

Another Month in Honduras...

Human Rights Monitor – January 2020

The MACCIH died this month; what else is there to say? Its important Honduran counterpart UFECIC was replaced by a new body, UFERCO, which suffers from various limits. Impunity in key corruption cases is more possible than ever. At the same time, an important new report published by OACNUDH highlighted the ongoing impunity for the post-electoral human rights violations two years ago. And as another Garífuna defender was murdered, the JOH regime continues to undermine free, prior and informed consent. 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
UFERCO	Special Prosecuting Unit against Corruption Networks
UNAH	National Autonomous University of Honduras
ZEDE	Zone for Employment and Economic Development

Human Rights and Their Defenders

OACNUDH presented an important new report¹ this month on the ongoing impunity for the post-electoral repression between November 2017 and March 2018. "Two years after the events, no case of human rights violation has obtained a conviction and most of the serious violations documented by OACNUDH, such as alleged summary or extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances, remain under investigation."² Honduras' human rights organizations and social movements welcomed the report. "We fully subscribe to the content of the OACNUDH report on the current state of human rights violations in Honduras (...) The conclusions of the OACNUDH report confirm the political will of the current regime is based on the control of State institutions, which have been placed at the service of impunity, corruption and the protection of criminals. We express our strong appreciation to the work of OACNUDH, and in particular to the Resident Representative, Ms. Maria Soledad Pazo. (...) We regret the lack of willingness of the current regime to fulfill its commitments to investigate, try and convict those responsible for homicides, illegal detention and abuse of authority. (...) We also regret that institutions such as the Human Rights Secretariat and the National Human Rights Commissioner, as well as the Public Prosecutor's Office, and specifically the Special Prosecutor for Human Rights, remain silent. (...) We call on the various sectors of society and civil society and on the international community to give firm support to the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OACNUDH), the body that, under the leadership of its Resident Representative, Ms. María Soledad Pazo, accompanies and observes the State of Honduras in fulfilling its role of protecting the human rights and dignity of all persons, in accordance with the international standards and commitments it has signed."^{3 4}

Exactly for this important work, this new report, but also the daily accompaniment of human rights defenders and the documentation of the human rights violations, OACNUDH is under pressure in Honduras. Criterio denounced that pressure from the Honduran government triggered the departure of the representative of OACNUDH, María Soledad Pazo, who is expected to leave office in February.⁵ Shortly afterwards, in a public statement, the Citizen's Social Platform for Honduras denounced that the Government of Honduras is provoking the "forced" departure of OACNUDH, led by María Soledad Pazo.⁶ On the presence of OACNUDH, COFADEH's Bertha Oliva commented: "Setting up a High Commissioner's office in a country without institutions, where democratic order has been lost and the Constitution repeatedly violated, was a challenge, but we succeeded. The work that the office has done has been very professional, and the report on the post-election repression is an example of that professionalism." Regarding its closure, especially after the closure of the MACCIH, she says: "It's a fear I have. Both bodies were requested by the regime to clean its face before the international community. The moment they began to do real work and

1 <http://oacnudh.hn/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/INFORME-TEM%C3%81TICO-2017-Enero-2020.pdf>

2 <https://oacnudh.hn/informe-de-la-oficina-de-las-naciones-unidas-para-los-derechos-humanos-responsabilidad-por-las-violaciones-a-los-derechos-humanos-cometidas-en-el-contexto-de-las-elecciones-de-2017-en-hondura/>

3 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/organizaciones-defensoras-de-ddhh-se-pronuncian-ante-informe-de-oacnud/>

4 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2668-organizaciones-de-ddhh-respaldan-informe-de-la-oacnudh-sobre-violaciones-a-derechos-humanos-en-el-marco-de-las-elecciones-2017>

5 <https://criterio.hn/gobierno-de-hernandez-presiona-por-salida-de-representante-de-oacnudh/>

expose part of the web of corruption, human rights violations and impunity, they became a hindrance to the regime. They have closed the Maccih and I would not be surprised if they now go for OACNUDH and its resident representative Maria Soledad Pazo. They might say that since democracy has been strengthened and special secretariats and prosecutors' offices for human rights have been created, there is no longer any need for an office of this level in Honduras. (...) Closing OACNUDH would be a disaster. It would be a return to the past."⁶

Assassinations

Front Line Defenders documented the assassination of 304 human rights defenders in 2019.⁷ In Honduras, at least 31 defenders were murdered making it the third highest toll in the world, after Colombia and the Philippines, and by far the highest per capita.⁸

Back on December 28, there was an attack on indigenous Garífuna defender Karla Ignacia Piota Martínez, sister of Amada Piota Martínez, member of OFRANEH's general coordination (see last month's monitor). Karla Ignacia died in January from her wounds.⁹ IM-Defensoras sent out a new alert after her death.¹⁰ Pasos de Animal Grande denounced it as an "extermination plan" against the Garífuna people.¹⁰ In less than a week, the indigenous Pech leader Santos Felipe Escobar Garcia was kidnapped and murdered and indigenous Tolupán leader Efraín Martínez Martínez was assassinated.¹⁰

Two lawyers were murdered this month in Honduras. Javier Edgardo Escobar Rivera was assassinated in Santa Rosa de Copán¹¹ and Marco Antonio Bobadilla Gutiérrez was shot several times in San Pedro Sula and later died in the hospital.¹¹

Attacks, Criminalization and Harassment

At the beginning of the new year, CESPAD sent out an alert regarding the criminalizing trial against MUCA leader Alexis Ulloa Flores. His case goes back to 2009, then in 2017 a judge finally decided to drop the charges, but the MP challenged the decision and he was arrested again on December 31,¹² 2019. He is a beneficiary of special protective measures by the IACHR.

The two defenders Cristopher Castillo and Fernando Zelaya were followed and monitored just hours before a mobilization against the privatization of SANAA and ENEE. Both defenders are active in the defense of the La Tigre National Park.¹³ The National Coalition of Environmental Networks and Organizations, CONROA, demanded the Mayor's Office of the Central District and its mayor, Nasry "Tito" Asfura, to stop the threats against the journalist and environmental defender Dolores Valenzuela, who has been the object of a smear campaign on social networks and pressure

6 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/el-cierre-de-la-oacnudh-seria-un-desastre/>

7 https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/sites/default/files/global_analysis_2019_web.pdf

8 <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2020/jan/14/300-human-rights-activists-killed-2019-report>

9 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1216224871535071232>

10 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/en-una-semana-fueron-ejecutados-dos-lideres-indigenas/>

11 <https://confidencialhn.com/matan-a-reconocido-abogado-en-la-colonia-trejo-en-san-pedro-sula/>

12 <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/01/06/alerta-a-audiencia-inicial-lider-del-movimiento-de-unificacion-campesina-del-aguan-muca/>

from unknown people to no longer get involved in the fight for the defense of the La Tigra National Park."¹³

The Labor Rights Forum demanded an end to the criminalization of labor leader Moises Sanchez. He "suffered vicious attacks & death threats for organizing on @FyffesIRL melon farms & now faces jail time for bogus charges from a landowner".¹⁴ "[H]e faces 30 years in prison without possibility of appeal for the crime of "usurping private land".^{15 16}

COPA denounced that their offices in Tocoa, Colón, were broken into and ransacked on January 26 evening - the second time in a bit more than a month.¹⁷ When human rights defender Carlos Leonel George went to the police to report the break-in, he was illegally detained. Human rights organizations denounced that even after showing the resolutions with the definitive dismissal of previous criminalizing charges, the DPI agents did not believe and wanted to leave him in prison, under the excuse of having an arrest warrant.¹⁸

The Catholic priest, Florentino Hernández Bonilla, was meant to appear for a hearing at the Choluteca sentencing court on January 29 for the alleged crimes of usurpation and misappropriation. The complaint was filed by the Diocese of Choluteca of the Honduran Catholic Church, led by Bishop Guido Charbonneau, who recently dismissed the defendant from his post as parish priest on 29 October. The dismissal is due to his involvement in the popular consultation in El Triunfo, which resulted in the declaration of the municipality free of mining.¹⁹ Local churchgoers accompany and support him.²⁰ Then, the trial was postponed to February 5.^{21 22 23} OACNUDH is accompanying and observing the trial.²⁴

At the end of the month, Jaime Rodriguez, leader of the teachers' movement, announced that he would leave. He was recently disappeared and tortured. He was saved, but still receives death threats.²⁵

Indigenous Peoples

Three indigenous leaders were murdered in the last days of 2019 and first days of 2020 (see above). OFRANEH published a short video explaining the difficult situation for the Garífuna people in

13 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2664-conroa-exige-a-alcalde-el-distrito-central-cese-a-las-amenazas-contr-la-defensora-y-periodista-dolores-valenzuela>

14 <https://twitter.com/ILRF/status/1218227839591505921>

15 <https://twitter.com/ILRF/status/1218230280466681856>

16 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/mirada-al-sur/1357-quien-esta-detras-de-la-cobarde-acusacion-a-moises-sanchez>

17 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/122182074888675328>

18 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/pese-a-tener-medidas-de-la-cidh-nuevamente-atacan-oficina-y-personal-de-copa/>

19 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/mirada-al-sur/1369-honduras-padre-y-defensor-del-ambiente-querrellado-por-usurpacion>

20 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/feligresia-de-el-triunfo-respalda-a-sacerdote-querrellado-por-la-misma-iglesia-catolica/>

21 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/reprograman-audiencia-del-padre-florentino-herandez-para-el-5-de-febrero/>

22 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/mirada-al-sur/1375-entrevista-en-exclusiva-con-el-padre-florentino-herandez>

23 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/tv/1374-conferencia-de-prensa-al-finalizar-la-audiencia-del-padre-florentino>

24 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1223357397298708480>

25 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2677-dirigente-magisterial-que-sufrio-atentado-criminal-abandona-el-pais-porque-teme-por-su-vida>

Masca after the murder of Karla Ignacia Piota Martínez.²⁶ OACNUDH sent a delegation to various Garífuna communities in Colón, Atlántida and Cortés. They "condemn the increase in violence in the Garifuna communities Masca-Cortés and Iriona in Colón, where at least six people have been killed and others have suffered threats and/or attacks against their physical integrity, from September 2019 to date".²⁷

COPINH sent out an alert that the Madrid family were stealing maize cultivated for the sustenance of the Río Blanco community and threatening community members.²⁸

Seven years ago, the indigenous Tolupán defenders María Enriqueta Matute, Ricardo Funés Medina and Armando Soto Funés were assassinated. The case against the material author has been raised to a trial this month, but there is still no investigation into the intellectual authors.²⁹ The MP also informed about the opening of the trial against Roger Rafael Lara Pineda, a member of the Armed Forces, who is accused of being responsible for the murder of three members of the Miskito indigenous community of Warunta, municipality of Ahuas, Gracias a Dios, in 2018.²⁹

FPIC

OFRANEH showed how the JOH regime lied in a report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) regarding oil exploitation in the Miskita region. They claimed that they consulted the Miskita people but they just conducted a socialization of the project after having granted it.³⁰ This was made public in the same month the debate about the controversial consultation bill promoted by Congress resumed. Congress started to socialize the bill. OFRANEH exhorted Congress to take into account the recommendations of the United Nations Rapporteur on Indigenous pointing out that a socialization is not the same as a consultation.³¹ COPINH denounced that representatives of Honduras indigenous peoples presented by Congress to socialize the do not represent the indigenous peoples.³² Libre congresswoman Olivia Zúniga Cáceres denounced irregularities in the elaboration of the bill.³²

