRDs regarding human rights violations.¹⁰

Lawyers

According to the Lawyers Association of Honduras, at least 40 lawyers have left the country so far this year after receiving threats.¹¹

1 <https://criterio.hn/2019/07/26/ante-vulnerabilidad-lanzan-campana-de-proteccion-para-defensores-de-dd-hh/>

2 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/asesinan-a-hija-de-lider-de-la-oposicion-en-choluteca/>

3 <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/enemies-state/>

4 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/vivian-una-voz-defensora-que-se-llevo-la-migracion-forzada/>

5 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/mirada-al-sur/1171-defensor-acusado-por-quinta-vez-de-usurpador-por-cultivar-la-tierra>

6 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/alerta-tras-detencion-adepza-desconoce-paradero-de-su-integrante-santos-herandez/>

7 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/07/25/alerta-detenido-el-defensor-santos-herandez-por-el-supuesto-delito-de-usurpacion/>

8 <https://share.mayfirst.org/s/7afByXnx8KZEaH#pdfviewer>

9 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1153860508564492290>

10 <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/defensores-de-ddhh-articulan-esfuerzos-en-honduras-para-que-su-labor-no-sea-criminalizada.html>

11 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/unos-40-abogados-han-abandonado-el-pais-por-amenazas-en-primer-semestre-del-ano.html>

Indigenous Peoples

COPINH held its 12th general assembly with representatives from five departments this month. They elected their representatives for the coming three years, Bertha Isabel Zúniga Cáceres being reelected as the General Coordinator.¹² COPINH also demanded the approval of the Berta Cáceres Act in the US to stop military aid to "the fraudulent, corrupt, and human rights violating government of Honduras".¹³

On July 4, COPINH sent out an alert as the Lenca community of Montaña Verde was being threatened by members of Chusquín, a neighboring community. Inhabitants of Montaña Verde had been denouncing for some week the illegal logging by inhabitants of Chusquín and then the later started threatening them and destroyed the only access to the community of Montaña Verde.¹⁴ ¹⁵ COPINH denounced that the mayor of Gracias, Lempira threatened community members of Montaña Verde and that the courts in Gracias did not inform them about a trial for illegal logging close to the water source of Montaña Verde. COPINH believes that this behavior favors the accused illegal loggers.¹⁶

The same week, a group of indigenous Miskito protested outside the casa presidencial denouncing the lack of basic services in their region. But instead of being granted a talk with JOH, they suffered harassment and repression at the hands of state security forces.¹⁷ Radio Progreso offered a helpful socioeconomic analysis on why indigenous Miskito feel forced to take up the dangerous work on fishing boats - work which had cost dozens of them their lives last month.¹⁸ At the same time, industrial fishing is destroying both their livelihoods and local biodiversity.¹⁹ Their protest outside the casa presidencial took in total three weeks and only ended with approval of the Sanitation Law.²⁰

OFRANEH denounced that part of their coconut nursery was destroyed in Vallecito. In an important effort, OFRANEH intends to reintroduce coconuts in the Honduran agriculture as an important pillar "to strengthen the family economy, while creating living barriers, to protect the beaches from the inexorable coastal erosion."²¹ IM-Defensoras published an alert regarding the situation of OFRANEH general coordinator Miriam Miranda. It is the third alert since January 2019, highlighting the ongoing persecution and harassment of her and her organization.²² It does not help that four years have passed since OFRANEH and the Garífuna communities Triunfo Cruz and Punta Piedra won before the IACtHR. But the JOH regime continues to fail to comply.²³

12 <https://copinh.org/2019/07/declaracion-xii-asamblea-general-copinh/>

13 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1145838990974738432>

14 <https://copinh.org/2019/07/alerta-agresores-mv/>

15 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1146582544667807744>

16 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1156023339967582208>

17 <https://hch.tv/2019/07/07/misquitos-en-protesta-cerca-de-casa-presidencial-denuncian-intentos-de-desalojos-violentos-por-parte-de-militares/>

18 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/buzos-miskitos-obligados-a-sumergirse-en-el-mar-para-no-morir-de-hambre/>

19 <https://ofraneh.wordpress.com/2019/07/29/la-flota-pesquera-industrial-destruccion-de-la-biodiversidad-y-etnocidio-de-buzos-miskitos/>

20 <https://confidencial.hn.com/misquitos-suspenden-huelga-tras-publicacion-de-ley-de-saneamiento-en-la-gaceta/>

21 <https://ofraneh.wordpress.com/2019/07/08/destruccion-de-los-viveros-de-coco-en-vallecito/>

22 <http://im-defensoras.org/2019/07/alertaurgente-honduras-hostigamiento-intimidacion-y-ataques-reiterados-contra-ofraneh-ponen-en-alto-riesgo-a-sus-integrantes/>

23 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1154107428306374656>

COPINH continued to suffer attacks this month. On July 9 at 5am, the National Police arrived at the Lenca community Nueva Esperanza to arrest 15 people, among them a pregnant woman. They are accused of usurpation, a common approach to criminalize the use of land by subsistence farmers.²⁴
²⁵ IM-Defensoras sent out an alert.²⁶ The initial hearing took place the next day. As with most cases of criminalization, the accused are forced to sign in at the courts every two weeks and they are forbidden to approach the land they have worked to nourish their families.²⁷ Just hours before the hearing, another member of the Nueva Esperanza community, Sandra Echeverria, went to the police to ask about the state of her friends when she herself was also arrested.²⁸ A week later, COPINH voiced fear of 100 additional arrest warrants against community members.²⁹

In another case of criminalized indigenous people, Peace Watch Switzerland published an update on the situation of the nine criminalized Tolupán defenders and MADJ members from San Francisco de Locomapa. The initial hearing was on June 24 and the hearing was planned to continue on July 3, but it was postponed as the public prosecutors went on holiday, violating article 128 of the Criminal Procedure Code.³⁰

On July 15, COPINH sent out an alert after COPINH members from Somolagua, Santa Bárbara were being shot at by men linked to the Ríos brothers. The latter oppose the land recuperation efforts by the community and are being supported by the Nationalist congressman Mario Pérez.³¹ Due to the ongoing repression, communities linked to COPINH protested outside the offices of the National Agrarian Institute (INA) demanding the land titles for nine communities.^{32 33 34} The protests took two days³⁵ and afterwards COPINH communicated that an agreement was found regarding the lack of land titles.^{36 37} But July did not end with good news for COPINH. State security forces destroyed some 50'000 coffee and 7000 banana plants of the El Mirador community in Siguatepeque. The plants belonged to 29 families currently in a land recuperation process awaiting their land titles.³⁸

Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, held a speech at the Global Landscapes Forum in Bonn, Germany this month. "Indigenous Peoples are the best guardians of the forests and biodiversity hotspots we all depend on. Research shows that lands managed by Indigenous Peoples with secure rights experience lower rates of deforestation, store

24 <https://copinh.org/2019/07/alerta-policia-detiene-a-15-companerxs-de-nueva-esperanza-comayagua/>

25 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/139-julio2019/4483-requerimiento-fiscal-por-usurpacion-de-terrenos-en-el-ceda-de-comayagua>

26 <http://im-defensoras.org/2019/07/alertadefensoras-honduras-detienen-y-criminalizan-a-defensoras-de-la-tierra-de-la-comunidad-de-nueva-esperanza-integralantes-del-copinh/>

27 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1149026997261258752>

28 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1148966744712724480>

29 <https://copinh.org/2019/07/otra-alerta-nueva-esperanza/>

30 <https://peacewatch.blog/2019/07/09/tolupanes-una-tribu-ancestral-que-lucha-por-lo-que-siempre-ha-sido-suyo/>

31 <https://copinh.org/2019/07/alerta-disparan-a-miembros-de-la-comunidad-de-somolagua-santa-barbara/>

32 <https://copinh.org/2019/07/accion-urgente-por-la-tierra/>

33 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/1166-copinh-instala-planton-indefinido-ante-retraso-de-titulacion-se-tierras>

34 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1153384937615241218>

35 <https://avispa.org/honduras-indigenas-lencas-denuncian-agresiones-y-exigen-titulacion-de-tierras-para-sus-comunidades/>

36 <https://copinh.org/2019/07/toma-del-ina-22-y-23-julio-2019/>

37 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1153780596805701633>

38 <https://copinh.org/2019/07/alerta-policia-destruyen-siembra-de-comunidad/>

more carbon, hold more biodiversity, and benefit more people than other lands—including protected areas." Based on this, she demands among other things "free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) of Indigenous Peoples and local communities—including women within these groups" as well as an end to "the criminalization, impunity and persecution of Indigenous Peoples and local communities".³⁹

The Case of Berta Cáceres

COPINH and Berta's family denounced 40 months of impunity. More than 3 years after the murder of Berta Cáceres, the intellectual authors of the crime have not been investigated nor tried, and for some weeks, COPINH has been facing a new smear campaign that seeks to keep the case in impunity.^{40 41}

