

# *Another Month in Honduras...*

## Human Rights Monitor – December 2019

Honduras' prisons have never been considered anything close to safe, but this month showed how dangerous they really are. There were four mass-killings in December inside four different Honduran prisons, two of them so-called high-security prisons. The killings claimed the lives of at least 48 inmates. Two of them took place after the further militarization of Honduras' penitentiary system – a response to the first two mass killings. But life outside prison is not safe either. While last month a key witness in the Tony Hernández case was murdered in a Honduran prison, this month one of his lawyers was murdered as well as the suspended director of the prison where the first murder had taken place. Someone is tying up loose ends. To guarantee that no international body remains in Honduras to investigate this, the MACCIH was further weakened this month by a Nationalist-controlled Congress. By the end of December, the fate of the MACCIH once again remains uncertain, 19 days before its mandate comes to an end. Welcome to another month in Honduras.

In solidarity,

Daniel Langmeier

Honduras Forum Switzerland

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# Abbreviations

ASJ	Association for a More Just Society
ATIC	Technical Bureau for Criminal Investigation
BID	Inter-American Development Bank
CABEI	Central American Bank for Economic Integration
CDM	Center for Women's Rights
CIPRODEH	Center for Human Rights Research and Promotion
CMH	Medical Association Honduras
CNA	National Anti-Corruption Council
COFADEH	Committee of Families of the Detained-Disappeared in Honduras
COIPRODEN	Coordination of Private Institutions for Children's Rights
CONADEH	National Human Rights Commission
COPINH	Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras
FEPRODDHH	Special Public Prosecutor Unit for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Journalists, Social Communicators and Justice Operators
FOSDEH	Social Forum on the External Debt of Honduras
FOSDEH	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
HRDs	Human Rights Defenders
IACHR	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
IACtHR	Inter-American Court of Human Rights
ILO	International Labor Organization
ISHR	International Service for Human Rights
MACCIH	Support Mission against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras
MADJ	Broad Movement for Dignity and Justice
MP	Attorney General's Office
OACNUDH	UN Human Rights Office in Honduras
TSC	Supreme Audit Court
UFECIC	Anti-Corruption Unit of the Attorney General's Office
UNAH	National Autonomous University of Honduras
ZEDE	Zone for Employment and Economic Development

## Human Rights and Their Defenders

ACI-Participa published its yearly report on the situation of human rights defenders in Honduras. They documented 29 murders of HRDs<sup>1</sup> and 499 attacks against HRDs between January and November 2019.<sup>2</sup>

In December, an important hearing on Honduras, human rights and corruption took place in Congress at the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission in the presence of the two co-chairs Republican congressman Christopher Smith and Democratic congressman James McGovern.<sup>3</sup> There were various important things said worth highlighting. Republican congressman Smith spoke of Honduras as a "country plagued by political corruption" and he said the focus is on "the action of the administration of Juan Orlando Hernández, including up to the highest levels". Regarding a recent IACHR visit to Honduras, Democratic congressman James P. McGovern said that "I think it is fair to say that the Commission would not go into a country unless there was deep deep concern about what was happening in that country". He spoke of corruption in Honduras as "pervasive, systematic, baked into the operating system". Next to the importance of the MACCIH and the renewal of its mandate, various witness highlighted the importance work of OACNUDH in a country where human rights defenders are the targets of threats, harassment and worse. "The United States should also strongly support the office of the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights in Honduras with its current leadership which plays a crucial role in documenting the abuses and providing technical support".<sup>4</sup> Eddy Táborá, director of C-Libre, called on the reconsideration of security and military assistance by the US highlighting the use of state security forces to violently repress peaceful protests up to right out assassinating them and to intimidate and harass human rights defenders. Asked by congressman McGovern in which other cases apart from the Berta Cáceres case, the US Congress should to more, the cases of Guapinol, Reitoca, Los Prados and the situation in the Bajo Aguán and the Atlántida region, where various hydroelectric projects are imposed, where mentioned as well as the situation of the political prisoners. McGovern also criticized the too narrow approach of the US to Central America, focused on migration and drugs and called for a more holistic approach.

OACNUDH congratulates COFADEH for its 37th anniversary and highlights its "unrelenting struggle for the victims of forced detention and their loved ones".<sup>5</sup> OACNUDH also signed a memorandum of understanding with the Human Rights Secretariat which allows the former to give technical assessments to the latter.<sup>6</sup>

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1 At least one more defender was murdered in December (see sub-section below).

2 [https://honduras-forum.ch/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/1912\\_ACI-Participa\\_Informe-Situacional-de-Defensores-DDHH-2019-PR2.pdf](https://honduras-forum.ch/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/1912_ACI-Participa_Informe-Situacional-de-Defensores-DDHH-2019-PR2.pdf)

3 <https://humanrightscommission.house.gov/events/hearings/human-rights-and-corruption-honduras>

4 <https://www.lawg.org/comunicado-de-prensa-lawg-publica-informe-y-ofrece-testimonio-ante-el-congreso-de-los-estados-unidos-sobre-la-corrupcion-y-las-violaciones-de-derechos-humanos-en-honduras/>

5 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1202700330804350977>

6 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1203017864455892992>

## Assassinations

The indigenous Tolupán Efraín Martínez Martínez was found murdered in Montaña de la Flor on December 30.<sup>7 8</sup>

## Attacks, Criminalization and Harassment

Honduras' trade union organizations united in the Network against Anti-Syndical Violence denounced that they are victims of serious attacks against their lives for defending the labor rights of union members. They also denounced that the JOH regime plays an accomplice role that fosters impunity for such acts.<sup>9</sup> Indigenous Lenca defenders from Reitoca held a protest rally denouncing their judicial persecution and receiving death threats for resting the imposition of a hydroelectric project.<sup>10</sup> The human rights defender Pedro Amador from Ecumenical Action for Human Rights (AEDH) denounced a hate campaign against him by a Nationalist lawyer on social media.<sup>11</sup> OACNUDH condemned the threats and digital attacks against him.<sup>12</sup> COPA sent out an alert denouncing an attack on their office. The back door of the office building was destroyed an important information was stolen putting the defenders belonging to COPA at risk. COFADEH and La Vía Campesina Honduras denounced new death threats against indigenous Lenca campesino leader and CNTC general secretary Sebastián Reyes Bardales (see also yesterday).<sup>13</sup>

## Indigenous Peoples

Two Tolupán defenders, Randy Magdiel Rivera Ávila and Juan Ángel Santos, were detained on December 4 in San Francisco Locomapa, Yoro, and held for 27 hours. "They were arrested for a complaint filed by Oscar Filander Armijo Uclés, former general of the Armed Forces and a landowner, without a warrant or search warrant."<sup>14</sup>

"On November 3, Prosecutor's Office for Ethnicity issued a tax injunction in relation to the La Ensenada hydroelectric plant, which the families of Marcelino Ponce's heirs have been trying to build for many years on the Cuyamel River, in the Garífuna community of Sambo Creek. It took the prosecutor's office nine years to issue the tax injunction against the former vice minister of the former Secretariat of Natural Resources (SERNA), Sr. Norman Gilberto Ochoa Henríquez, who issued the environmental license for the project within 40 days, without a prior consultation of the Sambo Creek community. (...) Although the La Ensenada hydroelectric dam was not built, the process of auctioning the Cuyamel River Basin continued its course, varying the objective. The hydroelectric plant was converted into a 70 megawatt thermoelectric plant based on bunker C,

7 <https://tiempo.hn/encuentran-muerto-a-lider-de-la-montana-de-la-flor-en-orica/>

8 <https://twitter.com/SamanthaTheI/status/1212042433439191040>

9 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2627-red-contra-la-violencia-sindical-denuncia-graves-ataques-contra-sindicalistas-por-defender-derechos-laborales-de-los-trabajadores>

10 <https://www.hispantv.com/noticias/honduras/443784/ambientalistas-horrenda-persecucion-asesinato>

11 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2640-activista-y-abogado-del-partido-nacional-instrumentaliza-campana-de-odio-contra-el-defensor-de-los-ddhh-pedro-amador>

12 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1205237318166163470>

13 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/cofadeh-y-lvc-preocupados-por-amenazas-contra-el-secretario-general-de-la-cntc/>

14 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2634-tras-27-horas-detenidos-tolupanes-son-llevados-a-audiencia-en-juzgados-de-yoro>

which was installed without an environmental license between two protected areas. (...) The absence in Honduras of environmental audits by the State, and the sinister handing out of licenses, has generated disastrous results for the environment and the communities that protect them, who are processed, persecuted and even murdered."<sup>15</sup>

OACNUDH recognized the work of OFRANEH's general coordinator Miriam Miranda for defending the rights of the Garífuna people, but also for fighting against the human rights violations suffered by the Honduran people in general. OACNUDH also mentioned the favorable court rulings of the Inter-American Human Rights System in the case of Triunfo de la Cruz and Punta Pierda, rulings which remain mostly unaddressed by the JOH regime.<sup>16</sup> A group of EU-parliamentarians wrote an open letter to the ambassador of the EU to Honduras expressing concern about the criminalization and persecution of human rights defenders in Honduras highlighting the case of Miriam Miranda, general coordinator of OFRANEH. They also question the effectiveness of some of the EU's projects in Honduras given the ongoing dire situation of HRDs.<sup>17</sup>

Just a few days later, OFRANEH denounced an attack Amada López, member of OFRANEH's governing board and Garífuna spiritual leader. Her house was shot at . This took place in the Masca community, where in the last half a year, two Garífuna leaders had been murdered.<sup>18</sup> By the end of the month, there was another attack. Karla Ignacia Piota Martínez, sister of the general coordination member of OFRANEH, Amada Martínez. Piota Martínez was shot seven times and her life is in the air.<sup>19</sup> IM-Defensoras denounced that "[t]his is the fourth incident in which people around Amada have been attacked or killed. On December 12, her house was shot at, and Paula Alvarez was injured in the incident. Before that, three people were killed, including Garífuna defender Mirna Suazo."<sup>20</sup>

## FPIC

CESPAD published an analysis of the application of free, prior and informed consent in Honduras summarized as follows: "Between non-compliance with the Convention and a regulation that protects extractivist interests in Honduras".<sup>21</sup> On December 17, COPINH denounced a new attempt by the Central American Development Bank (BCIE) and the Honduran business lobby to undermine the ILO Convention 169 on free, prior and informed consent.<sup>22</sup>

## The Case of Berta Cáceres

After one year, the sentencing of the seven convicted material authors of the assassination Berta Cáceres took place on December 2. "[T]he four paid hitmen – Elvin Rapalo, Edilson Duarte Meza,

15 <https://ofraneh.wordpress.com/2019/12/03/el-rio-cuyamel-piratas-de-las-termicas-y-el-derecho-a-la-consulta-previa/>

16 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/120234779869282305>

17 <https://twitter.com/MiguelUrban/status/1207020136227577857>

18 <https://ofraneh.wordpress.com/2019/12/12/atentan-contra-lideresa-garifuna-en-masca/>

19 <https://twitter.com/baraudawaguchu/status/1211257731803492352>

20 <http://im-defensoras.org/2019/12/alertadefensoras-honduras-intentan-asesinar-a-la-defensora-garifuna-karla-piota-martinezintegrante-de-ofraneh/>

21 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/12/08/coyuntura-desde-los-territorios-a-30-anos-de-la-ratificacion-del-convenio-169-de-la-oit-entre-el-incumplimiento-del-convenio-y-una-reglamentacion-que-resguarda-los-intereses-extractivistas-en-hondu/>