COPINH then highlighted that the main promoter is congressman Óscar Nájera who was recently publicly designated by the US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, due to his involvement in corruption related to drug trafficking.³³ 34 Miriam Miranda made the important link of the bill with the climate crisis. "There is nothing more hypocritical than international organizations and European governments making public statements to combat the climate crisis and yet they support or call for silence when this dictatorial government promotes a law of consultation to exterminate the indigenous people".³³ On this occasion, OFRANEH also published an article on "the

26 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1216460573703057408>

27 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1219664241856253956>

28 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1218213376838553600>

29 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/150-enero2020/5301-mp-a-la-espera-de-auto-de-apertura-a-juicio-contras-asesinato-de-tres-miembros-de-la-comunidad-misquita-de-warunta>

30 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1212847072199806977>

31 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1216757889030934531>

32 <https://criterio.hn/diputada-denuncia-irregularidades-en-aprobacion-de-ley-de-consulta-previa-e-informada/>

33 <https://twitter.com/baraudawaguchu/status/1217919432070062080>

assassination of Berta Cáceres and the imposition of the "Consultation" Bill elaborated by UNDP".³⁴

On January 23, Honduras indigenous peoples protested yesterday outside Congress against the so-called Nájera Bill.³⁵ ³⁶ They also hold the World Bank and the EU responsible for helping to promote the bill.³⁷

The Case of Berta Cáceres

Berta Cáceres was assassinated 46 months ago and COPINH continues to demand justice.³⁸ Democracy Now! interviewed Laura Zúniga Cáceres on the case against the material authors, the lack of investigation into the intellectual authorship and the general situation in Honduras.³⁹

InSight Crime picked up the discussions around the newest revelations in the Berta Cáceres case involving the private messages (see also last month). "Private call logs, SMS, and WhatsApp messages unearthed by the Honduran Public Prosecutor's Office revealed that the hit squad "communicated through a compartmentalized chain that reached the highest ranks of leadership" of Desarrollos Energéticos SA (DESA), the company building the Agua Zarca hydroelectric dam, the Intercept reported on December 21. (...) The messages suggest that those involved in the plot to murder Cáceres knew that they had enough friends in high places to ensure that the odds of them facing justice were slim to none. They spoke clearly of their intentions in messages, discussing details of the "mission," bribes to be paid and weapons to be exchanged to carry out the crime. As things stand now, the elites that felt they could deliberately plan and carry out a high-profile murder with impunity were completely right."⁴⁰

This month, an appeal was filed in favor of Mariano Díaz, one of men convicted for the murder of Berta Cáceres.⁴¹ COPINH reacted by highlighting the clear evidence against him and "[t]hat army agents, like Diaz, are involved in the murder of our comrade confirms that this is a state crime, a political femicide".⁴¹

CESPAD published an analysis of the Gualcarque Fraud corruption case.⁴²

LGBTQ

The LGTB Association Arcoiris denounced that the defender of the their Trans Women's Collective, Paola Flores, was shot in one of her legs after suffering persecution.⁴³ OACNUDH condemned the

34 <https://ofraneh.wordpress.com/2020/01/16/el-asesinato-de-berta-caceres-y-la-imposicion-de-la-ley-de-consulta-elaborada-por-el-pnu/>

35 <https://avispa.org/en-honduras-comunidades-denuncian-reglamentacion-de-consulta-indigena-para-favorecer-despojo-de-territorios/>

36 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2669-pueblos-originarios-protestan-en-el-congreso-nacional-contra-anteproyecto-de-ley-de-consulta-previa>

37 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1222527286555160576>

38 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1212802091296710656>

39 https://www.democracynow.org/2020/1/17/berta_caceres_laura_caceres_interview

40 <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/private-messages-further-link-honduras-elites-berta-caceres-murder/>

41 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1219426302815547392>

42 <http://cespad.org.hn/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Caso-Gualcarque-CESPAD2020.pdf>

43 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2663-noche-violenta-hieren-de-bala-a-defensora-lgtb-de-arcoiris>

attack.⁴⁴ PBI Honduras sent out an alert regarding the situation of the LGBTQ community, especially trans women. "PBI Honduras is extremely concerned over the high number of attacks against trans women and individuals who defend trans rights, as well as the impunity that has continued in these cases. We are particularly concerned by the security situation of the members of the Muñecas Trans Women's Collective of Arcoiris LGBT Association, which has been accompanied by PBI since 2015. Despite having protective measures from the Honduran National Protection Mechanism, the Muñecas Collective has experienced an increase in attacks and assaults over the last six months."⁴⁵ PBI Honduras also produced a documentary which "reflects the life, problems and challenges faced by the defenders of the rights of the LGTBQ+ community in Honduras".⁴⁵

The MP informed this month that José Luis López Godoy and Franklin Joel Salinas Méndez were found guilty for the murder of trans activist Bessy Ferrera in July 2019. Bessy was a member of LGTBQ+ organization Arcoiris and a focal point within the "Rights Here and Now" Platform.⁴⁶

Proceso Digital published an article on LGBTQ migrants in the caravan.⁴⁷

Freedom of Expression and Journalists

Jennifer Ávila writes about the difficulties of being a journalist in Honduras. "In Honduras, doing independent journalism means constantly running into a wall. This wall is built by mafia-run institutions that have silenced and terrorized whole communities. To simplify a complex reality, the media has labeled the country a narcostate. It's not hyperbole, but it also doesn't capture all the complicated factors. We live in a reality where drug trafficking and political power complement each other, where institutions are meant to launder money and where a president can get himself reelected by using money made from drug trafficking and political robbery. The narcostate label went viral when a New York court found the president's brother guilty of various crimes related to drug trafficking. But Honduras is also more than a narcostate. Before, when there were no drug cartels to control the country, it was a corrupt group of elites, as well as a fruit company, that wielded power over the president. The state was designed to facilitate crime and the enrichment of a select few. In both setups, silence is golden. Silence is a form of survival."⁴⁸

The two journalists Eddie Andino and Mai Ling Coto were impeded from doing their work by police agents, the later even being physically assaulted by police agents during a live transmission.⁴⁹

The journalist Dolores Valenzuela filed a complaint at the MP after having received death threats. She thinks they are linked to her struggle to defend the La Tigra National Park.⁵⁰ The car of Elder Cortés, the director of Canal Copaneco TV, in Santa Rosa de Copán was set on fire. Witnesses said that someone broke the rear windows, poured fuel into the car and set it on fire. According to

44 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1219990549366812673>

45 <https://vimeo.com/387748859>

46 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/150-enero2020/5350-condenan-a-implicados-en-crimen-de-miembro-de-la-comunidad-lgbti>

47 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/migrantes-homosexuales-y-trans-piden-ayuda-a-la-comunidad-lgbt-de-mexico.html>

48 <https://elfaro.net/en/201912/internacionales/23899/Seen-as-Either-a-Sell-Out-or-a-Rebel-On-the-Difficulties-of-Reporting-in-Honduras.htm>

49 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1092-de-forma-agresiva-policia-impide-cobertura-a-periodistas>

Cortés, someone powerful with links to hitmen is behind the intimidation.⁵⁰ The director of Radio Cholula Triunfeñ, Wilfredo Hernández, denounced that the Electric Energy Company (EEH) arbitrarily cut the wiring and removed the meter at the community radio station's facilities, leaving it without electrical service.⁵⁰

Pasos de Animal Grande reported that a court ruling this month may leave the closure of several news outlets during the coup d'état in 2009 in impunity.⁵¹ And the same day, a court accepted a legal challenge against the director of El Perro Amarillo, Milton Benítez, for defamation - a common way to silence critical journalists.⁵¹ Then, the Sentence Court at the Supreme Court of Justice admitted the criminalizing charge against him. Benítez had previously face threats against him and his family for his covering corruption.⁵² At the end of the month, the trial began against a police officer of the National Preventive Police of El Progreso, Yoro, who on September 1, 2015, participated in the repression against the journalist Dunia Montoya. That day her arm was broken by the violence used by a group of police against her to remove a camera that recorded police and military abuses against a peaceful demonstration.⁵²

Violence against Women

Already on the first day of 2020, five women were murdered in Honduras.⁵³ Deputy Secretary of Security, Luis Suazo, reacted by promising advances in investigating femicides. The impunity rate for femicide is in the high 90s, nevertheless, Suazo claimed that the five femicides would be resolved in the next five days.⁵³ Women human rights defenders are not as hopeful and they continue to denounce the lack of access for women to the judicial system as well as the ineffectiveness of investigations into femicides.⁵⁴

And the murder of women continued. At least 15 women were murdered in the first two weeks of 2020, more than 1 per day.⁵⁵ In the first 24 days of 2020, 27 women were murdered in Honduras - a 20% increase compared to last year.⁵⁶ Human rights defender Honorina Rodríguez and member of CEM-H denounced that the Unit for the Investigation of Violent Deaths of Women does not have all the resources and mechanisms necessary to investigate correctly and try to resolve the problem to some extent. The unit has a budget of 40 million Lempiras, but Rodriguez claims that part of those funds were reallocated to other activities.⁵⁶ The women's rights organization Movimiento Visitación Padilla demanded the declaration of a national emergency⁵⁷

50 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1095-empresa-de-energia-electrica-sabotea-radio-comunitaria-en-zona-sur>

51 <https://www.facebook.com/509023156159306/posts/954403618287922/?sfnsn=mo>

52 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2676-este-30-de-enero-juicio-oral-y-publico-casi-cinco-anos-tiene-la-periodista-dunia-montoya-de-esperar-justicia>

53 <http://www.elheraldo.hn/sucesos/1346187-466/luis-suazo-femicidios-ser%C3%A1n-resueltos-en-los-pr%C3%B3ximos-d%C3%ADas>

54 <https://tiempo.hn/defensoras-denuncian-falta-justicia-mujeres-honduras/>

55 <https://radiohrn.hn/15-mujeres-han-sido-asesinadas-en-los-primeros-14-dias-del-2020-en-honduras/>

On January 25, Honduras commemorated the Day of the Honduran Woman. Feminist and women's rights organization called out: "We don't want flower, we want rights!".^{56 57 58} The next day, they also protested outside the Supreme Court demanding a stop to the impunity in cases of femicide.⁵⁹

The IACHR published a report on violence and discrimination against women, girls and adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean.⁶⁰

Protection Mechanism

Taking an example of the Guapinol case, Defensores en Línea shows one of the problems with the protection mechanism. "For more than 14 months, the peasant and environmental defender, Jeremías Martínez, has been behind bars. Martínez was in his home, located in La Concepcion, in Tocoa, Colón, in the north of Honduras, when a police patrol arrived as usual. The agents told him to board with them because he had to go and sign a document. As he benefited from protective measures MC 50/14 granted by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), the patrol was part of the routine, but on this occasion the security guards handed him over to the judicial authorities and he was left in prison. This fact adds to the mistrust that exists towards the work of the National Protection Mechanism and the measures that are agreed upon with the victims, who sometimes comply with them because there is no other entity that provides them with protection."⁶¹

Political Prisoners

OACNUDH raised its concern for the case of the two political prisoners Edwin Róbelo Espinal and Raúl Álvarez, accused of aggravated damages, arson and use of homemade explosive material.⁶² In the case of the other political prisoner, Rommel Herrera Portillo. COFADEH's Bertha Oliva went to visit him in the psychiatric hospital where he is being held. The young teacher was transferred to this centre last October, after the judge revoked the measure of preventive detention after hearing the opinion of Forensic Medicine that showed a "psychiatric damage conditioned by the appearance of a mixed disorder of anxiety and depression".⁶³ On January 30, the hearing of exceptions and annulments was held in his case. "Attorney Karol Cárdenas said that "at the hearing we told the judge that we did not consider that there were any elements to file exceptions, nullities or challenges, and that a date should be set for the hearing to propose evidence, which will be held on February 13 at 9 a.m., and at the end of this hearing, the judge must set a date for the oral and public

