

Another Month in Honduras...

Human Rights Monitor – December 2020

Two murdered human rights defender, a social communicator assassinated, all just weeks after two hurricanes had hit Honduras and everything happening during a global pandemic, what a horrible way to end 2020. 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
FPIC	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

The Hurricanes Eta and Iota

While still suffering the aftermath of the two hurricanes (see last month), the situation was made worse for Hondurans by the JOH regime. On December 1, Honduran state security forces heavily repressed local residents during an eviction of hurricane victims. They even opened fire murdering the young man Rafael Flores Hernández.¹ OACNUDH condemned the murder.² Hondurans called on the MP to present charges against the mayor of San Pedro Sula, Armando Calidonio, for ordering the eviction.³ The next day, some 127 human rights and civil society organizations demand protection at the Supreme Court for those affected by both the pandemic and the hurricanes. They also denounced the mismanagement of the crises by the JOH regime.^{4 5}

The weather also continued to make the situation worse. At the beginning of the month, COPECO renewed the red alert for all Honduras due to an incoming cold front.⁶ The first rains it brought already hit Honduras again.⁷

The JOH regime promised to invest 2.5 billion Lempiras in temporary portable housing⁸ as well as to transfer 122 million Lempiras to municipalities.⁹ JOH himself continued to ask around for money. In a US visit, he met with the World Bank¹⁰, the World Food Program¹¹, the OAS¹², and the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC).¹³ El Libertador wrote: "Juan Hernández, accompanied by a delegation, has gone on a tour of the offices of International Financial Institutions (IFIs) to ask for more funds - donated and borrowed - to cushion the impacts of Cyclones Eta and Iota. He hopes to raise at least \$3.2 billion (77.77 billion lempiras) for social programs in an election year. As of this Saturday, Hernandez has received relief funds "on behalf of the Honduran people" of about \$1.3 billion from the World Bank (\$250 million), the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (\$1 billion) and USAID (\$18.8 million). In contrast, in the last few days there have been denunciations of the closure of shelters, and yesterday, Friday, in the shelter in the Villa Olímpica, the capital city, the victims protested in the street, because they feel helpless and they see the moment when they will be evicted very near; according to official data, 4.5 million Hondurans were affected by the hurricanes, 95,739 of whom have been housed in collection centers."¹⁴ On December 10, the BID spoke \$640 million for 2021 to the JOH

1 <https://contracorriente.red/2020/12/01/un-muerto-durante-un-desalojo-reabre-heridas-en-los-bordos-de-un-rio-en-san-pedro-sula/>

2 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDHN/status/1333906755353538563>

3 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/instante/demandan-que-ministerio-publico-actue-de-oficio-en-asesinato-de-lavador-de-carros/>

4 <https://criterio.hn/responsabilizan-a-poder-ejecutivo-por-manejo-ineficiente-de-pandemia-y-emergencias-por-huracanes/>

5 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/pt/joh-y-max-gonzalez-principales-responsables-de-la-emergencia-en-honduras/>

6 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/instante/honduras-en-alerta-roja-por-frente-frio/>

7 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1426439-466/fuertes-lluvias-por-frente-frio-inundaciones-en-litoral-atlantico>

8 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1426484-466/invertiran-2500-millones-soluciones-habitacionales-afectados-tormentas>

9 <https://proceso.hn/gobierno-desembolsa-1-122-millones-para-atender-emergencias-en-55-alcaldias/>

10 <https://www.bancomundial.org/es/news/statement/2020/12/03/wb-vice-president-for-latin-america-and-the-caribbean-meets-president-of-honduras>

11 <https://twitter.com/WFPChief/status/1334949324929851392>

12 <https://confidencial.hn.com/oea-y-honduras-firman-convenio-educativo-luego-de-baja-a-maccih-hace-casi-1-ano/>

13 <https://www.dfc.gov/media/press-releases/readout-meeting-honduran-president-juan-orlando-herandez-and-dfc-ceo-adam>

14 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2487-honduras-gobierno-pide-3-200-millones-de-dolares-mientras-corre-damnificados>

regime¹⁵ and the BCIE \$1000 million.¹⁶ El Libertador later reported that the JOH regime has to its disposal almost 119 billion Lempiras, almost \$5 billion, for the reconstruction of Honduras.¹⁷ And more money was about to come. "The International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved the third revision of the agreement with Honduras under the Stand-by modality, which will allow access to 88 million dollars, informed this Monday the Economic Cabinet of the government."¹⁸ "The World Bank Board of Directors today approved a US\$150 million credit for an investment project to support Honduras' emergency response and recovery needs after the devastation from hurricanes Eta and Iota."¹⁹ Spain also announced 70 million Euros.²⁰

By December 6, there were still 92'962 Hondurans living in shelters according to COPECO.²¹ Others even have to live on the street as their houses had been destroyed. La Prensa reported on 2000 people in between La Lima and El Progreso.²² In the Sula Valley, there are 13 communities near the Ulúa River that were totally destroyed, plus the area of El Porvenir and the urban center. "In spite of the seriousness of the situation, the central government does not hand over the famous funds for reconstruction, although in its publicity it claims to have made the transfers. The Mayor of San Manuel, Cortés, Arturo Castro, said on Radio Progreso that he is concerned about the reality of the municipality. He said that the tragedy is exceeding the capacity that they have as mayor, he also denounced the exclusion and abandonment by JOH's administration."²³

One month after the two hurricanes hit Honduras, La Prensa summarizes its impact. "Due to the floods and landslides, 99 people lost their lives, 11 remain missing, 1,056,965 were evacuated and 92,651 people were sheltered, of which more than 40,000 remain in the spaces that were prepared by the authorities to deal with the emergency."²⁴ Cepal estimates the economic loss due to Eta and Iota to 45 billion Lempiras.²⁵

CESPAD explained the link between climate change, the two hurricanes hitting Honduras last month, and government failure. "In other words, the country is experiencing a process of "climate displacement" against the backdrop of the absence of an environmental public policy that addresses climate change and responds strategically to risk management, land use planning and climate justice. The leaders of the Central American region have reiterated on various occasions that the populations of the region are victims of climate change. However, the concept of "victims" should be analyzed in light of the absence of radical actions that should be taken by the rulers to stop this scourge that threatens the survival not only of the region, but also of the planet."²⁶

15 <https://proceso.hn/el-bid-pondra-a-disposicion-640-millones-de-dolares-para-reconstruir-honduras/>

16 <https://proceso.hn/bcie-anuncia-1000-millones-de-dolares-para-la-reconstruccion-de-honduras/>

17 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2511-honduras-joh-pide-mas-verdes-y-ya-tiene-119-mil-millones-para-reconstruccion>

18 <https://tiempo.hn/revision-fmi-permite-90-millones-endeudamiento-economista/>

19 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/12/18/banco-mundial-respuesta-emergencia-reconstruccion-huracanes-eta-iota-honduras>

20 <https://proceso.hn/espana-pone-disponibles-e70-millones-para-rehabilitacion-y-reconstruccion-de-honduras/>

21 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1427623-410/pasos-destruidos-tormentas-eta-iota-damnificados-albergues>

22 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1427614-410/habitantes-damnificados-guadalupe-la-lima-eta-iota-inundaciones>