22 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1206997227555700736>

Óscar Torres, and Henry Javier Hernández – were each given 34 years for the murder. They were also sentenced to 16 years and four months for the attempted murder of Gustavo Castro, a Mexican environmentalist who was shot in the same attack but survived by playing dead. Sergio Ramón Rodríguez, the communities and environment manager for Desa, and Douglas Geovanny Bustillo, a former Desa security chief and ex-US trained army lieutenant, were given 30 years and six months for their participation in the murder. Mariano Díaz Chávez, a US-trained special forces major who served with Bustillo, was found guilty by omission and given 30 years. (...) “From the outset, the path to justice has been painful, as our rights as victims have not been respected. These sentences are a start in breaking the impunity, but we’re going to make every effort to ensure that all those responsible – the company executives and state officials identified in the trial – are prosecuted,” said Bertita Zúñiga, Cáceres’ second-eldest daughter.”<sup>23</sup> After the sentencing, Berta’s children read a statement outside the court highlighting that impunity has not ended with just the sentencing of the material authors and demanding the investigation of the Atala family and other suspected intellectual authors.<sup>24</sup> “The men who shot Berta Cáceres are identified, prosecuted and sentenced. The intellectual authors of the crime are unpunished, and are within reach of justice if it wants to act. The investigation must continue among DESA’s highest shareholders. (...) As long as the power structures that killed Berta remain intact, women will continue to be threatened. Berta’s path is a frontal struggle against patriarchy, and from that conviction her spirit calls for a tenacious struggle to break with the impunity that protects intellectual killers. The conviction of the material murderers is a step forward. But from the perspective of the men of power, it is a mirage. It makes us believe that justice has already been done.”<sup>25</sup>

OACNUDH recognized the importance of the sentences, but also highlighted that it is only a first step.<sup>26</sup> The IACHR highlighted the importance to go after the intellectual authors.<sup>27</sup> US Congressman Hank Johnson tweeted: “I stand alongside Berta’s family & the countless advocates & champions fighting on the front lines every day for the protections of Hondurans, and as a Member of Congress, I will continue standing with them to achieve a better, safer Honduras.”<sup>28</sup> Together with two other congresswo/men, Jan Schakowsky and Mark Pocan, all supporting the Berta Cáceres Act calling for the suspension of U.S. funding to the Republic of Honduras for its police and military operations, he issued the following statement: “While these sentences are a step in the right direction, it’s only a first, small step. Although the killers who pulled the trigger on that fateful day in March 2016 may be facing a measure of justice, those who hired these hitmen and are the true architects of Berta’s murder, are still free. In its ruling, the Court noted the participation of executives and directors of the DESA company in the planning and financing of her murder. Today, we recognize progress in the pursuit of justice for Berta but stand strong with her family and friends in seeking true justice. True justice includes trial and punishment of all those responsible for her

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23 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/02/bera-caceres-murder-sentencing>

24 <https://copinh.org/2019/12/lectura-sentencia-causa-bera/>

25 <https://wp.radioprogreso.net/un-paso-falta-la-macolla-intelectual/>

26 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1201639958383079424> <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1201640103543750656> <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1201640305763790853>  
<https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1201640373212368902>

27 <https://twitter.com/CIDH/status/1202054826848186368>

28 <https://twitter.com/RepHankJohnson/status/1201898519096954880>

murder, including the executives of the company building the dam, DESA, who were the masterminds and financiers of the plot.”<sup>29</sup> EU parliamentarian Miguel Urbán Crespo also called for the investigation and prosecution of the intellectual authors and denounces the widespread impunity in Honduras.<sup>30</sup> The German congresswoman Heike Hänsel wrote an open letter to Attorney General Óscar Chinchilla asking for the investigation, prosecution and sentencing of the intellectual authors in the Berta Cáceres case.<sup>31</sup>

Various national, regional and international human rights organizations organized in Observation Mission of the Berta Cáceres Case published a joint press release emphasizing the ongoing debt of the Honduran State for the assassination of Berta. "From the Mission we continue observing the judicial processes linked to the murder of Berta Cáceres and we note with grave concern that, to date, only the general manager of DESA, David Castillo, has been investigated as a intellectual author of the crime and his process has been characterized by a series of delays, as well as smear campaigns, threats and attacks against COPINH and the Lenca people during the legal process. In this regard, we recall that impunity will continue to exist until progress is made in the identification, trial and punishment of all persons involved in the intellectual authorship of the facts. At the same time, as indicated by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), we urge the authorities to initiate the corresponding process in order to revoke the concession of the Gualcarque River, which remains a source of risk to the life and integrity of the Lenca people and the COPINH communities."<sup>32</sup>

On December 21, the Intercept published an investigative article by Danielle Mackey and Chiara Eisner into the intellectual authorship of the Berta Cáceres murder. "In preparation for the trial of the assassins, the Honduras Public Prosecutor's Office extracted thousands of private call logs, SMS, and WhatsApp messages from their phones. The call log evidence was examined by an independent expert, and it showed that the assassins had communicated through a compartmentalized chain that reached the highest ranks of leadership of the company whose dam she had been protesting. Those messages, analyzed below, provide a striking window into the plot to kill Cáceres."<sup>33</sup>

## Freedom of Expression and Journalists

"For several years now, journalism and freedom of expression have been more and more under threat than ever, especially for those communicators and journalists who make alternative, anti-system communication and who swim against the current with proposals for the construction of a more just society. Of course, the informative and alternative communication bets produce more threats than satisfactions because they disrupt all the great interests that the political and business classes have over a nation as small and impoverished as that of Honduras. (...) We urge colleagues

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29 <https://hankjohnson.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/rep-johnson-schakowsky-pocan-issue-statement-sentencing-bertha-c-ceres-s>

30 <https://twitter.com/MiguelUrban/status/1202129326730285057>

31 <https://criterio.hn/diputada-alemana-pide-a-fiscal-general-oscar-chinchilla-castigar-asesinos-intelectuales-de-bertha-caceres/>

32 <https://www.cejil.org/es/estado-honduras-sigue-deuda-asesinato-bertha-caceres>

33 <https://theintercept.com/2019/12/21/bertha-caceres-murder-plot-honduras/>



in Honduran journalism and communicators not to be sold or bought but to grow in solidarity and identity with our profession that leads us to be worthy of recognition based on independence, freedom of expression, respect, dignity and journalistic ethics, and above all to defend the Freedom of Expression, the free exercise of journalism and the operation of the free press in the country."<sup>34</sup>

On December 11, Journalist Lidieth Díaz denounced that the life of her husband and director of Radio Globo, David Romero Ellner was more than ever in danger. Romero Ellner has been imprisoned since March after being convicted of defamation. Lidieth Díaz denounced that there is a plan in place to have him murdered.<sup>35</sup>

## Violence against Women

Cristina Alvarado from the Women's Movement for Peace denounced that in the last 15 years, over 6000 women were murdered in Honduras (almost 5000 of which in the last ten years since the coup d'état) and in 96% of the cases impunity reigns. "There is no investigation, there are barely 40 investigative agents specialized in protocols of analysis for femicide, but they also cover other types of crimes so they are spread throughout the country. Another element is judicialization, because if not done correctly, the crimes remain unpunished."<sup>36</sup> This year again, almost 400 women were murdered.<sup>37</sup> OACNUDH published a press release expressing grave concern for the "persistent violent murders of women and girls".<sup>38</sup>

## Protection Mechanism

Honduran human rights organization discussed this month the insecurity of human rights defenders. According to Hedme Castro, director of ACI-Participa, the situation is worse than in the 80s.<sup>39</sup> Josué Murillo, director of the Panamerican Foundation for Development (Fpad) presented the Honduran protection mechanism as inadequate for the needs of human rights defenders.<sup>40</sup> Jaime Flores from Casa Alianza denounced that the protection mechanism mainly serves to whitewash the JOH regime in front of international human rights bodies.<sup>41</sup> 200 complaints were filed at the mechanism which resulted in only 15 investigations.<sup>42</sup>

## Political Prisoners

Pasos de Animal Grande spoke with the mother of the political prisoner Rommel Baldemar Herrera Portillo, Maricruz Portillo. She wishes for more accompaniment of her son's case so that he won't

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34 <https://wp.radioprogreso.net/la-dificil-tarea-de-hacer-periodismo-alternativo/>

35 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3652-la-vida-de-david-hoy-mas-que-nunca-esta-en-riesgo-lidieth-diaz>

36 <http://elpulso.hn/96-por-ciento-de-impunidad-en-los-crimenes-contra-de-las-mujeres/>

37 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2629-femicidios-no-paran-porque-el-estado-de-honduras-no-tiene-voluntad-politica-para-castigar-a-los-culpables>

38 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1207353178422960128>

39 <https://criterio.hn/situacion-de-derechos-humanos-en-honduras-esta-peor-que-la-decada-de-los-anos-80s/>

40 <https://confidencial.hn.com/lamentan-falta-de-efectividad-del-mecanismo-de-proteccion-a-periodistas-y-defensores-de-ddhh/>

41 <https://criterio.hn/en-honduras-el-mecanismo-de-proteccion-existe-para-lavarle-la-cara-al-gobierno/>

42 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/1323-fiscalia-especial-de-proteccion-cierra-y-no-investiga-denuncias-de-agresiones-contra-defensores>

be forgotten and to increase the chance of a more independent judgment.<sup>43</sup> On December 19, the charges against him were reviewed.<sup>44</sup> The court against a shortened procedure and ordered a public hearing.<sup>45</sup>

## Extractive Industries

Libre congressman Jorge Cáliz presented a bill calling for an investigation into the disputed housing project in the La Tigra National Park which led to widespread protests and police repression some weeks ago.<sup>46</sup> RT published a discussion on the Zones for Employment and Economic Development (ZEDEs), the so-called charter cities, with Emy Padilla, director of Criterio.hn, Ismael Zepeda, economist at FOSDEH, and Lucía Vijil, investigator at CESPAD.<sup>47</sup> Large-scale solar energy projects in Honduras have caused various problems so far, be it irregularities in their concessions or forced displacement for their construction. At the same time, they are highly subsidized. The 12 plants in Valle and Choluteca cost ENEE over 2 billion Lempiras between August 2015 and December 2017.<sup>48</sup>

Community and indigenous leaders from Marcala successfully organized the local community to have a permit for deforestation suspended.<sup>49</sup> The people of El Negrito, Yoro are preparing a plebiscite on the question of a closed season for exploiting the forest ("veda forestal"). They announced to collect 8000 signatures to present to Congress. Already back in 2014, El Negrito became the first municipality to declare itself free of mining.<sup>50</sup>

## Mining

Trocaire published a short 6min video on the activities by Aura Minerals in Azacualpa. "Rivers are being poisoned, and even graveyards are being dug up in the pursuit of raw minerals. Even the dead can't rest peacefully in the town of Azacualpa, Honduras, as a Canadian mining company digs up bodies for gold, despite the objections of family and community members. This short film from Trocaire visits the community of Azacualpa to hear their story, and explains why Doctrinaire is campaigning for a UN treaty that would force international companies to respect human rights in their operations."<sup>51</sup>

Last month, Tocoa, Colón, declared itself free of mining. According to Radio Progreso, the municipality now cannot renew the mining license for the disputed company Inversiones Los Pinares nor for any other mining company.<sup>52</sup>

43 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2643-madre-de-rommel-autoridades-quieren-apresurar-una-condena-para-mi-hijo>

44 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2646-defensa-de-rommel-solicitara-que-juez-recalifique-delito>

45 <https://confidencialhn.com/elevan-a-juicio-oral-causa-contra-docente-arrestado-por-supuesto-intento-de-quemar-embajada-de-ee-uu/>

46 <http://elpulso.hn/en-el-limbo-proyecto-bosques-de-santa-maria/>

47 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zaM-S2zP4&feature=youtu.be>

48 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1344477-410/2370-millones-lempiras-ebe-enee-pago-incentivos-solares-honduras>

49 <https://criterio.hn/pobladores-de-marcala-logran-suspender-tala-de-madera-en-microcuenca-hidrografica/>

50 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/el-negrito-yoro-se-prepara-para-realizar-un-plebiscito/>

51 <https://vimeo.com/365482741>

52 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/declaratoria-libre-de-mineria-prohibe-renovacion-de-licencias-a-inversiones-los-pinares/>

## Hydroelectricity

The inhabitants of Reitoca occupied the building of the mayoralty in protest against a hydroelectric project. The occupation is a reaction to the failed promises by the local mayor. The project has been accompanied by irregularities, the former deputy secretary of natural resources, Marco Jonathan Láinez Ordóñez, is accused of illegally granting the environmental license for the dam.<sup>53</sup> <sup>54</sup> CESPAD published a short video on the struggle by the inhabitants of Reitoca.<sup>55</sup>

