



# *Another Month in Honduras...*

## Human Rights Monitor – May 2019

May started as April had ended, with nationwide protests. First on May Day, then again as the public education and healthcare sector took up their marches anew. The protests now go beyond the two sectors and question the JOH regime as a whole. The regime was involved in additional battles as new evidence came to light linking JOH to drug traffickers and when the MACCIH and UFECIC presented their newest corruption case, Narcopolítica. 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

The IACHR conducted a three-day follow-up visit to Honduras this month. Previous to this, Defensores en Línea had republished the recommendations made by the IACHR in 2018.<sup>1</sup> The delegation met with Honduran HRDs, a meeting they called too short "to expose the criminalization promoted by the Juan Hernández regime."<sup>2</sup> In a joint press release, the IACHR and OACNUDH expressed their concern about the situation of HRDs in Latin America. In the case of Honduras, they highlight the assassination of the indigenous Tolupán defenders Salomón Matute and Juan Samael Matute this February.<sup>3</sup>

### Assassinations

On May 25, the human rights defender and member of the Mutual Help among Women Association Honduras (APOMUH) Maricruz Tolvez was assassinated in Choloma, Cortés.<sup>4</sup> Four days later, the local leader of the teacher's movement, Johny Alexander Lopez, was murdered at home in Yoro.<sup>5</sup>

### Lawyers

A lawyer from the Supreme Court and her husband were murdered in El Paraíso.<sup>6</sup>

### Attacks, Criminalization and Harassment

IM-Defensoras sent out an alert that the HRD Lesly Mariela Andino was detained in Choluteca during the May Day protests.<sup>7</sup> According to Radio Progreso, more than 15 people were detained, two journalists and many others got hurt and their mobile radio station was attacked.<sup>8</sup> There are also ongoing attacks against campesino groups affiliated with the CNTC.<sup>9</sup>

The Mesoamerican Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders sent out an alert for the illegal arrest of the three WHRDs Karen Yajaira Trigueros, Gledy Rodríguez and Suyapa Trigueros and further HRDs in Azacualpa, Copán. All of them were later released without being charged making this another attempt to intimidate them for further protesting against the local mining project.<sup>10</sup> CESPAD sent out an alert after the arrest of the 70-year old local HRD Julio Matamoros in Playa Blanca on the peninsula Zacate Grande. He is among the local HRDs criminalized for resisting the large-scale landowner Jorge Casis Leiva.<sup>11</sup> CESPAD also published a helpful analysis by Alessandra

1 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/delegacion-de-la-cidh-le-da-seguimiento-a-recomendaciones-al-estado-hondureno/>

2 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/sin-mucha-confianza-defensores-comparten-testimonios-ante-la-cidh/>

3 <https://oacnudh.hn/cidh-y-las-oficinas-de-onu-derechos-humanos-expresan-su-preocupacion-por-la-situacion-de-personas-defensoras-de-derechos-humanos-en-el-primer-cuatrimestre-del-ano/>

4 <http://im-defensoras.org/2019/05/alertadefensoras-honduras-asesinan-a-la-defensora-maricruz-tolvez-integrante-de-la-apomuh-en-choloma/>

5 <https://tiempo.hn/asesinan-un-dirigente-magisterial-en-yoro/>

6 <https://tiempo.hn/sicarios-matan-a-abogada-en-jacaleapa-y-su-esposo/>

7 [https://twitter.com/IM\\_Defensoras/status/1123659539822325761](https://twitter.com/IM_Defensoras/status/1123659539822325761)

8 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/jornada-de-represion-vive-honduras-en-movilizacion-del-1-de-mayo/>

9 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/exigen-fin-a-ataques-contra-campesinos-afiliados-a-la-cntc/>

10 <http://im-defensoras.org/2019/05/alertadefensoras-honduras-detencion-arbitraria-e-intimidacion-contra-defensoras-del-territorio-y-los-bienes-naturales-en-de-azacualpa/>

11 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/05/28/alerta-continuan-las-detenciones-arbitrarias-de-defensores-de-bienes-comunes-en-el-sur-de-honduras/>

Bueso and Claudia Mendoza on the criminalization of HRDs by falsely linking them with organized crime.<sup>12</sup>

## Indigenous Peoples

OFRANEH denounced the imposition of two fossil fuel based energy projects in La Ceiba in the midst of various protected areas.<sup>13</sup> There are various problems with the thermal energy plant La Ensanada in La Ceiba built without an environmental license thanks to the disputed mayor Jerry Sabio.<sup>14</sup> They also denounced the mistreatment of indigenous Garífuna artisan fisherwo/men and Garífuna communities in Cayos Cochinos in general by the Naval Force and the Cayos Cochinos Foundation.<sup>15</sup>

Indigenous Miskito Councils organized as MASTA presented 11 demands regarding the situation in La Moskitia. They have been protesting and occupying government buildings in Puerto Lempira.<sup>16</sup> Pasos de Animal Grande highlights the role of the former army general Oscar Filánder Armijo Uclés in persecuting the indigenous Tolupán in San Francisco Locomapa, Yoro.<sup>17</sup> And then there is the problematic fact that both the public prosecutor's office for the environment in La Paz and the one for ethnic groups in Tegucigalpa ignore complaints by the Indigenous Councils in La Paz.<sup>18</sup>

## FPIC

OFRANEH published a short video denouncing that the newest version of the Consultation Bill in Honduras undermines the spirit of ILO 169 for free, prior and informed consent.<sup>19</sup>

## The Case of Berta Cáceres

In the beginning of May, COPINH denounced that 38 months have passed since the assassination of Berta Cáceres and justice has still not been served, even worse, five month have passed since the trial of the material authors but they still have not been sentenced yet.<sup>20</sup> And once more, impunity leads to more violence. Members of COPINH in Río Blanco have faced new aggression by the Madrid family and Rosalina Domínguez received death threats.<sup>21 22 23</sup> Both CEJIL and Amnesty International emitted calls demanding the protection of Rosalina Domínguez.<sup>24 25 26</sup> Since the

12 <http://cespad.org/hn/2019/05/15/perfiles-falsos-modalidad-que-cobra-fuerza-para-criminalizar-lideres-sociales-en-honduras/>

13 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1127976821084053509>

14 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1130554969126580229>

15 <https://ofraneh.wordpress.com/2019/05/17/declaratoria-nueva-armenia/>

16 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/05/17/un-mes-en-protestas-en-el-corazon-del-corredor-biologico-mesoamericano/>

17 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2471-ex-general-del-ejercito-hondureno-sigue-amenazando-a-indigenas-de-la-etnia-tolupan>

18 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/fiscalia-de-las-etnias-ignora-las-denuncias-de-los-consejos-indigenas-de-la-paz/>

19 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1133346666617159681>

20 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1124081179920097280>

21 <https://copinh.org/2019/05/alerta-amenazas-a-muerte-en-rio-blanco/>

22 <http://im-defensoras.org/2019/05/alertadefensoras-honduras-amenazan-de-muerte-a-rozalina-dominguez-defensora-de-la-tierra-integrante-del-copinh/>

23 <https://copinh.org/2019/05/amenazas-a-muerte-a-rozalina-resumen/>

24 <https://www.cejil.org/es/amenazas-honduras-debe-tomar-medidas-inmediatas-protger-vida-personas-defensoras-rio-blanco>

25 <https://www.amnesty.ca/get-involved/take-action-now/honduras-land-defenders-risk%C2%A0>

26 <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AMR3703372019ENGLISH.pdf>

murder of Berta, two more assassinations of young COPINH members took place in Río Blanco, one in December 2017 and one in March this year.<sup>27 28</sup>

Meanwhile, the defense team of David Castillo, accused in the Berta Cáceres trial, was given the possibility to claim his innocence on a widely-watched TV program.<sup>29</sup> The legal representative of Berta's family and COPINH, HRD Víctor Fernández, riposted that they should not pretend to be victims of a system from which they themselves have benefited.<sup>30 31</sup>

Several national and international human rights organizations organized in an international observation mission denounced that six months after the first trial and conviction in the Berta Cáceres trial, there are still no sentences.<sup>32</sup> They organized a forum this month in Tegucigalpa to inform about the Berta Cáceres trial. COPINH published several videos from the forum, e.g. by their coordinator Berta Zúniga.<sup>33</sup> In an additional press release, CEJIL "requires the Court to issue the judgment against the material authors of the case without further delay and that the State comply with its obligation to investigate, prosecute and punish all persons responsible for the intellectual authorship of the murder."<sup>34</sup> US Congressman Hank Johnson tweeted: "I join the family of Berta Cáceres and COPINH in sounding the alarm: 6 months after the conviction of 7 material authors in the murder of #BertaCaceres, still no sentences. The state of Honduras must bring to justice the intellectual authors of her murder."<sup>35</sup>

## LGBTQ

The murder of the Honduran trans woman Vicky Hernández will go to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR). She was murdered on June 28, 2009 in the context of the coup d'état.<sup>36 37</sup> El Faro and Vice published a video report on the LGBTQ community in Honduras focusing on gay men. Between 2009 and 2017, of the more than 280 people murdered of the LGBTQ community, 154 were gay men.<sup>38</sup>

On the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia, the LGBTQ community marched in Tegucigalpa and they were accompanied by OACNUDH.<sup>39 40</sup>

27 <https://copinh.org/2019/05/alerta-violencia-en-rio-blanco-autoridades-aun-nada/>

28 <https://copinh.org/2019/05/linea-de-tiempo-de-agresiones-en-rio-blanc>

29 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1131754283274264579>

30 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1131697151774482432>

31 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1131728191691907072>

32 <https://www.cejil.org/es/justicia-deuda-preocupante-demora-caso-berta-caceres>

33 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1133861653236203520>

34 <https://www.cejil.org/es/honduras-debe-afirmar-sentencia-contra-autores-materiales-del-asesinato-berta-caceres>

35 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1134593435162337280>

36 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/transfemicidio-de-vicky-herandez-en-honduras-sera-conocido-por-la-corte-interamericana-de-derechos-humanos/>

37 <http://elpulso.hn/cidh-presenta-caso-sobre-honduras-a-la-corte-idh/>

38 [https://elfaro.net/es/201905/ef\\_tv/23284/Diversoam%C3%A9rica-gays-bajo-ataque-en-Honduras.htm](https://elfaro.net/es/201905/ef_tv/23284/Diversoam%C3%A9rica-gays-bajo-ataque-en-Honduras.htm)