On July 5, COPINH denounced that an important witness in the Berta Cáceres case was murdered. Olvin Gustavo García Mejía was found dead on June 4 after having disappeared 6 days earlier. In the past, he had been denounced on several occasions as a hitman hired by DESA to murder Berta Cáceres. David Castillo had even called him "our best insurance" in a text message to Sergio Rodríguez.⁴² Peoples Dispatch picked this up: "The Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) reported that on July 5 that Olvin Gustavo García Mejía was found dead in the San Bartolo community, in the north region of the Intibucá department. García Mejía was an unofficial employee of the Desarrollos Energéticos S.A. (DESA) company and allegedly carried out their dirty work of threats, intimidation and even selective assassinations in order to pave the way for the construction of their hydroelectric project, Agua Zarca. COPINH released copies of chats between DESA executives David Castillo and Sergio Rodríguez calling García Mejía their "best security at the dam". In a communique, COPINH said that "With the death of Olvin García Mejía, a key witness is buried and the truth about the plans of the DESA company to assassinate Berta Cáceres are hidden."⁴³

COPINH denounces that on July 15, members of the Madrid family with links to the Atala Zablah family destroyed the complete harvest of the COPINH community in Río Blanco.⁴⁴ COPINH launched a urgent call to the international community to support the people of Río Blanco and to put pressure on the JOH regime.⁴⁵ IM-Defensoras also sent out an alert.⁴⁶ This attack took place almost on the day six years after the murder of Tomás García in Río Blanco by state security forces.⁴⁷ Community members from Río Blanco presented a complaint at the Special Prosecutor's Office for Ethnic Groups. At the same time, COPINH denounces that 22 complaints have been filed

39 <http://unsr.vtaulicorpuz.org/site/index.php/es/declaraciones-comunicados/295-global-forum>

40 <https://criterio.hn/2019/07/02/caso-bera-caceres-40-meses-sin-justicia/>

41 <https://copinh.org/2019/07/video-a-40-meses-de-impunidad-seguimos-exigiendo-justicia-para-bera/>

42 <https://copinh.org/2019/07/sicario-contratado-por-castillo-para-asesinar-bera-aparece-muerto/>

43 <https://peoplesdispatch.org/2019/07/14/death-of-key-witness-in-bera-caceres-case-a-plot-to-erase-evidence/>

44 <https://madi.org/index.php/2019/07/17/ataques-contra-familias-lencas-son-sistematicos-y-amparados-por-la-impunidad-que-permite-la-institucionalidad-hondurena/>

45 <https://copinh.org/2019/07/alerta-urgente-ataque-en-rio-blanco/>

46 <http://im-defensoras.org/2019/07/alerta-urgente-honduras-hostigamiento-al-copinh-destruyen-todas-las-cosechas-de-maiz-de-la-comunidad-de-rio-blanco/>

47 <https://copinh.org/2019/07/a-6-anos-de-su-asesinato-la-lucha-sigue-rio-blanco-resiste/>

so far to no avail.⁴⁸ At the end of the month, COPINH denounced that former DESA employees threatened with a machete Rosalina Domínguez, COPINH leader in Río Blanco.⁴⁹

The Spanish Lawyers Foundation published a press release demanding the respect of due process in the case against David Castillo, so far the only accused intellectual author of the murder of Berta Cáceres. They accompanied the press release with an amicus curiae to the Honduran courts. "David Castillo is the only person accused as the intellectual author of the murder of our companion Berta Cáceres, his process is stopped due to the intention of the defense of Castillo to irregularly evacuate evidence. Today, the Spanish Lawyers Foundation introduced a legal opinion to the process, which is in the court of appeals of Francisco Morazán, with the objective that the actions of the judge that leads the process are rectified and that the oral and public trial in this case can take place."⁵⁰

LGBTQ

July was a very difficult month for the LGBTQ community in Honduras. Three trans women were assassinated in less than a week.⁵¹ On July 4, Antonia Lainez, was murdered in El Negrito, Yoro.⁵² Two days later, the social communicator Santiago "Santi" Carbajal was murdered after having had received death threats.⁵³ On July 7, the trans activist Bessy Ferrera in Comayagüela and a person accompanying her was wounded. She was a member of the LGBTQ organization Arcoiris and sister of Rihanna Ferrera, director of Cozumel Trans.⁵⁴

The German Foreign office published a press release demanding a swift and thorough investigation and a better protection for human rights defenders and especially the LGBTQ community.⁵⁵ The U embassy reacted to it on social media insisting that the authorities investigate the crimes and improve the security of the LGBTQ community.⁵⁶ There were additional press releases by OACNUDH⁵⁷, the IACHR⁵⁸ and the Spanish government.⁵⁹

Since 2009, 320 LGBTQ activist, defenders and members were assassinated and 24 in the current year.⁶⁰ According to CONADEH, it were at least 325 murders since 2009. He demanded a stop to these hate crimes as well a stop to the high impunity rates of more than 90%.⁶¹

Avispa wrote about the increase in hate crimes against the LGBTQ community in Honduras. Speaking with Donny Reyes of the Association Arcoiris, he highlighted one of the main sources of

48 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1154185361096105985>

49 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1156767723629817856>

50 <https://copinh.org/2019/07/7334/>

51 <http://www.rel-uita.org/honduras/mas-ataques-mortales-contr-la-comunidad-lgbti/>

52 <https://tiempo.hn/segun-familiares-femina-asesinada-dentro-casa-por-supuestos-policias/>

53 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1034-muere-comunicador-atacado-a-tiros-en-puerto-cortes>

54 <http://im-defensoras.org/2019/07/alertadefensoras-honduras-crimen-de-odio-contr-bessy-ferrera-activista-trans-e-integrante-de-la-asociacion-arcoiris/>

55 In German: <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/newsroom/mrhbb-mord-lgbti-aktivistin-honduras/2232862>

56 <https://twitter.com/USAmbHonduras/status/1149446923964878848>

57 <https://oacnudh.hn/oacnudh-honduras-condena-la-muerte-de-miembros-de-la-comunidad-lgbti/>

58 <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2019/176.asp>

59 http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/es/SalaDePrensa/Comunicados/Paginas/2019_COMUNICADOS/20190719_COMU117.aspx

60 <http://www.proceso.hn/nacionales/9-nacionales/comunidad-lgbt-en-zozobra-por-ataques.html>

61 <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/al-menos-325-miembros-de-comunidad-lgbti-asesinados-en-honduras-desde-2009.html>

violence. "We have done some research throughout our organizational life. And through the investigations it has emerged that those who commit the greatest number of crimes towards the LGBTI community are those linked to the Armed Forces or State Security Forces. That is, from an investigation we did on 171 cases that we had, 61% had been committed by state security forces: the National Police, the investigation police, the army."⁶²

Freedom of Expression and Journalists

July started with the expulsion of journalist Pablo Dalence. He works for Radio Sweden and was detained at the airport in Tegucigalpa upon arrival before being deported to El Salvador.⁶³ HCH reported on an attack on a social communicator in Puerto Cortés.⁶⁴ Journalist and director of Radio Globo, David Romero, has been held in a military facility for four months. The IACHR asked the JOH regime for explanations for this given that Romero is a beneficiary of special protective measures, but so far they have not received an answer.⁶⁵

Two accredited journalists of Radio Progreso were not allowed to cover the parliamentary session of the mobile Congress in Gracias, Lempiras. The security staff claimed that there is not enough space.⁶⁶ ⁶⁷ The journalist Israel Lanza received threats after covering a local issue in Puerto Cortés.⁶⁸ Radio Globo journalist Marvin Neptalí Ortiz denounced having been persecuted for the second time by the same car.⁶⁹ In one occasion, he was followed by a car while he was with his youngest son.⁷⁰ The journalist Wenceslao Canales received death threats after reporting on irregularities at the San Isidro Hospital in Tocoa.⁷¹

Even if sometimes such threats and attacks are investigated, justice is still far away. In an especially worrisome case, the MP failed to present important evidence in a case of aggression against the journalist Ronnie Huete resulting in the provisional freedom of the aggressors, private security guards from the company ESPA.⁷²

The Latin American Association of Education and Popular Communication (ALER) raised alarm in a press release regarding the general situation of journalists in Honduras.⁷³ The Press Emblem Campaign highlighted Honduras as one of five Latin American countries that is dangerous for journalists.⁷⁴ Pasos de Animal Grande reported on the situation of journalists in Santa Rosa de

62 <https://avispa.org/en-aumento-crimenes-de-odio-contra-la-comunidad-lgbt-en-honduras/>

63 <https://criterio.hn/2019/07/01/regimen-de-joh-expulsa-periodista-de-radio-suecia/amp/>

64 <https://hch.tv/2019/07/05/atentan-contra-comunicador-social-que-se-debate-entre-la-vida-y-la-muerte-en-puerto-cortes/>

65 <https://confidencialhn.com/senalan-que-el-poder-judicial-debe-responder-a-peticion-de-la-cidh-por-david-romero/>

66 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/denuncia-publica-09-julio-2019/>

67 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/radio-progreso-hace-denuncia-por-negar-derecho-a-evento-publico/>

68 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1035-periodista-victima-de-amenazas-por-realizar-su-trabajo-en-puerto-cortes>

69 <https://criterio.hn/2019/07/16/periodista-marvin-ortiz-de-radio-globo-denuncia-persecucion/amp/>

70 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/monitoreo-de-compromisos-internacionales/item/2525-implacables-persiste-la-persecucion-contra-el-periodista-marvin-ortiz>

71 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1042-periodista-es-amenazado-por-denunciar-contaminacion-en-hospital-de-tocoa>

72 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/libertad-de-expresion/1165-negligencia-de-la-fiscalia-deja-en-libertad-provisional-al-agresor-de-periodista>

73 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/libertad-de-expresion/1137-aler-exige-respeto-al-ejercicio-de-un-periodismo-libre-y-seguro>

74 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/libertad-de-expresion/1144-cinco-paises-latinoamericanos-entre-ellos-honduras-peligrosos-para-periodistas>

Copán, where 98% of them do not even receive a salary.⁷⁵ Pasos de Animal Grande also reported on the difficult situation of journalists and social communicators who do not inform in line with the JOH regime.⁷⁶ Unsatisfied by the work and lack of democracy of the Journalists Association of Honduras (CPH), journalists and social communicators formed their own association, APPCH, and elected their board members.⁷⁷

Reporteros de Investigación spoke with IACHR Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, Edison Lanza, about the situation in Honduras. He voiced dismay regarding the situation of journalists in Honduras and their treatment by the JOH regime. "The Honduran State often says, or it is customary to say, this case had nothing to do with their profession, it had to do with economic, sentimental or whatever problems, but I think that is not the answer, the answer is to see what did the journalist do, what did the presenter do, what did the communicator do, who could they have bothered, investigate that line and then well then discard it, but not a priori to make an excuse not to investigate."⁷⁸

Journalists were also repressed this month when covering the protests against the JOH regime⁷⁹ (see also the sub-sections on Social Unrest and on JOH below).