## Corruption and Its Enemies

In December, Honduras commemorated the International Day against Corruption and MADJ wrote: "Today is the international day against corruption and many of us ask ourselves, why are these days commemorated if the evil that we are trying to eliminate is becoming more and more prevalent in our societies? (...) Honduran society has waited with infinite patience for the progress of investigations and trials of government corruption cases, with greater force since the political appearance of the UFECIC. With a handful of high-ranking officials behind bars, several former public officials on the run and an infinite number of open files without investigative advances, prosecutors and judges are entangled in the web of access to structured justice from historical corruption and the narco-state. (...) It is clear that corruption is the basis of the capitalist, fundamentalist and conservative economic model; therefore, the anti-corruption policies adopted by international agreements are only an incentive in the face of the profound political and social crisis linked to drug trafficking and the narco-state. It is one of the pillars that sustains the State and, in the particular case of Honduras, the criminal structure into which they have turned the state gear directed by not only corrupt officials but also criminals who are internationally recognized and pointed out as drug trafficking professionals. Due to the conditions of Honduras, the fight against corruption obligatorily goes through the urgent and frontal dismantling of the structure of the National Narco Party, its tentacles in each State institution, its criminal ways of operating, to clean up the current scenario of those who are the provocateurs and who sustain the various deep crises of the country in which the one caused by institutionalized corruption is only one of these. And for this, it must be clearly assumed beyond the role of international bodies, political lobbies, pacts and inter-party negotiations."<sup>56</sup>

Next to the main corruption case, new and former cases also made headlines this month. Criterio published new information on the corruption at the Social Security Institute for Journalists (IPP).<sup>57</sup> The Supreme Audit Tribunal (TSC) found irregularities in the books of NGOs managing state funds from the disputed Departmental Fund.<sup>58</sup> Congress gave the administration and operation of the Toncontín airport to Emco S.A. de C.V. without a bidding process. Emco already has the concession

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53 <https://criterio.hn/por-proyecto-sobre-rio-petacon-pobladores-se-toman-municipalidad-de-reitoca/>

54 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1207070681718034434>

55 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/12/17/reitoca/>

56 <https://madj.org/index.php/2019/12/09/editorial-la-corrupcion-la-lucha-del-gato-y-del-raton/>

57 <https://criterio.hn/ente-de-pensiones-de-periodistas-compra-terreno-sobrevalorado-en-casi-1-3-millones/>

58 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1339799-410/investigacion-oeneges-manejaron-fondos-millonarios-honduras>

for the new Palmerola airport and its president is Lenir Pérez, the son-in-law of the deceased palm oil magnate Miguel Facussé.<sup>59</sup> La Prensa reported that Honduras will lose some 150 million Lempiras annually.<sup>60</sup> The act has been denounced as corruption.<sup>61</sup> There are also irregularities around the concession for the Palmerola airport. Congress tries to shift the responsibility on the executive branch.<sup>62</sup> The National Anti Corruption Council (CNA) uncovered a new case involving the former head of the National Electric Energy Company (ENNE), the Nationalist Jesús “Cuqui” Mejía. They accused him of defrauding ENEE of 12 million Lempiras between 2016-2019.<sup>63</sup> These revelations are especially important as Hondurans suffer from some of the highest electricity prices in the region.<sup>64 65</sup>

The CNA accuses the former mayor and former councilors of La Ceiba of embezzling 20.8 million Lempiras.<sup>66</sup> They also filed before the MP a new complaint against the plenum of the former magistrates of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) for the period 2014-2019, for the crime of fraud in the rental of scanners that were not used as stipulated in the contract signed with an individual Honduran merchant, generating an economic loss of more than L. 41 million.”<sup>67</sup> ConfidencialHN reported on corruption in the bidding process by the Property Institute (IP) for the management of the new car registry.<sup>68</sup>

## The Onslaught against the Anti-Corruption Bodies

In November, the OAS announced the installment of an evaluation body of the MACCIH. This month, they finished their work, but instead of more clarity, there was still no certainty about the future of the MACCIH as the year came to an end.

At the beginning of the month, CESPAD published a synthesis on the expectations by the public of the work of the MACCIH, its successes and its weaknesses, and the obstacles in its way.<sup>69</sup> CESPAD and the Lawyers without Borders also organized a forum on the MACCIH and CICIG around the question of the effectiveness of their fight against corruption. "According to the analyst, civil society should concentrate on renewing the mandate of the MACCIH and, once it is achieved, promote legislative reforms that facilitate the work in the fight against corruption."<sup>70</sup>

On December 3, a bipartisan letter from US congressmen demand the extension of the MACCIH.<sup>71</sup> Congress’ president Mauricio Oliva did not seem impressed. He wanted to present himself as the

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59 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1340041-410/sin-licitacion-congreso-cede-emco-operacion-eropuerto-toncontin-honduras>

60 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1341713-410/150-millones-lempiras-anales-perdida-estado-canon-toncontin-honduras>

61 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3644-empresarios-reclaman-ilegal-concesion-de-toncontin-y-palmerola>

62 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3644-empresarios-reclaman-ilegal-concesion-de-toncontin-y-palmerola>

63 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3651-denuncian-a-cuqui-mejia-por-planillas-fantasma-en-la-enee>

64 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/piden-renegociar-contratos-energeticos-para-reducir-costo-de-la-energia/>

65 <https://twitter.com/jeffgermst/status/1204154730576039937>

66 <https://twitter.com/cnahonduras/status/1205205252020015106>

67 <https://criterio.hn/el-cna-denuncia-por-fraude-a-exmagistrados-del-tse/>

68 <https://confidencialhn.com/denuncian-corrupcion-en-licitacion-que-realizara-el-instituto-de-la-propiedad-por-nuevo-software/>

69 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/12/02/analisis-castigos-a-altos-funcionarios-involucrados-en-actos-de-corrupcion-la-mayor-expectativa-sobre-la-maccih/>

70 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/12/05/maccih-y-cicig-que-tan-efectivas-han-sido-en-la-lucha-contra-la-corrupcion/>

71 <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/2019/12/bipartisan-house-leaders-call-for-extension-of-honduras-anti-corruption-commission>

man who has the fate of the MACCIH in his hands. He somehow described the MACCIH as being married with the executive power. According to him, if they want to stay married, he will decide about this<sup>72</sup> – which is obviously wrong, as the agreement between the OAS and Honduras was made at the executive level. The former Attorney General Edmundo Orellana Mercado called this statement "arrogant" and highlights the lack of knowledge about this important issue by Oliva.<sup>73</sup>

The MACCIH's national counterpart UFECIC, meanwhile, announced new investigations and its head, Javier Santos, emphasized its independent work from the Attorney General Óscar Chinchilla.<sup>74</sup> Santos also criticized a Honduran specialty that they have to await investigations by the TSC before taking up their own which can take years.<sup>75</sup> The CNA, meanwhile, denounced the "systematic attacks" for its fight against corruption by the JOH regime.<sup>76</sup>

On December 5, the Acting Assistant Secretary for U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, Michael G. Kozak, tweeted again (see last month): "Honduras's leaders know that corruption has no place in Honduras— that's why they invited @OEA\_MACCIH in to work w prosecutors. Now is the time to renew the mandate. No one is above the law." Just hours later, the Honduran Congress, i.e. the Nationalist majority and its allies, once more showed that they are above the law by announcing their own special commission to evaluate the MACCIH<sup>77</sup>, days before the OAS is supposed to present their evaluation and just six weeks before the end of its mandate.<sup>78</sup> A day later, the EU also joined the discussion. "The EU and its Member States reiterate their support for the work done by the Mission to Support the Fight Against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH), which since its creation in 2016 at the invitation of the Honduran government, has been making a significant contribution to the prevention and fight against corruption and impunity in Honduras and to the strengthening of the Rule of Law in the country. The European Union and its Member States are among the most important donors to MACCIH. In January 2020 the mandate of MACCIH will expire. The EU calls on the Honduran government to renew the mandate in its entirety."<sup>79</sup>

The decision by the Nationalist-controlled Congress to form their own commission to evaluate the MACCIH, meanwhile, caused widespread rejection. Just a day after the announcement, the all members from other parties than the National Party had left the commission again.<sup>80</sup> "For the congressman of Pinu, David Reyes, the appointment of the legislative commission to investigate the actions of the MACCIH is a gross maneuver and vulgarization of the issue, and he says that the more than 80 congresswo/men who have been singled out and accused in investigations of the

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72 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/continuidad-de-la-maccih-depende-de-matrimonio-con-el-poder-ejecutivo-oliva.html>

73 <https://radiohm.hn/de-prepotente-califica-edmundo-orellana-a-mauricio-oliva-sobre-santificar-convenio-con-la-maccih/>

74 <https://tiempo.hn/ufecic-lineas-investigacion-por-actos-corrupcion/>

75 <https://www.proceso.hn/nacionales/9-nacionales/en-ninguna-parte-del-mundo-el-mp-investiga-despues-del-tsc-dice-jefe-de-ufecic.html>

76 <https://twitter.com/cnahonduras/status/1202303281864814592>

77 [https://twitter.com/Congreso\\_HND/status/1202667648145854464](https://twitter.com/Congreso_HND/status/1202667648145854464)

78 <https://tiempo.hn/controversia-diputados-evaluaran-maccih-decide-congreso-nacional/>

79 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/12/06/declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-the-extension-of-the-mandate-of-the-mission-to-support-the-fight-against-corruption-and-impunity-in-honduras-maccih/>

80 <https://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/tomas-ramirez-se-retira-de-la-comision-que-investiga-actuaciones-de-la-maccih.html>

UFECIC are showing signs of fear."<sup>81</sup> The US once more asked the renewal of the mandate for the MACCIH.<sup>82</sup> The same demand also came from the Coalition for the Renewal of the MACCIH.<sup>83</sup> OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro highlighted the important work of the MACCIH.<sup>84</sup> The head of the Supreme Audit Court (TSC), meanwhile, publicly criticized the MACCIH claiming that a cooperation between them did not materialize.<sup>85</sup> Presidential adviser Marvin Ponce said that JOH and the foreign minister wanted to renew the mandate, but other groups inside the National Party did not.<sup>86</sup>

On December 10, the JOH regime reacted to the call from the US to renew the mandate of the MACCIH reiterating that "the sovereign government of Honduras (...) will base its decision on the results of the international evaluation".<sup>87</sup> The Nationalist commission to evaluate the MACCIH did their job in record time and presented just two days later its report.<sup>88</sup> It came to a vote in Congress and 70 congresswo/men voted in favor of not renewing the MACCIH's mandate (again, the vote was without any legal basis), 52 against, 4 did not vote and 1 abstained. "The vote came after a special commission, made up of seven deputies from the governing party, presented a report arguing that the agreement reached with the OAS should not be ratified because it violates the independence of the controlling, investigative and judicial bodies."<sup>89</sup> The Liberal Party rejected the report.<sup>90</sup> In a joint press release, Pinu and Libre demanded the renewal of the mandate.<sup>91</sup> The recently created Platform of Media Outlets against Corruption and Impunity condemned the actions by Congress. It highlighted the lack of political will to confront corruption and impunity.<sup>92</sup>

On December 12, the official evaluation body by the OAS has handed in its report on the MACCIH. It recommends the prolong the current mandate of the MACCIH without modifications.<sup>93</sup> Journalist Jeff Ernst summarizes the obstacles found by the report in one word: Congress.<sup>94</sup> EU ambassador Alessandro Palmero said it would be "opportune" to renew the mandate.<sup>95</sup> JOH said they will analyze it and present an answer in January.<sup>96</sup> The Nationalist congressman, Edwin Gómez, meanwhile, presented a bill to get rid of the MACCIH.<sup>97</sup> The business lobby criticizes that Congress gives a bad image to Honduras.<sup>98</sup> US Acting Assistant Secretary for U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, Michael G. Kozak tweeted once more: "We agree with the

81 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/congreso-nacional-no-tiene-moral-para-investigar-a-la-maccih-segun-frente-parlamentario/>

82 <https://hn.usembassy.gov/es/estados-unidos-pide-renovacion-maccih/>

83 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/12/09/coalicion-demanda-intercambio-de-notas-para-la-renovacion-del-mandato-de-la-maccih/>

84 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/almagro-defiende-accionar-de-la-maccih-y-alardea-con-sus-resultados.html>