23 <https://radioprogreso.hn/instante/alcaldia-de-san-manuel-cortes-denuncia-exclusion-y-abandono-del-gobierno/>

24 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1428667-410/honduras-tormentas-eta-iota-dejaron-millon-evacuados>

25 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1430699-410/cepal-perdidas-eta-iota-honduras-pobreza>

26 <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/12/08/honduras-la-negacion-del-cambio-climatico-y-la-construccion-de-represas/>

The COVID-19 Crisis

Additionally to the corona pandemic, there are also some 24'861 dengue cases in Honduras.²⁷ Criterio called it "the forgotten pandemic in Honduras".²⁸

December began with 108'641 COVID-19 cases and officially recognized 2927 deaths.²⁹ But even at that time, the Association of Funeral Homes of Honduras estimated the real number of deaths at 6600.³⁰ By the end of the year, there were 121'827 cases and 3130 official deaths.³¹ The Association of Funeral Homes of Honduras reported at least 7400 deaths linked to COVID-19.³²

State Reaction

Some months ago, when the ongoing corruption by the JOH regime during the pandemic was widely visible and there were even protests, JOH suddenly tested positive for corona and presented himself both as both vulnerable but at the same time as a strong leader even working for his people while sick. Even then, many believed the positive test to be fake, and since then ContraCorriente tried to get access to the test result. And now they got it. "The RT-PCR test that was performed on President Juan Orlando Hernandez was negative the day before he publicly announced that he and his wife, Ana Garcia Carias, were infected with coronavirus. This according to the documents delivered by the Secretary of Health to the IAIP after a six-month process that Contra Corriente brought before that institution."³³

In January, Honduras may go back to a lockdown according to the JOH regime.³⁴ Congress approved the ongoing suspension of constitutional guarantees.³⁵ Additionally, Congress approved a change to the law regulating the Honduras Solidarity program authorizing the JOH regime that the support be delivered through bank transfers.³⁶

Health Sector

Another doctor died this month to COVID-19, at least 54 have died so far.³⁷

Congress approved a law which makes corona vaccine free for all Honduras.³⁸ The approval of this Free Vaccine Act was accompanied by controversy. ""We voted against it because they did not accept independent social monitoring, because they do not want to include the CMH, the Chemical College... Why don't they say what vaccine they are going to buy, how much it is going to cost.

27 <https://confidencialhn.com/salud-reporta-229-casos-de-dengue-grave/>

28 <https://criterio.hn/la-fiebre-del-dengue-una-epidemia-olvidada-en-honduras/>

29 <https://tiempo.hn/covid-19-en-honduras-sinager-388-nuevos-casos-9-muertos/>

30 <https://criterio.hn/muertes-por-covid-19-pueden-ser-tres-veces-superiores-a-las-cifras-que-brinda-el-gobierno/>

31 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1432751-466/con-121827-casos-3130-muertes-covid-cierra-honduras-2020>

32 <https://radioprogreso.hn/instante/muertes-por-covid-19-superan-las-siete-mil-segun-funerarias/>

33 <https://contracorriente.red/2020/12/17/errores-y-enganos-en-los-resultados-de-la-prueba-para-covid19-del-presidente/>

34 <https://tiempo.hn/carlos-madero-honduras-podria-volver-al-confinamiento-en-enero/>

35 <https://confidencialhn.com/hondurenos-continuan-con-suspension-de-garantias-constitucionales/>

36 <https://criterio.hn/congreso-autoriza-al-ejecutivo-entregar-bonos-de-asistencia-social-a-traves-de-transferencias-electronicas/>

37 <https://proceso.hn/muere-medico-pediatra-por-causa-de-covid-19-en-san-pedro-sula/>

38 <https://tiempo.hn/cn-aprueba-vacuna-contr-el-covid-19-gratuita-honduras/>

Why are we going to support it, if everything indicates that they want to continue plundering the country," expressed the parliamentarian from Libre, Olivia Zúniga Cáceres."^{39 40}

Due to the hurricanes, the pandemic was a bit forgotten in the public, but medical experts were still very worried. "A good handful of Hondurans who forgot that the coronavirus pandemic is still going on will be able to spend their Christmas and New Year in an intensive care unit while Honduras' hospitals collapse again because of the upsurge in cases of the pathogen and desperation to get a place to save their lives."⁴¹ The same day, the National Cardiopulmonary Institute of Honduras, El Tórax, announced that it could not handle more patients.⁴² The same was the case at the ICU of the IHSS.⁴³ Epidemiologist Fidel Barahona denounced: "How long have we been saying that this situation was going to happen, but they were going to let go health personnel, now we have a serious problem in the hospitals, where the intensive care units are full".⁴⁴ Even El Heraldo wrote of "hospitals on the verge of collapse".⁴⁵ Making matter worse is the already weak Honduran health system. Honduras has only one hospital bed in an intensive care unit per 151'200 Honduran.⁴⁶

On December 20, the president of the National Association of Nurses and Auxiliary Nurses of Honduras (ANEAAH), Josué Orellana, announced a sit-in for the next day in protest against non-compliance of several agreements by the authorities.⁴⁷ The next day they called for the payment of outstanding paychecks worth 50 million Lempiras.⁴⁸

Human Rights

CESPAD published the report "Women and the health emergency in Honduras. A new struggle against the historical invisibility of their rights".⁴⁹

Corruption

On December 2, the Institute for Access to Public Information (IAIP) sanctioned various public officials for non-compliance with the disclosure of information in the COVID-19 emergency portals.⁵⁰ "For not publishing all the information on the official website, the Institute of Access to Public Information has announced that it will sanction more than 230 former and current officials of President Juan Hernández with "three minimum salaries", including the Secretary of Health, Alba Flores; the former commissioner of Copeco, Gabriel Rubí, and the former director of Invest-H,

39 <https://elpulso.hn/?p=50917>

40 <https://criterio.hn/demagogia-intereses-privados-y-riesgos-a-la-salud-en-ley-de-vacuna-covid-19/>

41 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2495-honduras-un-mes-sin-confinamiento-hospitales-colapsan-y-cada-3-horas-un-muerto>

42 <https://confidencialhn.com/colapsa-hospital-el-torax-debido-al-aumento-de-pacientes-por-covid-19/>

43 <https://proceso.hn/sala-de-uci-del-ihss-sin-cupo-ante-incremento-de-casos-de-covid-19-en-sps/>

44 <https://confidencialhn.com/especialista-indica-que-en-el-pais-se-dieron-condiciones-para-rebote-de-covid-19/>

45 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/fotogalerias/1430486-468/dramaticas-imagenes-pandemia-hospitales-a-punto-colapso>

46 <https://tiempo.hn/video-camas-uci-cuidados-intermedios-covid-19/>

47 <https://confidencialhn.com/enfermeras-anuncian-plantones-por-incumplimiento-por-parte-de-las-autoridades/>

48 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2531-honduras-enfermeria-protesta-50-millones-en-sueldos-le-debe-gobierno>

49 <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/12/01/cespad-presenta-informe-de-monitoreo-las-mujeres-y-la-emergencia-sanitaria-en-honduras-una-nueva-lucha-en-contra-de-la-historica-invisibilizacion-de-sus-derechos/>