Violence against Women

Anna-Cat Brigida wrote for Al-Jazeera on how the "[d]ebate over the morning-after pill has prevented the adoption of crucial guidelines for attending to sex abuse survivors" in Honduras.⁸⁰ Sexual violence is encountered in various places in Honduras. Young indigenous Lenca female peasants denounced their situation of sexual harassment, threats and violence they suffer from their partners and former partners.⁸¹ The newest report by the Human Rights of Women Observatory found that Honduras has had the second highest femicide rate in Central America in 2017 and 2018.⁸²

Various human rights organization held a Alternative Tribunal on four cases of violence against women "Defending Our Bodies and Territories". The JOH regime was found guilty of not guaranteeing their access to justice.⁸³

75 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2509-compromisos-politicos-y-competencia-por-la-pauta-publicitaria-dividen-a-prensa-en-santa-rosa-de-copan>

76 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2517-castigos-por-el-gobierno-por-no-seguir-la-linea-oficial>

77 <https://criterio.hn/2019/07/21/asociacion-de-periodistas-creada-por-desproteccion-de-gremio-elige-directivos/>

78 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/07/23/relator-edison-lanza-cidh-califica-a-honduras-como-un-pais-preocupante-gobierno-ha-incumplido-con-liberar-periodista-encarcelado/>

79 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1048-canal-6-denuncia-agresiones-contra-sus-periodistas>

80 <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/honduran-women-demand-protocol-survivors-sex-abuse-190707003702255.html>

81 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2518-jovenes-campesinas-indigenas-lencas-la-violencia-domestica-nos-mata>

82 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/opiniones/1157-honduras-el-segundo-pais-con-tasas-mas-altas-de-femicidio-en-centroamerica>

83 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2523-tribunal-alterno-condena-al-estado-de-honduras-por-violencia-contra-las-mujeres>

Protection Mechanism

Trocaire and C-Libre published an evaluation of the protection mechanism for human rights defenders.⁸⁴ ACI Participa denounced that the protection mechanism prioritizes non-human rights defenders handing out blinded cars and more. They were made aware of this using the Law for Access to Public Information. They also found that of the 25 million Lempiras budget of the mechanism, half of which is meant for protective measures for HRDs, by December 2018, only one third has been executed.⁸⁵

Political Prisoners

The Committee for the Release of the Political Prisoners, the Convergence Against Continuity and the Latin American labor union Rel-UITA held a press conference in front of the National Penitentiary Institute (INP) where they denounced and condemned that the three social leaders Edwin Robelo Espinal, Raúl Álvarez and Rommel Baldemar Herrera Portillo are held in prison for political reasons.⁸⁶ ⁸⁷ Juan Carlos Herrera, father of political prisoner Herrera Portillo, publicly announced that he would hold JOH and the National Penitentiary Institute (INP) responsible if something were to happen to his son.⁸⁸ "Our son is a political prisoner and his imprisonment is a clear message to the Honduran people fighting in the streets claiming their rights. With his arrest they try to stop the social movement and criminalize the protest."⁸⁹

Rights Action denounces that the political prisoners Edwin Espinal, Raul Alvarez and Rommel Herrera held in so-called maximum security prisons received death threats. "As a result of death threats received from other inmates, all three told prison authorities on July 7th that they refused to return to their cellblock and would withstand being beaten or punished for not obeying. All feared for their lives. Edwin, Raul and Rommel have denounced threats against their life since at least June 6th and penitentiary authorities have done nothing to implement security measures to protect them. (...) As of July 11th (the last communication with them), all three report being sick. Rommel and Raúl have a harsh cough and Edwin complains about constant ringing and thumping in his ear as a result of an ear infection that has never been adequately treated since December 2018."⁹⁰

Extractive Industries

ConexiHon published an interesting article on the fiscal policies driving extractivism in Honduras.⁹¹ FOSDEH recently published a report on this.⁹² CESPAD published an important report on the

84 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/noticias/1040-evaluacion-del-sistema-nacional-de-proteccion-2015-2018>

85 <https://criterio.hn/2019/07/30/mecanismo-de-proteccion-otorga-vehiculos-blindados-a-personas-que-no-son-defensoras-aci-participa/>

86 <https://criterio.hn/2019/07/04/denuncian-que-gobierno-planifica-motin-en-la-tolva-para-atacar-a-los-presos-politicos/>

87 <https://criterio.hn/2019/07/04/denuncian-que-gobierno-planifica-motin-en-la-tolva-para-atacar-a-los-presos-politicos/defensoresenlinea.com/presos-politicos-se-encuentran-en-una-situacion-de-extrema-gravedad-en-carceles-de-honduras/>

88 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/joh-y-las-autoridades-del-inp-son-responsables-si-le-sucede-algo-a-los-presos-politicos/>

89 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/lo-queremos-libre/>

90 <https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/death-threats-against-honduran-political-prisoners-edwin-espinal-raul-alvarez-rommel-herrera>

91 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/transparencia/1140-privilegios-fiscales-en-energia-y-mineria-agudizan-desigualdades-en-honduras>

92 <http://www.fosdeh.com/2019/07/fiscalidad-y-desarrollo-en-las-industrias-extractivas-en-honduras/>

negative effects of extractivist solar energy projects in the south of Honduras focusing on the community of Namasigüe.⁹³

This month, 22 communities of Atima, Santa Bárbara, came together in a town hall meeting deciding against the exploitation of their forests demanding the cancellation of the permit granted by the Institute for Forest Conservation (ICF) to Miguel Ángel Bautista Castellón, who had been cutting trees without oversight since 2017.⁹⁴

Corruption and Its Enemies

On July 3, the CNA announced new lines of investigation into corruption at 16 hospitals worth some 17 billion Lempiras.⁹⁵ ⁹⁶ The following days, the CNA published additional details on the case⁹⁷ and on July 9, the TSC joined announcing that at least 29.3 million Lempiras were stolen from the Health Secretariat.⁹⁸ The TSC also uncovered irregularities of 13 million Lempira at the Education Secretariat.⁹⁹ By the end of the month, the MP announced to be investigating some 100 people in the newest corruption cases involving the healthcare sector.¹⁰⁰

The Onslaught against the Anti-Corruption Bodies

In a press release, the Association of Judges for Democracy (AJD) denounced the ongoing interference by the JOH regime in the Judicial Power.¹⁰¹ The MACCIH, meanwhile, is led once more by the ad-interim spokesperson Ana María Calderón.¹⁰² The undermining of the MACCIH also continued in July as the former head of investigations at the CNA states that its contract should not be renewed.¹⁰³ Proceso Digital rightly asked if the MACCIH entered in hibernation mode with the exit from its spokesperson Luis Guimarães.¹⁰⁴

Talks took place between the OAS and the JOH regime regarding the future of the MACCIH. The civil society Provisional Committee of the Penal Justice System Observatory of Honduras emitted a press release demanding transparency in the discussions and the renewal of the mandate.¹⁰⁵ ConfidencialHN claimed that the JOH regime wants to pull all the remaining teeth of the MACCIH and renew the contract with a body meant more or less for offering workshops.¹⁰⁶ At the same time,

93 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/07/18/coyuntura-desde-los-territorios-namasigüe-un-pueblo-que-esta-evidenciando-el-dano-de-los-proyectos-fotovoltaicos-en-el-sur-de-honduras/>

94 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/en-cabildo-abierto-habitantes-de-atima-santa-barbara-deciden-no-aceptar-ningun-plan-de-manejo-para-explotacion-de-bosque/>

95 <http://www.proceso.hn/nacionales/9-nacionales/cna-recuerda-que-presento-ochos-lineas-de-investigacion-en-salud-con-perjuicio-de-1-700-mil-millones.html>

96 <https://tiempo.hn/cna-investiga-empleados-corrupos-hospital-escuela/>

97 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/desfalco-de-1-700-mil-millones-en-salud-sera-fundamentado-anuncia-el-cna.html>

98 <https://confidencialhn.com/tribunal-de-cuentas-halla-irregularidades-por-unos-30-millones-en-secretaria-de-salud/>