85 <https://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/firmamos-un-convenio-con-la-maccih-pero-no-ha-existido-cooperacion-se-queja-magistrado-del-tsc.html>

86 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/presidente-y-canciller-me-han-dicho-quieren-renovar-la-maccih-no-asi-otros-sectores-del-pn-marvin-ponce.html>

87 <https://twitter.com/CMendozaHN/status/1204493522189115392>

88 <http://elpulso.hn/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Informe-Maccih-del-CN-convertido.pdf>

89 <https://criterio.hn/diputados-oficialistas-votan-para-que-el-convenio-de-la-maccih-no-sea-ratificado/>

90 <https://criterio.hn/liberales-condenan-y-rechazan-informe-del-congreso-nacional-sobre-la-maccih/>

91 <https://criterio.hn/diputados-opositores-exigen-la-renovacion-del-convenio-la-maccih>

92 <https://criterio.hn/plataforma-de-medios-condena-actuacion-del-congreso-nacional-respecto-a-la-maccih/>

93 <https://www.oas.org/documents/spa/press/Informe-de-Evaluacion-del-Trabajo-de-la-MACCIH.pdf>

94 <https://twitter.com/jeffernst/status/1205290975851098114>

95 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/embajador-de-la-ue-cree-que-es-oportuno-renovar-mision-de-oea-en-honduras.html>

96 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/presidente-herandez-reitera-que-se-evaluara-informe-sobre-la-maccih.html>

97 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/diputado-edwin-gomez-presenta-iniciativa-para-derogar-el-convenio-de-la-maccih.html>

98 <https://confidencial.hn.com/cohep-senala-que-parlamentarios-dan-mala-imagen-a-la-comunidad-internacional-al-prescindir-a-la-maccih/>



recommendation of the joint Honduran government and OAS evaluation report to renew the @OEA\_MACCIH mandate without changes so it can continue its important work in #Honduras."<sup>99</sup> The Parliamentary Group Germany-Central America from the German Bundestag wrote an open letter to Mauricio Oliva congress' president, highlighting the important work of the MACCIH and asking for the renewal of its mandate.<sup>100</sup>

On December 13, Hondurans took to the street to demand the renewal of the MACCIH's mandate.<sup>101</sup> "The decision by the National Congress is causing tremendous controversy, first, to investigate the performance of the MACCIH, second, to approve an almost express report of their investigation, third, to ask the executive not to approve the extension of its period, and to finish off, already introduced an initiative that seeks to eliminate the decree that gives life to the MACCIH."<sup>102</sup> Dozens of Honduran and international human rights organizations published a joint press release warn about "developments that threaten continuity of the MACCIH in Honduras" and urge for a renewal of its mandate.<sup>103</sup> "The fight against corruption, under the current conditions, has no possibility of developing efficiently and sustainably from the national institutionality, because it is captured by networks of corruption and impunity which have turned the State into an instrument at its service. The most profound changes will come from below, from citizen mobilization and political action which can provoke substantive changes in the political elites and the political system. In the meantime, the presence of international bodies, such as the MACCIH, is of fundamental importance in order to move forward."<sup>104</sup>

At the end of December, the OAS published a press release<sup>105</sup> announcing talks between the General Secretary and Honduras on the MACCIH.<sup>106</sup> This caused different reactions. Journalist Dagoberto Rodríguez Coello writes: "The MACCIH will become an advisory and support body for a much broader inter-institutional anti-corruption body, composed of MP, CSJ, TSC, among others."<sup>107</sup> Proceso Digital had a headline "The MACCIH stays!"<sup>108</sup> The executive director of CESPAD, Gustavo Irias, wrote: "Back to reality, the intention of Hernández and Almagro is to renew the mandate of the MACCIH by removing it from the criminal investigation with the UFECIC. In reality, it would be another MACCIH that would be in harmony with the protection built by the corrupt elite in recent months."<sup>109</sup>

The Coalition for the Renovation of the MACCIH demands the renewal of its mandate but without changes. In the case of changes made to the mandate, it would go to Nationalist-controlled

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99 <https://twitter.com/WHAAsstSecty/status/1205654656736780288>

100 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2647-grupo-parlamentario-aleman-centroamericano-abogan-para-la-maccih-no-desaparezca>

101 <https://www.hispantv.com/noticias/honduras/444461/protesta-herandez-corrupcion-impunidad-maccih>

102 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/blindaje-de-los-corruptos/>

103 <https://www.cejil.org/en/human-rights-organizations-alert-against-developments-threaten-continuity-maccih-honduras-urge>

104 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/12/17/analisis-como-los-protagonistas-de-la-corrupcion-secuestraron-al-estado-de-honduras-desde-adentro/>

105 [https://www.oas.org/es/centro\\_noticias/comunicado\\_prensa.asp?sCodigo=C-115/19](https://www.oas.org/es/centro_noticias/comunicado_prensa.asp?sCodigo=C-115/19)

106 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1344211-466/honduras-y-oea-dialogar%C3%A1n-para-avanzar-en-siguiente-etapa-de-la-maccih>

107 <https://twitter.com/darocohn/status/1209512482697629696>

108 <https://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/la-maccih-se-queda.html>

109 <https://twitter.com/GustavoIrias/status/1209914313256906756>

Congress.<sup>110</sup> JOH's allies, meanwhile, continued to undermine the MACCIH. The Evangelical Confraternity announced that the MACCIH should only be renewed for a short time as "our institutions have learned a lot".<sup>111</sup> The possible Nationalist presidential candidate and mayor of Tegucigalpa, Nasry Asfura, accuses the MACCIH of foreign interference.<sup>112</sup>

On December 27, the talks started between the OAS General Secretary and the JOH regime on the renewal of the MACCIH mandate.<sup>113</sup> Almargo once more talked of the "construction of a stronger system" which could imply changes to the mandate.<sup>114</sup> The talks were lead by a so-called negotiation commission. Journalist Dagoberto Rodríguez Coello listed some of its members from the Honduran side: "Lisandro Rosales Banegas (foreign minister), Abraham Alvarenga Urbina (presidential adviser), Ebal Diaz Lupian (minister of the presidency), Miriam Estela Guzmán (SAR), Ethel Suyapa Deras Enamorado (CNBS)".<sup>115</sup> Journalist Emy Padilla wrote of "the new farce by Hernández and Almargo".<sup>116</sup> Business leader and outspoken critique of the JOH regime, Juliette Handal, asked the international community not to accept changes to the MACCIH's mandate.<sup>117</sup> Even the former head of the MACCIH, Juan Jiménez Mayor, joined the discussion. He sees the renegotiation of the mandate as part of a larger discussion between the JOH regime and the OAS General Secretary Luis Almargo regarding the latter's reelection bid. This situation is "bad news for Honduras" according to Jiménez Mayor.<sup>118</sup> Nasralla spoke of an impunity pact between JOH and Almargo.<sup>119</sup>

## The Petty Cash of the Brother Case

The MACCIH and UFECIC request the seizure of goods belonging to the brother of former president Pepe Lobo, Ramón Lobo Sosa.<sup>120</sup>

## IHSS

In the IHSS corruption case, a new trial was set for February against its former director Mario Zelaya.<sup>121</sup>

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110 <https://criterio.hn/exigen-renovacion-de-la-maccih-pero-sin-cambios-en-su-convenio/>

111 <https://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/confraternidad-evangelica-pide-que-maccih-sea-renovada-por-poco-tiempo.html>

112 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/da-pena-que-personas-de-otros-paises-venga-a-poner-orden-opina-edil-asfura-sobre-la-maccih.html>

113 <https://criterio.hn/hermanez-y-almagro-deciden-modificar-convenio-de-la-maccih/>

114 [https://twitter.com/Almagro\\_OEA2015/status/1210616444196663303](https://twitter.com/Almagro_OEA2015/status/1210616444196663303)

115 <https://twitter.com/darocohn/status/1210583559288827904>

116 <https://criterio.hn/la-nueva-etapa-de-la-maccih-la-nueva-farsa-de-hermanez-y-almagro/>

117 <https://confidencialhn.com/piden-a-comunidad-internacional-que-no-accepte-condiciones-ante-renovacion-de-la-maccih/>

118 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/mas-que-el-convenio-de-maccih-honduras-negocia-apoyo-a-reeleccion-de-almagro-jimenez-mayor.html>

119 <https://confidencialhn.com/nasralla-advierde-manipulacion-ante-renovacion-de-maccih-esta-dispuesto-a-liderar-paro-nacional/>

120 <https://www.oas.org/es/sap/dsdme/maccih/new/docs/MCH-018.Equipo-integrado-MACCIH-UFECIC-solicita-privacion-definitiva-de-bienes-de-origen-il%C3%ADcito-en-Caso-Caja-Chica-del-Hermano.pdf>

121 [https://twitter.com/MP\\_Honduras/status/1204835530741026817](https://twitter.com/MP_Honduras/status/1204835530741026817)



## Narcopolítica

The MP demanded to go to trial in the case of the former mayor of Tegucigalpa and the former secretary for Public Works, Miguel Pastor.<sup>122</sup> In the same corruption case, a court ordered alternative measures to imprisonment for the accused Marvin Aguilera Flores.<sup>123</sup>

## State Security Forces

The JOH regime and the security forces have in the recent past often spoke about their alleged success in combating extortion. The transport sector, meanwhile, denounced this month having had to pay 40 million Lempiras in extortion money in December alone. So far this year, at least 125 people working in the transport sector have been murdered.<sup>124 125</sup>

## Post-Electoral Human Rights Violations

The TIGRES agent who where let go from their job for protesting against the ordered repression against protesters (see last month) sued the Honduran State for 80 million Lempiras.<sup>126</sup>

## Repressions

Inhabitants from Zacate Grande denounced that during a protest this December 4, on the road to Coyolito, in the department of Valle, members of the Military Police came to attack them while they were peacefully protesting for their land. Among those attacked were two local HRDs and social communicators, Gerardo Aguilar and Roxana Corrales. The Military Police agents tried to take away their equipment. This took place one week after the most recent act of criminalization against three defenders from Zacate Grande (see the section on criminalization above).<sup>127</sup>

## Penitentiary System

December was one of the bloodiest month in Honduras' prison. It does not help to know that 52% of all inmates have not yet been sentenced and should be awaiting trial outside prison.<sup>128</sup> At least the National Penitentiary Institute (INP) announced to study the reports on 21'000 inmates after the new Penal Code will come into force to see if the inmates with minor crimes could be released.<sup>129</sup>

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122 <https://confidencialhn.com/piden-elevar-a-juicio-oral-causa-penal-contramiguel-pastor-y-complices-por-narcopolitica/>

123 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/se-presenta-ante-los-tribunales-el-ultimo-implicado-en-caso-narcopolitica.html>

124 <https://tiempo.hn/sector-transporte-pago-mas-de-140-millones-por-extorsion-en-diciembre/>

125 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/transportistas-denuncian-que-han-pagado-mas-de-140-millones-por-extorsion-en-diciembre.html>

126 <https://tiempo.hn/agentes-tigres-destituidos-demandan-estado-1-80-millones/>

127 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2633-gobierno-de-joh-reintala-el-terror-policia-militar-agrede-a-manifestantes-de-la-comunidad-de-zacate-grande>

128 <https://tiempo.hn/codeh-52-de-reos-no-condenados-deberian-defenderse-en-libertad/>

129 <https://tiempo.hn/inp-reos-podrian-salir-libre-hasta-entrada-vigencia-del-nuevo-codigo-penal/>

The month started with a riot at the youth detention center Renaciendo where four inmates died.<sup>130 131</sup> OACNUDH expressed grave concern.<sup>132</sup> At this moment, at least 11 inmates had already been murdered this year, compared to four in 2018.<sup>133</sup> On December 14, another five inmates were murdered, shot dead by another inmate in the so-called maximum-security prison La Tolva.<sup>134 135</sup> The same day, 33 inmates escaped from the youth detention center Renaciendo.<sup>136</sup> Pinu congresswoman Doris Gutiérrez denounced that hitmen go freely in and out of the so-called maximum security prisons.<sup>137</sup> OACNUDH again expressed profound concern and it reminded Honduras about its duty to protect the human rights of all people which includes taking measures to protect the lives of inmates. OACNUDH also called for an independent investigation.<sup>138</sup> Conaprev called for the demilitarization of the prison system and the destitution of the heads of the INP.<sup>139 140</sup> This also resonated with a recent demand by the MACCIH for the demilitarization of the prisons.<sup>141</sup>