39 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1129509007075553280>

40 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1128376026113953793>

## Freedom of Expression and Journalists

Fearing that it loses some of its significance, it still bears importance to repeat that Honduras' journalist had another difficult month – and this in the month the world celebrates World Press Freedom Day<sup>41</sup> and the Day of the Honduran Journalist.<sup>42</sup> C-Libre published an overview of the laws restricting access to public information in Honduras.<sup>43</sup> Both during the May Day protests and the protest of the public sector, journalists and social communicators suffered repression. In one case, the mobile radio station of Radio Progreso was attacked during its coverage of the May Day protests in Tegucigalpa. Its director, Padre Melo, held the JOH regime responsible and demanded a thorough investigation.<sup>44</sup> Radio Progreso also filed an official complaint.<sup>45</sup> After publishing a video of a young protester being detained, the journalist Francisco Aguirre from El Triunfo, Choluteca denounced receiving threats.<sup>46</sup> Then, there is journalist Edgar Francescoly Serrano Portillo who requested political asylum in the US in fear of being assassinated in Honduras.<sup>47</sup>

C-Libre presented a report on the occasion looking at acts of aggression against freedom of expression between January 1 and May 1, 2019.<sup>48</sup> OACNUDH asked Honduras to decriminalize defamation, libel and insult.<sup>50</sup> El Libertador denounced that its journalists are less and less allowed to enter public institutions such as Congress. In the newest case, a journalist was denied entry into University Hospital by three security guards.<sup>51</sup>

Reporteros de Investigación published an update on the state of journalist Geovanny Sierra who was shot and badly injured last November.<sup>52</sup> And there is also some news in the case of journalist David Romero. ConfidencialHN reported that in the IACHR hearing in his case, the commissioners gave Honduras 15 days to suspend the sentence and free the journalist.<sup>53</sup> By the end of May, Honduras still had not complied. But at least a court dropped the criminalizing charges against the journalist Jairo López by the Energy Company Honduras (EEH). López and his family had been persecuted by private actors in collaboration with the JOH regime since 2015.<sup>54</sup> Pasos de Animal Grande denounced the show of force by state security forces accompanying the criminalization trial against journalist Jairo López. The article also highlighted how his persecution has been ordered from the top.<sup>55</sup>

41 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/libertad-de-expresion/1053-bajo-amenaza-se-conmemora-el-dia-mundial-de-la-libertad-de-prensa-en-honduras>

42 <https://www.facebook.com/ONUDDHH/posts/2431001097140674>

43 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/libertad-de-expresion/1046-regular-leyes-obstaculiza-el-acceso-a-la-informacion-publica>

44 <https://tiempo.hn/radio-progreso-se-suma-medios-atacados/>

45 <https://wp.radioprogressohn.net/presentan-denuncia-por-robo-y-danos-a-unidad-movil-de-radio-progreso-durante-movilizacion-del-1-de-mayo/>

46 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1005-periodista-recibe-amenazas-por-publicar-video-detencion-contra-manifestante>

47 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/libertad-de-expresion/1078-grave-riesgo-corre-periodista-a-punto-de-ser-deportado>

48 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/D%C3%ADa-Mundial-de-la-Libertad-de-Prensa-FINALISIMO-convertido.pdf>

49 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/libertad-de-expresion/1049-honduras-criminalizar-la-protesta-es-la-mayor-agresion-a-la-libertad-de-expresion>

50 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/03/naciones-unidas-insta-al-estado-de-honduras-a-despenalizar-la-difamacion-calumnia-e-injuria/>

51 <http://www.web.elibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3359-niegan-ingreso-a-el-libertador-en-hospital-escuela-hondureno>

52 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/05/07/me-dieronme-estoy-desangrando/>

53 <https://confidencialhn.com/dan-15-dias-al-estado-de-honduras-para-dejar-en-libertad-a-david-romero/>

54 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2465-sobresimiento-definitivo-para-el-periodista-jairo-lopez-en-juicio-impulsado-por-energia-honduras-eeh>

55 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2466-periodista-fue-enjuiciado-para-decir-fuera-joh-y-eeh-a-traves-de-un-megafono>

For the negative effects of the new Penal Code on journalists and freedom of expression, please consult the sub-section below.

## Violence against Women

In the first four months of 2019, at least 104 women had been murdered in Honduras.<sup>56</sup> In April, C-Libre started a series of articles on violence against women. This month, the newest article focused on the role of corporate media outlets in re-victimizing women by publishing their photos and names.<sup>57</sup>

On May 15, OACNUDH reminded the JOH regime that CEDAW had recommended to Honduras "to ensure that all cases of violence against women on the basis of gender are investigated promptly and effectively".<sup>58</sup> Instead, the new Penal Code even worsens the situation of women<sup>59</sup> by reducing the penalties for crimes against women.<sup>60</sup>

## Protection Mechanism

Almost every month, cases of failed protection by the JOH regime for HRDs. As the threats against the journalist Joel Mejía continued, he felt force to close his media outlet and leave Honduras.<sup>61</sup> In February, had filed a complaint at the MP in Juticalpa Olancho against the mother of the local mayor for threatening him with death.<sup>62</sup> <sup>63</sup> For months, Pasos de Animal Grande has been requesting information from the MP regarding the budget of the prosecutor's office for the protection of journalists, HRDs and justice operators as well as statistics of their work. This month, the Institute for Access to Public Information required the MP to share this information.<sup>64</sup>

## Political Prisoners

On the occasion of May Day, COFADEH once more demanded the liberation of all the political prisoners held since the 2017 post-electoral protests.<sup>65</sup> Rights Action wrote an open letter to the Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau and its foreign minister Chrystia Freeland regarding the political prisoners in Honduras. Rights Action denounced that the wife of political prisoner Edwin Espinal, Karen Spring, was strip-searched when she visited him in the maximum-security military jail. "The Honduran government is increasing persecution of family members and loved ones of detainees, including political prisoners who shouldn't be in jail in the first place. For over 15

56 <http://www.proceso.hn/caliente/12-caliente/suman-104-femicidios-en-el-presente-ano-segun-el-codemuh.html>

57 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/investigaciones/1047-los-medios-de-comunicacion-que-revictimizan-a-las-mujeres>

58 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1128747820314505216>

59 <https://tiempo.hn/nuevo-codigo-penal-trece-puntos-debe-conocer/>

60 <http://elpulso.hn/las-tres-mayores-criticas-hasta-el-momento-al-nuevo-codigo-penal/>

61 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1009-por-amenazas-periodista-cierra-medio-de-comunicacion-y-abandona-el-pais>

62 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2470-amenazas-a-periodista-si-vuelves-a-mencionar-a-un-alcalde-de-los-municipios-del-norte-de-olancho-es-conmigo-que-te-vas-a-entender-hijo-de-la-gran-pu>

63 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/11/antes-de-ser-el-proximo-periodista-asesinado-joel-mejia-abandono-honduras/amp/>

64 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/monitoreo-de-compromisos-internacionales/item/2478-ordena-el-iaip-mp-debe-entregar-informacion-sobre-casos-de-periodistas-a-pasosdeanimalgrande-com>

65 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/honduras-debe-de-liberar-a-los-opositores-politicos-encarcelados/>



months, Edwin has been detained in a max-security, military-jail, “waiting trial” on trumped up charges. (...) This persecution against Karen and other women sends a message to family members and loved ones of political prisoners, as well as to Honduran society in general, that they could be harassed and persecuted in this manner if they try and visit their loved ones.”<sup>66</sup>

On May 21, the National Committee for the Liberation of the Political Prisoners in Honduras demands the compliance with IACHR recommendations, giving medical attention and the urgent treatment for the political prisoners, their immediate release and an unconditional amnesty for the 174 criminalized protesters of the post-electoral crisis.<sup>67</sup> But the opposite is happening as another case of a political prisoner, Gustavo Adolfo Cáceres, was sent to the courts. Cáceres had been in prison since December 2017.<sup>68</sup>

## Extractive Industries

Radio Progreso published a helpful overview of the struggle against the solar energy project Los Prados and the fear and criminalization that came along with it.<sup>69</sup> The south of Honduras also fears the imposition of a ZEDE. They are planned to be set up with a so-called Committee of Best Practices (CAMP). Its president, the Austrian Barbara Kolm of the extreme right wing party FPÖ was accused of corruption this month.<sup>70</sup> What better symbol for the problems with the ZEDes.

## Mining

The mining conflict in Guapinol is still very active, even though less is heard about it. C-Libre denounced a new defamation campaign by the mining company Inversiones Los Pinares against the digital media outlet Diario Colón Hn.<sup>71</sup> The campaign is linked to the Guapinol case. In another problematic mining case, CESPAD denounced the arrest of seven more local HRDs in Azacualpa as part of the persecution against those opposing the mining project by MINOSA.<sup>72</sup> Radio Progreso published an additional article on the mine in question.<sup>73</sup>

## Hydroelectricity

Indigenous Lencas from Reitoca traveled to Tegucigalpa to protest outside of the Human Rights Secretariat against the construction of the hydroelectric project on the Petacón river. They highlighted the violation of ILO 169 for not having been consulted on the project.<sup>74</sup> They are also victims of a fierce smear campaign by the Honduran Association for Renewable Energy (AHER).<sup>75</sup>

66 <https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/karen-spring-strip-searched-while-visiting-husband-edwin-espinal-a-political-prisoner-in-honduras>

67 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/21/comite-pro-liberacion-de-presos-politicos-exige-amnistia-para-174-encarcelados/>

68 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/un-caso-mas-de-los-judicializados-post-elecciones-es-enviado-al-tribunal-de-sentencia/>

69 <https://wp.radioprogressohn.net/empresa-fotovoltaica-criminaliza-y-provoca-miedo-en-comunidades-de-choluteca/>

70 <https://ofraneh.wordpress.com/2019/05/21/barbara-kolm-presidente-de-las-zede-ciudades-modelo-enjuiciada-por-corrupcion-en-austria/>

71 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1006-empresa-minera-desprestigia-medio-de-comunicacion>

72 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/05/13/alerta-en-azacualpa-copan-mas-personas-detenido-por-su-labor-de-defensa-de-los-bienes-comunes/>

73 <https://wp.radioprogressohn.net/una-mina-de-sangre-y-oro-que-destruye-cerros-en-la-union-copan/>

74 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/07/habitantes-de-reitoca-protestan-contraproyecto-hidroelectrico-que-les-ha-secado-el-rio/>

75 <https://radiohm.hn/2019/05/15/aher-denuncia-el-secuestro-de-proyectos-energeticos-por-grupos-externos-con-intereses-politicos/>