99 <https://confidencialhn.com/tsc-muestra-irregularidades-en-13-millones-de-lempiras-transferidos-a-la-secretaria-de-educacion/>

100 <https://tiempo.hn/un-centenar-de-personas-investiga-mp-por-grandes-casos-de-corrupcion-en-salud/>

101 <https://criterio.hn/2019/07/24/basta-de-intromisiones-a-la-independencia-judicial-dicen-jueces-por-la-democracia-a-joh/amp/>

102 https://twitter.com/OEA_oficial/status/1145728459848736768

103 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/expersonero-del-cna-pide-no-renovar-convenio-de-la-maccih.html>

104 <http://www.proceso.hn/portadas/10-portada/maccih-frente-a-una-etapa-dehibernacion.html>

105 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/07/10/comitiva-del-observatorio-de-justicia-penal-se-pronuncia-ante-el-proceso-de-negociacion-respecto-al-futuro-de-la-maccih/>

106 <https://confidencialhn.com/regimen-nacionalista-quiere-dar-tiro-de-gracia-al-mandato-de-la-maccih/>

Congress' president Mauricio Oliva was testing the ground for reinstating congressional immunity.¹⁰⁷

UFECIC published a series of tweets demanding the renewing of the contract with the MACCIH as well as the approval of crucial legislative reform, e.g. the derogation of the secrecy law or the strengthening of the investigative capacities of the TSC.^{108 109 110 111 112}

Throughout July, the MACCIH also received support. It met with representatives of the German embassy and the German development agency GIZ.¹¹³ The Parliamentary Front in Support of the MACCIH demanded the renewal of its contract.¹¹⁴ Civil society organizations held a press conference in support of the MACCIH demanding the renovation of its contract.¹¹⁵

On July 24, OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro unexpectedly tweeted that he had received an official request by the JOH regime to evaluate the work and results of the MACCIH.^{116 117} The new Foreign Minister Lisandro Rosales announced that an independent organization will evaluate the MACCIH.¹¹⁸ It should take 45 days.¹¹⁹ Pinu congresswoman Doris Gutiérrez criticized the evaluation of the MACCIH as a strategy to further postpone the prolongation of the agreement. To no surprise, close JOH ally and president of the Judicial Power, Rolando Argueta, welcomed the evaluation.¹²⁰ He showed his real intentions by further claiming that the Honduran judicial system is now able to function without the MACCIH.¹²¹ The same Rolando Argueta also felt forced to defend "his" judges after the coordinator of the sentencing tribunals, Mario Díaz, had denounced the lack of independence of judges.¹²²

Corruption around JOH

ConfidencialHN published their newest investigation into corruption cases around JOH. They found that his wife Ana García bought fertile land in Olancho with public money.¹²³ Then they found out through declassified information in the US that JOH had received more than \$100'000 by a US

107 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/cn-vuelve-a-colocar-la-inmunidad-parlamentaria-en-agenda-publica.html>

108 <https://twitter.com/UFECIC1/status/1151220749706780672>

109 <https://twitter.com/UFECIC1/status/1151235922828189696>

110 <https://twitter.com/UFECIC1/status/1151236110384803841>

111 <https://twitter.com/UFECIC1/status/1151236753996406784>

112 <https://twitter.com/UFECIC1/status/1151237318155669504>

113 https://twitter.com/OEA_MACCIH/status/1150923784318328832

114 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/convenio-de-la-maccih-deber-renovado-sin-tocar-ni-una-coma-en-el-texto-fatima-mena.html>

115 <https://tiempo.hn/coalicion-de-la-sociedad-civil-respalda-a-maccih/>

116 https://twitter.com/Almagro_OEA2015/status/1154147916606595073

117 <https://tiempo.hn/oea-gobierno-hondureno-gestion-para-evaluar-desempeno-maccih/>

118 <https://tiempo.hn/canciller-rosales-maccih-evaluado-por-organismo-independiente-1/>

119 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1304917-466/gobierno-espera-evaluaci%C3%B3n-de-la-maccih-en-45-d%C3%ADas>

120 <https://tiempo.hn/poder-judicial-respalda-revision-gestion-realizada-por-maccih/>

121 <https://confidencialhn.com/argueta-insiste-que-sistema-judicial-ya-puede-trabajar-sin-el-acompanamiento-de-la-maccih/>

122 <https://tiempo.hn/rolando-argueta-confio-en-la-independencia-y-objetividad-de-los-jueces-y-magistrados/>

123 <https://confidencialhn.com/ana-garcia-compro-con-dinero-publico-135-manzanas-de-tierra-en-zona-productiva-de-olancho/>

company to grant them the rights for oil exploration.^{124 125} Apparently, the money came from Yankel Rosenthal.¹²⁶

The Honduras Solidarity Network denounced that Reinaldo Sánchez, the president of the National Party, has a private company which received \$3.6 million for fumigation against dengue. Sánchez is also the Minister of Social Inclusion and Development.¹²⁷

For more on corruption around JOH, please also consult the section on the Pandora corruption case below. And it is worth highlighting, that this same month, during the 4th of July celebrations at the US embassy, the US lauded the efforts by the JOH regime against corruption.¹²⁸

The Petty Cash Accounts of the Brother Case

The charges against two accused, Ramón Lobo Sosa and Wilfredo Cerrato Durón, in the Caja chica del hermano corruption case were dismissed this month.¹²⁹

The Case against the Former First Lady Rosa Elena de Lobo

The MP published a set of infographics on the corruption case against the former first lady Rosa Elena Bonilla de Lobo.¹³⁰

Pandora Case¹³¹

UFECIC denounced this month that one year had passed since the trial was opened against the the accused in the Pandora corruption case. But as the courts still have not resolved the legal challenges presented by the defense, the accused may soon leave pre-trial detention.¹³² On July 31, the MACCIH and UFECIC request the confiscation of the properties of the accused in the Pandora corruption case - among them goods by the National and Liberal Party.¹³³ Among the officials highlighted is Ana Rosalinda García Carías, JOH's wife, among the accused, i.e. a company linked to her,¹³⁴ as well as to JOH's brother-in-law.¹³⁵ El Tiempo published additional information on the role of JOH's wife and brother-in-law.¹³⁶ Former president Pepe Lobo reacts to this by reiterating that "the problem of Honduras and the National Party is called Juan Orlando Hernández".¹³⁷

124 <https://confidencialhn.com/revelan-que-joh-recibio-100-mil-dolares-de-empresa-de-ee-uu-a-cambio-de-exploracion-petrolera-en-honduras/>

125 <https://criterio.hn/2019/07/06/mas-de-2-millones-recibio-joh-como-soborno-por-aprobar-contratos-petroleros-en-honduras/>

126 <https://confidencialhn.com/empresa-que-dio-100-mil-dolares-a-joh-es-de-yankel-rosenthal-y-esta-en-lista-negra-de-ee-uu/>

127 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1156745743761174528>

128 <https://radiohm.hn/en-celebracion-de-independencia-de-ee-uu-resaltan-trabajo-contr-la-corrupcion/>

129 <https://confidencialhn.com/dan-sobreseimiento-definitivo-a-ramon-lobo-y-wilfredo-cerrato-duron-por-caja-chica-del-hermano/>

130 https://twitter.com/MP_Honduras/status/1156274866754134022

131 https://twitter.com/MP_Honduras/status/1155890215522902018

132 <https://twitter.com/UFECIC1/status/1146992828343562241>

133 <https://www.oas.org/es/sap/dsdme/maccih/new/docs/MCH-011.MACCIH-y-UFECIC-solicitan-privacion-definitiva-de-bienes-de-origen-ilicito-en-Caso-Pandora.pdf>

134 <https://confidencialhn.com/maccih-y-ufecic-confirman-participacion-de-ana-garcia-carrias-en-trama-pandoras/>

135 <https://criterio.hn/2019/07/31/caso-pandora-primera-dama-y-cunado-de-joh-socios-de-empresa-que-saqueo-el-estado/>

136 <https://tiempo.hn/maccih-solicito-incautar-bienes-ana-de-herandez-por-caso-pandora/>

137 <https://confidencialhn.com/pepe-califica-de-manoso-a-herandez-por-inminente-aseguramiento-de-la-sede-del-partido-nacional/>

State Security Forces

Two years ago in June, the regional head of ATIC, Sherill Yubissa Hernández Mancía, died in what was first presented as suicide. But the then head of Forensic Medicine, Julissa Villanueva, showed that she had been murdered. As a consequence, Villanueva herself received threats and was let go from her position. This month, she talked with Criterio about what happened and she released new details about the investigations conducted by Hernández previous to her murder.¹³⁸ Later in July, ConfidencialHN reported that she is being followed and harassed by ATIC agents in civilian clothes.¹³⁹

The JOH regime celebrated the first anniversary of their anti-Mara force FNAMP. The transport sector, meanwhile, denounced that extortion had risen not decreased.¹⁴⁰ InSight Crime also picked up the ongoing extortion crisis in Honduras' transport sector. "Street gangs in Honduras are forcing transport workers to participate in extortion rackets, highlighting the vulnerability of a group already hit hard by such gangs. Since 2018, the country's anti-gang unit has arrested 21 bus sector employees who are suspected of collaborating with gangs in extortion schemes, La Tribuna reported. The gangs use the bus workers as intermediaries to collect the extortion fees from other public transport operators."¹⁴¹ In less than 24 hours, two more minibus drivers as well as a passenger were murdered.¹⁴² The assassinations are linked to extortion and the director of the National Anti-Mara and Anti-Pandilla Force (FNAMP) admitted that their work is not effective.¹⁴³