56 <http://elpulso.hn/no-queremos-flores-queremos-derechos/>

57 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/35-mujeres/1368-hondurenas-conmemoran-y-reivindican-sus-derechos-el-dia-de-la-mujer>

58 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2671-honduras-un-estado-hostil-para-la-vida-de-las-mujeres>

59 <https://confidencialhn.com/mujeres-protestan-frente-a-la-sede-del-poder-judicial-en-tegucigalpa/>

60 <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2020/012.asp>

61 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/jeremias-martinez-el-defensor-de-guapinol-entregado-por-sus-custodios/>

62 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/oacnudh-preocupada-por-juicio-que-se-le-sigue-a-los-presos-politicos-edwin-espinal-y-de-raul-alvarez>

63 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/bertha-oliva-rommel-debe-ser-liberado-va/>

trial." Attorney Omar Menjívar said he hopes that the hearing on Thursday, Feb. 13 will admit evidence that is relevant and useful in demonstrating the truth."⁶⁴

Extractive Industries

CESPAD looked back at 2019 and the socio-environmental struggle in Honduras. "In the first section, the main events of the situation are described, evaluating the increase and reactivation of the socio-environmental struggle, detailing the reaction of the regime and the coercive force of the State and an effort to understand the current moment of territorial struggle and the correlation of forces. In the second section, an assessment is made of the main acts of resistance that have arisen in the situation, emblematic cases of criminalization and murders against territorial leadership, the important struggle of Honduran women and the non-capitalist alternatives that have been woven from the socio-environmental movement. And finally, the third section identifies and poses the challenges of the movement in the face of 2020."⁶⁵

The struggle will continue this year. COPINH denounced that the JOH regime intends to invest \$1 billion in the construction of 54 new dams. "With this decision the government spits on the memory of our martyrs who are victims of a predatory system that has enriched a small group of businessmen. It spits on the resistance of the indigenous and Garifuna peoples who have not stopped defending the territories and the dignity of the people in the face of hundreds of unconsulted projects. But they are mistaken in their intentions, because Berta Cáceres' proclamation resonates with the peoples who are autonomously building their own way. With this news they reaffirm the urgent need to remove this dictatorial and unscrupulous government that has perpetuated the violation of our fundamental rights".⁶⁶ Hydroelectric projects have caused grave harm in Honduras. One current case involves the Petacón River in Reitoca. The Municipal Mayor's Office in charge of the mayor Marlon Osorto, agreed to a thorough review of the reforestation project of the upper Petacón River, but they failed to fulfill this agreement.⁶⁷ In another project, residents near the Patuca III dam announced that they will take over the project's machine room in protest of the failure to meet several commitments.⁶⁷

There were also updates on the situation of the Guapinol defenders. The Municipal Committee for the Defense of the Commons of Tocoa demanded that the Court of Appeals review the measures against the defenders who have been criminalized for defending the Guapinol River.⁶⁸ The eight human rights and environmental defenders are still held by the JOH regime, one in a prison in La Ceiba, seven in Olanchito, Yoro.⁶⁸

64 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/el-13-de-febrero-se-conocera-fecha-del-juicio-oral-y-publico-contr-el-pres-o-politico-rommel-herrera/>

65 <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/01/03/coyuntura-desde-los-territorios-hacia-donde-avanza-la-lucha-socio-ambiental-en-honduras-un-balance-de-la-coyuntura-del-2019/>

66 <https://copinh.org/2020/01/millon-de-dolares-que-invierte-el-gobierno-en-represas/>

67 <https://tiempo.hn/pobladores-amenazan-bloquear-patuca-iii-exigen-carreteras-energia/>

68 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2675-juicio-injusto-hay-un-panorama-desalentador-para-defensores-de-guapinol-para-obtener-acceso-a-la-justicia>

Corruption and Its Enemies

In a grim month for the fight against corruption in Honduras (see below), let's start with Radio Progreso explaining one modus operandi of the corrupt elite in Honduras. "One of the strategies was to intervene those institutions that they had previously looted or used them to launder drug trafficking funds. Their interventions were presented as a fight against corruption, but in reality it was a way of erasing evidence of the criminal group led by the president's tenant. (...) This is just one of the strategies of this regime, which was applied in at least 11 institutions and the script is the same, the elimination of the traces, all those loose ends to bury their corruptions. And in spite of this, the tenant keeps on screaming like crazy that he is fighting corruption head on. And, worse still, there are many who believe him."⁶⁹ One case in point is ENEE. Javier Suazo published an analysis of its current intervention⁷⁰ and the CNA reported on new corruption cases at the ENEE.⁷¹

ConfidencialHN denounced that the intervention at the National Persons Registry (RNP) has not lead to a clean up of the census, but rather lead to a "wage and salary piñata" for JOH loyalists.⁷² There is a general problem of nepotism under the JOH regime.^{73 74}

There were also some sentences handed out this month. A former councilor of Choluteca was sentenced to 15 years in prison for money laundering.⁷⁵ A public official was found guilty of 139 cases of fraud because she handed out scholarships meant for students in the medical area to other people.⁷⁶ And in an open town hall meeting on accountability in Siguatepeque, civil society organizations gave the Municipal Corporation a document to demonstrate the lack of transparency in the construction of public works.⁷⁶ The same day, the Special Prosecutor's Office for Transparency and Combating Public Corruption (Fetccop) filed a prosecutorial injunction against Abel Solórzano Solano, the mayor of Humuya, Comayagua, for assuming responsibility for the crimes of abuse of authority and violation of the duties of officials.⁷⁶

Honduras ranks worse than last year on the Corruption Perception Index by Transparency International, it dropped 14 ranks to 146 out of 180.⁷⁷

The Onslaught against the Anti-Corruption Bodies

The growing tension regarding the future of the MACCIH came to abrupt stop this month – the MACCIH was declared dead on January 18 and closed shop already a day later.

Previous to this, there were two more weeks of uncertainty, but also a growing realization that the JOH regime would play foul. For some time, it seemed that JOH and OAS Secretary General Luis

69 <https://www.radioprogreso.net/hn/el-oficio-de-borrar-huellas/>

70 <https://www.alainet.org/es/articulo/204312>

71 <https://tiempo.hn/cna-denuncia-lamparazo-enee-administracion-jesus-mejia/>

72 <https://confidencialhn.com/festival-de-sueldos-comisionados-del-rnp-ganan-180-mil-lempiras-activistas-se-agencian-hasta-90-mil/>

73 <https://confidencialhn.com/familion-se-enquisto-en-el-sistema-aduanero-revelan-nombres-y-cargos-de-parientes-y-activistas-nacionalistas/>

74 <https://confidencialhn.com/sigue-la-empleomania-en-aduanas-contrataran-unas-60-personas-este-viernes/>

75 <https://tiempo.hn/por-lavado-activos-condenan-exregidor-triunfo-15-anos-carcel/>

76 <https://confidencialhn.com/honduras-presentan-requerimiento-fiscal-en-contra-alcalde-de-humuya/>

77 <https://www.transparency.org/cpi2019>

Almagro would make changes to the agreement giving Congress the final say about the MACCIH.⁷⁸ It says something about the confidence of the JOH regime, that in the end it did not even use this ruse and straight out canceled the MACCIH. Letters⁷⁹ and tweets⁸⁰ from US congresswo/men and senators did not help and there was a call by OACNUDH and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, Diego García-Sayán, exhorting the Honduran government to renew its mandate, to no avail.⁷⁹

A few days before the announcement, the MACCIH's spokesperson Ana María Calderón renounced and it became clear that it is a done deal.⁸⁰ El Libertador commented: "[S]everal actors see this departure as the loss of the best foreign experts who came to the country with ideas to fight against white-collar corrupt. For many, powerful corruption continues to win." ⁸⁰

And then, on January 18, it was made public that the talks between the JOH regime and the OAS broke down. "According to Univision sources, a primary point of contention was the investigative role of the mission and its coordination with a special prosecutorial unit, which the Honduran government wanted to strip from any new agreement. In such a case, the mission would have been reduced to an advisory role."⁸¹ ContraCorriente described the end of the MACCIH as the closure of the last crack through which some light entered into Honduras.⁸² Gabriela Castellanos, head of the National Anti-Corruption Council (CNA) wrote: "This is not the end of the MACCIH, it is the end of rule of law in Honduras."⁸³ The director of the Commerce and Industries Chamber of Cortés (CCIC), Pedro Barquero, said that this showed the lack of political will to fight corruption.⁸⁴

The OAS published a press release in which they blame the JOH regime for the non-renewal. "Unfortunately, it was not possible to reach the agreements required for the renewal of the mandate of the Mission, which is why MACCIH will end its functions on January 19, 2020. The OAS General Secretariat is obliged to express that the conclusion of the work of MACCIH in Honduras is a negative step in the fight against corruption and impunity in the country. (...) Unfortunately, the position of the Government of Honduras has been not to accompany this proposal, which has made it impossible to renew the Mission."⁸⁵ The EU also reacted. "The decision not to renew the mandate of the Mission to Support the Fight Against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH) is regrettable and a step in the wrong direction. The renewal had been called for by many Honduran stakeholders. The European Union and its Member States regret the unwillingness of the government of Honduras to reach an agreement with the Organisation of American States on the renewal of the mandate. This sends a negative message which hampers on-going efforts in the fight against corruption and impunity in the country. The government of Honduras must continue to

78 <https://confidencialhn.com/advierten-de-un-plan-macabro-del-gobierno-para-que-maccih-no-siga-en-honduras/>

79 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1216890894001102848>

80 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3693-la-maccih-esta-lista-para-la-autopsia-malestar-en-honduras>

81 <https://www.univision.com/univision-news/latin-america/the-oas-anti-corruption-effort-set-to-expire-in-honduras>

82 <https://contracorriente.red/2020/01/17/se-cerro-la-rendija/>

83 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3700-alerta-gobierno-de-honduras-no-renueva-acuerdo-de-maccih>

84 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/hoy-el-gobierno-demuestra-que-no-tiene-compromiso-para-eliminar-corrupcion-pedro-barquero.html>

85 https://www.oas.org/en/media_center/press_release.asp?sCodigo=E-003/20

strengthen anti-corruption efforts, including through legislative reform and the reorganisation of the penal justice system. The EU stands ready to support such efforts."⁸⁶

Univision highlighted the role of the Trump administration. "The U.S. State Department, which provided funding to the mission, or MACCIH as it's known for its Spanish initials, remained silent throughout the crucial final weeks of negotiations between Honduras and the OAS. Meanwhile, acting secretary of Homeland Security, Chad Wolf, visited Honduras last week to announce that a safe-third country agreement reached in September would begin implementation in the coming weeks."⁸⁷ In the Tom Lantos hearing mentioned in last month's monitor there was bipartisan support voiced by both the politicians as civil society representatives from both camps that the non-renewal of the MACCIH mandate would be a step to far.⁸⁷ There were some reactions going in this direction. Reactions also came from two powerful representatives of the US Senate and Congress. US Senator Patrick Leahy wrote: "The decision by President Hernandez, an unindicted co-conspirator in the U.S. prosecution of his brother for drug trafficking, to end the MACCIH, is the latest evidence that he is not serious about stopping the corruption that permeates his government from top to bottom. The question now is whether the Trump Administration continues to turn a blind eye, caring only that President Hernandez has agreed for his violent, impoverished country to be a so-called 'third country safe haven' for Central Americans seeking asylum in the United States. MACCIH was strongly supported by the Honduran people and by the U.S. Congress. We can no longer support a government whose officials have repeatedly shown that they care far more about holding power and amassing wealth, than respecting the rule of law or addressing the needs of their people."⁸⁸ Congressman Jim McGovern tweeted: "I am deeply dismayed that @JuanOrlandoH has refused to renew @OEA_MACCIH. Corruption & impunity are pervasive in #Honduras. The president's own brother is a convicted drug trafficker. This is a huge defeat for the rule of law & will have consequences."⁸⁸