## Corruption and Its Enemies

For some weeks now, Hondurans have taken up the Friday torch marches against corruption again. This was even picked up by the French Press Association (AFP).<sup>76</sup> On May 15, the MACCIH handed over its sixth report to the OAS.<sup>77</sup> It looks at the time period of October 2018 to April 2019.<sup>78</sup> But also Honduras' own anti-corruption body continue to work. The CNA presented four new lines of investigation for corruption into the Health Secretariat worth almost half a billion Lempiras.<sup>79</sup> UFECIC presented new corruption charges but without publishing the corresponding names of the accused.<sup>80</sup> El Pulso wrote that at least 18 persons are affected, mostly former public employees, and they would be accused of money laundering for organized crime outlets.<sup>81</sup> According to ConexiHon, the MP had investigated more than 3000 acts of corruption for the time period 2012 to 2016, that is on average one act of corruption every 14 hours.<sup>82</sup>

## The Onslaught against the Anti-Corruption Bodies

The MACCIH's<sup>83</sup> fate in Honduras is still uncertain as JOH has not yet signed the agreement for its continuation, even though the US embassy urged in a press release the OAS and the JOH regime to renovate the contract of the MACCIH.<sup>84</sup> And then, Eduardo Martell from the Liberal Party suddenly claimed that the current head of the MACCIH, Luiz Antonio Guimarães Marrey, may leave Honduras for disagreeing with the Secretary General of the OAS, Luis Almagro. The same thing had happened to his predecessor.<sup>85</sup> This news was picked up by Criterio<sup>86</sup> and the first goodbye-messages were written.<sup>87</sup> The same day, the president of the National Party, Reinaldo Sánchez, confirmed that Marrey will leave in June.<sup>88</sup> And later Marrey himself also confirmed it.<sup>89</sup> The official explanation for his departure was that his wife did not want to come to Honduras.<sup>90</sup> ContraCorriente interviewed him after his announcement.<sup>92</sup>

US Chargé d'Affaires Heide Fulton told Honduran media outlets that the work of the MACCIH should continue under the leadership of a new person.<sup>93</sup> She also met with the parliamentary group

76 <https://sg.news.yahoo.com/thousands-march-honduras-protest-presidency-124400295.html>

77 [https://www.oas.org/es/centro\\_noticias/comunicado\\_prensa.asp?sCodigo=AVI-114/19](https://www.oas.org/es/centro_noticias/comunicado_prensa.asp?sCodigo=AVI-114/19)

78 [https://www.oas.org/es/centro\\_noticias/comunicado\\_prensa.asp?sCodigo=C-030/19](https://www.oas.org/es/centro_noticias/comunicado_prensa.asp?sCodigo=C-030/19)

79 <https://tiempo.hn/cna-nuevas-lineas-de-investigacion-salud/>

80 <http://elpulso.hn/ufecic-presenta-nuevo-requerimiento-pero-no-revela-los-acusados/>

81 <https://tiempo.hn/ufecic-requerimientos-contras-exfuncionarios-entrega-de-contratos-a-los-cachiros/>

82 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/transparencia/1076-cada-14-horas-funcionarios-cometen-un-delito-de-corrupcion-en-honduras>

83 Proceso Digital summarized the ten cases presented by the MACCIH and UFECIC, where they stand, how many people were accused , etc. <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/un-centenar-de-imputados-y-17-presos-en-casos-mp-maccih.html>

84 <https://hn.usembassy.gov/es/declaracion-embajada-estados-unidos-extension-mandato-maccih-ley-colaboracion-eficaz/>

85 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/vocero-de-la-maccih-se-ira-por-discrepancias-con-secretario-de-oea-segun-eduardo-martell.html>

86 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/09/en-junio-se-va-vocero-de-la-maccih-por-discrepancias-con-luis-almagro/>

87 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/09/con-cierto-pena-y-con-escasa-gloria/amp/>

88 <https://confidencialhn.com/presidente-del-partido-nacional-confirma-salida-del-jefe-de-la-maccih-guimaraes/>

89 <https://tiempo.hn/luiz-guimaraes-marrey-salida-maccih-junio/>

90 [https://twitter.com/OEA\\_MACCIH/status/1126887309113208833](https://twitter.com/OEA_MACCIH/status/1126887309113208833)

91 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/10/vocero-de-la-maccih-se-va-porque-su-esposa-no-quiso-venir-a-honduras/>

92 <https://contracorriente.red/2019/05/21/relacion-con-el-estado-hondureno-ha-sido-cordial-dice-guimaraes-a-40-dias-de-partir-de-la-maccih/>

93 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/el-trabajo-de-la-maccih-puede-seguir-con-otro-vocero-dice-encargada-de-negocios-de-eeuu.html>

in support of the MACCIH.<sup>94</sup> At the same time, president of the Supreme Court Rolando Argueta again undermined the MACCIH by announcing that Honduras should not depend on international organizations.<sup>95</sup> The former Attorney General Edmundo Orellana warns of the consequences of the MACCIH leaving or rather being forced to leave Honduras.<sup>96</sup>

MACCIH, meanwhile, is still pushing for its Efficient Collaboration Bill to be approved. Congress formed a committee, but it consists of various congresswo/men highlighted in corruption cases.<sup>97</sup> This violates Honduran law.<sup>98</sup> According to lawyer Omar Menjivar, the pressure from the US embassy is needed to have a strong law, otherwise Congress will water it down.<sup>99</sup> The Spanish ambassador Guillermo Kirkpatrick spoke out in support of the MACCIH.<sup>100</sup>

## Corruption around JOH

For the third month in a row, ConfidencialHN continued its series on corruption around JOH. According to newest article, JOH used third parties to buy up land in Olancho and if people resisted, he had them thrown into jail.<sup>101</sup> They further accused him of misusing funds from the “tasa de seguridad” - a controversial security tax.<sup>102</sup> ConfidencialHN also uncovered irregularities around the security company Servicios de Seguridad Lempira Sistemas de Seguridad Asociados (Sersel). The company had contracts with at least 42 public institutions and among whose main shareholders was JOH. Fearing an investigation, JOH got rid of his share, but as ConfidencialHN found out, they were just transferred to his mother.<sup>103</sup> The Social Citizen Platform for Honduras announced to present a complaint against JOH for the purchase of a \$13 million private airplane.<sup>104</sup>

On May 18, the US State Department published a six-paged brief, on corruption in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.<sup>105</sup> Criterio highlights the three powerful Nationalist mentioned in the report, former president Rafael Leonardo Callejas and two former vice--presidents of Congress Lena Gutiérrez and Gladis Aurora López.<sup>106</sup> In total, there are eleven Hondurans mentioned in the report. InSight Crime summarized it as follows: "A new US list of corruption suspects in Central America includes officials with ties to sitting presidents — an important step in recognizing how deeply corruption has penetrated these countries’ governments. (...) However, it’s unclear what, if any, impact this list will have on future efforts to root out corruption in the Northern Triangle. The Mission Against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (Misión de Apoyo contra la Corrupción y la Impunidad en Honduras – MACCIH), which is backed by the Organization of American States

94 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/congreso-debe-aprobar-de-inmediato-ley-de-colaboracion-eficaz-segun-eeuu.html>

95 <https://tiempo.hn/presidente-de-la-csj-no-depender-organismos-internacionales/>

96 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/sin-maccih-se-cae-lucha-anticorrupcion-se-debilita-ufecic-y-habra-persecucion-dice-orellana.html>

97 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/diputados-senalados-de-corrupcion-integran-comision-dictaminadora-de-ley-de-colaboracion-eficaz/>

98 <https://contracorriente.red/2019/05/13/falta-de-ley-de-colaboracion-eficaz-cuello-de-botella-para-atacar-corrupcion/>

99 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/03/ley-de-colaboracion-eficaz-puede-ser-buena-solo-si-embajada-de-ee-uu-presiona-video/>

100 <https://confidencialhn.com/embajador-de-espana-pide-continuidad-de-la-maccih-para-combatir-corrupcion-en-honduras/>

101 <https://confidencialhn.com/joh-uso-a-operadores-para-comprar-terrenos-en-olancho-y-encarcelar-a-quienes-se-resistieron/>

102 <https://confidencialhn.com/tasa-de-seguridad-quiso-ocultar-documentos-por-compra-de-lujoso-avion-de-joh/>

103 <https://confidencialhn.com/empresa-de-seguridad-de-herandez-gano-millones-de-lempiras-en-fabulosos-contratos/>

104 <https://confidencialhn.com/presentaran-denuncia-ante-ministerio-publico-por-despilfarro-en-compra-de-avion-presidencial/>

105 [https://torres.house.gov/sites/torres.house.gov/files/05-16-19.State\\_Report-on-Corruption-El-Salvador-Guatemala-Honduras.pdf](https://torres.house.gov/sites/torres.house.gov/files/05-16-19.State_Report-on-Corruption-El-Salvador-Guatemala-Honduras.pdf)

106 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/18/lena-gutierrez-gladis-aurora-lopez-y-callejas-aparecen-en-nueva-lista-de-corrupcion-de-ca/amp/>

(OAS), has been hamstrung since its inception and its future is tenuous. Earlier this month, the judicial mission's second leader, Luiz Antonio Guimarães Marrey, announced he is stepping down in June. Meanwhile, the mission's mandate lasts just another six months, and it's unclear whether it will be renewed. Honduran President Hernández has recently placed more of a focus on combating the country's gangs than rooting out corruption that has seeped into every level of government."<sup>107</sup>

## Narcopolítica

On May 24, the MACCIH and UFEIC presented their newest corruption investigation called Narcopolítica in which they accuse 12 people of money laundering, fraud and more. Among them is Fabio Lobo, the son of the former president Pepe Lobo.<sup>108</sup> According to El Tiempo, this was the first time that the name of an ex-president appears in a report by the MACCIH.<sup>109</sup> The international press also picked up the case. Reuters reported: "The anti-graft unit of the Organization of American States (OAS) said the probe into Lobo began after Devis Leonel Rivera, a leader of the "Los Cachiros" drug cartel, testified in a U.S. court that he had given money to Lobo's 2010 election campaign. Rivera said Lobo "suggested to him that in exchange for donations to his political campaign, they would create companies that would be given contracts once he had won the presidential election," Luiz Guimarães, spokesman for the Mission to Support the Fight Against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH), told reporters."<sup>110</sup> According to ConfidencialHN, current minister and close JOH ally Roberto Ordóñez should also have been among the accused.<sup>111</sup>

Already on Day 2, the case caused some negative headlines. The judge Agüeda Isabel Canelo Portillo was challenged by UFEIC for leaking information about the case and that they additionally were disallowed to pick up documents at the anti-corruption court.<sup>112</sup><sup>113</sup><sup>114</sup> Nevertheless, a court rejected the challenge presented by UFEIC.<sup>115</sup> The same day, the MP presented another challenge which led to the renewed suspension of the initial hearing.<sup>116</sup> This challenge was once more rejected.<sup>117</sup> The month ended with the judge deciding on pre-trial detention for the five accused.<sup>118</sup>