Of course, the JOH regime came to another conclusion. It declared a state of emergency, suspended the prison authorities and further militarized the Honduran penitentiary system. They will have control for the next six months.<sup>142 143</sup> The head of the human rights organization Casa Alianza, Guadalupe Ruelas, expressed fear that the defenselessness of inmates will further increase and transparency further decrease.<sup>144</sup> There was widespread criticism for this decision and it is worth highlighting two things. First, especially the so-called maximum-security prisons, where the most assassinations took place this year, were already heavily militarized under the promise that they should stop exactly what has now been happening under their control these last months. Even more, it gives the JOH regime through its allies in the Armed Forces even more control and given the recent assassinations of witnesses to the Tony Hernández case, this is especially worrisome. Second, once more, JOH ally and "civil society leader" Omar Rivera feels the urge to praise the decision to militarize the prisons.<sup>145</sup>

Or in the words of Radio Progreso: "The murder of at least five people in an alleged riot at the maximum security prison "La Tolva" or "El Pozo II", makes it clear again that the only safe thing in the mega prisons created by the regime is death. The regime sold the false idea that these prisons would improve the coexistence of persons deprived of liberty considered dangerous and would effectively control them, since despite being under the custody of the State, they continued their

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130 <https://confidencialhn.com/tres-muertos-y-varuis-heridos-deja-reuerta-en-carcel-de-menores-renaciendo/>

131 <https://www.laprensa.hn/sucesos/1339447-410/-muertos-amotinamiento-centro-menores-renacer-tegucigalpa->

132 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1204154707834474496>

133 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/sucesos/1339986-466/homicidios-carceles-honduras>

134 <https://confidencialhn.com/cinco-muertos-deja-reuerta-en-el-penal-de-ultra-alta-seguridad-de-moroceli/>

135 <https://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/cinco-muertos-en-amotinamiento-en-carcel-de-la-tolva.html>

136 <https://confidencialhn.com/se-escapan-unos-33-infractores-del-correccional-juvenil-renaciendo/>

137 <http://elpulso.hn/en-las-carceles-de-maxima-seguridad-los-asesinos-entran-como-pedro-por-su-casa-doris-gutierrez/>

138 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1206602432073097217>

139 <https://tiempo.hn/conaprev-carceles-maxima-seguridad/>

140 <https://confidencialhn.com/conaprev-pide-destitucion-inmediata-de-las-autoridades-del-sistema-penitenciario/>

141 <https://www.proceso.hn/component/k2/38-politica-nacional/desmilitarizar-y-adequar-seguridad-vital-en-reforma-penitenciaria-maccih.html>

142 <https://criterio.hn/militarizan-y-suspenden-autoridades-de-centros-penitenciarios-de-honduras/>

143 <https://tiempo.hn/seis-coroneles-un-oficial-policia-dirigiran-el-sistema-penitenciario/>

144 <https://criterio.hn/indefension-de-privados-de-libertad-aumentara-con-militares/>

145 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/sociedad-civil-aplaude-intervencion-militar-en-carceles-defensores-de-ddhh-la-cuestionan.html>

criminal activities from inside the prisons. With this logic, the prison function was militarized, which meant handing over custody and control of maximum security prisons to the military; however, to date, the military has once again proved to be incompetent."<sup>146</sup> Criminal lawyer Raúl Suazo denounced that Honduras is violating international standards.<sup>147</sup> The civil society Board to Follow-Up on Sentences and Resolutions by the Inter-American Court on Human Rights came to the same conclusion<sup>148</sup> and so did CEJIL.<sup>149</sup>

On December 20, the third day of total control by Fusina, there was already the first disaster. Criterio first reported that at least 13 inmates died in the prison in Tela, Atlántida, and Fusina refused to share information about what happened.<sup>150</sup> In the evening, El Herald reported on at least 20 dead inmates, while Fusina only confirmed three.<sup>151</sup> The next day, they raised the confirmed number to 18.<sup>152</sup> La Prensa reported that the murdered inmates were of low-risk and only three of them had been sentenced.<sup>153</sup> Family members had started to gather in front of the prison demanding answers.<sup>154</sup> Fusina sought excuses claiming that they had not yet taken control of the Tela prison when the massacre took place.<sup>155</sup> Human rights defender Dina Madrid disagreed saying that the Military Police had controlled the prison for almost a year.<sup>156</sup>

Just two days later, a second mass killing took place in another Honduran prison. 19 inmates were assassinated in the minimum-security prison El Porvenir, 100km northeast of the Tegucigalpa.<sup>157 158</sup> OACNUDH expressed deep concerns.<sup>159</sup> Fusina confirmed 18 deaths.<sup>160</sup> They also tried to present themselves as the victims claiming that the "criminal escalation" impedes them from taking over the control of the Honduran prison. This, once more, ignored the fact that the Military Police had been "in control" of some prison for quite some time.<sup>161</sup> The mass-killing in the Tela prison, meanwhile, claimed its 19th victim, as one inmate died in the hospital from his wounds.<sup>162</sup> Later, another inmate died in the hospital.<sup>163</sup>

Padre Melo warned about this situation: "Prison massacres, witness cleansing and militarization are part of the policy of extermination and official terror. And yet there are those who claim that they are just inmates killing each other. What a naive and dangerous opinion! The sad thing is that this is

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146 <https://wp.radioprogreso.net/carceles-de-maxima-seguridad-y-militares/>

147 <http://elpulso.hn/comision-interventora-del-instituto-penitenciario-de-honduras-refleja-crisis-en-el-pais/>

148 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/con-militarizacion-del-sistema-penitenciario-honduras-incumple-con-estandares-internacionales-de-ddhh-en-materia-penitenciaria/>

149 <https://www.cejil.org/es/militarizacion-del-sistema-penitenciario-honduras-incumple-estandares-internacionales-derechos>

150 <https://criterio.hn/al-menos-13-muertos-y-15-heridos-en-carcel-de-tela-atlantida/>

151 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/sucesos/1343615-466/muertos-tela-centro-penal-carcel-amotinamiento-reverta>

152 <https://confidencialhn.com/honduras-fusina-confirma-21-asesinatos-en-reverta-del-penal-de-tela/>

153 <https://www.laprensa.hn/fotogalerias/honduras/1343800-411/18-reclusos-asesinados-baja-peligrosidad-mascrec-carcel-tela-honduras?i=1>

154 <https://tiempo.hn/masacre-en-carcel-de-tela-familiares-se-aglomeran-y-quieren-respuestas/>

155 <https://tiempo.hn/fusina-junta-interventora-habia-tomado-penal-tela/>

156 <https://tiempo.hn/dina-madrid-fusina-maneja-sistema-penitenciario/>

157 <https://confidencialhn.com/carniceria-humana-unas-16-personas-son-asesinadas-en-el-penal-de-el-porvenir/>

158 <https://tiempo.hn/identifican-reos-muertos-carcel-el-porvenir1/>

159 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1208963307299885057>

160 <https://tiempo.hn/fusina-18-ascienden-reos-muertos-carcel-el-porvenir12/>

161 <https://confidencialhn.com/se-hacen-las-victimas-fusina-denuncia-que-el-crimen-les-impide-asumir-sistema-carcelario/>

162 <https://tiempo.hn/sps-suman-19-victimas-masacre-carcel-tela/>

163 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/sucesos/1344596-466/a-20-asciende-la-cifra-de-muertos-por-reverta-en-c%C3%A1rcel-de>

only just beginning".<sup>164</sup> Criminal lawyer Carlos Arévalo declared that the executive power is responsible for the massacres this month in Honduras' prisons.<sup>165</sup> Deputy Minister of Security Luis Suazo, meanwhile, had his own theory. "What has happened in recent days in the prisons are systematic, orchestrated and well-planned attacks by organized crime to expose Honduras, and to draw the attention of human rights organizations"<sup>166</sup>

CEJIL condemned the situation and denounced that the State has failed to guarantee the right to live and personal integrity of inmates. They also expressed concern that the further militarization of the prisons seems to be the answer for the JOH regime exposing inmates to additional human rights violations.<sup>167</sup> The well-renowned human rights defender Juan Almeyda Bonilla presented Honduras' prisons as "centers of death"<sup>168</sup> and Casa Alianza denounced that the massacres were planned to spur the privatization of the prisons.<sup>169</sup> Human rights organizations demanded the creation of a special commission representing various sectors. "According to their proposal, the commission should make urgent recommendations on the serious situation facing the prison system as a result of more than 40 violent deaths of prisoners in recent days and due to the lack of institutional credibility emanating from public security and justice operators."<sup>170</sup>

The IACHR and OACNUDH published a joint press release expressing concern about the situation in Honduras' prisons and calling on the State to protect the lives of the inmates.<sup>171</sup> They also offered assistance in elaborating a diagnostic of the Honduran penitentiary system.<sup>172</sup> By the end of December, there were 2000 soldiers and police agents dispatched for the control of the prisons.<sup>173</sup> The new head of the Armed Forces, general Tito Livio Moreno Coello, promised a well-functioning prison system in six months.<sup>174</sup> A day later, another inmate was found dead in the so-called maximum-security prison La Tolva.<sup>175</sup> He was strangled to death by his two cell mates.<sup>176</sup> The human rights organization CPTRT denounced the torture of female inmates by members of the Armed Forces.<sup>177 178 179</sup> The new head of the Armed Forces, Tito Livio Moreno, denied it.<sup>180</sup>

On December 27, El Libertador uncovered that among the murdered inmates in the El Porvenir prison was Wilson Eduardo Valladares, the alleged murder of Yester Hernández, brother of JOH. Yester Hernández had been murdered on December 29, 2008. Valladares' wife had claimed his

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164 <https://twitter.com/Melosjmoreno/status/1208940400477691904>

165 <https://confidencialhn.com/aseguran-que-el-ejecutivo-estaria-detras-de-las-masacres-en-el-sistema-penitenciario/>

166 <https://confidencialhn.com/funcionario-de-seguridad-cree-que-masacre-es-para-llamar-atencion-de-organismos-de-ddhh/>

167 <https://www.cejil.org/es/cejil-condenamos-masacres-al-menos-42-personas-privadas-libertad-honduras>

168 <https://confidencialhn.com/defensor-de-ddhh-lamenta-que-las-carceles-se-convirtieron-en-centros-de-muerte/>

169 <https://confidencialhn.com/casa-alianza-denuncia-que-las-masacres-son-planificadas-para-privatizar-carceles/>

170 <https://criterio.hn/demandan-crear-comision-de-alta-credibilidad-que-se-encargue-de-centros-penales-de-honduras/>

171 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1209534826434453504>

172 <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2019/334.asp>

173 <https://radiohm.hn/un-contingente-de-2000-militares-y-policias-resguardan-las-carceles-mision-imposible/>

174 <https://tiempo.hn/funciones-misiones-fusina-normalizar-crisis-penitenciaria-1/>

175 <https://confidencialhn.com/fallece-de-manera-misteriosa-otro-recluso-al-interior-del-presidio-de-moroceli/>

176 <https://tiempo.hn/fusina-establecen-como-mataron-reo-carcel-moroceli/>

177 <https://confidencialhn.com/denuncian-que-fusina-torturo-a-varias-mujeres-en-el-centro-penal-de-el-progreso/>

178 <https://confidencialhn.com/policias-militares-ultrajaron-a-una-privada-de-libertad-en-carcel-de-el-progreso-requeriran-a-jefe-del-operativo/>

179 <https://confidencialhn.com/policias-militares-ultrajaron-a-una-privada-de-libertad-en-carcel-de-el-progreso-requeriran-a-jefe-del-operativo/>

180 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/ningun-militar-maltrato-a-privadas-de-libertad-asegura-jefe-castrense.html>

innocence for over ten years saying that the DNA evidence indicated that he had not participated in the murder.<sup>181</sup> The prison massacre also claimed the lives of inmates sentenced for the murder of the two journalists Anibal Barrow and Alfredo Villatoro.<sup>182</sup>

## Militarization

Even though media coverage has decreased after the initial shock about the militarization program for children, Guardians of the Fatherland, the program continues. ContraCorriente highlighted the religious aspect of the program and how it seems to be the materialization of "God and Fatherland." "In the last 20 years, Nationalist governments have promoted the incursion of the Armed Forces in the management of public security, first as a deterrent to criminality and, over the years, in tasks of attacking organized crime and preventing violence in conflictive neighborhoods. From seeing them guarding public buses, we went on to see them in tasks such as the civic and ethical formation of children. In 2010, these actions were formalized through a program called Guardians of the Fatherland, in which for 4 years they took the children from the schools to the battalions to give them civic and religious classes. From 2014 to 2019 the program has had some changes and now, through civil liaisons, Guardians of the Fatherland operates in public schools nationwide. Over 17 years, the program has covered approximately 12% of the Honduran child population. Of the civil society bodies that accompany the program most are the churches. It is worth mentioning that the Evangelical Confraternity of Honduras is one of its main partners."<sup>183</sup>

Tito Livio Moreno Coello, the former general commander of the Military Police was announced as the new head of the Armed Forces.<sup>184</sup> This will further strengthen the position of JOH. And as an additional step to buy the support of the state security forces, the JOH regime had Congress approve after just one debate pension increases for members of the Armed Forces and the police as well as firefighters.<sup>185</sup> Colonel Willy Oseguera Rodas, meanwhile, took over the command of the Military Police.<sup>186</sup>

For the militarization of the penitentiary system, see the section above.