Also this month, the MP informed that they opened trial against four members of the Armed Forces for abuse of authority.¹⁴⁴ The Security Secretariat announced changes in the leadership of the police.¹⁴⁵ Six police agents were arrested accused of various crimes.¹⁴⁶ ConfidencialHN highlighted recent findings by the Association for a More Just Society (ASJ) that a lot of police stations are in a precarious condition even though the security sector benefits from a substantial part of Honduras' budget.^{147 148}

Post-Electoral Human Rights Violations

CESPAD dedicated an article to the glaring impunity in the cases of the murdered protesters by state security forces during the 2017/2018 post-electoral protests. "Almost 2 years have passed since more than 30 Hondurans were killed in the midst of the post-electoral crisis, by elements of the army and the police. However, only 2 cases have been brought to trial, the rest remains in

138 <https://criterio.hn/2019/07/01/agente-de-la-atic-asesinada-en-santa-rosa-de-copan-investigaba-el-cartel-de-occidente/>

139 <https://confidencialhn.com/asedio-supuestos-espias-de-la-atic-dan-vigilancia-y-seguimiento-a-exjefa-forense-julissa-villanueva/>

140 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/fuerza-anti-maras-celebra-primer-aniversario-con-mil-700-capturas-aunque-extorsiones-aumentan.html>

141 <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/brief/honduras-gangs-bus-workers-collect-extortion/>

142 <http://elpulso.hn/un-verdadero-calvario-en-el-transporte-publico/>

143 <https://tiempo.hn/jefe-de-la-fnamp-admite-fracaso-en-lucha-antiextorsion-y-culpa-de-ello-a-infiltrados/>

144 https://twitter.com/MP_Honduras/status/1148272467783421952

145 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/oficializan-seis-nuevas-rotaciones-en-jefaturas-policiales.html>

146 <https://tiempo.hn/captura-seis-policias-delitos-de-lesiones-abuso-autoridad/>

147 <https://confidencialhn.com/arrestan-a-seis-policias-en-olancho-por-lesiones-fuerza-publica-repudia-conducta-de-imputados/>

148 <https://confidencialhn.com/paraestatal-asj-evidencia-miserrimas-condiciones-de-postas-policiales-en-honduras/>

impunity. (...) More than 50 crimes are counted during the protests after the coup d'état in 2009; more than 30 during the post-electoral crisis and another 9 so far from the protests of the population against the privatization of health and education (May to June 2019). The actions of the government is censored, national and internationally, for the negligence in the investigation of these crimes."¹⁴⁹ COFADEH, meanwhile, still accompanies the family members of Raúl Antonio Triminio Cisnado seeking justice. Triminio Cisnado was murdered by the Military Police on December 3, 2017 during the post-electoral repression.¹⁵⁰

Repressions

The human rights organization CPTRT documented 16 cases of torture in the last year highlighting a case involving the Military Police.¹⁵¹ Please consult the section on Social Unrest below for the general repression having taken place in Honduras this month.

Assassinations

Two police agents were found guilty for a murder back in 2010¹⁵² and the MP emitted an arrest warrant against the police official Douglas Armando Muñoz Cruz accused of murder.¹⁵³ Last but not least, a police agent will await trial in prison accused of attempted murder.¹⁵⁴

Penitentiary System

At the end of June, another two inmates died at the so-called maximum prison El Pozo. On July 1, OACNUDH lamented this. In total, OACNUDH documented at least five deaths of inmates in the last month alone and they exhorted the authorities to tackle the structural problems of the deaths as well as investigate and sanction the ones responsible.¹⁵⁵ According to ConfidencialHN, the two most recent deaths were caused by exposure to tear gas.¹⁵⁶ On July 7, inmates at the two so-called high-security prisons La Tolva and El Pozo announced a strike to raise awareness about the human rights violations they suffer from.¹⁵⁷ 58 prison guards have been suspended so far as part of the general purge for having committed illicit acts.¹⁵⁸

But things did not improve, but rather worsened. According to National Committee for the Prevention of Torture, Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment (CONAPREV), a riot at the prison in Santa Rosa de Copán was caused by the deputy director of the prison. He opened fire. One

149 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/07/01/analisis-mas-de-30-crimenes-que-al-estado-y-gobierno-de-honduras-no-importan/>

150 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/impunidad-militar-vestida-de-civil/>

151 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/de-violacion-y-acoso-sexual-acusan-a-policias-militares/>

152 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/139-julio2019/4502-15-anos-de-carcel-para-dos-policias-por-el-homicidio-de-un-ciudadano-en-minas-de-oro-comayagua>

153 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/ordenan-capturar-a-oficial-activo-de-la-policia-implicado-en-muerte-de-empresario-de-sps.html>

154 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/139-julio2019/4549-por-tres-delitos-envian-a-prision-a-policia-de-la-umep>

155 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1145860402317844482>

156 <https://confidencialhn.com/dos-reos-de-carcel-el-pozo-murieron-intoxicados-con-gases-lacrimogenos-lanzados-por-militares/>

157 <https://confidencialhn.com/privados-de-libertad-de-el-pozo-y-la-tolva-se-declaran-en-huelga-por-violaciones-a-ddhh/>

158 <https://radiohn.hn/unos-58-agentes-penitenciarios-fueron-depurados-por-acciones-ilicitas/>

inmate died and several ones were wounded.¹⁵⁹ OACNUDH lamented “the growing number of deaths and violent acts” in Honduran prisons.¹⁶⁰ CONADEH criticized the insecurity in Honduras' prison.¹⁶¹ Later, the deputy director of the prison in Santa Rosa de Copán was suspended.¹⁶²

Militarization

SOUTHCOM informed about a two-week training on security forces techniques and procedures by U.S. Army National Guard members. “This was Security Forces Training and we interacted with the Honduran military and taught them a little bit about our techniques,” said U.S. Army Capt. Hermon Rivera, SFT Honduras officer in charge. “During the last 14 days, we were training the Honduran Army in different tasks including clearing rooms, weapons qualification, vehicle searches and tactical control points.”¹⁶³ The head of the Honduran army, meanwhile, said that the militarization of Honduras is a necessity for the country.¹⁶⁴

CESPAD published a report in which they investigated the question if a democratic reform for the defense and security sector of Honduras is feasible. “The study is guided by two central questions: the first, what transformations and continuities has the defense / security sector had in recent years (2009-2017) and what have been its impacts for democracy in terms of democratization and de-democratization? Second, is it possible to democratize the defense / security sector and establish a democratic policy and not rely on force, as the articulating center of state operation?”¹⁶⁵

International Community

July began with JOH asking for additional support by the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (BCIE) for Honduras' energy grid.¹⁶⁶ Shortly afterwards, the Inter-American Development Bank granted ENEE a \$150 million loan to improve the energy grid.¹⁶⁷ The same month, JOH also announced that Honduras would receive \$35 million from the Copenhagen Green Climate Fund for a forest restoration project.¹⁶⁸

The main headlines, though, made the signature of a \$311 million stand-by agreement for 24 months with the IMF.¹⁶⁹ FOSDEH denounced the lack of transparency around the newest IMF deal.¹⁷⁰ The US embassy, meanwhile, congratulated them on Twitter.¹⁷¹ The IMF also published a

159 <https://tiempo.hn/comisionada-conaprev-evidentemente-subdirector-presidio-comenzo-a-disparar/>

160 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1154475699106910208>

161 <https://confidencialhn.com/ombudsman-hondureno-cuestiona-inseguridad-de-los-centros-penales/>

162 <https://confidencialhn.com/imputan-a-funcionarios-de-carcel-copaneca-por-amotinamiento-del-miercoles/>

163 <https://www.southcom.mil/MEDIA/NEWS-ARTICLES/Article/1883162/honduran-soldiers-complete-us-army-led-security-forces-training/>

164 <https://tiempo.hn/jefe-de-estado-mayor-dice-que-la-militarizacion-es-una-necesidad-del-pais/>

165 <http://cespad.org.hn/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Seguridad-y-Defensa-WEB.pdf>

166 <https://www.latribuna.hn/2019/07/03/hernandez-pide-apoyo-del-bcie-para-refundacion-del-sistema-electrico/>

167 <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/bid-invierte-150-millones-en-mejoramiento-de-red-de-distribucion-del-servicio-energetico.html>

168 <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/fondo-verde-del-clima-aprueba-propuesta-de-honduras-de-mejorar-la-gestion-forestal.html>

169 <https://tiempo.hn/honduras-firmo-acuerdo-stand-by-fmi-1/>

170 <https://confidencialhn.com/fosdeh-denuncia-que-acuerdo-con-el-fondo-monetario-internacional-no-se-manejo-con-transparencia/>

171 <https://twitter.com/USAmbHonduras/status/1152290010252677120>

new report on Honduras.¹⁷² Javier Suazo on the deal and the relationship between the IMF and the JOH regime in general. "For the IMF, the JOH administration represents efficient management - if measured by the fulfillment of the commitments and goals established in the Cooperation Agreements, he graduated with excellence notes. It does not matter that he is accused of corruption, drug trafficking, violation of the Constitution and being a liar, what interests is that he lowered the fiscal deficit and inflation, stabilized the economy, promotes clear rules (regarding the handing over of public goods and natural resources) to foreign investment, which remains low, but is on the rise."¹⁷³