## Impunity Pacts

The various impunity pacts corruption cases have stalled for a while. This month, an appeals court ratified the decision to open trial against Sara Medina in the original impunity pact case while

<sup>107</sup> <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/us-corruption-list-highlights-criminal-ties-northern-triangle-presidents/>

<sup>108</sup> [https://www.oas.org/es/centro\\_noticias/comunicado\\_prensa.asp?sCodigo=C-036/19](https://www.oas.org/es/centro_noticias/comunicado_prensa.asp?sCodigo=C-036/19)

<sup>109</sup> <https://tiempo.hn/pepe-lobo-en-la-mira-de-la-maccih-sera-investigado-anuncia-guimaraes/>

<sup>110</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-honduras-crime-idUSKCN1SU2JV>

<sup>111</sup> <https://confidencialhn.com/miguel-pastor-se-entrega-por-presunta-corrupcion-por-que-joh-encubre-a-ordonez/>

<sup>112</sup> <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/25/recusan-a-jueza-de-caso-narcopolitica-por-filtrar-informacion/amp/>

<sup>113</sup> <https://twitter.com/UFEIC1/status/1132407964646739968>

<sup>114</sup> <https://twitter.com/UFEIC1/status/1132429719306145794>

<sup>115</sup> <https://tiempo.hn/caso-narcopolitica-inadmisibile-tribunales-audiencia-1/>

<sup>116</sup> <https://tiempo.hn/suspenden-audiencia-nueva-recusacion-narcopolitica/>

<sup>117</sup> <https://tiempo.hn/inadmisibile-segunda-recusacion-jueza-caso-nacopolitica/>

<sup>118</sup> <https://twitter.com/PJdeHonduras/status/1133981560686960640>

dropping the charges against Antonio Rivera Callejas.<sup>119</sup> At the same time, Reporteros de Investigación made public yet another impunity pact for corruption, this time hidden in the new Penal Code.<sup>120</sup>

## The IHSS Case

May started with bad news in in the IHSS corruption case. Even though it had been confirmed several times, the Constitutional Chamber suspended the pre-trial detention against the former IHSS board members.<sup>121</sup> <sup>122</sup> While this has to be seen as a setback, the MP also presented a new case linked to the IHSS corruption case.<sup>123</sup> And on May 15, the the case against Mario Roberto Zelaya Rojas and Roberto Alejandro Bandes Atuán was sent to trial.<sup>124</sup>

## The Pandora Case

In the Pandora corruption case, two accused are allowed to leave pre-trial detention. Only three of the accused remain in prison.<sup>125</sup>

## State Security Forces

At the beginning of May, the Security Secretariat announced changes at the leadership level of the police.<sup>126</sup> It seems unlikely that this will suffice as this months shows. The MP charged a police agent in Intibucá with abuse of authorities and the inflicting of injuries.<sup>127</sup> A prison guard was found guilty of torturing inmates in the youth detention center "Renaciendo".<sup>128</sup> El Heraldo uncovered that the recently murdered police official Wilfredo Gonzalo Salazar Barahona, had been receiving a salary for 13 years even though he had been suspended since 2005.<sup>129</sup> The MP requested the seizure of goods and properties of the former deputy police commissioner Jorge Alberto Barralaga Hernández and his family and associates.<sup>130</sup> But there seem to be irregularities in his case.<sup>131</sup>

The same month, the police used excessive force when arresting a man in front of his children. He crime, he drove with his kids in the front passenger seat.<sup>132</sup> FUSINA charged five members of the Military Police with abuse of authority and another with for injuring a protected witness.<sup>133</sup> A police

119 <https://tiempo.hn/pacto-de-impunidad-sara-medina-y-tono-rivera/>

120 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/05/29/hubo-un-segundo-pacto-de-corruptos-codigo-penal-fue-alterado-para-evadir-extradicion-y-juicios-por-corrupcion/>

121 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/02/ex-directivos-del-ihss-liberados-de-la-prision-preventiva/>

122 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/admiten-amparo-con-suspension-de-la-prision-preventiva-para-exjunta-del-ihss.html>

123 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/135-mayo2019/4247-mp-judicializa-nuevo-caso-de-corrupcion-en-el-ihss>

124 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/135-mayo2019/4255-dictan-prision-preventiva-por-corrupcion-en-el-ihss>

125 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/cambian-medidas-a-dos-implicados-en-caso-pandora-y-se-defenderan-en-libertad.html>

126 <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/secretaria-de-seguridad-anuncia-cambios-de-mando-policia-a-nivel-nacional.html>

127 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/135-mayo2019/4249-presentan-requerimiento-fiscal-contra-policia-en-intibuca>

128 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/135-mayo2019/4220-fiscalia-de-derechos-humanos-logra-sentencia-condenatoria-contra-policia-penitenciario>

129 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/sucesos/1282034-466/oficial-deveng%C3%B3-sueldo-durante-13-a%C3%B1os-sin-trabajar>

130 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/135-mayo2019/4280-mp-solicita-la-privacion-de-dominio-sobre-235-bienes-y-productos-financieros-de-ex-subcomisionado-barralaga-y-su-clan>

131 <https://confidencialhn.com/mas-abusos-fiscalia-quiere-quitar-bienes-a-exfuncionario-policia-sin-ser-vencido-en-juicio/>

132 <https://tiempo.hn/video-policia-somete-padre-frente-a-sus-hijos-colon/>

133 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/135-mayo2019/4287-fiscales-adscritos-a-fusina-acusan-a-seis-efectivos-de-la-policia-militar-por-abuso-de-autoridad-y-lesiones>

agent in the south of Honduras was arrested for abuse of authority.<sup>134</sup> Another police agent was caught on camera how he sexually harassed a young woman.<sup>135</sup> And lastly, five members of the Military Police face trial for sexual abuse, accomplices of abuse, and violation of the duties of officials.<sup>136</sup>

## Repressions

State security forces repressed protesters defending the public education and healthcare throughout the month<sup>137</sup> (please see the sub-section on the Health and Education Sector below). Repression also takes place in Choluteca and this bi-weekly since the electoral fraud in 2017. This month, a dialogue took place between the mayoralty and the protesters.<sup>138</sup> They demanded justice for the victims of state repression and an end to their persecution as well as the persecution of the journalists covering the marches.<sup>139</sup>

Repression also takes a judicial form by criminalizing protesters. In an especially egregious case, a group of 23 people was arbitrarily and illegally detained and criminalized during the post-coup d'état protests in 2009. Finally this month, the charges against them were dropped.<sup>140</sup>

## Assassinations

On May 2, a police agent was found guilty of attempted homicide.<sup>141</sup> A week later, police official Douglas Armando Muñoz Cruz was arrested accused of murder<sup>142</sup> and only another three days later, three police agents were sentenced yesterday, two for murder and one illegal detention.<sup>143</sup> The same month, a police agent was sent to pre-trial detention for homicide.<sup>144</sup> And if this were not enough, the Military Police agent Arlen Samir Díaz was found guilty for the murder of the 17-year old Edgardo José Moreno in January 2017.<sup>145</sup> While there is at least some hope for justice in these cases, family members of Isis Obed Murillo have to continue struggling for this. ConfidentialHN denounced that the files on his murder by state security forces during the coup d'état disappeared.<sup>146</sup>

## Penitentiary System

Human rights scholar Joaquín Mejía Rivera summarized a recent inspection by Conaprev, judicial bodies and OACNUDH of the El Pozo prison. "The first findings of this visit confirm the

134 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/atic-captura-a-policia-activo-en-el-sur-de-honduras.html>

135 <https://tiempo.hn/policia-tocando-mujer-en-bus-tegucigalpa/>

136 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/135-mayo2019/4336-presos-miembros-de-la-pmop-por-suponerlos-responsables-de-abuso-sexual-a-joven-en-la-rivera-herandez>

137 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2475-dictadura-perversa-y-represiva-coarta-la-libertad-de-la-expresion-reprimiendo-las-protestas>

138 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2462-jugada-politica-o-interes-genuino-convocatoria-a-dialogo-en-choluteca-con-marchistas>

139 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2463-marchistas-de-la-zona-sur-demandan-justicia-y-cese-a-persecucion-contra-periodistas>

140 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/victimas-del-golpe-de-estado-justicia-tardia-no-es-justicia/>

141 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/133-abril-2019/4214-fiscalia-especial-de-derechos-humanos-logra-sentencia-condenatoria-contra-policia-preventivo>

142 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/135-mayo2019/4262-detencion-judicial-contra-oficial-de-policia-por-muerte-de-un-ciudadano-en-san-pedro-sula>

143 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/135-mayo2019/4272-mas-de-15-anos-de-prision-contra-policas-por-homicidio-de-ciudadano>

144 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/135-mayo2019/4296-por-homicidio-de-ciudadano-envian-a-prision-a-policia-activo>

145 [https://twitter.com/MP\\_Honduras/status/1134582634468843521](https://twitter.com/MP_Honduras/status/1134582634468843521)

146 <https://confidencialhn.com/desaparecen-expediente-de-isis-obed-murillo-asesinado-por-las-ffaa-tras-el-golpe-de-2009/>

militarization of the penitentiary system and the high number of people in preventive detention. On the one hand, in "El Pozo" there are 140 military police officers and only 52 prison guards. On the other hand, of the 1804 people detained, 1112 have been prosecuted and 672 have been convicted. Both data demonstrate the State's failure to comply with international standards in the matter. In turn, it was found that there were repeated abuses committed by FUSINA and the Military Police when issuing arbitrary and illegal orders contrary to the Penitentiary System Act itself, as well as the improper use of non-lethal force and weapons; prolonged confinement and physical and psychological aggression."<sup>147</sup>

## Militarization

Almost every months, members of the Armed Forces or the Military Police face trial or are charged. May was not different. A case against military police sergeant Leandro Enrique Mendoza Almendares was sent to trial accused of various crimes against a protected witness.<sup>148</sup> Two members of the Military Police were detained for sexual abuse of a woman during an operation.<sup>149</sup> Given this, it is not surprising that Radio Progreso came to a straightforward conclusion on the use of the Armed Forces in Honduras - none. "In short, the military has been given the responsibility to protect the democracy, elections, human rights, alternation in power, borders and forests, and evidence shows that they have failed due to their complicity and inability . Therefore, the Armed Forces are not useful for anything that benefits society, because they have become watchdogs of those who throw crumbs of power. If they do not serve any purpose at all, they must disappear and thus their wasted budget should be reallocated to guarantee conditions of dignity for the population."<sup>150</sup> Nevertheless, they still have a strong support in the National Party. In a controversial setting in Congress, they stealthily introduced an increase in the budget to hire more soldiers used for internal security purposes. "By virtue of the manner in which the approval was given, it is concluded that the ruling party took advantage of an non-transparent situation to achieve something problematic facing the disapproval of an important segment of the population that wishes to stop the militarization of the society and that State resources are prioritized in basic needs such as health and education."<sup>151</sup>