There was also a bipartisan letter on the issue. "House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Eliot L. Engel (D-NY) and Lead Republican Michael McCaul (R-TX), along with Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security and Trade Chairman Albio Sires (D-NJ) and Ranking Member Francis Rooney (R-FL) issued the following statement condemning Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández's decision not to extend the Mission to Support the Fight against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH): "With the stroke of a pen, President Juan Orlando Hernández had the opportunity to extend MACCIH – the mechanism put in place to strengthen Honduras's capacity to address systemic corruption. Unfortunately, President Hernández chose not to exercise his authority and allowed MACCIH to expire. We strongly condemn this decision. "Corruption in Honduras has had a corrosive effect on the country and remains a key driver of migration to the United States. The Honduran people are the ones who will suffer the most from this ill-advised decision. We stand with them and support their right to live in a country whose government respects the rule of law and holds corrupt actors accountable. We remain committed to

86 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/01/22/honduras-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-the-non-renewal-of-the-mission-to-support-the-fight-against-corruption-and-impunity-maccih/>

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

88 <https://twitter.com/RepMcGovern/status/1218616426539507714>

the fight against corruption in Honduras and will continue to support civil society-led efforts.”⁸⁹ Even the Trump administration reacted through a Tweet by acting Assistant Secretary for U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, Michael G. Kozac: "Deeply disappointed that despite commitments to do so, #Honduras failed to extend @OEA_MACCIH anti-corruption effort, requested and designed by @JuanOrlandoH himself, and strongly supported by the people of Honduras, & has put forward no credible alternative to fight corruption."⁹⁰ But this was a very short limited answer by the Trump administration and they immediately went back to treat JOH as an important ally on migration issues (see sub-section below)⁹¹ and congratulating them on designating Hezbollah as a terrorist organization.⁹²

Radio Progreso explained the closure of the MACCIH in the wider context of the JOH regime. "One of the fundamental elements of the democratic system is legitimacy, that is, the consent and conviction of the citizenry that the regime that governs and its decisions are the best for the community, and therefore it does not need the use of force to impose itself. (...) Two of the main characteristics of Juan Orlando Hernández's regime are authoritarianism and lack of legitimacy, which is why it has had to impose itself through fraud, police and military repression and serious human rights violations, all covered by the cloak of corruption and impunity. (...) And the same has happened to the MACCIH, which, despite the existence of a resounding citizen demand for its continuity, the regime left it to die in order to prevent it from continuing with its work of disentangling the networks of corruption that reach him and his circle of power."⁹³ They also presented three teachings from the end of the MACCIH. "First certainty. The Maccih was also a distraction. It is true that the Maccih frightened many corrupt people, but the immense majority were entertained by the novels of JOH and Almagro, today both seek continuity and the Maccih served only as tradeable currency. However, since the installation of the Maccih, the torches have been extinguished and the popular pressure against the corrupt has disappeared. Second certainty. International cooperation such as the OAS, the European Union and the U.S. embassy have shown almost no interest in supporting the people in the fight against the corrupt. Third certainty. The fight against corruption will not be driven from the political class, nor will it come from outside, it will emerge from the heart and hands of the people. The distraction of the Maccih is over and it is up to us to confront the reality of the corrupt and corrupting. And in this struggle we need to believe in ourselves, in our transforming force that springs from the organization and defense of the territories. Fortunately, we do not have to look for that force or wait for it to come from outside; that force lives and walks with us."⁹⁴

Initially, the end of MACCIH left open the fate of its Honduran counterpart, UFECIC.⁹⁵ The pressure against it rose immediately. Nationalist congressman Francisco Rivera claimed that the

89 <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/2020/1/bipartisan-house-leaders-condemn-honduran-president-s-decision-not-to-extend-maccih>

90 <https://twitter.com/WHAAsstSecty/status/1218703715030511616>

91 e.g. https://twitter.com/DHS_Wolf/status/1219310065292861445

92 <https://twitter.com/SecPompeo/status/1219378401666052097>

93 <https://www.radioprogreso.net/np/el-fin-de-la-maccih-otra-bofetada-a-la-voluntad-popular/>

94 <https://www.radioprogreso.net/np/dos-continuismos-un-camino/>

95 <https://confidencialhn.com/advierten-de-una-encrucijada-para-ufecic-por-el-desaparecimiento-de-la-maccih/>

"international left" is behind the UFECIC and he wanted their prosecutors being investigated.⁹⁶ On January 20, ConfidencialHN reported that the mandate of UFECIC ended together with the MACCIH, according to a memorandum of understanding signed in 2017 between Attorney General Óscar Chinchilla and OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro.⁹⁷ Nationalist congressman and Secretary of Congress, Tomas Zambrano, claimed the same thing.⁹⁷ And so it came. On January 24, the MP announced its replacement with the Special Prosecuting Unit against Corruption Networks (UFERCO).⁹⁸ Some observers greet that it will be headed again by the public prosecutor Luis Javier Santos, who led UFECIC. Nevertheless, most see in it another trap to appease international pressure with a body that is controlled by the MP - the head of the MP, Attorney General Óscar Chinchilla is a close ally of JOH. Or in the words of lawyer Omar Menjívar: "It is part of the game of appearances in which they try to convey a message to persuade the population that they are indeed working against corruption, but it is clear that, as prosecutor Luis Javier Santos himself, head of this unit, said, it is a farce because Uferco is the same Special Prosecutor's Unit that worked with the Maccih, It is the same national personnel with the difference that the Ufecic worked with the support of 25 foreign technicians specialized in forensic audit, this work is fundamental in the investigation of corruption crimes, it is determinant and these personnel are not going to have it, and if they do not have it the work they are going to do will be deficient. On the other hand, there is a disincentive for the personnel that make up this unit because the Attorney General has cut their salaries by half."⁹⁹ But of course, the US embassy and the OAS General Secretary immediately congratulated Honduras.^{100 101}

One day later, ContraCorriente published a helpful analysis of the events. "Political analyst Raúl Pineda, who was a three-time National Party congressman and now works in private litigation, believes there were different interests in the negotiations, but tilted toward what the United States could get from the Juan Orlando Hernández government. "The OAS is an expression of the political power of the Americans (...) they tolerated the destruction of the MACCIH, they play based on their interests; at this moment they are focused on the immigration issue and drug trafficking. If they are given that, they make concessions and part of that is to limit their disagreement with the dissolution of the MACCIH to a simple press release," explained Pineda. He also rules out the possibility that they will give continuity to the work of the UFECIC, which was also conditioned by the political decisions of the Attorney General, something that would not change with the new UFERCO that will be totally dependent on the Attorney General. (...) On December 26 last year, in the weeks before the end of the MACCIH, the National Forum of Convergences (FONAC) was reactivated, which according to the Presidency of the Republic would come to "follow up on the Plan of the Nation and Country Vision, and help create new systems of transparency and anti-corruption". For Fátima Mena, this resurgence of the Forum raises suspicions about the intentions with which the

96 <https://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/diputado-rivera-dice-izquierda-internacional-esta-detras-de-ufecic-y-pide-investigar-a-sus-fiscales.html>

97 <https://tiempo.hn/ufecic-se-extingue-fin-maccih-segun-tomas-zambrano/>

98 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/150-enero2020/5345-comunicado-ministerio-publico-crea-unidad-fiscal-especializada-contr-redes-de-corrupcion>

99 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn.net/noticias-nacionales/institucionalidad-controlada-y-oposicion-debil-mantienen-a-joh-en-el-poder/>

100 <https://twitter.com/usembassyhn/status/1220854932364021763>

101 https://twitter.com/Almagro_OEA2015/status/1220828008266813440

institution is reappearing, since she considers that the aim is to weaken the other bodies that have reported cases of corruption, such as the National Anti-Corruption Council (CNA). (...) The MACCIH increased the public's perception of the reality of corruption affecting the country, and discontent became apparent after each case that was presented (...) Pineda assures that this scale goes beyond what is published or appears in the media and that it is linked to high levels of power. "The system is designed precisely to allow corruption; the Supreme Court of Justice is elected by politicians in Congress, the Prosecutor also, as is the Superior Audit Tribunal (...) these officials have a political commitment to those who elected them," said the political analyst. (...) Given this panorama, the support and accompaniment of the Mission to the Public Prosecutor's Office represented a threat to the corruption networks in the country. However, for attorney Pineda, the MACCIH was limited by Attorney General Óscar Chinchilla; therefore, according to him, the Mission could have done more in the country. "I think the MACCIH made a mistake, and that was not to hit the snake in the head. A lawyer said on a television program that UFECIC made an injunction against the President of the Republic. Why didn't they present it? - he questioned - the MACCIH is not being removed for what it did, but for what it could have done," he concluded."¹⁰²

The real intentions of the JOH regime were also made evident when he made reappear the National Convergence Forum (Fonac) shortly before the end of the MACCIH and UFECIC. The lack of independence was clear from the beginning but made even more apparent this month, when JOH ally Omar Rivera was elected as its secretary.¹⁰³ But the Trump administration refuses to see through this. Another challenge for the fight against corruption will be the new Penal Code. According to former Congresswoman Fátima Mena, in the new Penal Code, which will enter into force on May 10, crimes against public administration "are badly typified, it is such a complex form" that in the end it becomes almost impossible for the Public Prosecutor's Office to file an accusation. Mena details that the new Penal Code establishes that the crime of fraud will have to be proven through public procurement, which must comply with all the requirements of the Law on State Procurement, something that will be impossible, because corruption networks operate in a different way. Even worse, Carlos Sierra, a researcher at CIPRODEH, does not rule out that the intentions of the nationalist government in creating UFERCO are to contaminate and even destroy the files of the cases having been investigated by the now defunct UFECIC.¹⁰⁴ But the Trump administration refuses to see this. On January 29, the INL Director of Western Hemisphere Programs Patrick Ventrell visited Honduras and met with Attorney General Óscar Chinchilla. "The #UFERCO and @MP_Honduras are very important for continuing the fight against corruption in Honduras. Congrats to Atty. General Chinchilla and we offer our help and support"¹⁰⁵

102 <https://contracorriente.red/2020/01/25/finalizacion-de-la-macch-deja-incierto-camino-anticorruccion/>

103 <https://tiempo.hn/omar-rivera-asj-nombrado-secretario-ejecutivo-fonac/>

104 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn/noticias-nacionales/coalicion-de-organizaciones-piden-independencia-para-uferco/>

105 <https://twitter.com/StateINL/status/1222625534238167040>

Impunity Pacts

The Constitutional Chamber gave Congress five days to hand in a report about their newest impunity pact (see December's monitor).¹⁰⁶ Instead of this, Congress made further changes so that it is now impossible to ask for information regarding how they voted or if their deputies voted for them.¹⁰⁷