## International Community

UNDP promotes in Honduras "integrated development solutions" to tackle child malnutrition. "Child malnutrition is a complex issue rooted in social, economic and environmental factors. "The challenge for us as a community is to join forces," says Dr. Teresa de Jesus, who works at the health center. "Focusing only on health will not work, family income and housing conditions also limit a child's development and increase the risk for undernourishment."<sup>187</sup> The Inter-American

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181 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3673-presunto-asesino-de-hermano-de-joh-ejecutado-en-masacre-de-penales>

182 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3675-sicarios-de-periodistas-villatoro-y-barrow-asesinados-en-carcel-de-el-porvenir>

183 <https://contracorriente.red/2019/12/04/guardianes-de-la-patria-la-huella-militar-y-religiosa-en-la-ninez-de-un-pais-violento/>

184 <https://confidencialhnm.com/joh-se-enrumba-a-su-dictadura-nombra-a-tito-moreno-como-jefe-de-ffaa/>

185 <https://tiempo.hn/cn-aprueba-aumento-pensiones-militares-policias-bomberos/>

186 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/asume-nuevo-comandante-de-la-policia-militar-en-honduras.html>

187 <https://medium.com/@UNDP/groundbreaking-data-tackles-child-malnutrition-in-honduras-3c219a2736cb>

Development Bank (BID) will work with Honduras on a security scheme to confront climate change.<sup>188</sup> JOH signed a loan with the Inter-American Development Bank (BID) to build a trauma hospital.<sup>189</sup> And by the end of December, the IMF approved in a first revision the Stand By agreement with Honduras.<sup>190</sup>

## US

The Latin American Working Group (LAWG) published a short brief on the situation in Honduras and Guatemala with policy recommendations for the US. "In Guatemala and Honduras, corrupt officials in executive branches and legislatures are putting into place laws and policies to limit oversight and action by judicial authorities, human rights defenders, civil society activists, and journalists to expose and protest abuses, while sweeping away obstacles to their own corruption. As the situation deteriorates rapidly, the White House focus on migration is almost exclusively driving U.S. government diplomacy towards the two countries, as well as towards El Salvador."<sup>191</sup> El Faro also tackled the important question of US support for the JOH regime. "Just days after former Honduran congressman Juan Antonio "Tony" Hernández was convicted on drug and weapons charges in the United States, the U.S. Chargé d'Affaires in Honduras Colleen Hoey was photographed smiling and laughing alongside his brother, President Juan Orlando Hernández. The photo-op was followed by a comment from Michael Kozak, the U.S. State Department's Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs, who called the administration of President Hernández a "reliable partner." The photograph and comment were typical for the pat-on-the-back and turn-a-blind-eye U.S. strategy in Central America—basically propping up whatever head of state will do the United States' bidding. President Hernández represents short-term stability and somebody willing to bow to U.S. economic and political interests, no matter his alleged involvement in protecting and accepting bribes from drug traffickers and stealing million of dollars worth of state funds. (...) The Central American nation has long been a focal point of U.S. efforts to spread its influence throughout Latin America. In 2016 and 2017 alone, the US government bestowed Honduras with almost \$400 million dollars (...) But this assistance hasn't always helped ensure good practices. Some of the funds have gone directly to militarized police units like the Tigres, a force created in 2012 specifically to fight organized crime that has been dogged by corruption allegations involving some of the country's most high-profile drug traffickers. The money has also been funneled into the National Police, even while former police chief Juan Carlos "El Tigre" Bonilla Valladares, among other high-ranking police officers, is alleged to have played a central role in facilitating drug trafficking and been involved in extrajudicial murders. (...) While the United States does not hold all of the blame for the current state of Honduras, there's no denying how destructive its continued support, financial or otherwise, has been for a large share of Hondurans."<sup>192</sup>

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188 <https://confidencialhn.com/un-esquema-de-seguro-para-que-honduras-enfrente-el-cambio-climatico-es-analizado-por-el-bid/>

189 <https://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/herandez-sanciona-decreto-de-prestamo-con-el-bid-para-construccion-de-hospital-en-la-capital.html>

190 <https://www.proceso.hn/economia/6-economia/directorio-del-fmi-aprueba-primera-revision-de-acuerdo-stand-by-con-honduras.html>

191 <https://www.lawg.org/wp-content/uploads/LAWGEF-Guatemala-Honduras-memo-December-2019.pdf>

192 <https://elfaro.net/en/201912/internacionales/23866/What-Are-the-Consequences-of-Continued-US-Support-for-Honduras.htm>



Investigating the root causes of Honduran migration, Laura Carlsen came to similar conclusions. "Inexplicably, many progressive politicians and Washington NGOs protested the original announcement of suspension of aid to Honduras, with little explanation of how aid to an illegitimate and unpopular government in crisis would help the country. US aid historically— and especially under a Trump administration— has never been impartial or beneficent to the receiving Central American countries. All the Honduran grassroots leaders I talked to were very clear—U.S. aid props up the JOH government and works against us. (...) Instead of turning a blind eye to the Honduran crisis, Congress should stop propping up a man his own people call a dictator. As the Honduran government continues to attack protesters and target activists, it should quickly approve the Bertha Cáceres Act, named for the feminist environmental activist murdered for defending a river slated to be dammed. The Act calls for the immediate suspension of security aid."<sup>193</sup> The US embassy, meanwhile, praised the work of Attorney General Óscar Chinchilla for fighting corruption.<sup>194</sup><sup>195</sup>

There was also an important hearing at the Tom Lantos Commission in the US Congress this month, more on this in the first section of this monitor.

## EU

The MP inaugurated the Expedited Integrated Centre for Interinstitutional Justice (CEIN) in Comayagua.<sup>196</sup> It was supported by the Eurojusticia program by the EU and the Spanish Cooperation Agency. The Spanish ambassador was also present.<sup>197</sup>

## Drug Trafficking

La Prensa reports that there are 36 open extradition requests in Honduras.<sup>198</sup> Two former Honduran police officials will face trial for drug trafficking in New York in March 2020.<sup>199</sup> At the end of the month, Ramón Matta Waldurruga was arrested in Colombia and may be extradited to Honduras. He had previously been in prison in the US for two years for drug trafficking.<sup>200</sup>

Foreign Policy published an article on how the U.S. war on drugs is empowering corrupt elites in Honduras. "Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández is mired in controversy, accused of fraudulently rigging the 2017 election in his favor. And yet the Trump administration remains a strong supporter of his government due to its backing for Washington's immigration and drug policies. Traveling through the Honduran interior reveals the extent of the country's descent into chaos. It isn't a war zone in the traditional sense; insurgents aren't targeting foreigners or engaging

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193 <https://www.counterpunch.org/2019/12/31/as-honduras-collapses-its-people-are-forced-to-flee/>

194 <https://twitter.com/usembassyhn/status/1202976783106281475>

195 <https://tiempo.hn/embajada-eeuu-ratifica-apoyo-fiscal-general-oscar-chinchilla/>

196 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/149-diciembre2019/5231-se-inaugura-centro-integrado-expedito-de-justicia-interinstitucional-cein-en-la-ciudad-de-comayagua-13-de-diciembre-de-2019>

197 [https://twitter.com/MP\\_Honduras/status/1205538356999966723](https://twitter.com/MP_Honduras/status/1205538356999966723)

198 <https://www.laprensa.hn/premium/1341218-410/extraditables-36-ordenes-captura-pendientes-ejecutar-honduras>

199 <https://confidencialhn.com/dos-exoficiales-de-policia-presos-en-ee-uu-por-nexos-con-narcos-seran-sentenciados-en-marzo-de-2020/>

200 <https://tiempo.hn/matta-waldurruga-es-requerido-en-aeropuerto-colombiano/>

in attacks that kill indiscriminately. But the countryside is home to rampaging soldiers and gangs, along with police who routinely harass locals."<sup>201</sup>

## Tony Hernández

An additional four alleged associates of Tony Hernández were indicted on drug charges in New York. They are accused of conspiring with "corrupt Honduran officials".<sup>202</sup> "Prosecutors say some were present at the meeting when El Chapo reportedly delivered to Tony a \$1 million bribe destined for his brother, #Honduras Pres. Juan Orlando Hernández."<sup>203</sup> For more on the Tony Hernández case, especially the role of JOH, see the sub-section below.

## Varia

### JOH

December started with JOH's attendance at the COP in Madrid. It was accompanied by a protest letter to the Honduran embassy in Spain denouncing "the narco-dictatorship" under the JOH regime.<sup>204</sup> <sup>205</sup> During his participation, JOH asked for a refinancing of Honduran debt "to invest in mitigation projects".<sup>206</sup> Back home, political analyst Fernando García told ConfidencialHN that the National Party suffered severe blows for its links to drug trafficking and the recent convention (see last month) showed that some public Nationalist figures want to mark distance to JOH.<sup>207</sup> Even JOH's adviser Marvin Ponce said that the National Party "is worn down".<sup>208</sup>

On December 2, JOH's presidential adviser Ebal Díaz got into a Twitter feud with the director of the National Anti-Corruption Council (CNA), Gabriela Castellanos.<sup>209</sup> But Díaz may very well try to divert attention from new accusations against him - he was registered as the secretary of the NGO FUNDEIH, which played a crucial part in draining off public funds in a corruption case investigated by the MACCIH and UFECIC. ConfidencialHN presents Díaz as a man with a lot of knowledge on the JOH regime and its shady dealings. "Consequently, Díaz Lupián has a lot of information that could compromise his partner Juan Orlando Hernández as head of the criminal organization and that confirms the investigations carried out by both media outlets on how multi-million dollar amounts of money were stolen that helped the nationalist leader win the first electoral process and become one of the most powerful men in Honduras."<sup>210</sup>

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201 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/12/11/in-honduras-the-u-s-war-on-drugs-is-empowering-corrupt-elites/>

202 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3662-caso-tony-ee-uu-acusa-a-mexicanos-y-guatemaltecos-por-nexos-con-narcos>

203 <https://twitter.com/PJAsmann/status/1207034846675177472>

204 <https://twitter.com/RMigradas/status/1201489745114742784>

205 <https://criterio.hn/presidente-de-honduras-que-reprime-a-manifestantes-y-ambientalistas-esta-en-la-cop25/>

206 <https://confidencialhn.com/joh-aprovecha-cumbre-del-clima-para-pedir-refinanciamiento-de-deuda-externa-hondurena/>

207 <https://confidencialhn.com/decadencia-del-partido-nacional-surge-por-vinculos-con-narcos-segun-analista/>

208 <https://tiempo.hn/marvin-ponce-si-pn-no-se-une-probablemente-pierda-elecciones-2021/>

209 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3641-cna-responde-a-ebal-los-diaz-estan-contados>