## Drug Trafficking

ConfidencialHN and Radio Globo published an important article this month highlighting links between drug traffickers and the Supreme Court of Justice, e.g. with its president and JOH ally Rolando Argueta.<sup>152</sup> <sup>153</sup> ConfidencialHN also reported that state intelligence has investigated the

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147 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/21/bienvenidos-y-bienvenidas-al-infierno/amp/>

148 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/135-mayo2019/4254-auto-de-formal-procesamiento-contra-policia-militar>

149 <https://tiempo.hn/caen-pmop-por-violar-a-mujer-en-tgu/>

150 <https://wp.radioprogresohn.net/para-que-sirven-los-militares-para-nada/>

151 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/29/congreso-aprobo-hoy-modificacion-del-presupuesto-de-seguridad-para-contratar-mas-militares/amp/>

152 <https://confidencialhn.com/narcojusticia-el-contador-se-convirtio-en-el-verdadero-mandamas-del-poder-judicial/>

153 <https://confidencialhn.com/magistrado-y-politicos-dieron-dinero-para-soltar-narcos-el-rojo-regalo-armas-para-ganar-lealtades/>

former Nationalist Security Minister Óscar Álvarez and the current Nationalist congressman David Chávez for links to drug trafficking.<sup>154</sup>

At the same time in a US court, the Honduran drug trafficker Miguel Arnulfo Valle Valle confirmed that he paid off members of the Armed Forces and the police as well as congresswo/men and public officials.<sup>155</sup> Also in the US, Arnulfo Fagot-Máximo was sentenced to 33 years for drug trafficking and leading a drug trafficking organization.<sup>156</sup>

Back in Honduras, the legal circumstances for drug traffickers further improved as the new Penal Code included a reduction in penalties for drug trafficking (see also sub-section on the Penal Code).<sup>157</sup> Criterio called drug traffickers "the big winners of the new Penal Code".<sup>158</sup>

## Tony Hernández

The Honduran press published the transcript of the arrest of JOH's brother Tony Hernández last November.<sup>159</sup> <sup>160</sup> <sup>161</sup> His lawyers demanded that the testimony be declared null and void due to a lack of an lawyer present.<sup>162</sup> The trial is planned to start in September. Salvador Nasralla warned that before t "JOH is eliminating gang members that have worked with him in organized crime before his brother Tony gives declarations in September in the US. The number of homicides in the coming three months will continue to increase..."<sup>163</sup> At the same time, El Libertador reported that the US recently requested assistant in the trial against JOH's brother Tony Hernández, e.g. a list of accomplices. El Libertador published a summary of the 50-page request.<sup>164</sup>

Once more, links to JOH were highlighted. In his testimony, Tony Hernández mentioned him several times.<sup>165</sup> Additionally, Reporteros de Investigación reported that airplanes and a helicopter in possession of the presidential family may have been used for drug trafficking activities.<sup>166</sup> InSight Crime summarized it as follows: Newly unveiled testimony from the brother of Honduras President Juan Orlando Hernández about his links to the drug trade is making it harder for the Central American head of state to deny his knowledge of such criminal activity, but it remains to be seen if this will have any real impact. (...) To further complicate matters, President Hernández is one of the biggest regional allies of the United States in Latin America. Just last year, high-ranking US officials met with him to reinforce the two nations' "strong partnership" and their so-called commitment to the fight against corruption. However, the "mounting evidence of widespread

154 <https://confidencialhn.com/inteligencia-hondurena-investiga-a-oscar-alfarez-y-david-chavez-por-delincuencia-organizada/>

155 <https://confidencialhn.com/lider-de-los-valle-valle-confirio-soborno-a-diputados-militares-y-policias-hondurenos/>

156 <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/honduran-drug-trafficker-sentenced-33-years-prison>

157 <https://tiempo.hn/nuevo-codigo-penal-trece-puntos-debe-conocer/>

158 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/17/los-narcotraficantes-los-grandes-gananciosos-con-el-nuevo-codigo-penal/amp/>

159 <https://confidencialhn.com/juan-orlando-herandez-supio-que-tony-se-involucro-en-el-narcotrafico/>

160 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1283850-466/se-destruy%C3%B3-mi-vida-testimonio-completo-de-tony-hern%C3%A1ndez-tras-ser-arrestado>

161 <https://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2019/05/16/us/ap-1t-honduras-presidents-brother.html>

162 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1283793-410/abogado-pide-anular-declaracion-tony-herandez-narcotrafico-dea-estados-unidos>

163 <https://twitter.com/elpulsohn/status/1127981836158660609>

164 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3360-lista-de-complices-e-informacion-de-th-que-investiga-justicia-de-ee-uu>

165 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/05/13/narcos-hicieron-cena-en-restaurant-de-su-hermano-declaro-tony-herandez/>

166 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/05/14/avion-de-familia-presidencial-investigado-en-caso-de-narcotrafico-th/>



corruption and criminality of the Hernández administration is becoming more difficult to ignore,” according to Christine Wade, a Central America expert and political science professor at Washington College. “[The United States’] top regional ‘ally’ is a veritable narco-state,” Wade added. “At a minimum, this should provide the US Congress with an opportunity to reevaluate aid and assistance to Honduras, but one would certainly hope that [the US State Department] will reassess this relationship.”<sup>167</sup>

And the bad news kept coming for JOH. The former head of a drug cartel Carlos Arnoldo "El Negro Lobo" revealed in a testimony in the US that he paid \$250'000 to JOH.<sup>168 169</sup> A few days later, ConfidencialHN claimed that JOH had additionally received \$2.2 millions from the Valle Valle drug cartel which was in business with his brother Tony Hernández.<sup>170</sup> As long as such information is contained in Honduras, it does not affect JOH as much, but the international press picked it up. Bloomberg reported that the "U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration investigated the president of Honduras for drug-trafficking according to court documents, potentially weakening his grip on power and spooking markets. Hernandez and eight others were the targets of a DEA probe that began in 2013 into “large-scale drug-trafficking and money laundering activities relating to the importation of cocaine into the United States,” according to documents filed by prosecutors with the U.S. District Court Southern District of New York. (...) The DEA said it doesn’t confirm or deny whether investigations are ongoing.”<sup>171</sup> And the LA Times added: "Also included in the request are the email accounts of the president’s sister Hilda Hernández, his adviser Ebal Díaz and his security minister Julián Pacheco Tinoco. Hilda Hernández, who helped manage the finances of the president’s political party and his presidential campaign, died in a December 2015 helicopter crash. The request also named four members of the wealthy and politically-connected Rosenthal family.”<sup>172</sup> US congresswoman Norma Torres asked why the US still supports JOH.<sup>173</sup>

## International Community

Last month, the JOH regime started new negotiations with the IMF. They agreed on a line of credit worth some \$311 million for two years.<sup>174</sup> According to the former president of the Central Bank of Honduras, Hugo Noé Pino, the agreement with the IMF was not necessary, but rather it will lead to more debt and the people won't benefit.<sup>175</sup> "The former president of the Central Bank of Honduras said that life does not start or end with the International Monetary Fund. "What is positive is that countries have coherent, consistent economic policies, that they do not have high fiscal deficits, that inflation is not encouraged, etc. Honduras may well function without the IMF, "he reflected.”<sup>176</sup>

167 <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/testimony-brings-honduras-president-closer-brother-drug-trade-ties/>

168 <https://confidencialhn.com/el-capo-negro-lobo-revela-que-dio-250-mil-dolares-al-presidente-de-honduras/>

169 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/05/27/presidente-de-honduras-y-ministro-de-seguridad-ligados-a-trafico-de-toneladas-de-cocaina-cita-expediente-en-corte-de-nueva-york/>

170 <https://confidencialhn.com/narcolibreta-joh-recibio-2-2-millones-de-dolares-por-negocios-de-tony-con-socio-de-los-valled/>

171 <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-05-30/president-of-honduras-investigated-by-u-s-for-drug-trafficking>

172 <https://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-honduras-president-investigation-20190530-story.html>

173 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/30/como-ee-uu-puede-ser-aliado-con-un-gobierno-de-honduras-vinculado-al-narcotrafico/>

174 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3351-honduras-migrantes-mandan-en-20-dias-los-311-millones-que-fmi-prestara-en-dos-anos-a-gobierno>

175 <https://tiempo.hn/hugo-noe-pino-poblacion-pagar-desastre-enee/>

176 <https://wp.radioprogreso.net/honduras-puede-vivir-sin-acuerdo-con-el-fondo-monetario-dice-ex-presidente-del-banco-central/>

Next to the IMF, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) was also in the headlines. Proceso Digital spoke with its Honduran representative Eduardo Almeida.<sup>177</sup> The IDB also announced to further invest \$3.9 million in the transportation project Trans-450 which has been riddled by corruption.<sup>178</sup> ConfidencialHN criticized that the IDB continued to give huge loans to the JOH regime ignoring the rampant corruption in Honduras.<sup>179</sup>

The UNDP presented its new head in Honduras, Richard Barathe, who replaced Igor Garáfulic.<sup>180</sup>

## Israel

BBC published a report this month on how the Israeli company Archimedes Group is accused of interfering in the Honduran elections.<sup>181</sup>

## US

At the beginning of May, the head of SOUTHCOM, Craig Faller, traveled to Honduras.<sup>182</sup> He spoke about the need to confront drug trafficking and corruption in the region.<sup>183</sup> Meanwhile in the US, "Representatives Norma J. Torres (D-CA) and Albio Sires (D-NJ) led a group of 101 Members of Congress in a letter to U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo calling on the Trump administration to reverse its decision to cut humanitarian and development aid to Central America. Suspending hundreds of millions of dollars in foreign assistance to the region would seriously damage both U.S. and regional interests, the letter asserts."<sup>184</sup> Shortly afterwards, Trump's Attorney General William Barr met with with Northern Triangle counterparts in El Salvador. "U.S. Attorney General William Barr said Thursday that funding under his authority for policing in Central America's Northern Triangle is not at risk under the Trump administration's promise to cut off those countries not doing enough to control migration."<sup>185 186 187</sup>

## EU

Some European ambassadors (Germany, France and Spain) met with human and indigenous rights defenders from OFRANEH, the Permanent Human Rights Observatory of the Aguán and the San Alonzo Rodríguez Foundation in Tela this month.<sup>188</sup> The ambassadors also went to Pajuiles to visit a local protest camp against the hydroelectric project by HIDROCEP. At the same time, the Social

<sup>177</sup> <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/bid-educacion-e-inversion-son-claves-para-desarrollo-economico-de-honduras.html>