50 <https://elpulso.hn/?p=50809>

Marco Bográn Corrales. If one considers that the minimum wage in effect for 2020 in Honduras ranges from 9,400 to 12,100 lempiras, it means that the "sanctioned" will pay at most 36,000 lempiras, something that borders on the absurd if one considers that Flores earns 90,000 lempiras a month, while the reinstated Nationalist Congressman Rubí receives more than 150 a month and Bográn receives more than 230,000."⁵¹ Regarding Bográn, new accusations were raised against him this month. "Marco Bográn, former director of Strategic Investment of Honduras (Invest-H), modified at least eight contracts for a cumulative value of 80 million lempiras in the months of May and June 2020, when he was in the public eye for alleged acts of corruption in the purchase of the seven mobile hospitals."⁵² The CNA published a new report, again focusing on Invest-H and the mobile hospitals. They found new irregularities in the hospitals meant for Choluteca and Santa Rosa.^{53 54}

Apart from the infamous mobile Hospitals, there are numerous more acts of corruption which had been highlighted these last months, one concerns the Honduras Solidarity Program. Criterio further investigated and found that it benefited mostly the companies providing the food and hygiene packets. 12.6% of of all the money spent to confront the pandemic went to them.^{55 56} Transparency International published a report on "Emergency Procurement Covid-19". It focuses on the budgets assigned by the governments, their sources of financing and the lack of transparency in the accountability in the execution of the resources. The JOH regime disposed of \$3.7 billion.⁵⁷ The CNA also published its 14th report on corruption during the pandemic this month.⁵⁸ "The group of anti-corruption experts explained that a total of 138 mechanical fans with their respective inputs have yet to be received as planned, thus generating a shortage of equipment needed to greatly alleviate the health crisis that our country is going through because of the COVID-19."⁵⁹

Poverty

The cost of the basic goods basket rose from 9'300 Lempiras to 10'300 Lempiras in the nine months of the pandemic.⁶⁰ At least, remittances sent to Honduras did not substantially lower during the pandemic - only in March, April and May they were lower.⁶¹

Economy

The Honduran economy will shrink by 9.5% this year according to the Central Bank.⁶²

51 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2481-honduras-absurdo-solo-30-mil-lempiras-pagaran-violadores-de-ley-transparencia>

52 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1428420-466/marco-bogran-invest-contratos-modificados>

53 <https://twitter.com/cnahonduras/status/1339927544989102080>

54 <https://criterio.hn/nuevo-informe-del-cna-ahonda-actos-de-corupcion-en-compa-de-hospitales/>

55 <https://criterio.hn/los-poderosos-proveedores-de-la-bolsa-solidaria-en-honduras/>

56 <https://criterio.hn/multinacionales-y-empresas-controversiales-se-beneficiaron-con-honduras-solidaria/>

57 <https://elpulso.hn/?p=51310>

58 <https://twitter.com/cnahonduras/status/1341016263762567169>

59 <https://criterio.hn/cna-denuncia-que-138-ventiladores-mecanicos-comprados-por-honduras-siguen-sin-llegar/>

60 <https://tiempo.hn/adecabah-incrementos-canasta-basica/>

61 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1427853-410/remesas-hondure%C3%B1os-pandemia-covid-estados-unidos>

62 <https://proceso.hn/caida-de-la-economia-sera-del-9-5-por-ciento-este-ano-segun-presidente-del-bch/>

Human Rights and Their Defenders

"Honduras has been experiencing a profound human rights crisis for many years, which translates into serious difficulties for the enjoyment of human rights, said the representative of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights at the UN, Isabel Albaladejo Escribano."⁶³ One aspect of this human rights crisis, is the weak institutional back up of human rights in Honduras...and it was further weakened this month. Without hearings nor even an interview, the Nationalist-controlled Congress elected Blanca Sarahí Izaguirre Lozano as the new Human Rights Ombudswoman (CONADEH).⁶⁴ ⁶⁵ OACNUDH published a press release. "The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Honduras (OHCHR) expresses concern about the voting process for the position of National Human Rights Commissioner (CONADEH) held in the National Congress during the night of December 21. In this regard, it calls for the continuation of the process of public hearings that had been suspended in March of this year."⁶⁶

Assassinations

ACI-Participa published its 2020 human rights report called "Honduras, Destruction, Death and Corruption" and in which they documented among other things 15 assassinations of human rights defenders.⁶⁷

Sadly, more were to follow. On December 27, indigenous Lenca leader and pre-candidate for Congress for LIBRE, Felix Vásquez, was murdered in La Paz.⁶⁸ Four hooded men entered his house and shot him in Ocotal in the municipality of Santiago de Puringla, La Paz. In the last months, he had denounced death threats against him.⁶⁹ The Coalition against Impunity holds the JOH regime responsible for his death.⁷⁰ Both the UN Resident Coordinator in Honduras as well as OACNUDH condemned the murder.⁷¹ ⁷² Even the US embassy condemned it.⁷³ ⁷⁴ Congressman Albio Sires tweeted: "I call on President @JuanOrlandoH and the Government of Honduras to thoroughly investigate this crime and bring those who planned and perpetrated this attack to justice."⁷⁵

And it came even worse, in less than 48 hours, another indigenous activist, Tolupán Adrian Mejia was murdered.⁷⁶ UN Resident Coordinator in Honduras, Alice H. Shackelford denounced the

63 <https://criterio.hn/representante-de-oacnudh-honduras-vive-una-profunda-crisis-de-derechos-humanos/>

64 <https://criterio.hn/blanca-sarahy-izaguirre-lozano-es-la-nueva-comisionada-nacional-de-los-derechos-humanos/>

65 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/otra-arbitrariedad-del-regimen-eleccion-de-la-nueva-titular-del-conadeh/>

66 <https://oacnudh.hn/oacnudh-insta-a-que-se-asegure-la-independencia-y-autonomia-del-conadeh-a-traves-de-un-proceso-de-nombramiento-de-su-titular-transparente-y-participativo/>

67 <https://criterio.hn/honduras-violaciones-de-derechos-humanos-no-se-detienen-aci-participa/>

68 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/dec/29/indigenous-environmental-defender-killed-felix-vasquez>

69 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/hombres-encapuchados-y-armados-asesinan-a-dirigente-indigena-en-la-paz-felix-vasquez/>

70 <https://criterio.hn/el-estado-es-responsable-del-asesinato-de-felix-vasquez-cci/>

71 <https://twitter.com/aliceshackel/status/1343383558736535552>

72 <https://oacnudh.hn/oacnudh-condena-el-asesinato-del-defensor-indigena-felix-vasquez-e-insta-a-que-se-lleve-a-cabo-una-investigacion-pronta-independiente-y-eficaz/>

73 <https://twitter.com/usembassyhn/status/1343650794395078663>

74 <https://twitter.com/WHASstSecty/status/1344097715387568129>

75 <https://twitter.com/RepSires/status/1343997504627617794>

76 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1344059794714468353>

assassination.⁷⁷ Rodolfo Pastor Fasquelle wrote an important article on how these murders are treated in Honduras. "At this point in the story, El Heraldo and La Prensa, which as always, with no major background on the long struggle of the bloody man, present the information on the page of the red note... instead of as political news, they introduce calls for other notes on the murder of two assailants on a bus, the arrest of a rapist, the torture and death of an unknown teenager. (...) Although he was just as brave and clear-minded in confronting the enemies of his people, Felix was a national and local leader, he did not have the projection or international recognition that Berta Cáceres had. But in the context of the recently announced fiscal package, and the Engel List, the crime against him will also affect U.S. cooperation, which is so needed in the current crisis. Although this has never mattered to the death squads that have carried out so many of these non-judicial executions. Because, as is well known, nothing happens. Even if they are caught and criminally prosecuted, the system will be protecting them, the gunmen will remain very quiet, and those who give the orders will go unpunished. And they will continue to play with the drop of blood that spills from the chalice. Let's hope so, drop by drop. QDP Felix Vazquez."⁷⁸