The Case against the Former First Lady Rosa Elena de Lobo

CESPAD published a summary of the case against the former first lady, Rosa Elena Bonilla de Lobo.¹⁰⁸

Congress

CESPAD also published a summary of the Network of Corrupt Congresswo/men case.¹⁰⁹

The Pandora Case

CESPAD also looked at the Pandora case.¹¹⁰ This month, a judge declared appropriate the definitive deprivation of property made to seven accused of the Pandora corruption case.¹¹¹ But at the same time, it was made public that the JOH regime continues to negate protection for the key witness in the Pandora corruption case, Fernando Suárez. According to his lawyer Omar Menjívar, he is in danger of death.¹¹¹ Menjívar also denounced that the Supreme Court of Justice and the MP maintain this judicial process at a standstill.¹¹²

The IHSS Case

A sentencing court decided to sentence businessman and former IHSS board member Benjamin Bogran to two years in prison for taking bribes.¹¹³ At the same time, he was acquitted for money laundering and may soon walk free again – he has been abroad for a while for medical treatment.¹¹⁴

The Open Arch Case

The constitutional chamber accepted a challenge by UFECIC in the Open Arch corruption case against a decision by a judge to dismiss evidence incriminating a group of congresswo/men.¹¹⁵

106 <https://confidencialhn.com/sala-constitucional-pide-al-parlamento-una-explicacion-sobre-el-fuero-legislativo/>

107 <https://criterio.hn/congreso-nacional-de-honduras-se-blinda-para-no-dar-informacion-de-su-quehacer/>

108 <http://cespad.org.hn/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Documento-CAJA-CHICA-WEB.pdf>

109 <http://cespad.org.hn/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Documento-RED-DE-DIPUTADOS-15-de-enero.pdf>

110 <http://cespad.org.hn/Documento-Pandora%20-0-1-2020.pdf>

111 <https://criterio.hn/estado-de-honduras-esta-negando-proteccion-a-fernando-suarez-testigo-del-caso-pandora/>

112 <https://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/csj-mantiene-estancado-caso-pandora-critica-abogado-defensor.html>

113 <https://confidencialhn.com/condenan-a-empresario-benjamin-bogran-a-dos-anos-de-carcel-por-recibir-sobornos/>

114 <https://tiempo.hn/benjamin-bogran-absuelto-lavado-activos-pronto-saldra-libre-1/>

115 <https://confidencialhn.com/admiten-recurso-a-favor-de-ufecic-ante-evidencias-desestimadas-por-causa-penal-contra-diputados/>

State Security Forces

Aqui Abajo published a great new article on US support for the "Honduran police implicated in drug trafficking". "The U.S. support for the construction and maintenance of a narco-state in Honduras increased after the 2009 U.S. and Canadian-backed coup d'état. U.S. support for "state-sponsored drug trafficking," intentional or not, came in many forms - the Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI) that includes training and financial support to the Honduran military, police and state intelligence institutions, the Alliance for Prosperity, USAID projects, and more. Diplomatically and politically, the U.S. supported the two National Party governments under Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo who is named as co-conspirator 3 (CC3) in the same New York drug case and support for two (illegal) Presidential terms of co-conspirator 4 (CC4), the current Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez (JOH). Under President Obama, the U.S. Congress appropriated more than \$2 billion in aid through CARSI to assist the region's law enforcement institutions and justice systems. The Trump administration has maintained Obama's security framework for Central America but has focused more on diverting migrants away from the border, ramping up border security, and supporting programs that allegedly address migration. (...) Through testimonies of five confessed drug traffickers collaborating with the prosecution - all of whom were TH and JOH's drug business associates - it became part of the public record that the Honduran National Police provided security to drug traffickers and drug shipments over several years. Federal prosecutors found photos on the phone that was confiscated from TH when arrested in the Miami airport. The photos show how police vehicles and state security personnel escorted drug shipments across Honduras on behalf of drug traffickers."¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, the US embassy congratulated the Honduran police on their 138th anniversary.¹¹⁷ On this occasion promoted 128 officials.¹¹⁸ Its director claimed that the Honduran police force is a reference for the region.¹¹⁹ JOH, meanwhile, claimed that the police have been successfully transformed¹²⁰ and they are a reference for transparency. Both statements are not widely shared outside the JOH regime.¹²¹

CESPAD published an analysis on "the crimes that gave rise to the disputed police purge in Honduras". "In the struggle for the purge, the number of appeals against the decisions of dismissed police officers has been numerous and some resolutions of the Constitutional Chamber announce that sooner rather than later, some will have to be returned to their posts. The State will have to pay millions of dollars in lawsuits, while the streets are full of "the purged" without any control. There is no mechanism to guarantee what steps are taken for those who were taken out of the police institution and who were linked to acts that were against the law."¹²² Further proof that the purge of the National Police was just for show came from ConfidentialHN. "Figures from the Police Statistical System Online (Sepol) and the Violence Observatory of the National Autonomous

116 <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2020/1/8/united-states-supports-honduran-police-implicated-in-drug-trafficking>

117 <https://twitter.com/usembassyhn/status/1217544387204468738>

118 https://twitter.com/Presidencia_HN/status/1222924187863605249

119 <https://twitter.com/PoliciaHonduras/status/1222942038926282752>

120 <https://twitter.com/JuanOrlandoH/status/1222966736149975043>

121 <http://www.elpais.hn/2020/01/30/presidente-hernandez-policia-nacional-es-referente-de-transparencia/>

122 <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/01/13/los-crimenes-que-dieron-origen-a-la-cuestionada-depuracion-policial-en-honduras/>

University of Honduras (UNAH) indicate that there was an upturn in the scale of killings (...) Furthermore, information obtained by Radio Globo and ConfidencialHN confirms that police officers who committed illicit acts have been captured instead of those who were purged, whose dismissal was justified because they had links to common and organized crime."¹²³ The purging committee, meanwhile, announced that the number of police agents and officials will reach 26'000 in 2022.¹²⁴

The MP requested 18 years of prison for the former police commissioner Jorge Alberto Maradiaga Barralaga for money laundering.¹²⁵ Then, they announced no less than four trials against members of the police and the Armed Forces for "crimes against life".¹²⁶ The MP in San Pedro Sula informed that in the last three years, 16 members of the police force and 11 Military Police officers were found guilty of human rights violations.¹²⁷ This month, a former member of the Armed Forces was arrested. He is accused of various crimes.¹²⁸ Trial will be opened against the former member of the Armed Forces Carlos Iván Zelaya for the illegal and violent detention of a Honduran citizen.¹²⁸

Post-Electoral Human Rights Violations

For the newest OACNUDH report on this, see the first section of this monitor above.

MADJ commemorated Wilmer Adalberto Paredes Gámez, who was murdered on January 1, 2018, as part of the post-electoral violence. Two weeks before, he had been brutally beaten together with other young protesters by state security forces. Wilmer was responsible for the security of the local protests and was a special target of state repression. Two years later, his death remains unpunished as do all other murders and crimes by the JOH regime of this period.¹²⁹

Repressions

On January 27, the anniversary of the second, illegal, inauguration of the JOH regime, Hondurans took to the streets.¹³⁰ C-Libre denounced various acts of repression.¹³¹

Penitentiary System

Sociologist Víctor Meza comments on the Honduran penitentiary system. "I often wonder if there really is a prison "system" in Honduras. The question is valid, judging by the characteristics and operation of the so-called "prisons" or "detention centers" that exist in the country. If we assume that a system presupposes a certain internal order, coherence among its components and

123 <https://confidencialhn.com/suben-los-asesinatos-y-delito-en-honduras-al-tras-luz-de-la-depuracion-policial/>

124 <https://tiempo.hn/preven-mas-policias-en-servicio-para-2022-segun-depuradores/>

125 <https://tiempo.hn/mp-solicita-18-anos-de-carcel-para-exsubcomisionado-jorge-barralaga/>

126 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/150-enero2020/5259-senalan-cuatro-juicios-contr-policias-y-un-capitan-del-ejercito-encausados-por-delitos-contr-la-vida>

127 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/150-enero2020/5258-16-policias-y-11-militares-condenados-por-violaciones-a-derechos-humanos-en-san-pedro-sula>

128 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/150-enero2020/5338-fiscalia-de-derechos-humanos-logra-auto-de-formal-procesamiento-contr-ex-militar-por-tres-delitos>

129 <https://madj.org/index.php/2020/01/02/wilmer-paredes-2-anos-de-su-legado/>

130 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1222026953366130689>

131 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1100-represion-a-protestas-en-diferentes-puntos-del-pais-este-27-de-enero>

institutional complementarity, the answer would be negative: there is no prison system in our country. What there is, at most, is a set of detention centers, most of which do not meet the material conditions or functional ingredients to be considered as such."¹³² On January 20, human rights organizations made a proposal to the Prison System Intervention Commission to define a comprehensive and humanist reform of the prison system.¹³³

On January 4, Deputy Security Minister Luis Suazo, showed his real face when it comes to his view on inmates. He denounced that "[t]hese criminals take advantage of the spaces that the law gives them, the rights and guarantees that exist in international systems. They take it as a weakness of our system and take advantage of it for their own benefit". He is, among other things, taking about the possibility to speak to a lawyer and get medical treatment.¹³⁴ According to ConfidencialHN, the former head of the penitentiary system, Rosa Gudiel, fled Honduras together with her kids after having received death threats.¹³⁴

About a month after the announcement of the further militarization of the Honduran prison system (see last month's report), FUSINA claimed that they have control over 70% of the prisons.¹³⁵ The presented reason for this were the several massacres last month. The one in Tela claimed its 21st victim in January. Jefferson Alexander Valdez Castellanos died in the hospital.¹³⁶

Militarization

Proceso Digital published an update on the controversial "agricultural development program" controlled by the Armed Forces (see November's monitor).¹³⁷

International Community

JOH reiterated his demand this month first made at the recent COP in Madrid to have longer pay-pack periods for loans by international institutions and then use the money to build dams.¹³⁸ The Honduras Solidarity Network denounces that "[i]mpacts of climate change including extremely low levels of water in dams that supply households in Tegucigalpa, are being used as a reason to privatize water management in capital of #Honduras. Residents resist the IDB-funded privatization that is based on corrupt & illegal acts".¹³⁸ 139 Gabriel Rubí, the head of Copeco, meanwhile, said that the water levels for Tegucigalpa are so low that it will only last for the three first month and not until May as previously said.¹³⁸

Just before the inauguration of Guatemala's new president, Honduras, Guatemala and the US signed an agreement to create employment in the two Central American countries. Taiwan also joined and

132 <https://criterio.hn/el-sistema-penitenciario/>

133 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2661-organizaciones-de-ddhh-proponen-a-la-comision-interventora-del-sistema-penitenciario-una-reforma-integral-y-humanista>

134 <https://confidencialhn.com/huye-de-honduras-exjefa-del-sistema-penitenciario-denuncia-amenazas-de-muerte/>

135 <https://tiempo.hn/fusina-ya-tomo-el-mando-del-70-por-ciento-del-sistema-penitenciario-del-pais/>

136 <https://tiempo.hn/masacre-en-carcel-de-tela-asciende-21-muertos/>

137 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/ffaa-aclara-que-plan-al-agro-demanda-que-campesinos-sean-duenos-de-tierras-y-no-habra-ayudas-en-efectivo.html>