On July 25, the Canadian government announced to support an anti-human trafficking program in Honduras.¹⁷⁴

US

This month, Lawrence J. Gumbiner took over as the new chargé d'affaires at the US embassy.¹⁷⁵ Kevin McAleenan, the US Acting Secretary of Homeland Security, visited Honduras¹⁷⁶ and met with JOH.¹⁷⁷ The US Coast Guard was present with a ship in Honduras for three days and its Deputy Commander Atlantic Area, Rear Admiral Todd A. Sokalzuk, held meetings with Honduran military officials.¹⁷⁸ ¹⁷⁹ The US Joint Task Force-Bravo has a new commander, Colonel Steven Barry. US chargé d'affaires Lawrence J. Gumbiner attended the ceremony.¹⁸⁰

The Norwegian Refuge Council (NRC) denounced the cut of US aid to Central America. "“This cruel removal of aid to vulnerable communities will not make the so-called border crisis go away, it will only fuel the impulse to escape misery and seek a better future across the U.S. border, said Jan Egeland, Secretary General of NRC.”¹⁸¹

EU

The German Minister of State at the Foreign Office, Niels Annen, was in Honduras in July. "We all know that the situation of human rights in Honduras is very worrying. That is why I want to find out more about the protection mechanisms for human rights defenders".¹⁸² The UK signed a free trade agreement with Central America, i.e. the agreement keeps in place the existing agreement with the EU for after the Brexit.¹⁸³ The EU announced support for the Red Cross Honduras worth some

172 <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2019/07/17/NA071819-Honduras-New-Economic-Plan-for-Stability-and-Growth>

173 <https://www.alainet.org/es/articulo/201242>

174 <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/honduras-y-canada-buscan-fortalecer-lucha-contr-la-trata-de-personas.html>

175 <https://hn.usembassy.gov/es/lawrence-j-gumbiner-asume-cargo-como-encargado-de-negocios-de-la-embajada-de-los-ee-uu-en-honduras/>

176 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1298085-466/secretario-de-seguridad-de-ee-uu-vendr%C3%A1-este-martes-a-honduras-por>

177 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1298489-466/presidente-hern%C3%A1ndez-y-secretario-de-seguridad-de-ee-uu-abordaron-crisis-migratoria>

178 <https://twitter.com/USAmbHonduras/status/1151875703119462400>

179 <https://twitter.com/USAmbHonduras/status/1151870251883212800>

180 <https://twitter.com/USAmbHonduras/status/1154159283824672774>

181 <https://www.nrc.no/news/2019/july/u.s.-aid-cut-to-central-america-cruel-and-counterproductive/>

182 <https://criterio.hn/2019/07/03/situacion-de-derechos-humanos-en-honduras-es-preocupante-vicecanciller-aleman/>

183 <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/el-reino-unido-y-centroamerica-firman-continuidad-de-acuerdo-de-asociacion.html>

\$180'000 to fight dengue, which has already claimed at least 51 lives so far this year in Honduras.¹⁸⁴ Suyapa Figueroa, president of the Medical Association of Honduras (CMH), demanded the depoliticization of the fight against dengue by the JOH regime and that it would leave it in the hand of the experts.¹⁸⁵

Drug Trafficking

The US was once more the main actor in drug trafficking-related issues in Honduras. ConfidencialHN reported that the two lawyers Marlon Duarte and Dagoberto Aspra are being investigated by the US for collaborating with the Los Cachiros drug cartel.¹⁸⁶ Then, the former government official Miguel Rodrigo Pastor was mentioned in US court documents linked to Fabio Lobo and Fredy Nájera who worked with the Los Cachiros drug cartel. He is a former mayor of Tegucigalpa and ran in the Nationalist race to become their presidential candidate.¹⁸⁷ According to court documents, he received \$50'000 from the Sinaloa drug cartel.¹⁸⁸

On July 29, La Prensa claimed that the Honduran drug cartel leader Héctor Emilio Fernández Rosa, "Don H", payed \$2 million to Manuel Zelaya in 2005. Based on the same documents, Los Cachiros paid \$500'000 to support the presidential campaign of Pepe Lobo in 2009.¹⁸⁹ Zelaya immediately denied it.¹⁹⁰ The next day, Zelaya held a press conference. He reiterated his innocence and denounced La Prensa for having distorted the facts.¹⁹¹ He also highlighted that drug trafficking activities have increased since 2010, i.e. after the coup against him.¹⁹²

Since Honduras approved the extradition to the US in 2013, 24 Hondurans have been extradited, 60% of which have by now been sentenced.¹⁹³

Tony Hernández

Criterio published new details on the role of Fabio Lobo in drug trafficking activities. He established contacts for the Valle Valle cartel to many important figures, his then president father, the now Security Minister Julián Pacheco Tinoco as well as JOH's brother Tony Hernández.¹⁹⁴ El Libertador emphasized the importance of Lobo's statement highlighting JOH's brother Tony Hernández as an associate of the Valle Valle drug cartel. Lobo also mentioned JOH himself several time in his testimony.¹⁹⁵

184 <https://reliefweb.int/report/honduras/la-uni-n-europea-brinda-ayuda-las-v-ctimas-del-brote-de-dengue-en-honduras>

185 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/epidemia-de-dengue-en-manos-de-expertos-se-controla-en-seis-semanas-dice-presidenta-del-colegio-medico.html>

186 <https://confidencialhn.com/justicia-de-ee-uu-apunta-contramarlon-duarte-y-dagoberto-aspra-por-supuesta-colaboracion-con-narcos/>

187 <https://criterio.hn/2019/07/15/miguel-pastor-habria-ayudado-a-transportar-10-toneladas-de-cocaina-a-estados-unidos/amp/>

188 <https://criterio.hn/2019/07/25/miguel-pastor-habria-recibido-50000-del-cartel-de-sinaloa/>

189 <https://www.laprensa.hn/sucesos/1305607-410/hector-fernandez-don-h-pago-millones-presidente-honduras-2006>

190 <https://confidencialhn.com/expresidente-zelaya-rechaza-haber-recibido-durante-su-gobierno-dinero-de-don-h/>

191 <https://tiempo.hn/mel-zelaya-el-mismo-fiscal-dice-que-don-h-nego-haber-dado-un-soborno/>

192 <https://tiempo.hn/manuel-zelaya-casos-narcotrafico-han-aumentado/>

193 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1305580-466/estados-unidos-ya-conden%C3%B3-a-24-de-41-hondure%C3%B1os-acusados-de-narcos>

194 <https://criterio.hn/2019/07/30/tony-herandez-socio-del-cartel-de-los-valle-valle/>

195 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3455-ultima-hora-tony-socio-del-cartel-de-los-valle>

Varia

Social Unrest

The widespread protests in Honduras continued for another month and the JOH regime retreated to its usual response. July started with live bullets being fired against protesting university students in San Pedro Sula and four high school students being detained in Tegucigalpa.¹⁹⁶ The University Coalition published a press release denouncing the repression and presented the events at the universities as a reflection of broader trends in Honduras.¹⁹⁷ What some months ago began by the education and healthcare sector, has spread to students¹⁹⁸ and the transport sector also continued their protests this month.¹⁹⁹ The protests and their violent crack-down by the JOH regime were noticed by the International Crisis Group which published their analysis of the situation in Honduras.²⁰⁰ Another helpful analysis was published by Pasos de Animal Grande on the militarization of the repression.²⁰¹

Radio Progreso saw two things reconfirmed by the current crisis. "[T]he Armed Forces are one of the fundamental pillars that sustain the authoritarian regime of Juan Orlando Hernández" and "their demonstrations of brute force against citizen protests in the streets, at the National Autonomous University of Honduras and on the day that marked the decade of the coup d'état, reflect at the same time the weakness of the regime in the face of its lack of democratic legitimacy". Radio Progreso then concludes that "[t]herefore, before the exhaustion of the political transition that began almost 40 years ago, it is imperative that, in the agenda of a new stage of transition, the disappearance of the Armed Forces is a central point and a condition for the democratization of the country".²⁰²

On July 3, the Platform for the Defense of Education and Healthcare announced new nationwide protest actions. When announcing the protests, the leadership of the Platform said that while teachers have focused on academic and organizational activities in schools nationwide, the government has intensified its actions of labor repression and harassment against interim teachers and against those who participate in the struggle. Several teachers who have participated in the protests during the last three months have reported that they are being subjected to discharge hearings. The Platform also denounced the intensification of the criminalization and intimidation against students of the National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH) and of secondary education.²⁰³

While the protests and the repression continued, there was also the ongoing effort of an alternative citizen dialogue. On July 4 it continued with the installation of the thematic round tables.²⁰⁴ The

196 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1145874581514665984>

197 <https://tiempo.hn/no-somos-vagos-ni-delincuentes-responde-la-coalicion-universitaria/>

198 <https://contracorriente.red/2019/07/02/la-crisis-hondurena-se-extiende-a-la-unah/>

199 <https://confidencialhn.com/paralizado-el-servicio-del-transporte-publico-en-varias-rutas-de-tegucigalpa/>

200 <https://www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america-caribbean/central-america/honduras/crackdown-raises-stakes-honduran-protesters-march>