Attacks, Criminalization and Harassment

The National Police detained Víctor Vásquez, indigenous Lenca and member of the General Coordination of MILPAH.⁷⁹ "After more than six hours in an initial hearing against Victor Vasquez, a member of the General Coordination of the Independent Lenca Indigenous Movement of La Paz Honduras (MILPAH), and Santos Vigil, a member of the New Hope Peasant Base, they were remanded in custody for the crime of forced displacement."⁸⁰ C-Libre denounced that members of the police intimidated human rights defenders both at a press conference held in front of the Supreme Court⁸¹ and during a ceremony organized by COFADEH to remember the forcefully disappeared.⁸²

"The Association for the Development of the Zacate Grande Peninsula (ADEPZA), denounces the continuation of harassment and threats against its members and inhabitants of the area. The concern this time arises from the presence of six (6) men, hooded and armed, who surrounded the area where the community radio station La Voz de Zacate Grande is located on December 2. According to the account of Gerardo Aguilar, one of the community leaders, the hooded men also surrounded the house of the current Vice President of ADEPZA, Ethel Corea Posadas."⁸³

Defensores en Línea published an update on the criminalization of human rights defender and Catholic Priest Florentino Hernández. "The Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice admitted the Appeal for Protection that the legal defense team of Father Florentino, accompanied by

77 <https://twitter.com/aliceshackel/status/1344103288686456835>

78 <https://criterio.hn/la-noticia-del-asesinato-de-felix-vasquez-y-el-algoritmo-del-miedo/>

79 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1337432014480404481>

80 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/detencion-de-lideres-indigenas-responde-a-persecucion-y-criminalizacion/>

81 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1289-policia-levanta-perfiles-a-lideres-sociales-al-presentar-accion-ante-poder-judicial>

82 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1290-fuerzas-policiales-y-seguridad-privada-levantan-perfiles-a-victimas-de-desaparicion-forzada>

83 <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/12/05/hombres-armados-y-encapuchados-rodean-zona-de-radio-comunitaria-de-zacate-grande/>

other organizations including the Committee of Relatives of the Detained-Disappeared in Honduras (COFADEH), presented on October 28th in Tegucigalpa."⁸⁴

Indigenous Peoples

Almost five months have passed since the forceful disappearance of the five young men from the Garífuna community Triunfo de la Cruz.⁸⁵ OFRANEH was granted a hearing at the Inter-American Courts of Human Rights regarding various cases, Punta Piedra, Triunfo de la Cruz, and the forcefully disappeared young Garífunas. It will take place on March 4, 2021.⁸⁶

Assassination

At the beginning of the month, one or two Miskito indigenous men were killed.⁸⁷ "Based on preliminary investigations, one Miskito man was killed on Dec 3 during an "anti-drug" operation by either US or Honduran forces. The man's body was taken to Tegucigalpa for an autopsy". "The following day on Dec 4, a Miskito farmer was tortured & killed by Honduran military after they held & tortured him for info about drug operations. The man was buried yesterday."⁸⁸

The Case of Berta Cáceres

The expert mission accompanying the Berta Cáceres case presented numerous irregularities violating national and international human rights standards.⁸⁹ There is another case linked to the murder of Berta, the Gualcarque Fraud corruption case. On December 15, the Constitutional Chamber decided in favor of 10 out of the 16 accused in the Gualcarque Fraud case related to the murder of Berta Cáceres.⁹⁰ COPINH denounced: "With the decision to benefit these 10 public officials, the Honduran justice system continues to benefit the corrupt and promotes an economic model that violates human rights."⁹¹ The Chairman of the US House Foreign Affairs Committee, Representative Eliot Engel reacted: "I'm disappointed by the Honduran Constitutional Court's decision to side with many of those involved in the Gualcarque fraud case." "I stand with #Honduran UFERCO director Luis Santos in condemning this decision and thank him for his commitment to critical anti-corruption work. It is imperative that he continue to do his work with the adequate protection and security he needs."⁹²

84 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/tribunales-deben-abstenerse-de-emitir-fallo-en-proceso-contr-el-padre-florentino/>

85 <https://www.pressenza.com/es/2020/12/honduras-aparicion-con-vida-verdad-y-justicia-ya/>

86 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1341812542407122945>

87 <http://ciprodeh.org.hn/index.php/noticias-principales/548-ciprodeh-reporta-ante-los-asesinatos-recientes-contr-misquitos-en-la-comunidad-de-patuca>

88 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1335296026689728513>

89 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/component/k2/item/3025-segun-expertos-justicia-hondurena-ha-violentado-estandares-internacionales-en-el-juicio-por-crimen-de-berta-caceres>

90 <https://twitter.com/LuisSan16779987/status/1339401199410397184>

91 <https://copinh.org/2020/12/actualizacion-caso-fraude-sobre-el-gualcarque-15-12-2020/>

92 <https://twitter.com/HouseForeign/status/1339952854883311621>

LGBTQ

LGBTQ+ defender José Zambrano was awarded the Franco-German prize, the first time it went to a Honduran.⁹³

Freedom of Expression and Journalists

Honduras dropped further in the World Press Freedom Index by Reporters without Borders.⁹⁴

C-Libre, the Journalist Association of Honduras (CPH) and the Honduran Press Association (APH) have documented 89 attacks against media workers between March 15 and November 30 this year. In the last week of November alone, four journalists were kidnapped and threatened for the work they are doing.⁹⁵ C-Libre also documented two more attacks against journalists. They denounced acts of intimidation against the community radio Voice of Zacate Grande.⁹⁶ "The journalist Eduin Castro, denounced to C-Libre to have been a victim of acts of aggression and police detention last December 9th, while he was covering a protest of inhabitants of the community "La Sabana", municipality of Yorito, department of Yoro."⁹⁷

Assassination

Social communicators Pedro Arcángel Canelas was murdered in Dulce Nombre de Culmí, Olancho on December 19.⁹⁸ The Inter-American Press Society (SIP) condemned the murder.⁹⁹

Political Prisoners

This month, the trial against political prisoner Rommel Valdemar Herrera Portillo started.¹⁰⁰ As feared, he was found guilty.¹⁰¹ Radio Progreso denounced that the MP could not even prove that Rommel was at the place of the supposed crime - the burning of tires in front of the US embassy during the post-electoral protests in 2017. The MP also claimed that the damage to the door to the US embassy was \$1.7 million.¹⁰² "The lawyer Omar Menjívar of Rommel Valdemar Herrera Portillo's defense team, described the decision of the Fifth Chamber of the Court of Judgment that convicted him as an accomplice in aggravated arson, as a wrong decision that does not meet the requirements for that crime because at no time was there danger to people who were at the headquarters of the American Embassy."¹⁰³ A few days later, there was a bail hearing in his case deciding on if he could go home to await the sentencing. It was denied. "The participation of the US