210 <https://confidencialhn.com/ebal-diaz-fungio-como-secretario-de-oenege-de-joh-y-ana-rosalinda-que-dreno-dinero-publico/>



On ongoing pillar of JOH's power is the re-militarization of Honduras. Radio Progreso offered a welcome overview. "Since 2003, Honduras has undergone a process of re-militarization of society and the State that deepened with the coup d'état. The justification was the fight against violence and criminality, but the real objective was and is for the military to support a narco-dictatorial political project represented by Juan Orlando Hernandez. In exchange, the Armed Forces, especially its leadership, receive impunity for corruption and human rights violations committed, a carte blanche to control without accountability large portions of the public budget and greater control over the institutionality of the State. (...) The increase in violence indicates that the militarization of public security is not the answer, on the contrary, it only deepens authoritarianism, human rights violations, corruption and impunity. It is necessary to understand that violence is associated with various factors of social, economic, cultural and political inequality, which will continue to deepen if they are not addressed with public policies that place human dignity at the center."<sup>211</sup> And on this topic, the head of the Armed Forces, René Orlando Ponce Fonseca,<sup>212</sup> offered the joke of the month: During the 40 years he has been in the Armed Forces, never has there been any political interference.<sup>213</sup> Just days later, he "justified the re-election of President Juan Orlando Hernández, arguing that the majority of the population approved it, violating with this statement given to a radio station, the principle of being apolitical and non belligerency of the armed forces a few days before his term ends."<sup>214</sup> Constitutional lawyer Juan Carlos Barrientos also criticized the statement.<sup>215</sup> The JOH regime, meanwhile, returns the favor with ever increasing defense and security spending. The newest acquisition, a \$56 million patrol boat from Israel, arrived this month.<sup>216</sup> JOH's control of the Armed Forces became again apparent this month when he announced its new head, Tito Livio Moreno Coello - the former general commander of the Military Police.<sup>217</sup>

FOSDEH warned that this consumes up important parts of the 2020 budget.<sup>218</sup> "It seems as if Honduras is at war".<sup>219</sup> They presented five alerts regarding the budget: i) an ever increasing budget while the socioeconomic situation further deteriorates; ii) a budget which does not address the needs of the poor; iii) it violates the constitution when it comes to the under-funding of UNAH; iv) it further decreases access of information; and v) the budget for "financial services of the central administration" is worth 11'200 million Lempiras with no oversight.<sup>220</sup> Criticism also came from the the Central American Institute for Fiscal Studies (Icefi) highlighting problems ranging from a lack of transparency to cuts in education and healthcare spending.<sup>221</sup>

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211 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/el-espejismo-de-la-militarizacion-y-la-violencia/>

212 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3639-honduras-la-hora-del-general-y-la-cancion-desesperada-de-juan>

213 <https://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/nunca-ha-habido-injerencia-de-la-clase-politica-en-las-ffaa-defiende-general-ponce-fonseca.html>

214 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2636-jefe-de-estado-mayor-conjunto-de-las-ffaa-justifica-reeleccion-del-presidente-juan-orlando-hermandez>

215 <https://criterio.hn/al-jefe-de-las-fuerzas-armadas-se-le-salio-la-saya-cachureca-juan-barrientos/>

216 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3677-llega-buque-militar-que-cuesta-1-300-millones-a-hondurenos>

217 <https://tiempo.hn/nuevo-jefe-ffaa-apoyamos-al-actual-presidente/>

218 <https://confidencial.hn.com/fosdeh-advierde-que-gasto-publico-en-defensa-y-seguridad-consumiria-presupuesto-de-2020/>

219 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2637-fosdeh-financieramente-parece-que-honduras-esta-en-guerra>

220 <http://www.fosdeh.com/2019/12/se-aproxima-una-tormenta-o-sequia-perfecta-cinco-alertas-y-10-propuestas-al-presupuesto-2020/>

221 <https://criterio.hn/icefi-lamenta-que-presupuesto-2020-de-honduras-contenga-recortes-en-educacion-y-salud/>

The political opposition of JOH continues to suffer attacks. Deputy Libre congressman Alonso Rubí received death threats by employees of Congress.<sup>222</sup> On December 8, Ana Rosa Baquedano, sister of Libre councilor of Catacamas, Olancho, Héctor Anibal Amador Baquedano, was shot dead inside her store.<sup>223</sup> Just five months earlier, his was found dead at her home.<sup>224</sup>

Willfully ignorant to everything mentioned above, US president Trump praised JOH: "President Hernández is working with the United States very closely (...) and we are winning after years and years of losing. We are stopping drugs at a level that has never happened."<sup>225</sup> <sup>226</sup> Of course, this does not square with the view of the rest of the world of the JOH regime as a narcogovernment or in the words of Alberto Arce, "Honduras is a narco-political poem".<sup>227</sup> At the same time, the US Department of State warned that "they will immediately suspend the entry visas of corrupt officials in Latin America. (...) The measure would be extended, for example, to the next of kin of the officials of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, who are involved in acts of corruption."<sup>228</sup> <sup>229</sup> A day later, the Nationalist leader Roberto Ramón Castillo claimed that there were 8 requests for public officials of the JOH regime.<sup>230</sup> The press speaker of the police, Jair Meza, said there were 10 requests on which they are already working.<sup>231</sup>

Then, on December 9, something happened that, once again, should have led the US to reconsider its relationship with the JOH regime. Three days before, on December 6, Univision published the newest investigation by David C Adams and Jeff Ernst in the drug trafficking connection of the JOH regime focusing in detail on the murder of Nery López Sanabria a.k.a. Magdaleno Meza Funez in a Honduran prison. "The victim, Nery López Sanabria, was a 37-year-old drug trafficker whose ledgers were used in a New York trial a few days earlier to convict Juan Antonio 'Tony' Hernández, a younger brother of Honduras's president, on drugs and weapons charges. (...) López never testified in the trial as he was jailed in Honduras. However, he had been in discussions with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency for several months prior to his murder, according to four lawyers familiar with his efforts to cooperate with the U.S. officials. Some of those lawyers now wonder aloud if his cooperation with the DEA – and high-level political connections - may have gotten him killed. (...) But, despite losing López, the possible case against President Hernández keeps building, experts say. Several alleged co-conspirators remain at large, whole other alleged major traffickers have been busted in recent weeks."<sup>232</sup> <sup>233</sup> After his brutal assassination, there were calls for the

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222 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/diputado-suplente-de-libre-denuncia-amenazas-a-muerte-tras-dar-declaraciones-en-el-cn/>

223 <https://tiempo.hn/hermana-de-regidor-de-olancho-muere-luego-atacada-a-disparos/>

224 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/sucesos/1340562-466/matan-a-disparos-a-hermana-del-regidor-de-catacamas-olancho>

225 <https://twitter.com/dadams7308/status/1203532076148043776>

226 <https://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/palabras-de-trump-a-hernandez-son-reconocimiento-a-su-lucha-por-parte-de-un-amigo.html>

227 [https://www.eldiario.es/internacional/hace-falta-declarar-Honduras-narcoestado\\_0\\_840616907.html](https://www.eldiario.es/internacional/hace-falta-declarar-Honduras-narcoestado_0_840616907.html)

228 <https://anticorruptiondigest.com/2019/12/09/us-visa-crackdown-on-corrupt-latin-american-officials/>

229 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3645-ee-uu-no-mas-viajes-de-compras-ni-a-disney-para-lideres-corruptos-de-honduras>

230 <https://confidencialhn.com/dirigente-nacionalista-advierte-que-ee-uu-tiene-listo-ochos-requerimientos-contras-funcionarios-hondurenos/>

231 <https://confidencialhn.com/unas-10-personas-son-pedidas-en-extradicion-por-ee-uu-quienes-son/>

232 <https://www.univision.com/univision-news/latin-america/what-did-nerly-know-a-prison-murder-in-honduras-deepens-suspicions-of-government-involvement-in-drug-trafficking>

233 <https://www.univision.com/shows/noticiero-univision/quien-ordeno-el-asesinato-de-nerly-lopez-socio-del-hermano-del-presidente-hondureno-video?hootPostID=37913ab30e2dfc80866d8f55d5ea00c>

protection of his lawyers. And then, on December 9, one of his lawyers, José Luis Pinto, was murdered.<sup>234 235</sup> The second lawyer immediately expressed fears for his life.<sup>236</sup>

After Meza's murder, the then director of El Pozo, Pedro Idelfonso Armas, was suspended. He also immediately asked for protection. Less than a week after the events mentioned above, he was murdered as well.<sup>237</sup> CODEH's director Hugo Maldonado reacted saying that "the way in which the hitmen murdered Armas, whose face they disfigured, is a clear message from criminal structures."<sup>238</sup> The former police commissioner Henry Osorto claimed that the deputy director of the National Penitentiary Institute (INP) German McNeil made the call to the director of the El Pozo prison, Pedro Armas, to have Magdaleno Meza taken out of his cell and murdered.<sup>239 240</sup> El Libertador also did not mince words: "While all this happens on the surface, under our feet, beyond the black waters that run through the contaminated veins of the country a perverse plan is executed, Magdaleno was the first (of which we warned), then one of the lawyers and later the witness of the murder, the director of the "El Pozo". Who in Honduras wants all of them dead? Uff, very complicated! And although nothing can save the condemned, the gringos can assure two more years, although in the end all roads lead to Rome or New York. Juan is not saved even by the dragon's spheres."<sup>241</sup> Attorney Carlos Chajtur, the legal representative of Magdaleno Meza's family, meanwhile, said he is "totally unaware of the progress made in the investigation of the intellectual authors of his client's murder".<sup>242</sup> Carlos Leiva, CIPRODEH's director, warned that "people who handle information and who are still in prison are in grave danger".<sup>243</sup>

The hope voiced above that these most recent event would lead to a reconsideration of its allies in the US, was once again disappointed on December 19. JOH traveled to the US and met with representatives of the Trump administration.<sup>244</sup> Nevertheless, El Libertador claimed that Trump did not wanted to meet with JOH during this week's visit to the US while he met with Guatemala's outgoing president Jimmy Morales.<sup>245</sup> Back in Honduras, JOH's ally and former general commander of the Military Police took officially over as the Joint Chief of Staff.<sup>246</sup> At the same time, the opposition against the JOH regime remained strong as exemplified by the newest statement by the Episcopal Conference of Honduras. "The Bishops members of the Honduran Episcopal Conference, in a message to the Honduran people on the occasion of the Christmas period, emphasize that the actions of the state powers cause scandal and shame."<sup>247</sup> The business lobby COHEP also

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234 <https://criterio.hn/asesinan-a-abogado-defensor-de-magdaleno-meza/>

235 Graphic image: <https://confidencialhn.com/asesinan-a-defensor-de-magdaleno-meza-en-la-zona-occidental-hondurena/>

236 <https://confidencialhn.com/apoderado-legal-de-magdaleno-meza-denuncia-que-teme-por-su-viva-tras-muerte-de-colega/>

237 <https://www.univision.com/noticias/america-latina/asesinan-al-director-de-una-prision-de-maxima-seguridad-de-honduras>

238 <https://confidencialhn.com/consideran-que-muerte-de-jefe-carcelario-es-un-mensaje-claro-del-crimen/>

239 <https://confidencialhn.com/exjefe-policia-afirma-que-mcneil-llamo-al-director-del-pozo-que-sacara-a-magdaleno-para-ser-ultimado/>

240 <http://elpulso.hn/expolicia-osorto-canales-vaticino-que-matarian-a-jefe-del-penal-donde-acribillaron-a-magdaleno-y-adelanta-posible-nueva-victima/>

241 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3659-honduras-choque-de-toros-o-juicio-del-orlandismo>

242 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/denuncian-que-justicia-protége-a-los-autores-intelectuales-del-asesinato-de-magdaleno-meza/>

243 <http://www.radioamerica.hn/la-gente-que-maneja-informacion-y-que-aun-están-en-carceles-corre-grave-peligro-director-de-ciprodeh/>

244 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1343374-466/joh-reunion-chad-wolf-washington->

245 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3664-trump-posa-con-jimmy-morales-y-da-la-espaldita-a-joh>

246 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1343361-410/asume-nuevo-jefe-fuerzas-armadas-honduras-tito-livio-moreno>