138 <https://tiempo.hn/preven-agua-para-primeros-meses-2020-tegucigalpa/>

Israel, Japan and South Korea may also do so.¹³⁹ Honduras also signed a cooperation agreement with Israel.¹⁴⁰ A few days later, JOH announced that Honduras is just awaiting the opening of a Israeli embassy in Tegucigalpa for transferring its embassy to Jerusalem. Last year, Honduras opened a commercial office in Jerusalem, but the embassy continues in Tel Aviv.¹⁴¹

FOSDEH published a new report on the IMF in Honduras. "In approximately 30 years of negotiations and "intermittent" compliance with the IMF, nine Agreements have been signed. However, the socio-economic and political situation in Honduras continues to produce unsatisfactory results... Whose fault is this?"¹⁴²

US

The LA Times wondered this month if the Trump administration supports democracy in Latin America. "The contrast between its handling of election fallout in Honduras and the nearly identical scenario in Bolivia offers a stark lesson in how the Trump administration approaches the region. Even as votes were still being counted in Honduras in December 2017, the U.S. congratulated Juan Orlando Hernandez on victory. The endorsement, which came despite OAS recommendations for new balloting because of rampant election fraud, shocked numerous Latin American leaders as well as Democratic lawmakers in the United States. In a briefing at the time, a senior State Department official falsely contended that the OAS was changing its assessment about malfeasance and that the U.S. recognition of Hernandez was appropriate. The U.S. stance was widely seen as a reward for Hernandez, a right-wing politician who has played by the U.S. rules and heaped praise on President Trump. He had complied with U.S. demands to help cut off the flow of immigrants into the United States. And days after the election, Honduras became one of only a handful of countries that voted with the U.S. in the United Nations in support of Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and move the U.S. Embassy there from Tel Aviv. Trump has continued support for Hernandez, who visited senior administration officials in Washington last month despite having been named by federal officials as a co-conspirator in his brother's drug-trafficking trial. A Manhattan court in October found Tony Hernandez guilty of running a "state-sanctioned" multimillion-dollar operation funneling drugs into the United States. Juan Orlando Hernandez has denied involvement. The U.S. approach to Bolivia after its presidential election Oct. 20 could not have been more different."¹⁴³

Interestingly, there are more similarities between the two countries. "Interim Bolivian President Jeanine Áñez, who came to power in November, has rejected claims that her predecessor, Evo Morales, was ousted in a coup — while cracking down on dissent and calling for new elections to solidify the rule of conservative opposition forces that seized control of the government in Morales's absence. As many critics have noted, the cycle bears a striking similarity to the coup

139 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1348914-410/honduras-guatemala-eeuu-fuerzas-generacion-empleo>

140 <https://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/honduras-e-israel-firman-convenios-de-cooperacion-diplomatica-y-desarrollo.html>

141 <https://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/honduras-trasladara-su-embajada-a-jerusalen-cuando-israel-abra-su-legacion.html>

142 <http://www.fosdeh.com/2020/01/honduras-acuerdos-y-desacuerdos-con-el-fmi/>

143 <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-01-01/trump-democracy-latin-america>

d'etat that ousted Honduran President Manuel "Mel" Zelaya a decade ago. The left-wing leader was whisked out of office by the military, only to be replaced with an interim government led by right-wing opposition forces that swiftly consolidated power through a controversial election process. The parallels were apparently not lost on the Bolivia's new rulers. The Áñez government has retained the services of the same Washington, D.C., consultants hired by the Honduran interim government to build American support."¹⁴⁴

To carry up favor with the Trump administration, the JOH regime decided to declare Hezbollah a terrorist organization.¹⁴⁵ At the same time, the interim Secretary of National Security, Chad F. Wolf announced another visit to Honduras.¹⁴⁶ He came "for a bilateral meeting on regional migration and security. Honduras has been a strong partner in the region and we look forward to continuing our joint progress in the region."^{147 148}

On January 10, Criterio reported that the Trump administration is about to send boarder patrol and protection staff (from CBP and ICE) to to work in Honduras. They "will support the capacity building of their Honduran counterparts on migration, border security and customs issues".¹⁴⁹

Drug Trafficking

Honduras is currently discussing a reform of the Extradition law. Journalist Jeff Ernst warned: "The reforms to extradition are aimed at discouraging collaboration with American prosecutors and thus shield their partners who still enjoy freedom, in particular their political and security force allies."¹⁵⁰ The reform is promoted by no other than evangelical priest Alberto Solórzano, JOH ally and member of the purging committee.¹⁵¹

A young man denounced that after having served as a protected witness for the MP and the DPI in drug trafficking cases he was abandoned and betrayed by them.¹⁵² The Security Secretariat disputed this.¹⁵³ On January 11, Proceso Digital reported that the Supreme Court received two extradition requests.¹⁵⁴ Radio HRN later revealed the name of the two new extradition requests. Costa Rica asked for the extradition of Harley Clarisa Spacer Clark and the US for José Rafael Sosa Méndez.¹⁵⁴

El Pulso published a portrait of drug trafficker Juan Ramón Matta Waldurraga, who after he finished his sentence in the US traveled to Colombia where he was arrested and now Honduras wants him

144 <https://theintercept.com/2020/01/26/bolivia-evo-morales-honduras-coup-lobby-pr/>

145 <http://elpulso.hn/honduras-designa-a-hezbollah-como-organizacion-terrorista/>

146 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/secretario-de-seguridad-de-ee-uu-llegara-a-honduras-el-miercoles.html>

147 <https://twitter.com/SpoxDHS/status/1215085193339527169>

148 <https://twitter.com/SpoxDHS/status/1214646057512165377>

149 <https://criterio.hn/seguridad-de-ee-uu-se-desplazara-a-fronteras-y-aduanas-de-honduras/>

150 <https://twitter.com/jeffernst/status/1217940231896420352>

151 <https://tiempo.hn/honduras-solorzano-anuncia-reformas-a-ley-de-extradicion/>

152 <https://tiempo.hn/testigo-protegido-en-caso-de-narcos-denuncia-traicion-de-la-dpi-y-mp/>

153 <https://tiempo.hn/seguridad-argumenta-que-version-testigo-protegido-falsa/>

154 <https://radiohrn.hn/estos-son-los-dos-hondurenos-pedidos-en-extradicion/>

extradited.¹⁵⁵ His lawyer pleaded that his client should not be extradited from Colombia to Honduras as there are no conditions for a fair trial (see also last month's monitor).¹⁵⁶

Tony Hernández

The defense of Tony Hernández successfully requested the postponement of Tony's sentencing. It has been scheduled for February 24.¹⁵⁷ JOH's presidential adviser Marvin Ponce presented Tony in an interview just as a young man who made the wrong friends.¹⁵⁸

Related to the Tony Hernández case, after the murder in a so-called maximum-security prison of a key witness, Magdaleno Meza, his legal defense team asked for protection. They did not receive it and one lawyer was also murdered. Another one, Carlos Chajtur, once again asked for protection and this month denounced that the Protection Mechanism again denied his request.¹⁵⁹ The Human Rights Secretariat reacted saying that his case is handled by CONADEH.¹⁶⁰

Varia

JOH

Padre Melo warned that the very violent ending of 2019 in Honduras could be "a premonition of even harder times" due to a further consolidation process by the JOH regime.¹⁶¹ 2019 also has made evident once more the failed security policy of the regime.¹⁶² Next year is an election year in Honduras and Javier Suazo sees four possibilities for JOH to stay in power, directly or through someone else, e.g. Mauricio Oliva, the current president of Congress.¹⁶³ Radio Progreso spoke with lawyer Omar Menjívar on how JOH controls power. "The mister (JOH) has weakened the institutionality, it has practically disappeared because what prevails is the supreme will of the ruler, the rest of the country's institutions, which would function properly in a situation of true rule of law, are simply subject to that will and comply with that will." He identifies another pillar of his power in the weakness of the opposition. "It is a rather weak opposition because it is disorganized, disarticulated, and I am talking about opposition in general and not only from political parties, but also from other sectors such as social movements, (...) it seems that there are very particular interests of each sector and there is no capacity to reconcile these different interests that naturally exist."¹⁶⁴

155 <http://elpulso.hn/juan-ramon-matta-waldurraga-la-historia-del-hijo-del-primer-narco-hondureno-extraditado/>

156 <https://tiempo.hn/abogado-matta-waldurraga-no-garantias-extraditarlo-honduras/>

157 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3686-atencion-tony-hermanez-recibira-sentencia-hasta-febrero-proximo>

158 <https://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/justicia-de-eeuu-exagero-con-tony-hermanez-porque-nunca-fue-un-gran-narcotraficante-marvin-ponce.html>

159 <https://confidencialhn.com/desestiman-medidas-de-proteccion-para-apoderado-de-magdaleno-meza/>

160 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/estado-de-honduras-niega-ofrecerle-proteccion-por-amenazas-contra-su-vida-denuncia-abogado-chajtur.html>

161 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/adverten-escenarios-de-violencia-como-parte-del-proceso-de-pacificacion-del-gobierno-de-joh/>

162 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/en-honduras-fracaso-politica-de-seguridad/>

163 <https://www.alainet.org/es/articulo/204095>

164 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn.net/noticias-nacionales/institucionalidad-controlada-y-oposicion-debil-mantienen-a-joh-en-el-poder/>

JOH can also continue to count with the support of the Trump administration. The US Acting Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security Chad Wolf met directly with JOH on January 9. He tweeted about a "[g]ood discussion with President Hernandez and his cabinet on security and prosperity issues. We finalized the details of the ACA [safe third country agreement and look forward to implementing in the coming weeks".¹⁶⁵ The US embassy published his complete public presentation. It seems as the recent past with the Tony trial, electoral fraud, the assassinations of dozens of protesters by state security forces supported by US funds has never happened. "Your partnership touches nearly every corner of the United States government, but the Department of Homeland Security is especially fortunate to enjoy such a strong and productive bilateral relationship with you. (...) Mr. President—I commend your forward-leaning efforts to improve public security to attract greater investment to Honduras." Then there were also remarks on US investment. "The recently launched U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, or DFC, under CEO Adam Bohler, is committed to supporting economic growth in Honduras and expanding bilateral partnerships with your government. The DFC currently has over \$235 million invested in Honduras, including \$135 million in financing of the first geothermal power plant in the country."¹⁶⁶

At least, there is some more criticism coming from the church. "We don't want a church that is sleepy and out of touch with reality," said the Bishop of San Pedro Sula, Angel Garachana, who in his homily prayed for the people's forgiveness in the face of the church's silence for so much abuse.¹⁶⁷ There is no lack of new opportunities to denounce the acts of the JOH regime. The Pro Honduras Network uncovered that the JOH regime signed this month a contract with the US company BGR Government Affairs, LLC for political lobbying in DC. The contract is worth \$60'000 per month and runs until the end of the year.¹⁶⁸

On January 27, the anniversary of the second, illegal, inauguration of the JOH regime, Hondurans took to the streets.¹⁶⁹ C-Libre denounced various acts of repression.¹⁷⁰ The Honduras Solidarity Network published a press release on "two years of narco-dictatorship" in Honduras.¹⁷¹ Radio Progreso wrote: "The regime of Juan Orlando Hernández is the perfect example of the unbridled exercise of power, of arbitrariness in all its crudeness, of corruption and impunity as a way of doing politics, and of cynicism in the perverse use of concepts such as the rule of law, democracy and human rights. In this way, this authoritarian regime repeatedly affirms the defense of human rights and the fight against corruption and impunity, and at the same time it destroys any institutionality and eliminates any rule that has this purpose."¹⁷² A day later, the third legislative period was