93 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2541-honduras-historico-jose-primer-defensor-hondureno-en-recibir-premio-franco-aleman>

94 <https://rsf.org/en/ranking>

95 <https://radioprogreso.hn/instante/cuatro-periodistas-fueron-secuestrados-en-noviembre-denuncia-c-libre/>

96 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1291-encapuchados-hostigan-a-periodistas-de-radioemisora-comunitaria>

97 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1293-periodista-detenido-y-agredido-por-fuerzas-policiales-en-departamento-de-yoro>

98 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/asesinan-a-periodista-en-culmi-olancho/>

99 <https://proceso.hn/la-sip-pide-esclarecer-el-asesinato-de-un-periodista-en-honduras/>

100 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/hoy-inicia-juicio-oral-y-publico-contra-rommel-baldemar/>

101 <https://criterio.hn/sentencia-contra-rommel-herrera-portillo-criminaliza-la-protesta-social/>

102 <https://radioprogreso.hn/instante/sigue-contra-de-quemar-puerta-de-la-embajada-de-estados-unidos/>

103 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/3027-abogado-defensor-rommel-baldemar-ha-sido-sentenciado-por-incendio-agravado-lo-cual-no-califica-como-delito>

Embassy legal rep in bail hearing was to request that Rommel be sent to maximum security prison, La Tolva. The US Embassy's legal representative asked for a more strict measure than the Honduran Attorney General Office. Shame on you @usembassyhn".¹⁰⁴

Extractive Industries

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) granted a \$20.25 million loan to the JOH regime for the controversial and locally disputed Jilamito hydroelectric project.¹⁰⁵ In the last session of 2020, Congress approved a disputed hydroelectric project against the opposition of social movements.¹⁰⁶ "In the open town hall held this Sunday [December 27] in the municipality of Arizona, department of Atlántida, there were not only important results, but also mandates from the people to their authorities, said Martín Fernández of the Broad Movement for Dignity and Justice (MADJ). One of the most important mandates is that following hurricanes Iota and Eta, which devastated a large part of the country, the municipal authorities and the hydroelectric companies that are already installed in various communities, must invest resources to recover the losses and improve the situation of the people who were affected. Another important agreement is that it has ratified the condition that the Jilamito River is not subject to any negotiation and will be used as the water source for the 16 communities of the Arizona municipality, Fernandez added. The residents made it clear that they want the company Ingelsa out of Arizona as it plans to build a hydroelectric project on the Jilamito River."

Guapinol

The Guapinol defenders had already been imprisoned for 15 months, when it was announced that there would be a bail hearing on December 18.¹⁰⁷ OACNUDH announced to observe the hearing.¹⁰⁸ The hearing was accompanied by national and international calls for their freedom and a protest outside the court.¹⁰⁹ ¹¹⁰ As a response, the JOH regime militarized the court.¹¹¹ Even though the proceeding ended the same day, the judge announced to give her resolution the next day. The Honduras Solidarity Network denounced: "This is a political decision, not a judicial one."¹¹² UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defender Mary Lawlor tweeted: "Closely watching for the decision today on the pre-trial detention of the Guapinol human rights defenders - defending rights is not a crime".¹¹³

104 <https://twitter.com/EdwinLibertad/status/1337079990278643713>

105 <https://tiempo.hn/prestamo-bid-invest-proyecto-hidroelectrico-jilamito/>

106 <https://criterio.hn/movimiento-territorial-rechaza-aprobacion-de-contratos-energeticos-por-el-congreso-nacional/>

107 <https://www.cejil.org/es/cejil-honduras-debe-garantizar-libertad-y-proteccion-personas-criminalizadas-defensa-del-agua>

108 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1339621550983688194>

109 <https://twitter.com/MetzTilly/status/1339918048300560385>

110 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1339987435665539073>

111 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1339961771944103936>

112 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1340020987593515008>

113 <https://twitter.com/MaryLawlorhrds/status/1340260103673540610>

Nevertheless, in the same month in which once again high-level corruption cases were dismissed, the Honduran "Judicial" System was not as lenient with human rights defenders. The judge denied bail and the defenders have to remain in prison.¹¹⁴ OACNUDH lamented the ruling.¹¹⁵ From the US, Senator Patrick Leahy as well as Representative Jan Schakowsky rejected the decision. "Independence of the judiciary is fundamental to democracy. In Honduras, that independence is under assault, and people like the Guapinol water protectors, who should be released on bail or afforded a fair and speedy trial, are instead imprisoned pre-trial for years." "I am appalled by Judge Zoe Guifarro's ruling to keep #Guapinol water defenders in arbitrary pretrial detention. Int'l human rights and legal experts say the detention is illegal. Where is the judicial independence?"¹¹⁶ In Honduras, Padre Melo started a hunger strike¹¹⁷ and the defense of the Guapinol defenders presented a legal challenge against the court decision.¹¹⁸ "[T]he appeal filed with the Court of Appeals will not be processed due to the Christmas and year-end vacations of the employees of the Judiciary. They announced, in a press conference, that everything indicates that it will be until January 6, 2021 that it will be known if the Court pronounces in favor of the environmentalists so that they recover their freedom or ratifies the decision of Judge Zoé Guifarro and the measure of preventive detention is maintained."¹¹⁹

ZEDES

The planned ZEDE in Crawfish Rock on Roatán continues to be covered even by international outlets¹²⁰ and international organizations raise concern.¹²¹

Corruption and Its Enemies

Apart from the "main" corruption cases mentioned below, there were again other news-worthy stories related to corruption. "The Secretary of Natural Resources or Mi Ambiente, Elvis Rodas, was reported anonymously to the Superior Court of Accounts (TSC) and the National Anticorruption Council (CNA) for the crimes of abuse of authority, nepotism and misappropriation of public funds."¹²² ConfidencialHN later reported on more irregularities at Mi Ambiente.¹²³ "The former mayor of Yoro, Arnaldo Urbina Soto, will have to serve a 16-year prison sentence for the crime of money laundering. Urbina Soto was found guilty in 2017, but the sentencing court that heard the case took three years to publicize the ruling."¹²⁴ "A criminal court on corruption matters decided this Wednesday to bring to oral and public trial the case against 17 members of the National

114 <https://criterio.hn/justicia-de-honduras-niega-a-defensores-del-rio-guapinol-defenderse-en-libertad/>

115 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1340472607766949890>

116 <https://twitter.com/SenatorLeahy/status/1340809447891939328>

117 <https://www.radiohrn.hn/sacerdote-hondureno-inicia-huelga-de-hambre-para-pedir-la-liberacion-de-supuestos-presos-politicos-en-caso-agua-guapinol>

118 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/presentan-recurso-de-apelacion-en-favor-de-ocho-presos-politicos-de-guapinol>

119 <https://radioprogreso.hn/noticias-nacionales/caso-guapinol-juzgado-de-tocoa-colon-no-dara-tramite-a-recurso-de-apelacion/>

120 <https://www.vice.com/en/article/k7a7ae/foreign-investors-are-building-a-hong-kong-of-the-caribbean-on-a-remote-honduran-island>

121 <https://cepr.net/as-private-cities-advance-in-honduras-hondurans-renew-their-opposition/>