247 <https://criterio.hn/actuaciones-de-los-poderes-del-estado-provocan-escandalo-y-verguenza-conferencia-episcopal/>

denounced that Honduras suffers from a economic crisis due to "political conflicts".<sup>248</sup> The executive director of the Commerce and Industries Chambers of Cortés (CCIC), Pedro Barquero, demanded the derogation of the Secrecy Law as well as that the MACCIH and the CNA investigate the use of the Security Tax (tasa de seguridad).<sup>249</sup> Radio HRN reports that the Security Tax will collect some 3 billion Lempiras next year, the biggest part coming from a fee on financial transactions.<sup>250</sup>

After record numbers, the official Honduran homicide rate has decreased over the last years, but the numbers are widely questioned due to the control over them by the police and the general lack of transparency. It is, therefore, especially noteworthy that the current situation in Honduras does not allow the JOH regime to falsely present another success story and they had to concede that even their official homicide rate increased this year.<sup>251</sup> Honduras is expected to close 2019 with a murder rate of 42.8 per 100'000 inhabitants, 1.4 points higher than in 2018.<sup>252</sup>

Before the month ended, there was again some hopeful news from the north. The US designated the Nationalist Honduran Congressman and JOH ally Oscar Ramon Najera and his son Oscar Roberto Najera Lopez due to their involvement in "public corruption related to the Honduran drug trafficking organization Los Cachiros".<sup>253</sup> "The sanctions against Najera and his son are the latest in a series of political embarrassments for the ruling National Party in Honduras (...) Najera's name has long been linked to corruption in Honduras and has also been mentioned in several recent drug trafficking cases. (...) n his closing argument, prosecutor Emil Bove described Najera as "a close friend" of Tony Hernandez "who was a part of setting all of this up so that the Honduran government could be used to protects drug traffickers." When Hernandez was arrested at Miami International Airport in November 2018, he had Najera's contact information in his phone. Photos found on the phone also showed Najera in a hot tub with Hernandez. Another photo showed Najera with Juan Orlando Hernandez."<sup>254</sup> The Honduras Solidarity Network rightly asked: "Congressman Oscar Najera & son ban from US. But what about all the other problems he has caused? Land conflicts & murder in Aguán Valley? Drug trafficking? Why does US back Honduran gov't & public prosecutor's office that doesn't hold traffickers & corrupt to account?"<sup>255</sup> A few days later, the Pro Honduras Network uncovered in court documents a link between the convicted drug trafficker Emilio Fernandez Rosa alias "Don H" and a previous deputy minister of security, Armando Calidonio Alvarado. The latter went on to become the mayor of San Pedro Sula. "The information contained in the document from the Southern District Court of New York supports the statements made by Captain Santos Orellana, former National Police Commissioner Henry Osorto and former National Police Director Ricardo Ramirez Del Cid, who said that Oscar Álvarez and

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248 <https://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/conflicto-politico-deja-ano-critico-a-la-economia-hondurena-dice-lider-empresarial.html>

249 <https://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/ccic-insiste-en-derogar-ley-de-secretos-e-investigar-utilizacion-de-la-tasa-de-seguridad.html>

250 <https://radiohm.hn/en-2020-casi-3000-millones-de-lempiras-aportaran-cinco-sectores-a-la-tasa-de-seguridad/>

251 <https://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/en-dos-puntos-aumentaron-los-homicidios-este-ano-segun-la-policia.html>

252 <https://tiempo.hn/tasa-de-homicidios-con-428-por-cada-100-mil-habitantes-cerrara-el-ano-honduras/>

253 <https://www.state.gov/public-designation-due-to-involvement-in-significant-corruption-of-honduran-congressman-oscar-ramon-najera/>

254 <https://www.univision.com/univision-news/latin-america/honduran-congressman-sanctioned-by-trump-administration-for-drug-corruption>

255 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1208111277236793345>

Armando Calidonio supported drug cartels while serving as Minister and Deputy Minister of Security, respectively."<sup>256</sup>

## Penal Code

The citizens initiative demanding the derogation of the Penal Code presented by CNA could not be handed over to Congress due to "inconsistencies in fingerprints".<sup>257</sup> After this suspicions rejection by the RNP, various civil society organizations started a second round of collection.<sup>258</sup> On December 11, they handed in over 12'000 signatures.<sup>259</sup>

## Electoral Reforms

Congress' Special Multi-Party Commission (see last month) decided that the small parties would not be present at the vote-counting tables (Mesas Electorales Receptoras (MER)) anymore. In the past, they had trafficked their positions at the table to larger parties, mostly the National Party, which then controlled the outcome of the table.<sup>260</sup> Some smaller parties have seen their legal status canceled, but they appealed the decision.<sup>261</sup> El Pulso published an overview of the debate about the electoral reforms going back to the recommendations by the EU from 2013 which have not yet been implemented.<sup>262</sup> On December 12, the Follow-Up Mission by the European Union on electoral reforms presented its report highlighting once again the lack of implementation of its recommendations.<sup>263</sup>

## Migration

The main headlines in the migration section continue to be made by the controversial safe third country agreement between the JOH regime and the Trump administration.<sup>264</sup> A new report, Forced Return to Danger, by LAWG and other civil society organizations outlines "the disturbing impacts of the agreements on asylum seekers' protection and well-being, and the likelihood that they will violate U.S. and international refugee law. The memo highlights the ways in which the agreements completely ignore the distinct but concerning realities that fuel forced migration and displacement of thousands of individuals from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador."<sup>265</sup> By the beginning of December, at least four migrants, among them two Hondurans, have been deported to Guatemala.<sup>266</sup> Mid-December, a Honduran and a Salvadorian family were deported from the US to Guatemala.<sup>267</sup>

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256 <https://www.prohondurasnetwork.com/l/gh/>

257 <https://tiempo.hn/cn-no-procede-iniciativa-cna-derogar-nuevo-codigo-penal/>

258 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/organizaciones-reinician-recoleccion-de-firmas-para-abrogar-nuevo-codigo-penal/>

259 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1341366-466/cna-entrega-iniciativa-para-que-no-entre-en-vigencia-el-codigo-penal>

260 <http://elpulso.hn/mel-de-acuerdo-con-las-alianzas/>

261 <http://elpulso.hn/partidos-pequenos-en-el-blanco/>

262 <http://elpulso.hn/la-apuesta-es-por-nuevas-reformas-electorales-para-2021/>

263 <https://tiempo.hn/ue-honduras-solo-atendio-algunas-recomendaciones-materia-electoral-1/>

264 <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2019-12-16/us-poised-to-send-asylum-seekers-to-honduras>

265 <https://www.lawg.org/wp-content/uploads/Forced-Return-to-Danger-STC-Civil-Society-Memo-12.4.19.pdf>

266 <http://www.prensacomunitaria.org/en-silencio-guatemala-recibe-3-migrantes-centroamericanos-en-el-marco-del-tercer-pais-seguro/>

267 <https://radiohrn.hn/familias-hondurenas-deportadas-de-estados-unidos-son-enviadas-a-guatemala/>

Meanwhile in Honduras, a legal challenge against the agreement with the US was presented yesterday.<sup>268</sup> This did not stop the US sending another delegation from Homeland Security “specify details of the agreements signed in September”.<sup>269</sup>

Over 29'000 Hondurans have asked for asylum in Mexico in 2019 - almost half of all the asylum requests in Mexico this year.<sup>270</sup> A record number of 104'099 Hondurans have been deported this year, 22'916 of whom minors. That is double the amount of minors deported than in 2014, when the region spoke of a crisis of unaccompanied migrants on the way to the US.<sup>271</sup> <sup>272</sup> La Prensa reported that this year, some 650 Hondurans tried to cross the US-Mexican border every day, more than three times as much as in 2018.<sup>273</sup> In the midst of this, Honduras inaugurated the Migratory Statistical Center. It “will allow to establish a profile of its emigrants to formulate integral policies in the thematic and a Platform of Attention, with support of the International Organization for Migrations (OIM).”<sup>274</sup>

Hugo Maldonado, director of CODEH, told media outlets that there will be a new migrant caravan taking off in January.<sup>275</sup> According to El Libertador, it will take off on January 15.<sup>276</sup> Laura Carlsen published her investigation into the root causes of Honduran migration. "I went down to Honduras to ask grassroots leaders these questions. Also, to find out what's behind the rise in the popular movement over the past year and, most of all, whether it can provide a way out of the downward spiral the country has been in since the coup of 2009. I found a country facing an acute crisis on all levels—a political crisis of legitimacy that has destroyed faith in the leaders and led to violent repression of protest as the government implodes, an economic crisis with over 60% of the population living in poverty and extreme poverty, and a crisis in security as organized crime groups control urban territory, corporations take over resources, and corrupt security forces and paramilitaries routinely attack the citizenry with practically no legal consequences. There is also a deeper, more ineffable crisis: many Hondurans see no future in their own country.”<sup>277</sup>

## Education

Some 1.2 million Honduran children and teenagers are not attended by the school system.<sup>278</sup>

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268 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1339966-466/presentan-recurso-contr-a-acuerdo-de-tercer-pa%C3%ADs-seguro-en-honduras>

269 <https://twitter.com/usembassyhn/status/1205199739312099328>

270 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3653-exodo-mas-de-29-mil-hondurenos-han-pedido-asilo-en-mexico-en-2019>

271 <https://www.proceso.hn/migrantes/1-migrantes/honduras-suma-104-mil-99-deportados-entre-ellos-22-mil-916-menores.html>

272 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/honduras-cierra-2019-batiendo-propio-record-de-deportados.html>

273 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1345245-410/unos-650-hondure%C3%B1os-al-d%C3%ADa-intentaron-cruzar-a-eeuu>

274 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1340187-410/honduras-centro-estadistico-organizacion-internacional-de-migrantes>

275 <https://tiempo.hn/convocan-nueva-caravana-enero-rumbo-estados-unidos/>

276 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3682-exodo-nueva-mega-caravana-saldr-a-honduras-este-15-de-eneo>

277 <https://www.counterpunch.org/2019/12/31/as-honduras-collapses-its-people-are-forced-to-flee/>

278 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/mas-de-un-millon-de-ninos-no-tienen-acceso-a-sistema-escolar/>



## Public Health

Honduras has the second highest death toll due to dengue in Latin America. 177 people died this year of dengue. Per capita, Honduras has by far the highest rate.<sup>279</sup> 101 deaths were of children.<sup>198</sup> At the same time, the vice-minister of Health, Nery Cerato, expressed that the health budget for the coming year is not sufficient.<sup>280</sup>

## Poverty

Some basic goods have seen a price rise at the beginning of this month.<sup>281</sup> At the same time, Hondurans use up some 40% from the minimum wage for paying the electricity bill. Even worse, new price rises are expected for January<sup>282</sup> and according to Fosdeh, 70% of working Hondurans receive less than the minimum salary.<sup>283</sup> A record number of remittances will have been sent to Honduras this year, \$5.4 billion, a 12.7% increase compared to 2018.<sup>284</sup> Honduras is also "a country that produces people with disabilities: poverty, chronic malnutrition in minors, high rates of violence, diabetes, traffic accidents, among others, are the major causes of physical, visual and mental disability," according to Jorge Andino, former member of the National Union of the Blind of Honduras (UNCIH).<sup>285</sup>

"For almost a decade, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has positioned equality as the foundation of development. Today we see once again the urgency of making progress in the construction of Welfare States, based on rights and equality, that grant their citizens access to comprehensive and universal systems of social protection and to essential public goods, such as health and quality education, housing and transport. The call is to build social pacts for equality," said Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of the regional organization, during the launch of the Social Panorama of Latin America 2019.<sup>286</sup>

## And Light at the End of a Month

Radio Progreso celebrated 63 years of accompanying the Honduran people.<sup>287</sup>

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279 <https://www.laprensa.hn/premium/1339152-410/captacion-remesas-sera-5400-millones-dolares-honduras>

280 <https://tiempo.hn/salud-presupuesto-no-es-suficiente-para-atender-servicios-sanitarios/>

281 <https://confidencialhn.com/senalalan-incremento-en-algunos-productos-de-la-canasta-basica-en-inicio-de-la-temporada-navidena/>

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

Past Activities:

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Upcoming Activities:

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