201 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2505-contemos-las-balas-y-a-quienes-las-disparan>

202 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/hacia-la-desaparicion-de-las-armas-militares/>

203 <https://criterio.hn/2019/07/03/plataforma-anuncia-reactivacion-de-acciones-de-protesta-para-el-jueves-y-viernes/>

204 <https://criterio.hn/2019/07/04/soluciones-a-problematika-de-salud-y-educacion-saldra-de-mesas-tematicas-instaladas-hoy-suyapa-figueroa/>

same day, a protest by university and secondary school students suffered violent repression by state security forces.^{205 206 207} The IACHR felt compelled to emit a press release demanding that the JOH regime guarantees the right to peaceful protest and assembly. "The Commission condemns the acts of violence where the life and integrity of people were affected; and urges the State to adopt the necessary measures to investigate in a prompt, exhaustive and diligent manner, establishing the material and intellectual responsibilities and punishing those responsible."²⁰⁸ Amnesty International also reacted to the ongoing repression in Honduras. "The government of President Juan Orlando Hernández has adopted a policy of repression against those who protest in the streets to demand his resignation and accountability for the actions of authorities. The use of military forces to control demonstrations across the country has had a deeply concerning toll on human rights, said Amnesty International upon presenting the findings of a field investigation. (...) Amnesty International's Americas crisis team conducted a rapid response mission during the first week of July, following the upsurge in violence during demonstrations of the last few weeks, which left a toll of six people dead and almost 80 injured. The organization documented a total of eight cases, two of which involved people killed by the army and military police, and six that involved people who were injured, four of them by firearms. In addition, the organization analyzed more than 60 pieces of audio-visual and photographic material to identify the weapons and ammunition used, among other things."²⁰⁹ EU Parliamentarians wrote an open letter to the EU's Foreign Secretary Federica Mogherini to express their concerns about the situation in Honduras and that the free trade agreement between the EU and Honduras will be suspended.²¹⁰

But the situation did not improve. On July 6, the 11-year old Stefani Yolany López, daughter of HRD Gabriel Quiroz, was murdered in Choluteca – the city which has seen almost bi-weekly protests since November 2017.²¹¹ Later this month in Choluteca, state security forces opened fire injuring at least three protesters.²¹² On July 9, the Platform for the Defense of Education and Healthcare called for a nation-wide march for the next day. They asked people to come dressed in black to mourn the killings of the youth, the death of 101 people from dengue and the 30 Miskito indigenous people that had drowned off the coast of Honduras.²¹³ They also denounced the smear campaign against them.²¹⁴ The same day, Reporteros de Investigación uncovered shady deals made by former and the current Education Ministries with teacher salaries - a form of financial repression.²¹⁵

205 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1146893134841942017>

206 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1146907366652338176>

207 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1146908894242979841>

208 <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2019/169.asp>

209 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/07/honduras-ejercer-derecho-protesta-tiene-alto-costo/>

210 <https://www.cuartopoder.es/internacional/2019/07/05/los-eurodiputados-del-gue-piden-a-mogherini-que-suspenda-el-acuerdo-con-honduras/>

211 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2510-escuadrones-de-la-muerte-podrian-estar-en-operaciones-en-el-sur-de-honduras>

212 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1154580642614730753>

213 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1148424109430398976>

214 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/plataforma-para-la-defensa-de-salud-y-educacion-llama-a-fortalecer-acciones-el-jueves-y-viernes.html>

215 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/07/10/ministros-de-educacion-autorizaron-intermediacion-financiera-con-sueldos-de-maestros-sin-que-ellos-lo-supieran/>

During the national protest day on July 10, live bullets were against protesters in Nacaome, Valle.²¹⁶ Tear gas was also widely used again²¹⁷ - in one particularly problematic case, school children were tear-gassed by the Military Police.²¹⁸ OACNUDH reacted demanding an investigation.²¹⁹ The next day, five high school students and an adult in San Pedro Sula were arrested.²²⁰ After the violent repression of protests, the police and TIGRES special forces threw tear gas and entered the school. Even though MADJ presented a habeas corpus in favor of them, they remained in custody overnight.^{221 222} The next day, they were release, but they were also accused of damages against the state.²²³

On July 22, national, regional and international human rights organizations condemn in a joint press release the ongoing repression in Honduras highlighting the attacks against children and youth protesting for a better Honduras.²²⁴ COFADEH explained the importance of student movements to struggle against state oppression. "The police don't like students, especially the one that protects the dictatorship of the imposter and his criminal cartel. In general, despots do not like organized youth because they are independent, they are not afraid and because they represent the new energy of the homeland. In the last 50 years in Latin America, high school and university students unfortunately headed the lists of tortured, disappeared and murdered people. The youth suffers from the disastrous state of the country inherited by corrupt adults, criminals and drug traffickers. It hurts them more than anyone. And they face brute force for their future, risking everything in the present."²²⁵

While the protests took place, Honduras also suffered from a growing dengue crisis. Radio Progreso explained how the JOH regime is the main culprit of this crisis in Honduras - counteracting a narrative pushed by the regime itself that the protesting healthcare sector is somehow at fault.²²⁶ So far this year, at least 51 people died and there are 28'600 cases of dengue.²²⁷ Later, El Libertador reported that the JOH regime is using expired gas to fumigate against dengue.²²⁸ The Medical Association Honduras (CMH), meanwhile, denounced that the JOH regime is not revealing the true number of victims of dengue.²²⁹

216 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1149781015910477826>

217 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1149737089845485569>

218 <https://tiempo.hn/policias-gasean-a-ninos-dentro-de-la-universidad-pedagogica/>

219 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1149881593282080769>

220 <https://criterio.hn/2019/07/18/policia-retiene-estudiantes-del-jtr-capturados-esta-tarde/>

221 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/07/19/alerta-estudiantes-expuestos-a-tortura-tratos-crueles-e-inhumanos-por-parte-de-fuerzas-policiales/>

222 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1043-policias-ingresan-y-detienen-a-cinco-estudiantes-en-centro-educativo>

223 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/estudiantes-y-guardia-del-jtr-quedan-en-libertad/>

224 <https://www.cejil.org/es/organizaciones-nacionales-e-internacionales-condenamos-actos-represion-contra-ninas-ninos>

225 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/los-estudiantes-siempre/>

226 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/el-estado-principal-responsable-de-crisis-sanitaria-por-dengue-segun-medicos/>

227 <https://criterio.hn/2019/07/23/honduras-reporta-51-muertes-y-28600-casos-de-dengue/>

228 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3451-con-plaguicida-vencido-gobierno-hondureno-pretende-derrotar-al-dengue>

229 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/hay-instrucciones-para-ocultar-cifras-reales-del-dengue-denuncia-presidenta-del-cmh.html>

July ended with the exhumation of the 17-year old Eblin Noel Corea Maradiaga. He was murdered by the Military Police as part of the repression of the education and health care sector.^{230 231} The same day, two more students were arrested during a protest.²³²

Migration

July started with the publication of an important report by Human Rights Watch and the Hope Border Institute on the deportation of Central American migrants to Mexico.²³³ But also the migrants remaining in custody of the US border patrol continue to face difficult conditions. This month, another Honduran, the 30-year old Yimi Alexis Balderramos, died in US custody.²³⁴ Another Honduran, the 23-year old Dennis Arsenio Pineda Martínez, died on the way to the US.²³⁵ Accordingly, the following statement by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet rang sadly very true. She announced that she is “appalled by the conditions in which migrants and refugees - children and adults - are being held in detention in the United States of America after crossing the southern border. She stressed that children should never be held in immigration detention or separated from their families.”²³⁶ According to Guadalupe Ruelas, director of Casa Alianza, some 25'000 Honduran children leave Honduras every year.²³⁷ The number of migrant children and youth picked up by Mexican authorities grew by 132% in the first semester of 2019 compared to the same period in 2018. Of the over 33'000 children and youth, over 8500 are not accompanied by parents or relatives. The majority, over half of them, are from Honduras.²³⁸ More than 200'000 Hondurans have been detained this year on their way to the US and the Association for a More Just Society estimates that by then end of the year it will be 300'000.²³⁹

On July 4 and 5, the Regional Migration Conference took place in Mexico. It consists of Belize, Canada, Costa Rica, El Salvador, the United States, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and the Dominican Republic. Government representatives discussed the 2019-2025 Work Plan on Migrant Smuggling.²⁴⁰ Another important regional discussion between the US and Guatemala regarding a safe third country agreement. Some 150 regional and international human rights organizations wrote an open letter demanding that the US and Guatemala abstain from signing the agreement.²⁴¹ The Guatemalan government, facing legal challenges at home for the deal, announced that it postponed a planned meeting with the Trump administration.²⁴²

230 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/hermetismo-durante-exhumacion-de-eblin-noel/>

231 <https://tiempo.hn/mp-exhuma-cuerpo-de-menor-ultimado-durante-protesta-popular-en-la-paz/>

232 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1156760047394971648>

233 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/07/02/us-asylum-seekers-returned-uncertainty-danger-mexico>

234 <http://elpulso.hn/otro-hondureno-muere-en-custodia-de-migracion-en-estados-unidos/>

235 <https://www.laprensa.hn/mundo/1305062-410/honduras-hondureno-migrante-ahogado-repatriado-san-pedro-sula-rio-bravo>