122 <https://elpulso.hn/?p=50819>

123 <https://confidencialhn.com/persecucion-laboral-aflora-en-mi-ambiente-tras-denuncias-por-indicios-de-corrupcion/>

124 <https://elpulso.hn/?p=50933>

University of Agriculture (UNA), among them Marlon Escoto - who was the dean of that institution at the time - accused of abuse of authority, for which it refers the file to the Sentencing Court."¹²⁵

The Onslaught against the Anti-Corruption Bodies

Proceso Digital published an overview of all the 13 corruption cases which had been presented by the MACCIH and UFECIC and their current state in the legal process. It is a very bleak picture.¹²⁶ CESPAD called it "the dismantling of the anti-corruption agenda inherited by the MACCIH".¹²⁷ They also explained how UFERCO has been dismantled to guarantee impunity for corruption networks.¹²⁸ And in another MACCIH-era corruption case, an accused, Miguel Pastor, is allowed to leave pre-trial detention.¹²⁹

Some six years ago, the Nationalist-controlled Congress approved in only one session dozens of decrees and contracts, most of them harmful to the population. Opposition politicians have denounced this and have presented official complaints at the MP, but to no avail. One explanation of the inaction can be found, once again, in the person of Attorney General Óscar Chinchilla. "[He] has a conflict of interest because his wife, Katherin Chang, is not only related to leaders of the National Party (daughter of former Minister of the Interior and Justice Roberto Chang Castillo), but was also appointed to public office by President Juan Hernández, who placed her as president of the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (BCIE)."¹³⁰

The CNA published a new book on corruption and impunity in Honduras.¹³¹

Patuca III

CESPAD published an analysis on how the rulings in the Patuca III corruption case have to be interpreted. "For UFERCO, the irregularities committed by those involved in the case were clear, which is why it presented the evidence it claims showed how the defendants were part of a corruption network that defrauded the State by using the Special Unit for Renewable Energy Projects (UEPER) of the National Electric Energy Company (ENEE). However, this case shows that the assessment and interpretation made by judges can play an important role in letting many people involved in corruption cases go free."¹³²

125 <https://criterio.hn/a-juicio-marlon-escoto-y-17-empleados-de-la-una/>

126 <https://proceso.hn/el-estatus-de-los-casos-mp-macchi/>

127 <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/12/16/desde-los-principales-organos-del-estado-el-desmontaje-de-la-agenda-anti-corrupcion-heredada-por-la-macchi/>

128 <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/12/27/asi-ha-sido-el-desmontaje-de-la-uferco-para-garantizar-impunidad-a-las-redes-de-corrupcion/>

129 <https://proceso.hn/sala-de-lo-constitucional-ordena-otorguen-cambio-de-medidas-a-miguel-pastor-para-que-se-defienda-en-libertad/>

130 <https://criterio.hn/tres-anos-despues-mp-sigue-sin-dar-respuesta-a-denuncia-de-aprobacion-masiva-de-contratos-en-el-cn/>

131 <https://twitter.com/cnahonduras/status/1339215023932121088>

132 <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/12/15/de-como-las-interpretaciones-de-los-jueces-dejan-libres-a-implicados-en-el-caso-patuca-iii/>

IHSS

The trial for corruption against the former administrative manager of the IHSS, José Ramón Bertetty, has to be repeated. The Supreme Court nullified his sentencing.¹³³ Additionally, based on the controversial new Penal Code (as predicted by civil society), 14 accused former IHSS director were absolved.¹³⁴ The MP challenged this.¹³⁵ They also arrested three more people linked to the case.¹³⁶

Pandora

Since the forced departure of the MACCIH, the anti-corruption struggle has seen many setbacks, especially in the Pandora case. This month brought no change. The MP itself asked for the dismissal of charges against another of the accused, Belkis Rosibel Hernández¹³⁷, and pre-trial detention of the former Minister of Agriculture and Livestock, Jacobo José Regalado Weizenblut, was changed to house arrest.¹³⁸ This second decision was appealed by the MP.¹³⁹ Either way, out of the over 20 accused, there are only four left, Jacobo Regalado, along with Laura Arita, Fernando Suárez and Norma Montes. The rest of the defendants, mostly politicians, were dismissed. "This is a case whose judicial resolutions were classified in two levels: those who transferred the money and those who spent it."¹⁴⁰

"Fernando Suarez is the key witness in the Pandora's Box case. He voluntarily presented himself in November 2018 before the Public Ministry of Honduras; he accepted his responsibility in the facts and explained to the Prosecutors who were in charge of the network that was forged to loot money from the State through two foundations. He provided evidence that showed who decided and how those involved in the looting of more than 282 million lempiras (about \$12 million) operated. But, in spite of the willingness to reveal the truth, Suarez, through his defense, denounces that the Attorney General Oscar Fernando Chinchilla, has not complied with what was agreed in the collaboration agreement that was made."¹⁴¹

133 <https://criterio.hn/ordenan-repetir-juicio-a-ramon-bertetty-por-desfalco-al-ihss/>

134 <https://criterio.hn/libres-de-responsabilidad-penal-los-exdirectivos-del-ihss/>

135 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/169-diciembre2020/6792-mp-presentara-recurso-de-casacion-contrasentencia-absolutoria-a-favor-de-ex-junta-directiva-del-ihss-beneficiados-erroneamente-por-el-nuevo-codigo-penal>

136 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/169-diciembre2020/6750-mp-dirige-capturas-por-desfalco-millonario-en-el-seguro-social-empresarios-y-exfuncionarios-nuevos-imputados>

137 <https://proceso.hn/mp-pide-sobreseimiento-definitivo-a-una-imputada-en-caso-pandora/>

138 <https://proceso.hn/csj-admite-peticion-para-cambiar-prision-preventiva-por-arresto-domiciliario-a-exministro-de-agricultura/>

139 <https://confidencialhn.com/mp-senala-que-retraso-de-csj-favorecio-cambio-de-medidas-para-jacobo-regalado/>

140 <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/12/14/pandora-el-caso-que-castiga-a-los-que-transferieron-el-dinero-y-no-a-quienes-lo-gastaron/>

141 <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/12/22/fernando-suarez-el-testigo-clave-del-caso-pandora-que-ha-quedado-en-el-olvido/>

Asfura

CESPAD published an update on the corruption case against the mayor of Tegucigalpa and Nationalist pre-candidate for presidency, Nasry Asfura.¹⁴² “He faces a pre-trial process for embezzlement of 28 million lempiras. According to information on the case to which Contracorriente had access, Asfura used funds from the mayor's office to cover company operations, pay credit cards and make money transfers to his daughters in the United States.”¹⁴³

State Security Forces

Proceso Digital published a long article on the purge of the National Police Force whose effectiveness is widely questioned and this month was further undermined when a human trafficking network led by members of the police force was uncovered.¹⁴⁴ In the trafficking case, the court decided on pre-trial detention.¹⁴⁵ ATIC arrested an active member of the police allegedly for torture, abuse of authority and more.¹⁴⁶

Post-Electoral Human Rights Violations

This month was the third anniversary of the forced disappearance of Manuel de Jesús Bausta Salvador, in Naco, Cortés, at the hands of the Military Police. “Manuel is the first victim of forced disappearance in the post-electoral crisis of November 26, 2017, generated by the fraud of illegitimate president Juan Orlando Hernández.”¹⁴⁷