165 https://twitter.com/DHS_Wolf/status/1215351720173113344

166 <https://hn.usembassy.gov/acting-dhs-secretary-wolfs-remarks-with-honduran-president-juan-orlando-hernandez/>

167 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3694-obispo-ruega-perdon-de-hondurenos-por-silencio-de-iglesia-ante-multicrisis>

168 <https://criterio.hn/gobierno-de-joh-paga-60-mil-dolares-mensuales-para-realizar-lobby-politico/>

169 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1222026953366130689>

170 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1100-represion-a-protestas-en-diferentes-puntos-del-pais-este-27-de-enero>

171 <http://www.hondurassolidarity.org/2020/01/28/two-years-of-narco-dictatorship-in-honduras/>

172 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn/np/el-cinismo-tactico-del-regimen-2/>

inaugurated. ContraCorriente took a close look at some of the statements made by the JOH regime on this occasion, e.g. on the judicial backlog, on violence or the "social" program Vida Mejor.¹⁷³

Penal Code

Last year, after national and international protest, the JOH regime promised that they would not further include the criminalization of freedom of expression in the new Penal Code. But now it seems that it was once again just a strategy to silence the criticism and do it anyway. The Supreme Court of Justice sent an opinion insisting on criminalizing crimes against honor in the new Penal Code this month.¹⁷⁴ Additionally, Pasos de Animal Grande warned that "Article 541 of the New Penal Code includes the offense of unlawful disruption of the functioning of institutions, with the aim of limiting social protests to the powers of the State, and provides for prison sentences against persons who dare to do so".¹⁷⁵ The director of C-Libre, Eddy Táborá said that together with the Association of Journalists of Honduras (CPH), they will request the mediation of OACNUDH before Congress on the decriminalization of crimes against honor of the new Penal Code.¹⁷⁵

The new Penal Code has also been criticized for serving as another impunity pact for the corrupt. According to former Congresswoman Fátima Mena, in the new Penal Code, which will enter into force on May 10, crimes against public administration "are badly typified, it is such a complex form" that in the end it becomes almost impossible for the Public Prosecutor's Office to file an accusation. Mena details that the new Penal Code establishes that the crime of fraud will have to be proven through public procurement, which must comply with all the requirements of the Law on State Procurement, something that will be impossible, because corruption networks operate in a different way. Even worse, Carlos Sierra, a researcher at CIPRODEH, does not rule out that the intentions of the nationalist government in creating UFERCO are to contaminate and even destroy the files of the cases having been investigated by the now defunct UFECIC.¹⁷⁶

Electoral Reforms

Honduras, two years before the elections, entered in electoral mode with the parties presenting their primary candidates.¹⁷⁷ This month, once again, the JOH regime announced "profound" electoral reforms.¹⁷⁸ Radio Progreso has a different view. "Are small electoral reforms enough to prevent fraud that is already in place? If those who lead the electoral processes are the same ones who carried out a coup d'état, will they remove themselves from power through elections that they themselves control? The struggle to rescue elections from the clutches of the current authoritarian mafia is valuable, but these transformations are not achieved on the basis of premature enthusiasm. It is necessary to open minds and attitudes for responsible and mature debate. In this way we will

173 <https://contracorriente.red/2020/01/29/verdades-enganos-y-desmesuras-en-la-inauguracion-de-la-tercera-legislatura/#1580329178966-c00a3292-328c>

174 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1097-poder-judicial-insiste-en-penalizar-delitos-contra-el-honor>

175 <https://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/c-libre-y-gremio-periodistico-pedira-mediacion-de-onu-para-despenalizar-delitos-contra-el-honor.html>

176 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn/noticias-nacionales/coalicion-de-organizaciones-piden-independencia-para-uferco/>

177 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn/portada/candidaturas-prematuras-se-apoderan-de-ambiente-politico-en-honduras/>

178 <https://tiempo.hn/oliva-se-compromete-a-luchar-por-la-transparencia-electoral/>

avoid falling once again into the jaws and fangs of the criminals who are currently dying of laughter at the sight of everyone dancing to the electoral tune."¹⁷⁹ And shortly after announcing these “profound” reforms, the same Mauricio Oliva, Congress’ president, claimed that the electoral reforms have already been carried out with the creation of the National Electoral Council and the Electoral Justice Tribunal. Likewise, he declared that from his perspective: “I do not believe that we are prepared for a second round [presidential election]”.¹⁸⁰

Also this month, CESPAD published an analysis of the Clean Politics Law.¹⁸¹

Public Health

Last year, Honduras suffered from a severe dengue crisis. Even the New York Times reported on it. “Rising temperatures are increasing the range of disease-bearing mosquitoes globally. But in Honduras, the effects are compounded by government dysfunction and criminal gangs.”¹⁸² Things do not seem to improve in 2020; already on January 2, there was the first suspected dengue death.¹⁸³ At the same time, Honduras has 37’696 people living with HIV/AIDS.¹⁸⁴

On January 17, the auxiliary nurses denounced that authorities of the Secretary of Health and the Association of Auxiliary Nurses (ANEEAH), have left them excluded from the agreements of salary readjustment and the bonus of 13’000 Lempiras.¹⁸⁵ They announced strike measures and kept them up for three days until a partial agreement with the Health Secretariat was agreed.¹⁸⁶

Poverty

“The economic outlook for 2020 is the same as 2019 when foreign direct investment fell by 40%, said Alejandro Kafati, an economist with the Social Forum for Honduras’ Foreign Debt (FOSDEH). Kafati said it should be remembered that the economic cabinet announced in a press conference that the country has fallen into an economic recession that will last from 2019 to 2020 and probably all of 2021. (...) Kafati pointed out that this leaves only two paths for Hondurans: migration, either in caravans or alone, to the United States, and suicide, which has increased in the last two years.”¹⁸⁷ But at the same time, the JOH regime is calculating away poverty. With a new methodology, the poverty rate is now 48.3% instead of 61.9%, while independent experts and civil society organizations measured a poverty rate of up to 70%.¹⁸⁸

179 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn/hp/una-palabra-para-un-debate-necesario/>

180 <https://confidencialhn.com/presidente-del-legislativo-afirma-que-ya-se-realizaron-las-reformas-electorales-profundas/>

181 <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/01/07/la-ley-de-politica-limpia-y-el-dinero-prohibido-que-bulle-en-las-campanas-politicas-en-honduras/>

182 <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/29/world/americas/honduras-dengue-epidemic.html>

183 <https://radiohm.hn/seis-hondurenos-han-muerto-por-sospechas-de-dengue-en-los-primeros-dias-del-2020/>

184 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/honduras-registra-mas-de-37-mil-casos-de-vih-sida.html>

185 <http://elpulso.hn/enfermeras-os-auxiliares-fuera-de-acuerdos-de-aumento-salarial/>

186 <https://confidencialhn.com/enfermeras-logran-acuerdo-preliminar-y-suspenden-asambleas-informativas/>

187 <https://criterio.hn/panorama-economico-de-honduras-deja-dos-caminos-migracion-o-suicidio-video/>

188 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/el-48-3-de-los-hondurenos-viven-en-pobreza-segun-nuevo-metodo-de-medicion.html>

Drought

Honduras is facing the worst drought in years.¹⁸⁹ 190 The Secretariat of Community Development, Water and Sanitation (SEDECOAS) announced the construction of some 600 water harvesters for this year.¹⁸⁹

Migration

70'275 Hondurans were deported last year from Mexico.¹⁹⁰ The deportations continued in the new year. In the first three days, 403 Hondurans were deported from Mexico.¹⁹¹ Migration to Spain from Honduras, meanwhile, increased by 15% last year.¹⁹² At the same time, Honduras will soon receive citizens from Guatemala, El Salvador, Mexico, Basil and Nicaragua who have requested asylum in the US as part of the third safe country agreements.¹⁹³ 194 53 Hondurans, among them unaccompanied minors, have so far been sent to Guatemala as part of the safe third country agreement between the US and Guatemala to do the paperwork to ask for asylum in the US from there.¹⁹⁵ Shortly afterwards, Proceso Digital reported that Cinthia Fernández, who had fled Honduras to reach the US but returned from the US-Mexican border to Guatemala, was murdered there.¹⁹⁵

A lot of migrants are deported to Guatemala without any knowledge of what is happening to them. "The chartered U.S. government flights land here every day or two, depositing Honduran and Salvadoran asylum seekers from the U.S. border. Many arrive with the same question: "Where are we?" For the first time ever, the United States is shipping asylum seekers who arrive at its border to a "safe third country" to seek refuge there. The Trump administration hopes the program will serve as a model for others in the region. But during its first weeks, asylum seekers and human rights advocates say, migrants have been put on planes without being told where they were headed, and left here without being given basic instruction about what to do next."¹⁹⁶

27'000 Hondurans are stuck in Mexico sent back from the US.¹⁹⁷ "The US government has started sending asylum seekers back to Nogales, Mexico, to await court hearings that will be scheduled roughly 350 miles (563km) away in Ciudad Juárez. Authorities are expanding a program known as Remain in Mexico that requires tens of thousands of asylum seekers to wait out their immigration court hearings in Mexico. Until this week, the government was driving some asylum seekers from Nogales, Arizona, to El Paso, Texas, so they could be returned to Juárez. Now, asylum seekers will have to find their own way through dangerous Mexican border roads."¹⁹⁷

189 <https://tiempo.hn/cosechadoras-de-agua-utilidad-para-las-sequias-en-honduras/>

190 <https://tiempo.hn/alden-rivera-mexico-deporto-a-70275-hondurenos-en-2019/>

191 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/suman-403-los-hondurenos-deportados-en-2020.html>

192 <https://www.proceso.hn/migrantes/1-migrantes/en-15-4-aumento-en-2019-la-migracion-de-hondurenos-hacia-espana.html>

193 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1347757-410/honduras-recibira-migrantes-cinco-nacionalidades-asilo-refugio-estados-unidos>

194 <https://criterio.hn/honduras-comenzara-a-recibir-a-solicitantes-de-asilo-a-finales-de-enero/>

195 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/migrante-hondurena-es-asesinada-en-guatemala.html>

196 https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/the-us-is-putting-asylum-seekers-on-planes-to-guatemala--often-without-telling-them-where-theyre-going/2020/01/13/0f89a93a-3576-11ea-a1ff-c48c1d59a4a1_story.html

197 <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jan/02/us-asylum-seekers-mexico-arizona-remain>

In the midst of this, a new migrant caravan was announced from Honduras. On January 14, started to gather once more at the bus terminal in San Pedro Sula. Criterio initially wrote of 800-1000 people.¹⁹⁸ ¹⁹⁹ A few hours later, the estimate rose to 3000-4000 people.²⁰⁰ The Honduras Solidarity Network denounced that the "Honduran police are harassing & trying to take IDs & documents away" from the gathered people.²⁰¹ The caravan soon split in two groups. A smaller one tried it at the Corinto border, the larger one at the Agua Caliente border. Both were tear-gassed.²⁰² ²⁰³ OACNUDH dispatched observation and monitoring mission to various border points.²⁰⁴ The Red Cross in Guatemala attended more than 1000 Hondurans in two days.²⁰⁵ CONADEH, meanwhile, recommended to the Honduran government to attend the structural causes of forced migration.²⁰⁶

By January 15, Guatemala had already registered over 2000 Hondurans²⁰⁷, a day later, the number reached 3500.²⁰⁸ At the same time, they started to deport them again with US support. "Guatemalan police accompanied by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents have swept up hundreds of migrants, returning them to the Honduran border and in effect dashing their plans to travel together in a "caravan" to the United States. (...) Wolf [acting US homeland security secretary] also noted the presence of US "tactical agents" in Guatemala."²⁰⁹ Acting Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection Mark Morgan traveled to Honduras for a "[p]roductive meeting today with Honduran immigration officials".²¹⁰