<sup>178</sup> <https://tiempo.hn/ocho-millones-invertiran-concluir-trans-450/>

<sup>179</sup> <https://confidencialhn.com/a-pesar-de-la-corrupcion-en-honduras-bid-confia-en-el-buen-uso-de-multimillonario-prestamo/>

<sup>180</sup> <https://www.latribuna.hn/2019/05/14/richard-barathe-sustituye-a-igor-garafulic-en-la-onu/>

<sup>181</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-48380851>

<sup>182</sup> <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/llega-jefe-del-comando-sur-de-eeuu-para-participar-en-conferencia-de-seguridad-regional.html>

<sup>183</sup> <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/07/ee-uu-urge-a-militares-centroamericanos-que-enfrentan-narcotrafico-a-combatir-corrupcion/>

<sup>184</sup> <https://www.wola.org/2019/05/over-100-members-of-congress-oppose-cutting-aid-to-central-america/>

<sup>185</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the\\_americas/ag-barr-promises-continued-support-to-northern-triangle/2019/05/16/6d7ce92-782b-11e9-a7bf-c8a43b84ee31\\_story.html?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.adf12571caef](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/ag-barr-promises-continued-support-to-northern-triangle/2019/05/16/6d7ce92-782b-11e9-a7bf-c8a43b84ee31_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.adf12571caef)

<sup>186</sup> <https://sv.usembassy.gov/es/operacion-escudo-regional/>

<sup>187</sup> <https://sv.usembassy.gov/ag-william-barr-remarks/>

<sup>188</sup> <https://twitter.com/UEEnHonduras/status/1124088307539951621>

Citizen Platform challenged the EU for its support of the intervention committee of the National Persons Registry (RNP).<sup>189</sup> At the end of the month, JOH traveled to Spain<sup>190</sup>, where he was greeted by protest in Spain.<sup>191</sup>

## Varia

### JOH

Be it during the May Day protests or in the marches of the public education and health sector, JOH and his regime remained under pressure. It did not help that ConfidencialHN and others continued to publish articles regarding irregularities committed by the regime (see also Corruption section). On May 1, ConfidencialHN accused JOH of lying regarding the use of funds from the 'tasa de seguridad' to purchase the presidential airplane.<sup>192</sup> Political analyst Raúl Pineda presented two different ways ahead for Honduras. "There may be a kind of social vacuum where we live in a self-defense regime or there may be the emergence of a new leadership that sees the dignity of Honduran society as a real challenge and as a mission that must be fulfilled".<sup>193</sup> The self-defense part of the regime then went on to illegally arrest the former army captain and outspoken opponent of the JOH regime, Santos Rodríguez Orellana, in the presence of his his pregnant wife and children. Only when two HRDs arrived at the police station was he let go. The police claimed that there were problems with his car license.<sup>194</sup>

One source of pressure is the widespread insecurity suffered by the Honduran people. The head of the Armed Forces, René Orlando Ponce, tried unsuccessfully to convince Hondurans from the opposite by claiming that they would live in a "climate of peace and quiet".<sup>195</sup> And its a story only Honduras could write...the same day, the Nationalist mayor of Talanga, Roosevelt Avilez, decreed a curfew to counter violence in the town.<sup>196</sup> On mother's day, Honduran mothers who have lost their children to state and non-state violence protested outside CONADEH.<sup>197</sup> Last but not least, the number of mass-killings this year has increased by 118% compared to 2018.<sup>198</sup> Even the police speaker Jair Meza conceded that the murder rates have risen in April and May this year.<sup>199</sup>

Another source of public outrage are the possible links to drug trafficking by JOH. The former head of a drug cartel Carlos Arnoldo "El Negro Lobo" revealed in a testimony in the US that he paid \$250'000 to JOH.<sup>200</sup> According to ConfidencialHN, JOH additionally received \$2.2 millions from

189 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/piden-a-union-europea-reflexion-y-analisis-sobre-financiamiento-de-intervencion-del-rnp.html>

190 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/en-busca-de-inversiones-y-empleos-presidente-hermandez-viaja-a-espana.html>

191 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3367-explotan-protestas-en-espana-por-llegada-de-joh>

192 <https://confidencialhn.com/el-regimen-mintio-herandez-uso-tasa-de-seguridad-para-comprarse-avion-presidencial/>

193 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/honduras-tiene-dos-caminos-avanza-a-un-vacio-social-o-surge-nuevo-liderazgo-que-dignifique-al-pueblo/>

194 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/05/policia-retiene-ilegalmente-al-capitan-santos-rodriguez-orellana-y-su-familia/>

195 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/07/masacres-son-esporadicas-honduras-vive-clima-de-paz-jefe-de-las-ff-aa/>

196 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3353-alcaldede-nacionalista-declara-estado-de-sitio-en-talanga-honduras>

197 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/justicia-para-nuestros-hijos/>

198 <https://tiempo.hn/117-aumentan-masacres-en-honduras/>

199 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/policia-acepta-incremento-de-homicidios-en-ultimos-meses.html>

200 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/05/27/presidente-de-honduras-y-ministro-de-seguridad-ligados-a-trafico-de-toneladas-de-cocaina-cita-expediente-en-corte-de-nueva-york/>

the Valle Valle drug cartel which was in business with his brother Tony Hernández.<sup>201</sup> International news outlets picked this up. "The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration investigated the president of Honduras for drug-trafficking according to court documents, potentially weakening his grip on power and spooking markets. Hernandez and eight others were the targets of a DEA probe that began in 2013 into "large-scale drug-trafficking and money laundering activities relating to the importation of cocaine into the United States," according to documents filed by prosecutors with the U.S. District Court Southern District of New York. (...) The DEA said it doesn't confirm or deny whether investigations are ongoing."<sup>202</sup> The US not only looks/looked into JOH, but also some of his closest allies. "Also included in the request are the email accounts of the president's sister Hilda Hernández, his adviser Ebal Díaz and his security minister Julián Pacheco Tinoco. Hilda Hernández, who helped manage the finances of the president's political party and his presidential campaign, died in a December 2015 helicopter crash. The request also named four members of the wealthy and politically-connected Rosenthal family."<sup>203</sup>

Ricardo González, the director of Freedom House in Honduras, wrote an Op-Ed in the Washington Post. According to him, the recent protests against the JOH regime highlighted "a broader crisis of legitimacy and governance". He expects "the situation to continue deteriorating as the Hernández's administration entrenches itself in power and fails to deliver concrete results". González concludes that "[t]he lack of outcomes and minimal progress in moving Honduras toward a full democracy can only be attributed to Hernández. So far he has enjoyed the support of the international community. But this good faith can soon expire. Indefinitely postponing genuine change is untenable".<sup>204</sup> And US congresswoman Norma Torres asked why the US would support JOH.<sup>205</sup>

## May Day

This year's May Day protest took place in between a wave of protests from the public health and education sector (see next sub-section). Radio Progreso explained well the context of May Day. "In Honduras we celebrate this May Day in a dictatorial regime that represents the articulated alliance of a political mafia together with the oligarchic business elite and the extractive transnationals, an alliance that is supported by the government of the United States, the military and the leaders of organized crime. We are seen by the world as a Narco State, led by a group of criminals which more than ever threatens, plunders and cuts off the country's assets, social and labor rights and national sovereignty as part of an insatiable capitalist system deepened by the neoliberal model in its extractivist and privatizing expression."<sup>206</sup> Hondurans took to the streets in record numbers - even corporate medial outlet as El Heraldo wrote of at least 300'000 protesters.<sup>207</sup> One of the main demands was the end of the JOH regime. IM-Defensoras sent out an alert as the HRD Lesly Mariela

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201 <https://confidencialhn.com/narcolibreta-joh-recibio-2-2-millones-de-dolares-por-negocios-de-tony-con-socio-de-los-valled/>

202 <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-05-30/president-of-honduras-investigated-by-u-s-for-drug-trafficking>

203 <https://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2019/05/30/us/ap-1t-honduras-corruption.html>

204 [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/05/09/democratic-crisis-honduras-has-reached-boiling-point/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.342f76617156](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/05/09/democratic-crisis-honduras-has-reached-boiling-point/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.342f76617156)

205 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/30/como-ee-uu-puede-ser-aliado-con-un-gobierno-de-honduras-vinculado-al-narcotrafico/>

206 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/net/np-01-mayo-2019-primero-de-mayo-en-lucha-contra-el-modelo-extractivista/>

207 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1280496-466/sin-disturbios-culminaron-las-marchas-por-el-d%C3%ADa-del-trabajador-en-honduras>

Andino was detained in Choluteca during the May Day protests.<sup>208</sup> According to Radio Progreso, more than 15 people were detained, two journalists and many others got hurt and their mobile radio station was attacked.<sup>209</sup>

## Health and Education Sector

Last month, the public health and education sector took to the streets to protest against the Restructuring and Transformation of the National Health and Education System Bill (see last month's report). April ended with a partial victory when the two legal opinions putting into practice the bill were withdrawn. On May 2, teachers and health staff returned to work.<sup>210</sup> At the same time, the labor leaders of the public health and education sector warned of a misplaced triumphalism. They called for an ongoing struggle against the privatizing model based on a national reorganization of the labor movement.<sup>211</sup> Radio Progreso feared that a new agreement with the IMF would mean a further reduction in spending on health and education in Honduras.<sup>212</sup> CESPAD published a helpful analysis of public health spending in Honduras in the last 10 years.<sup>213 214</sup>

On May 6, the newly formed Platform for the Defense of Healthcare and Education<sup>215</sup> gave Congress 48 hours to declare null and void the executive decrees linked to the restructuring bill.<sup>216</sup> But the JOH regime had other plans<sup>217</sup> and it launched a derogatory campaign against the labor unions.<sup>218</sup> As a reaction, the public health and education sector declared itself in constant alert<sup>219</sup> and they announced new strikes and mobilizations.<sup>220</sup> They also participated at the torch march on Friday, May 10.<sup>221</sup>

As there was no sign by the JOH regime to take them seriously, the president of the Medical Association Honduras Suyapa Figueroa announced indefinite strike actions on May 14.<sup>222 223</sup> From this day on, there were almost daily strikes in Honduras<sup>224</sup> and not just in Tegucigalpa.<sup>225 226</sup> The strikes also grew in size. The medical sector announced a possible stop of surgeries until their

208 [https://twitter.com/IM\\_Defensoras/status/1123659539822325761](https://twitter.com/IM_Defensoras/status/1123659539822325761)

209 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/jornada-de-represion-vive-honduras-en-movilizacion-del-1-de-mayo/>