Repressions

Criterio reports that state security forces again threw a tear gas grenade into a bus filled with people as part of a violent repression of a protest.¹⁴⁸

Assassinations

On December 1, Honduran state security forces heavily repressed local residents during an eviction of hurricane victims. They even opened fire murdering the young man Rafael Flores Hernández.¹⁴⁹ OACNUDH condemned the murder.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴² <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/12/01/alcalde-de-tegucigalpa-pide-mas-tiempo-para-rendir-informe-que-lo-vincula-a-actos-de-corrupcion/>

¹⁴³ <https://contracorriente.red/2020/12/08/la-billetera-del-precandidato-a-la-presidencia-tito-asfura/>

¹⁴⁴ <https://proceso.hn/policia-urge-que-didadpol-siga-con-dedo-en-la-depuracion/>

¹⁴⁵ <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/autor-login/169-diciembre2020/6748-unidad-contrala-trata-obtiene-preventiva-preventiva-contral-otro-policia-miembro-de-red-transnacional-de-trafico-de-personas>

¹⁴⁶ <https://proceso.hn/atic-captura-a-agente-activo-de-la-policia-nacional/>

¹⁴⁷ <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/el-estado-no-da-respuestas-por-desaparicion-de-joven-a-manos-de-lapmop-durante-la-crisis-pos-electoral-de-2017/>

¹⁴⁸ <https://criterio.hn/nuevamente-policias-de-honduras-lanzan-bombas-lacrimogenas-en-interior-de-un-bus/>

¹⁴⁹ <https://contracorriente.red/2020/12/01/un-muerto-durante-un-desalojo-reabre-heridas-en-los-bordos-de-un-rio-en-san-pedro-sula/>

¹⁵⁰ <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1333906755353538563>

Four police agents have to remain in pre-trial detention accused of murder.¹⁵¹ And another police agent may soon join the, as he is being accused for the murder of two sisters.¹⁵²

Penitentiary System

For months now, the Honduran prison system has been militarized and the result is bleak. "The Center for the Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture and their Families (CPTRT) demanded the withdrawal of the Military Tiger Force from El Porvenir Penitentiary in the Siria Valley, for violation of the human rights of those deprived of their liberty."¹⁵³ "At least five violent events have been recorded inside Honduran prisons so far this year, all in the midst of the covid-19 pandemic, leaving 15 inmates murdered. That extreme demonstrates the failure of the Armed Forces to control the prison system; in 2019, Governor Juan Orlando Hernández said he would recover the governability of the prisons by using the security and defense forces, but to date that promise has not been delivered."¹⁵⁴ Additionally, impunity regarding crimes inside prisons reigns last. According to CONAPREV, at least 50 murders took place last year in Honduras' prisons but no one has been brought to justice. CONAPREV also filed more than 260 complaints for violation of rights of persons deprived of liberty.¹⁵⁵

And the violence continued this month. Two prisoner died in "a violent confrontation" inside the El Porvenir Prison in Francisco Morazán.¹⁵⁶ To end on some good news, family visits in prisons should be allowed again following a new protocol.¹⁵⁷

International Community

US

The US donated almost \$1 million in drugs for HIV/AIDS patients to Honduras on the World AIDS Day.¹⁵⁸

As a new administration will take over in the US, people wonder what this means for Honduras. Sandra Cuffe wrote for Vice about how "Central America Is Really Hoping Biden Will Fix Their Corruption Problems".¹⁵⁹ Back in Honduras, the US praised Attorney General Óscar Fernando Chinchilla, one of the main obstacles to fight corruption.¹⁶⁰ Also this month, SOUTHCOM Commander Adm. Craig Faller arrived in Honduras "to meet with security leaders to discuss the U.S.-Honduran security partnership. Honduras is a trusted partner in regional efforts to combat

151 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/sin-lugar-declara-solicitud-de-cambio-de-medidas-cautelares-a-policias-acusados-de-homicidio/>

152 <https://tiempo.hn/policia-habria-matado-a-hermanas-en-reitoca/>

153 <https://confidencialhn.com/exigen-retiro-de-la-fuerza-militar-tigres-de-la-carcel-el-porvenir/>

154 <https://elpulso.hn/?p=51378>

155 <https://confidencialhn.com/gobierno-aun-no-deduce-responsabilidad-por-asesinatos-en-carceles-denuncia-conaprev/>

156 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/sucesos/1430128-466/muertos-herido-carcel-siria>

157 <https://tiempo.hn/visitas-carceles-en-honduras-pandemia-covid-19/>

158 <https://www.radiohrn.hn/estados-unidos-dona-a-honduras-mas-de-123-millones-para-el-tratamiento-de-vih-sida>

159 <https://www.vice.com/en/article/jgqgx4/central-america-is-really-hoping-biden-will-fix-their-corruption-problems>

160 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/169-diciembre2020/6718-eeuu-reconoce-gestion-del-fiscal-general>

illicit traffickers." The comments on Twitter presented the adequate response to such a statement.¹⁶¹

¹⁶² The JOH regime awarded Craig Faller with the Grand Cross Medal of the Armed Forces.¹⁶³

At the end of December, US Congress approved a bill which includes "\$506 million for Central America, at least \$45 million of which must be allocated to anti-corruption efforts". None of the money can go to the Armed Forces.¹⁶⁴ ¹⁶⁵ Additionally, Congress approved the Northern Triangle Enhanced Engagement Act which includes the so-called Engel List, a list of corrupt officials from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.¹⁶⁶ There are also some critical voices regarding the Engel's List as previous initiatives have led nowhere.¹⁶⁷ Journalist Jeff Ernst highlighted some of the differences to previous attempts.¹⁶⁸

EU

"An agreement to regulate the export of wood from Honduras to the European Union is about to be concluded. At the same time, several civil society voices warn of continued cooperation with Tegucigalpa. Their hope: sanctions."¹⁶⁹ This same month, Several human rights defenders talked to European Union representatives about the role of extractive companies in contributing to the systematic violation of human rights in Honduras.¹⁷⁰

The EU and the UNDP launched a program to accompany the coming electoral cycle. It is a 2.2 million Euro program.¹⁷¹

Drug Trafficking

The JOH regime once again announced that a United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) will be installed in Honduras. The memorandum of understanding was signed one year ago. Now, it seems that they office may start their work next month.¹⁷²

This month, disturbing news came from the US: "The United States could begin sharing sensitive intelligence with Honduras about inbound flights carrying drugs, U.S. officials told Reuters, even as the Central American country faces scrutiny from Washington over drug-related corruption."¹⁷³ US congresswoman Jan Schakowsky and US congressman Chuy García did not agree: "The US contemplating sharing sensitive intelligence information with a Honduran Government known to

¹⁶¹ <https://twitter.com/Southcom/status/1337420547140038665>

¹⁶² <https://twitter.com/Southcom/status/1337581326615138305>

¹⁶³ <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1428831-466/honduras-otorga-medalla-gran-cruz-de-las-ff-aa-a-jefe-del>

¹⁶⁴ <https://twitter.com/jeffgernst/status/1341543987056926720>

¹⁶⁵ <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/2020/12/engel-u-s-northern-triangle-enhanced-engagement-act-passes-congress>