236 <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24800&LangID=E>

237 <https://criterio.hn/2019/07/18/unos-25-mil-ninos-salen-anualmente-de-honduras-hacia-estados-unidos/>

238 <https://www.elsalvador.com/eldiariodehoy/sube-112-migracion-de-menores-rumbo-a-ee-uu/622202/2019/>

239 <http://elpulso.hn/los-hondurenos-están-votando-con-los-pies/>

240 <https://rosanjose.iom.int/site/en/news/north-and-central-american-countries-follow-regional-plan-combat-migrant-smuggling>

241 <https://www.cejil.org/es/organizaciones-ddhh-guatemala-y-estados-unidos-deben-abstenerse-firmar-acuerdo-tercer-pais-seguro>

242 <https://twitter.com/GuatemalaGob/status/1150425042163044353?s=08>

"The Trump administration on July 15, 2019 announced a new rule that effectively bars from asylum nearly anyone who crosses the southern US border after traveling through a third country, Human Rights Watch said today. "The Trump administration's new rule shows breathtaking disregard for US obligations toward asylum seekers," said Bill Frelick, refugee rights director at Human Rights Watch. "It dumps asylum seekers on other countries without any assurances that they will get a fair hearing."²⁴³ This announcement and the situation in general led to a reaction by the IACHR. It "expresses its concern about the situation of migrants and refugees in the United States, Mexico, and Central America, especially because of the recent policies and measures adopted by States on migration and asylum; the securitization, militarization, and externalization of the borders; as well as the criminalization of defenders of the human rights of migrants and refugees. The Commission urges the States of the region to respect and guarantee the rights of migrants and refugees, as well as those of the defenders of their human rights."²⁴⁴

On July 26, after months of negotiations and threats, the Trump administration announced that a "safe third country" agreement with Guatemala had been reached.²⁴⁵

Electoral Reforms

Since the electoral fraud in November 2017, debates about much needed electoral reforms have not stopped. Nevertheless, there has not been any substantial progress. Two new electoral bodies were announced, but its representatives have not yet been elected. This caused Libre to go into congressional insurrection in June. This month, they announced that they would only stop the insurrection if the representatives of the new electoral bodies were elected in the next congressional session.²⁴⁶ This did not take place and the insurrection continues. Additionally, the deputy TSE magistrate Marco Ramiro Lobo resigned in protest.²⁴⁷ On July 10, Libre congresswo/men were tear-gassed and attacked by private security at a session of the mobile Congress in Lempira.²⁴⁸

Congresswoman Doris Gutiérrez opposes the discussed electoral reforms for being just "of form but not of substance". But according to her, there are still things that could be improved, e.g. the inclusion of the two-round presidential election.²⁴⁹ On July 11, the OAS handed over its report on the proposed electoral reforms to Congress.²⁵⁰ The report consists of a 126 pages long Electoral Bill and a 58 pages long Electoral Procedural Bill.²⁵¹ The political opposition denounces that the OAS abstained from commenting on the presidential reelection as well as the two-round presidential election, two key topics.²⁵² Shortly afterwards, the UN representative Igor Garáfulic urged Congress

243 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/07/15/us-new-rule-flouts-asylum-norms>

244 <https://reliefweb.int/report/united-states-america/iachr-expresses-deep-concern-about-situation-migrants-and-refugees>

245 <https://news.yahoo.com/donald-trump-says-safe-third-200543227.html>

246 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/libre-dejara-insurreccion-legislativa-solo-si-en-proxima-sesion-se-nombran-cargos-electorales.html>

247 <https://criterio.hn/2019/07/03/marco-ramiro-lobo-renuncia-al-tse-y-pide-nuevos-representantes-en-organos-electorales/>

248 <https://tiempo.hn/legislativo-reforma-leyes-congreso-movil-hubo-pitazos-altercados/>

249 <http://elpulso.hn/reformas-electorales-son-de-forma-y-no-de-fondo/>

250 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/oea-entrega-recomendaciones-para-reformas-electorales-al-cn.html>

251 <https://radiohmn.hn/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Informe-Final-ENTREGA-ANEXOS.pdf>

252 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/oea-omite-sugerencias-sobre-segunda-vuelta-y-reeleccion-presidencial-denuncia-oposicion/>

to approve the electoral reforms.²⁵³ Left unheard, at the end of the month he reiterated that Congress should elect the representatives of the two new electoral bodies, the Electoral Justice Tribunal (TJE) and the National Electoral Council (CNE).²⁵⁴

Radio Progreso published a helpful comment on all these discussions around the electoral reforms. "What then is behind the anguished desires and purposes of these sectors and obscure characters for the approval of the so-called electoral reforms? In our Honduran case, the elections, instead of being synonymous with democracy, have become, at least in the case of the last three electoral contests, an instrument that legitimizes the power of the strong, the corrupt, the criminal and the unpunished. And today, they need to repair that process with a few tweaks and stories that they call reforms, in order to suit the so-called international community, and thus continue deceiving the unwary".²⁵⁵

Penal Code

The disputed Penal Code continued to make headlines also in July. OACNUDH and the IACHR published a joint press release. They expressed concern about the publication last May of the final text of the new Penal Code, which contains disproportionate restrictions on freedom of expression, freedom of the press, as well as certain provisions that by their formulation may affect the right to protest and defend human rights in the country, among other things.²⁵⁶ Some 30 civil society organizations, business association and also the Platform for the Defense of Education and Healthcare jointly opposed the Penal Code meant to come into force in November. They propose a different Penal Code and announced to send a proposal to Congress.²⁵⁷

On July 18, the CNA announced an investigation into various congresswo/men for the incorporation of four controversial articles that had not been debated.²⁵⁸ The CNA also explained to some observers who try to minimize the possible harm of the Penal Code that one can only analyze its content starting from a Honduran perspective. In Spain such a Penal Code may work, but not in Honduras.²⁵⁹ Or in the words of Radio Progreso: "Honduras not only needs a new Penal Code, it needs a new institutionality and a new democratic culture that places dignity and people's rights at the center of its priorities."²⁶⁰ The Inter-American Press Society (SIP) also expressed concerns regarding the Penal Code and freedom of expression.²⁶¹

AT the end of the month, a discussion broke out regarding the possibilities to change the Penal Code. The Lawyers Association of Honduras (CAH) claimed that according to the law, the new

253 <https://confidencialhn.com/garafulic-urge-al-legislativo-que-emprendan-las-reformas-electorales-por-el-bien-de-honduras/>

254 <http://tiempo.hn/garafulic-deben-elegir-cuanto-antes-a-magistrados-del-cne-y-tje/>

255 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/reformas-electorales-cual-es-la-cuestion/>

256 <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2019/174.asp>

257 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/organizaciones-de-sociedad-civil-rechazan-nuevo-codigo-penal-y-entregaran-propuesta-para-reemplazarlo.html>

258 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/cna-investiga-a-diputados-por-cuatro-articulos-del-nuevo-codigo-penal-que-no-se-discutieron-en-el-pleno.html>

259 <https://tiempo.hn/cna-nuevo-nuevo-codigo-penal-realidad-honduras-no-espana/>

260 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/voces-unidas-contra-el-codigo-pena/>

261 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/sip-muestra-preocupacion-por-nuevo-codigo-penal-de-honduras-y-pide-revisarlo.html>

Penal Code first has to come into force before it can be reformed or derogated.²⁶² But there is also the possibility to abrogate it – legalese best explained by an article by Radio Progreso.²⁶³

July ended with the publication of a thorough analysis of the new Penal Code from a human rights perspective by OACNUDH. They highlighted problems with the Penal Code and international human rights treaties, problems with ambiguous wording and problems with proportionality. They also included recommendations regarding the decriminalization of certain crimes, e.g. slander.²⁶⁴

Poverty

The Central American Fiscal Studies Institute (Icefi) found that VAT increases in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras undermine the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the region.²⁶⁵

Honduras is one of the top-ten countries regarding the percentage of remittances of GDP (almost 20%).²⁶⁶ Randolfo García summarized the finding as follows: "In other words when human beings become merchandise. To provoke forced migration is a business."²⁶⁷

Violence

UNODC published its newest edition of the Global Study on Homicide with a strong focus on Central America. The report consists of six booklet, one for example is on gender violence.²⁶⁸

And Light at the End of a Month

"Who said everything is lost? Poets remind us of this. And indeed, ten years after the coup d'état, of which it is necessary to continue speaking because its consequences are still pertinent, there are signs, beautiful dynamics, that have been built up as 'contra golpes'."²⁶⁹

262 <https://tiempo.hn/cah-sin-entrar-vigencia-nuevo-codigo-penal-no-reformado/>

263 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/abrogar/>

264 <https://oacnudh.hn/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Observaciones-Co%CC%81digo-Penal-Nuevo-OACNUDH-ok.pdf>

265 <https://criterio.hn/2019/07/17/pobreza-aumentara-en-triangulo-norte-por-aumento-al-iva/>

266 <http://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/money-sent-home-workers-now-largest-source-external-financing-low-and-middle-income>

267 <https://twitter.com/randygarciaHn/status/1152217586676961281>

268 <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/global-study-on-homicide.html>

269 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/seis-dinamismos-hondurenos-de-contra-golpe/>



Another Month at the Honduras Forum Switzerland

Past Activities:

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Upcoming Activities:

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