210 <https://tiempo.hn/dirigentes-salud-y-educacion-retomar-trabajos/>

211 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/dirigencia-magisterial-pide-no-pecar-de-triunfalistas-ante-retroceso-en-leyes-de-reestructuracion-en-salud-y-educacion/>

212 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/gobierno-invertira-menos-en-educacion-y-salud-a-peticion-de-fondo-monetario-internacional-fmi/>

213 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/05/24/que-ha-pasado-con-el-presupuesto-de-salud-en-los-ultimos-10-anos/>

214 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/05/31/sector-salud-en-crisis-pero-no-se-ejecuta-presupuesto-y-se-transfiere-dinero-a-vida-mejor/>

215 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/plataforma-en-defensa-de-salud-y-la-educacion/>

216 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/06/medicos-y-docentes-dan-plazo-de-48-horas-al-congreso-y-ejecutivo-para-que-solventen-problematica/>

217 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1282376-466/poder-ejecutivo-asegura-que-no-va-a-derogar-decretos-de-ley-de>

218 <https://confidencialhn.com/cuestionado-colaborador-de-joh-arremete-contra-medicos-y-maestros-no-derogaremos-nada/>

219 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/08/medicos-y-docentes-de-honduras-se-declaran-en-alerta-permanente/amp/>

220 <https://tiempo.hn/salud-y-educacion-paro-nacional-lunes/>

221 <https://www.hispantv.com/noticias/honduras/428195/marchas-corrupcion-orlando-herandez>

222 <https://tiempo.hn/1-medicos-nuevo-paro-por-tiempo-indefinido/>

223 <http://www.pasosdeanilgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2469-en-el-marco-de-la-lucha-por-la-salud-y-educacion-medicos-senalan-como-dictador-abusivo-al-presidente-de-la-republica>

224 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/20/docentes-y-trabajadores-de-la-salud-inundan-las-calles-en-honduras/amp/>

225 <https://tiempo.hn/avanza-las-protetas-de-maestros-en-el-municipio-de-choloma/>

226 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/manifestantes-mantienen-tomas-entre-olanchito-y-saba.html>

demands would be met.<sup>227</sup> Students also joined, but they were heavily repressed by police and TIGRES forces<sup>228</sup> and so was a strike in Arizona, Atlántida.<sup>229</sup> Popular discontent was only further spurred and on May 22, two nationwide strike days were announced<sup>230 231</sup> and new groups joined, e.g. the Association of Medical Radiologic Technician of Honduras (ASTERMEH)<sup>232</sup> and the Association of UNAH Teachers (ADUNAH) also joined.<sup>233</sup> Even the Liberal Party asked their members to join the two-day strike.<sup>234</sup>

The JOH regime reacted two-fold. It threatened to fire public employees participating in the protests<sup>235</sup> and it further increased repression.<sup>236</sup> The repression also reached journalists covering the protests. Gerson Maldonado, cameraman at Azteca TV Honduras, was hit in the head with a tear gas grenade.<sup>237</sup> On May 29, the JOH regime presented a new executive decree which supposedly said that the two controversial decrees PCM 26 and 27 could not be interpreted as to privatize or for massive lay-offs.<sup>238</sup> But the Honduran people were not deterred and joined the second two-day national strike on May 30 and 31.<sup>239</sup> UNAH closed down allowing its staff and students to participate.<sup>240</sup> During the two-day national strike, at least 60 protest actions took place in 14 departments.<sup>241</sup>

Once again, the regime answered with violence.<sup>242 243</sup> Local protest leader Jhony Alexander López was assassinated<sup>244</sup> and others, such as Saúl Iván López<sup>245</sup>, were illegally detained. The Military police opened fire on protesters in Villanueva, south of San Pedro Sula, "gravely injuring 2 young men: Edgardo Diaz & Rigoberto Hernandez who are both now fighting for their lives".<sup>246</sup> A teacher shot at by the police on day one of the national strike, Claros Alfonso González Sánchez, lost a kidney.<sup>247</sup> And once again, journalists were among the victims of state repression. Leonidas Maradiaga and Víctor Rodríguez, both working for UNE TV, were first threatened by the Military Police and then physically attacked when covering the illegal arrest of a young man. C-Libre lists several more examples of state violence all having taken place during the first day of the national

227 <http://elpulso.hn/medicos-amenazan-con-suspender-las-cirugias-programadas/>

228 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/por-defender-sus-derechos-estudiantes-son-reprimidos/>

229 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1131308787384500230>

230 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/28/medicos-y-docentes-convocan-a-gran-paro-nacional-jueves-y-viernes/amp/>

231 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1286714-466/magisterio-anuncia-paro-a-nivel-nacional-este-jueves-y-viernes->

232 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/27/tecnicos-de-rayos-x-se-suman-a-la-lucha-de-los-empleados-de-la-salud/>

233 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/29/adunah-se-suma-a-la-lucha-de-los-medicos-y-maestros/amp/>

234 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/29/partidos-liberal-y-libre-convocan-a-sus-bases-a-unirse-al-paro-nacional/>

235 <https://confidencialhn.com/educacion-prepara-despidos-para-docentes-que-protestan-contra-la-privatizacion/>

236 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/27/policia-militar-recibe-con-gases-manifestacion-de-medicos-y-profesores/>

237 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2476-guardia-honor-del-presidente-joh-hiere-a-un-camarografo-de-azteca-tv>

238 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1288796-466/con-nuevo-decreto-gobierno-de-honduras-proh%C3%ADbe-despidos-masivos-de-maestros-y>

239 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3379-hondurenos-paralizan-el-pais-gritando-fuera-joh>

240 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3378-la-nacional-se-une-al-gran-paro-nacional-en-honduras>

241 <http://elpulso.hn/paro-nacional-dejo-al-menos-60-protestas-en-todo-el-pais/>

242 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/represion-marco-primer-dia-de-paro-nacional-en-honduras/>

243 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2480-atacados-por-el-terrorismo-de-estado-pobladores-y-gremios-paralizan-a-honduras>

244 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1133963636269969408>

245 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/en-libertad-docente-capturado-por-la-policia-en-danli/>

246 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1134582752152436736>

247 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/profesor-que-fue-herido-por-policias-durante-manifestacion-pierde-un-riñon/>

strike.<sup>248</sup> Apart from direct repression, the JOH regime aided by corporate media outlets also denigrated and criminalized the protest movement.<sup>249</sup>

OACNUDH published a press release reminding the State of Honduras about the right to peaceful assembly and its protection. Furthermore, protesters "should not be held responsible for the violent behavior of other people or acts of violence that occur in parallel".<sup>250</sup> <sup>251</sup> On Twitter, OACNUDH felt urged by the actions of the JOH regime in Honduras to emphasize that "fire arms should never be used to dissolve protests".<sup>252</sup> OACNUDH additionally published ten guiding principles for States to deal with protests.<sup>253</sup>

May ended with a lot of uncertainty and the following analysis by Eugenio Sosa and Hugo Noé Pino. "The current conflictive situation in the education and health sector in Honduras has its background in social policies implemented since 2010. The budgets of both sectors have decreased during this decade. For example, spending on education by the central government was 32.9% of the total in 2010 and in the approved budget of 2019 it is 19.9%. On the other hand, health spending was reduced from 14.3% to 9.7% in the same period. (...) The fact that most outraged the teachers and doctors, and broad sectors of the Honduran citizens, is that the National Congress approved the legislative decrees in an untimely and imposing manner, against the main opposition parties. Teachers and doctors reject legislative decrees because they consider that they open the doors for massive dismissals and deepen the privatization of institutions of the public health and education systems. In a first version, the decrees from the presidential house established in one of its articles "proceed to the cancellation of the appointment agreements and the termination of contracts for the rendering of services, in the context of the decisions taken in the process of administrative and organizational restructuring"."<sup>254</sup>

## Poverty

The Central American Institute for Fiscal Studies (Icefi) presented its newest macroeconomic findings in Tegucigalpa. In the case of Honduras, they highlighted a low-growth economy which could be improved by a more universal access to education and a better use of fiscal policies to combat poverty.<sup>255</sup> Icefi also highlighted that Honduras has one of the highest fiscal charge in the region, mostly through indirect taxation like the VAT. This setup burdens especially poor sectors of the population.<sup>256</sup> The same month, the Honduran Central Bank (BCH) warned of the increasing

248 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1016-periodistas-son-victimas-de-agresion-policial-en-manifestaciones-en-defensa-de-la-salud-y-educacion>

249 <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/presidente-herandez-acusa-a-lideres-de-protestas-de-provocar-la-desestabilizacion.html>

250 [https://www.facebook.com/ONUDDHH/photos/a.1863848500522606/2436910313216419/?type=3&eid=ARAPaEH9e-MFyMKhOUOtNqKI6iFVKmBnYjfa9rbuMWNE6MpCsLa2HRmqLE3dQsp1NSdHBWIM5xt0EhG&\\_tn\\_ =EHH-R&\\_fb\\_noscript=1](https://www.facebook.com/ONUDDHH/photos/a.1863848500522606/2436910313216419/?type=3&eid=ARAPaEH9e-MFyMKhOUOtNqKI6iFVKmBnYjfa9rbuMWNE6MpCsLa2HRmqLE3dQsp1NSdHBWIM5xt0EhG&_tn_ =EHH-R&_fb_noscript=1)

251 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/31/oacnudh-senala-el-uso-de-armas-de-fuego-por-parte-de-las-fuerzas-de-seguridad-durante-manifestaciones-en-honduras/>

252 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1134538299828129792>

253 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1134537020842397696>

254 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/05/31/la-lucha-contr-la-privatizacion-de-la-salud-y-la-educacion-una-nueva-ola-de-protestas-que-aumenta-la-crisis-en-honduras/>

255 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/04/honduras-a-pesar-de-tener-altos-niveles-de-gasto-publico-no-tiene-crecimiento-economico-video/>

256 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/04/honduras-tiene-sostenible-la-deuda-en-detrimento-del-bienestar-de-sus-ciudadanos/>

cost of living in Honduras.<sup>257</sup> Nevertheless, the private business lobby COHEP demanded that more basic goods would be taxed.<sup>258</sup>

## Migration

Deportations from Mexico and the US increased by 21% in the first four month this year compared to 2018. 19'000 Hondurans have been deported from January to April.<sup>259</sup> And in May, the number of deported Hondurans increased by 24.8% compared to the previous year.<sup>260</sup> At the same time, the number of children migrating north has tripled in April 2019 compared to April 2018 and the majority are Honduran children.<sup>261</sup> Additionally, the amount of remittances sent to Honduras continued to grow.<sup>262 263</sup>

Especially since the migrant caravans, many analysts have emphasized different push factors driving Hondurans north. This month, Michael Galant concentrates on the violations of labor rights as another driving force of Honduran migration. "In a microcosm of the conditions that have forced millions around the world to leave their homes in search of a better life in the global North, farmworkers in Honduras are fighting for their rights against the violent exploitation of a powerful multinational corporation and a global economic system designed to marginalize them."<sup>264</sup>