On January 18, first group of the newest migrant caravans²¹¹ arrived at the Mexican border but was stopped and repressed by the Mexican police and national guards.²¹² ²¹³ This new role of Mexico was addressed by WOLA: "Facing U.S. threats to impose potentially steep tariffs on Mexican goods last June, Mexico has adopted a series of measures along its southern border with Guatemala that, while somewhat effective at stopping the flow, seems a partial solution with high financial and political costs."²¹² The migrants, meanwhile, tried to cross the Suchiate River to enter Mexico.²¹² The Mexican National Guards repressed the migrants using physical force and tear gas.²¹³ ²¹⁴ A day later, El Faro reported: "The first caravan of 2020 failed. It did not manage to travel through Central America as a granite mass exodus, nor did it reach the border of the United States. (...) Mexico proved to be the efficient wall that promised the Donald Trump White House to contain Central

198 <https://criterio.hn/numerosa-caravana-de-migrantes-hondurenos-se-alista-para-partir-la-madrugada-del-miercoles/>

199 <https://criterio.hn/gritando-fuera-joh-primera-caravana-avanza-hacia-frontera-de-corinto/>

200 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1217279418978263040>

201 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/121722563270668289>

202 <https://tiempo.hn/video-policia-gasea-caravana-migrantes-frontera-corinto/>

203 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1217552624939040768>

204 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1217984670031339520>

205 <https://www.cruzroja.gt/noticias/asistencia-humanitaria-durante-el-flujo-masivo-de-personas-migrantes-proveniente-de-honduras/>

206 <http://conadeh.hn/ante-continuidad-de-migracion-forzada-ombudsman-hondureno-recomienda-al-gobierno-de-honduras-garantizar-ofertas-de-oportunidades-de-trabajo-productivo-y-atender-las-causas-estructurales-de-la-migra/>

207 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/mas-de-2-000-hondurenos-ingresaron-a-guatemala-con-la-caravana-migrante.html>

208 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1218223733661409280>

209 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/16/guatemala-migrants-us-agents-honduras?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

210 <https://twitter.com/CBPMarkMorgan/status/1217987287092428804>

211 <https://contracorriente.red/2020/01/19/el-camino-recurrente-del-nuevo-exodo-centroamericano/>

212 <http://elpulso.hn/39313-2/>

213 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3706-salvaje-con-brutal-golpiza-y-gas-mexico-busca-parar-migracion-hondurena>

214 https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/us-bound-migrants-clash-with-mexican-forces-at-guatemala-border/2020/01/20/e7872a14-3b99-11ea-afe2-090eb37b60b1_story.html

American migration.²¹⁵ Accordingly, Department of Homeland Security Acting Secretary Chad F. Wolf thanked Mexico for "upholding their commitment to increased security and law enforcement at their southern border".²¹⁶

With this newest migrant caravans, there was also more coverage again on the push factors. On January 21, a public forum took place in Tegucigalpa discussing migration. The speakers made the link between the "the neoliberal and interfering policy" of the US and Honduran migration.^{217 218} The Network of Women Human Rights Defenders of Honduras focused on the women fleeing. "They do not leave, they are expelled, they flee from the neoliberal and patriarchal misery that has turned women's lives into waste. Cornered by the ferocity of extreme poverty and even more so by the brutality of the violence exercised by all kinds of men who attack them to the point of murder, Honduran women seek a life for themselves, and a life for their daughters and sons."²¹⁹ Radio Progreso wrote: "Once again, between three and four thousand Hondurans decided to form the first migrant caravan of the year. They are leaving because there are no jobs, no food, no healthcare, no education and no public safety. And they are willing to give their lives in their attempt to live with dignity or at least guarantee a better life for their loved ones."²²⁰ The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) published a short report. "A combination of push factors, such as violence, disasters, poverty and lack of response from governments are largely intertwined as key drivers of new caravans in Central America."²²¹ The UNHCR also published a short report. "The number of people forced to flee from the North of Central America in search for protection — either internally or across international borders — has soared over the past years. Violence, persecution and insecurity compounded by deteriorating socioeconomic conditions has especially targeted children and women and LGBTQ people. Those who flee see no choice but to undertake dangerous journeys that expose them to smugglers, traffickers and other risks of exploitation and abuse."²²¹

Aqui Abajo has published a helpful fact sheet on "why Hondurans are forced to flee". "This fact sheet was compiled to provide a statistical context to the urgent crisis in Honduras that is forcing Hondurans to flee as refugees to neighbouring countries and to the U.S. border. It attempts to show the increasingly high cost of living that affect the daily lives and economic situations of millions of Honduran families. It provides a summary of the minimum wage and underemployment in the country for the small group of Hondurans that are able to find work but that suffer horrendous working conditions when their employers and the Honduran government do not abide by or enforce the labor code. This fact sheet also provides a few statistics related to the security situation in the country by looking at the homicide rate, the impunity rate, and the number of massacres that have occurred in the last few years. There is also a section about corruption and drug trafficking with details on involvement of government officials and Congressional representatives in corruption

215 <https://www.elfaro.net/es/202001/centroamerica/23944/M%C3%A9xico-enga%C3%B1a-una-vez-m%C3%A1s-a-la-caravana-centroamericana.htm>

216 <https://hn.usembassy.gov/statement-homeland-security-acting-secretary-chad-wolf-migrant-caravan/>

217 <https://criterio.hn/atribuyen-migracion-a-politica-neoliberal-e-injerencista-de-ee-uu/>

218 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2666-senalan-expertos-paises-evaden-con-politicas-migratorias-la-responsabilidad-del-conflicto-social-creado>

219 <http://im-defensoras.org/2020/01/comunicado-red-nacional-de-defensoras-de-ddhh-en-honduras-somos-mujeres-somos-feministas-somos-defensoras-somos-hondurenas/>

220 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn/np/huyen-para-vivir/>

221 <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/73692>

cases and drug trafficking. The final section includes statistics related to human rights issues and targeted populations such as students, Afro-indigenous Garifuna people, journalists, lawyers, and more."²²²

Back in the US, “a federal judge in McAllen, Texas, denied a request to halt the deportation of the Honduran mother and her two [sick] children. The family is expected to be sent to Guatemala on Tuesday, according to a lawyer familiar with the case. Once in Guatemala, they will be required to choose between seeking refuge there or returning to Honduras.”²²³ On January 23, US congresswoman Jan Schakowsky commented on the migration deals between the Trump administration and Mexico and Central America. “DHS must end its inhumane immigration policies, including “Remain in Mexico,” that have led to the murder, rape, assault, & kidnapping of thousands of migrants. It must also end its dangerous cooperation with corrupt and repressive security forces in Guatemala & Honduras and so-called “Safe Third Country” agreements.”²²⁴ Sociologist Leticia Salomón denounced that Honduras, Mexico and Guatemala “play the sad role of guardians of the United States borders”.²²⁴ The UN criticized asked Mexico to abstain from using violence against migrants and not to deport them if they are persecuted in their countries.²²⁵ But out of the over 1700 Honduras deported, only 51 agreed to it.²²⁶ organizations. The New York Times summarized it as follows: “Mexico Breaks Up a Migrant Caravan, Pleasing White House”.²²⁷ The Trump administration was satisfied.²²⁸ Later, the the Honduran National Migration Institute (INM) reported that over 5000 Hondurans having participated in the newest caravans were deported.²²⁸ At the same time, Mexican authorities said that 2303 Hondurans have been deported.²²⁹

On January 29, the Intercept and Doctors without Borders commemorated the first anniversary of the Remain in Mexico program. “One year ago, on January 29, 2019, the U.S. sent a Honduran asylum-seeker back to Tijuana to wait for his immigration court date — the first person subjected to “Remain in Mexico.” Since then, people from dozens of countries have been affected, but Honduras and Guatemala comprised more than 60 percent of cases, and Cuba, El Salvador, Ecuador, Venezuela, and Nicaragua accounted for most of the rest. Migrant and human rights groups have repeatedly condemned the policy. Fewer than five percent of people subject to the MPP had access to legal representation. Children, LGBTQ asylum-seekers, and people with disabilities have all been sent back to some of the most dangerous cities in Mexico. “As of January 21, 2019, Human Rights First has tracked at least 816 public reports of murder, torture, rape, kidnapping, and other violent attacks against asylum seekers and migrants returned to Mexico under MPP,” the organization noted in a fact sheet released this month.”²³⁰ “One year since the United States implemented its “Remain in Mexico” policy, tens of thousands of asylum seekers are trapped in danger in Mexico, facing daily violence and dealing with the mental health toll of constant risk and uncertainty, the

222 <http://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2020/1/28/why-hondurans-are-forced-to-flee-fact-sheet>

223 <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/u-s-to-deport-honduran-mother-two-sick-children-to-guatemala-under-controversial-trump-immigration-policy-2020-01-20/>

224 <https://criterio.hn/honduras-mexico-y-guatemala-se-han-convertido-en-guardianes-de-las-fronteras-de-estados-unidos/>

225 <https://tiempo.hn/onu-a-mexico-no-mas-violencia-contramigrantes-y-asilo-para-los-perseguidos/>

226 <https://tiempo.hn/de-mas-de-1-700-migrantes-deportados-solo-51-lo-han-hecho-de-forma-voluntaria/>

227 <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/24/world/americas/migrant-caravan-mexico.html>

228 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/mas-de-cinco-mil-integrantes-de-la-caravana-han-retornado-a-honduras.html>

229 <https://www.proceso.hn/migrantes/1-migrantes/migracion-de-mexico-deporto-2-303-hondurenos-los-ultimos-diez-dias.html>

international medical humanitarian organization Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) said Wednesday.²³⁰

By the end of the month, a new group of Honduras assembled in San Pedro Sula to leave Honduras together.²³¹ On January 31, some 500 Hondurans took off.²³²

Education

82'438 school children dropped out of school in 2019, more than in the previous year. Since 2015, the number has increased by at least 42%.²³³ 39% are out of the educational system because of their families' economic problems and the other 26% say they are not interested in continuing their studies because there are no job options. At least one million children, between 3 and 17 years old, are out of the system.²³⁴

And Light at the End of a Month

Radio Progreso sees some hope for Honduras in the coming decade.”We may be privileged generations, we may be witnessing a turning point in the history of Honduras. But it is up to us to work so that this generational meeting is reached, and that the wear and tear becomes an opportunity for the organization of the various sectors of society. Above all, we must not lose hope that Honduras can take other paths, and that the construction of a new country will only be possible, if we stop believing that the solutions will always come from above and start building popular power from the bases.”²³⁵

230 <https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/what-we-do/news-stories/news/devastating-toll-remain-mexico-one-year-later>

231 <https://criterio.hn/la-historia-se-repite-y-una-nueva-caravana-migrante-sale-manana-desde-san-pedro-sula/>

232 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3723-crisis-no-para-hoy-sale-nueva-caravana-de-honduras-y-la-indiferencia-gobierno>

233 <https://tiempo.hn/mas-de-82-mil-deserciones-escolares-se-registraron-en-2019/>

234 <https://confidencialhn.com/indican-alarmando-porcentaje-de-desercion-educativa-de-ninos-y-adolescentes-en-honduras/>

235 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/la-decada-del-cambio-y-la-esperanza/>

Another Month at the Honduras Forum Switzerland

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