## Electoral Reforms

In January, the Nationalist-controlled Congress approved the replacement of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) with a National Electoral Council (CNE) and a Electoral Justice Tribunal (TJE). Now, half a year later, Congress continuous to fail to approve the underlying reforms for the replacement and the TSE magistrate may continue in their position.<sup>265</sup> The president of the Liberal Party, Luis Zelaya, called this scenario a slap in the face of democracy and the Honduran people.<sup>266</sup> Salvador Nasralla denounced that JOH is "consolidating a dictatorial State through his state employees"<sup>267</sup> and that they would avail another electoral fraud.<sup>268</sup> The movement Citizens' Action against the Dictatorship also joined the protests expressing their fear that JOH may want to stay in power even longer as indicated by his intention to keep the current disputed TSE magistrates.<sup>269</sup>

257 <https://tiempo.hn/bch-aumento-servicios-costo-de-la-vida/>

258 <https://confidencialhn.com/cohep-plantea-al-gobierno-colocar-impuestos-a-unos-280-productos-de-la-canasta-basica/>

259 <https://radiohm.hn/2019/05/02/al-menos-200-hondurenos-son-deportados-diariamente-desde-mexico/>

260 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/deportacion-de-hondurenos-se-incrementa-25-en-ultimo-mes-y-se-cifra-en-37-mil-393-retornos.html>

261 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/hondurenosenelmundo/1283400-299/ni%C3%B1os-migrantes-hondure%C3%B1os-son-los-que-m%C3%A1s-ingresan-a-m%C3%A9xico-seg%C3%BA-n-informe>

262 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/crece-en-10-envio-de-remesas-a-honduras-en-primer-cuatrimestre-de-2019.html>

263 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/honduras-capto-entre-enero-y-abril-mil-698-millones-de-dolares-en-remesas.html>

264 <https://truthout.org/articles/honduran-labor-fight-reveals-exploitation-behind-the-migrant-crisis/>

265 <https://confidencialhn.com/advierten-continuidad-de-magistrados-del-tse-en-nuevo-ente-si-no-hay-reformas-urgentes/>

266 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/reelegir-a-magistrados-del-tse-seria-una-bofetada-para-la-democracia-dice-luis-zelaya.html>

267 <https://confidencialhn.com/nasralla-denuncia-continuismo-de-joh-mediante-nuevas-reformas-electorales/>

268 <https://confidencialhn.com/aseguran-que-continuidad-de-magistrados-del-tse-garantiza-fraude-en-proximos-comicios-electorales/>

269 <https://www.hispantv.com/noticias/honduras/428242/oposicion-alerta-reeleccion-herandez-elecciones>



On May 13, their term officially ended and Congress failed to replace them.<sup>270</sup> Libre declared itself in insurrection, when Congress tried to prolong their term.<sup>271</sup> Their protest was successful, but only for one day. Then, their term was prolonged for 90 days. PINU deputy, Doris Gutiérrez, said that this maneuver allowed the Nationalists to have more time to execute their plan that may consist in denying the representative that in the past they promised Libre in these new entities.<sup>272</sup> At the end of May, Congress' president Mauricio Oliva promises the approval of the regulation of the CNE and the TJE in 25-30 days.<sup>273</sup> Libre was not satisfied by that and continued to demand the election of the representatives of the two new electoral bodies.<sup>274</sup> They declared themselves once more in insurrection, which led to a convulsion in Congress.<sup>275</sup> But instead of addressing the issue of the electoral bodies, the Nationalist-controlled Congress used the resulting dispute in Congress to force through the approval of various contracts without the proper procedure. In one case, it concerns the purchase of Software by Oracle used for the new identity card and the purge of the electoral census.<sup>276</sup> According to lawyer and Libre congressman Jorge Cálix, they violated the constitution as the contracts were approved without the necessary quorum.<sup>277</sup>

## Penal Code

On May 15, the content of the new Penal Code became public. The reaction was immediate and the code was widely repudiated. El Libertador<sup>278</sup> and Criterio<sup>279</sup> warned that it violates some fundamental rights, e.g. the right to protest and the right to freedom of expression. El Tiempo<sup>280</sup> called it "Muzzle Law 2" and even the less combative Journalists Association of Honduras (CPH) called it a setback.<sup>281</sup> Human rights organizations<sup>282</sup> highlighted several problems with it, e.g. that Congress failed to decriminalize crimes against honor.<sup>283</sup> Already a day later, Nationalist congressman Mario Pérez felt forced to concede that the Penal Code would be revised before coming into force in November.<sup>284</sup> Congress' president Mauricio Oliva invited different sectors to revise the content of the highly disputed new Penal Code. Criterio highlights a new trap. "Interestingly, the call was addressed to state institutions that make up the circle of power validating all the actions of the government of Juan Hernández, who controls the Honduran institutions. This also counts for the associations of lawyers and journalists."<sup>285</sup>

270 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/no-hay-interes-en-que-libre-participe-en-nuevos-organos-electorales-denuncia-carlos-reina.html>

271 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/14/partido-libre-y-su-bancada-se-declaran-en-insurreccion/amp/>

272 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/partido-nacional-busca-continuidad-de-magistrado-del-tribunal-supremo-electoral/>

273 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/dentro-de-30-dias-aprobaremos-el-nuevo-reglamento-electoral-afirma-presidente-del-congreso-nacional.html>

274 <http://elpulso.hn/aprueba-contrato-oracle-cn/>

275 <https://twitter.com/GildateleSUR/status/1133886781840068610>

276 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/29/en-ambiente-de-convulsion-congreso-hondureno-aprueba-varios-contratos-amanados/>

277 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/29/nacionalistas-aprobaron-decretos-sin-siquiera-tener-quorum-para-sesionar/amp/>

278 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3362-alerta-codigo-penal-avizora-represion-judicial-a-periodistas-hondurenos>

279 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/15/publicado-en-la-gaceta-nuevo-codigo-penal-que-cercena-el-derecho-a-la-protesta-y-libertad-de-expresion/amp/>

280 <https://tiempo.hn/codigo-penal-trae-ley-mordaza-2-intocables-bancos/>

281 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/nuevo-codigo-penal-es-retroceso-de-garantias-y-libertades-presidente-del-colegio-de-periodistas.html>

282 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/monitoreo-de-compromisos-internacionales/item/2468-nuevo-codigo-penal-carcel-y-multas-para-intimidacion-a-periodistas-defensores-y-movimiento-social>

283 <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/delitos-contras-el-honor-debieron-ser-despenalizados-en-nuevo-codigo-penal-segun-mario-diaz.html>

284 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1285046-466/congreso-nacional-asegura-que-revisar%C3%A1-el-nuevo-c%C3%B3digo-penal>

285 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/20/mauricio-oliva-convoca-a-sus-aliados-a-revisar-nuevo-codigo-penal-nueva-trampa/amp/>

Human rights lawyer Omar Menjivar published a helpful analysis going beyond the Penal Code itself. "It is not so much in itself, the code per se, but the current conjuncture, politically marked by a dictatorship, which makes it inappropriate, inconvenient and perverse. It is the current policy of criminal prosecution (not criminal policy) that renders it illegitimate and therefore undemocratic, insofar as it does not coincide with the general will of a people which is fed up with impunity, with the privileges of abusive power mocking the aspirations of our people."<sup>286</sup> Radio Progreso went in the same direction. "Depending on whether a government regime is democratic or authoritarian, a Penal Code can serve to maintain the state of affairs in favor of the groups of power or be a factor of strengthening the rule of law. Accordingly, the recently approved Penal Code clearly reflects two objectives: first, that it is designed to criminalize social and peaceful protest, and curtail the fundamental freedoms of the citizenry, particularly that which is opposed to the dictatorship. Second, it is designed so that organized crime, drug trafficking, impunity, corruption, violations of human rights and violence against women can run at ease. There is no doubt that the Nationalist regime has in its hands the tool that it lacked to consolidate its authoritarian, tyrannical, military and fascist power, and more easily exercise social control and the sanction of citizen demands."<sup>287</sup>

But criticism did not just come from human rights organizations and social movements. Human Rights Minister Karla Cueva criticized the decrease in penalties for crimes against women.<sup>288</sup> The head of investigation at the CNA, Odir Fernández, denounced that it benefits the corrupt with lower penalties.<sup>289</sup> El Tiempo agreed, highlighting different possible cases in which the penalties had decreased.<sup>290</sup>

COFADEH highlighted the role of Spain which helped fund the renewal of the Penal Code.<sup>291</sup> And after several days of silence on this issue, the US embassy commented on the controversial new Penal Code. "Modernization of the penal code is an important step towards an improved criminal justice system. It is essential to ensure penalties match the crimes and to protect free expression. We encourage @Congreso\_HND to fully socialize articles with an eye towards #nomoreimpunity."<sup>292</sup>

On May 23, Nationalist congressman Oswaldo Ramos Soto asked for the extension of the Vacatio Legis (period between the promulgation of a law and the time the law takes legal effect) for the new Penal Code from 6 to 18 months. Criterio voiced fear that this time frame coincides with the next electoral process and that the Penal Code could be used as an electoral instrument.<sup>293</sup>

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286 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/05/18/sobre-el-nuevo-codigo-penal/>

287 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/un-codigo-penal-a-la-medida-del-regimen-dictatorial/>

288 <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/preocupacion-genera-rebaja-en-las-penas-de-delitos-de-violencia-contra-la-mujer-segun-sedh.html>

289 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/nuevo-codigo-penal-beneficia-a-personas-ligadas-a-corrupcion-segun-cna.html>

290 <https://tiempo.hn/1-que-condenas-suaviza-el-nuevo-codigo-penal/>

291 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/el-nuevo-codigo-del-crimen-organizado/>

292 <https://twitter.com/USAmbHonduras/status/1131333262046105601>

293 <https://criterio.hn/2019/05/23/ramos-soto-pide-ampliacion-de-vacatio-legis-para-codigo-penal/amp/>



## And Light at the End of a Month

Radio Progreso presented an example of community-driven and owned clean energy production in Camagüey, near Tela, Atlántida.<sup>294</sup>

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294 <https://wp.radioprogreso.net/comunidad-en-atlantida-es-ejemplo-de-generacion-de-energia-limpia/>



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

#### Past Activities:

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#### Upcoming Activities:

- On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the coup d'état, the Honduras Forum Switzerland will organize an art exhibit by Honduran artists.  
[http://honduras-forum.ch/wordpress/?page\\_id=297](http://honduras-forum.ch/wordpress/?page_id=297)

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