¹⁶⁶ <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2536-eeuu-sancionara-golpistas-y-corruptos-de-honduras>

¹⁶⁷ <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1341725496388759552>

¹⁶⁸ <https://twitter.com/jeffgernst/status/1341927659803181058>

¹⁶⁹ <https://www.dw.com/es/honduras-la-ue-m%C3%A1s-acuerdos-o-se%C3%B1ales-m%C3%A1s-claras/a-55887976>

¹⁷⁰ <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/3029-personas-que-defienden-derechos-humanos-en-honduras-le-manifestaron-a-la-ue-que-debe-hacer-mas-para-evitar-abusos-en-el-pais>

¹⁷¹ <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1428795-466/pnud-union-europea-lanzan-apoyo-ciclo-electoral-2021>

¹⁷² <https://proceso.hn/naciones-unidas-instalara-en-honduras-una-oficina-contrala-droga-y-el-delito/>

¹⁷³ <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2020-12-02/us-may-start-sharing-sensitive-intelligence-with-honduras-in-drug-fight>

have narcos within its ranks is a dangerous proposal."¹⁷⁴ "US prosecutors have tied Honduran president Juan Orlando Hernandez to drug trafficking more than once, yet the US is about to sign an MOU with his government to share intel about drug trafficking."¹⁷⁵

The sentencing of former Honduran congressman Fredy Renán Nájera Montoya in the US for drug trafficking was postponed to January 6, 2021.¹⁷⁶ New court documents released from his case brought forward interesting news.^{177 178 179} "According to documents from the prosecutor's office for the Southern District of New York dated December 23, 2020, approximately in 2012 the asset launderer Yani Benjamin Rosenthal Hidalgo, who now participates as a presidential pre-candidate for the Liberal Party, received one million dollars from the Sinaloa Cartel to finance his pre-candidacy for the presidency of Honduras."^{180 181} The Pro Honduras Network later also reported that a video in the hands of the prosecutor's office in NY narrates a tacit alliance between Juan Orlando and Yani Rosenthal to provide protection to drug traffickers.¹⁸²

CESPAD also covered the case of Fredy Nájera, in a three-part article series.^{183 184 185}

Varia

JOH

In the newest Human Development Index, Honduras is last of the Central American country and second to last of all the Latin American countries.¹⁸⁶ Political analyst Olban Valladares denounced the politicization of poverty which then is used as an argument to setup fake social programs which only serve to further enrich a corrupt elite.¹⁸⁷ And to further emphasize his priorities, JOH "made official the promotion to generals of old comrades of the Liceo Militar in a ceremony held on Monday; according to a former police general, the head of state intends to continue violating the laws with the continuist idea based on military support."¹⁸⁸

¹⁷⁴ <https://twitter.com/janschakowsky/status/1334591091820163082>

¹⁷⁵ <https://twitter.com/RepChuyGarcia/status/1334686610659696642>

¹⁷⁶ <https://proceso.hn/aplaza-para-el-6-de-enero-de-2021-la-sentencia-para-diputado-fredy-najera-en-eeuu/>

¹⁷⁷ <https://prohondurasnetwork.com/2020/12/30/los-socios-del-cartel-de-sinaloa-en-honduras/>

¹⁷⁸ <https://prohondurasnetwork.com/2020/12/30/fredy-najera-trafico-mas-de-20-toneladas-de-cocaina-del-cartel-de-sinaloa-con-la-ayuda-de-militares-y-policias-hondurenos/>

¹⁷⁹ <https://prohondurasnetwork.com/2020/12/30/miguel-pastor-recibio-2-millones-de-dolares-del-cartel-de-sinaloa-para-financiar-su-campana-como-pre-candidato-presidencial-del-partido-nacional/>

¹⁸⁰ <https://prohondurasnetwork.com/2020/12/25/yani-rosenthal-recibio-un-millon-de-dolares-del-cartel-de-sinaloa/>

¹⁸¹ <https://twitter.com/jeffgernst/status/1342885893569441794>

¹⁸² <https://prohondurasnetwork.com/2020/12/28/video-en-manos-de-la-fiscalia-en-ny-narra-una-alianza-tacita-entre-juan-orlando-y-yani-rosenthal-para-brindar-proteccion-a-narcotraficantes/>

¹⁸³ <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/12/28/fredy-najera-el-exdiputado-hondureno-que-en-siete-anos-trasego-20-toneladas-de-cocaina/>

¹⁸⁴ <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/12/30/asi-construyo-su-poderio-con-el-cartel-de-sinaloa-el-exdiputado-hondureno-fredy-najera/>

¹⁸⁵ <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/01/01/fredy-najera-los-anos-previos-a-su-extradicion-y-su-inminente-condena-en-estados-unidos/>

¹⁸⁶ <https://twitter.com/cnahonduras/status/1338851976482852867>

¹⁸⁷ <https://confidencialhn.com/pobreza-en-honduras-no-debe-instrumentalizarse-advierte-excandidato-presidencial/>

¹⁸⁸ <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2501-honduras-familiares-y-amigos-de-joh-suben-a-generales>

Violence

"The coordinator of Casa Alianza Honduras, Jose Guadalupe Ruela reports that during this year 2020, on average every month 60 young people, boys and girls under 23 years old were murdered in Honduras."¹⁸⁹

Migration

The US has prolonged the Temporary Protection Status (TPS) for Honduras, El Salvadorian and Guatemalan migrants for nine more months as a response to the two hurricanes.¹⁹⁰ And on December 18, the outgoing Trump administration announced to have finished the implementation of the so-called third safe country agreement with Honduras. "On December 18, 2020, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced that the United States and Honduras have concluded the implementation accords for the Asylum Cooperative Agreement (ACA) signed in September 2019. Under the ACA, certain migrants requesting asylum or similar humanitarian protection at the U.S. border may be transferred to Honduras to seek protection in Honduras."¹⁹¹ At the same time, 35'948 Hondurans had deported from the US this year.¹⁹²

And in Honduras, a new migrant caravan formed in San Pedro Sula.¹⁹³ OACNUDH observed the initial gathering in San Pedro Sula and according to them, people who lost their houses during the hurricanes, left the shelters to join the caravan.¹⁹⁴ The police harassed them after they had taken off¹⁹⁵ and at least 60 migrants were "returned".¹⁹⁶

Elections

CESPAD published an analysis about the context of the coming electoral cycle. "This article contains elements of analysis on the reform that has allowed the creation and distinction of powers of the National Electoral Council (CNE) and the Electoral Justice Tribunal (TJE) of Honduras. One of the main challenges for both institutions will be to disassociate themselves from the hegemony that the National Party has exercised, in the last decade, over all public institutions -including the electoral ones- and that has contributed to the lack of transparency and integrity in the last two electoral processes."¹⁹⁷

The National Registry of Persons (RNP) has failed to deliver the database for the creation of the new census in time. Officially, they had time until November 30.¹⁹⁸ This also caused a delay at the National Electoral Council (CNE), which promised that the provisional electoral census would be

189 <https://radioprogreso.net/instante/en-honduras-unos-60-menores-son-asesinados-cada-mes-casa-alianza/>

190 <https://criterio.hn/extienden-tps-para-honduras-el-salvador-y-nicaragua/>

191 <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2020/12/18/asylum-cooperative-agreement-honduras-finalized>

192 <https://www.radiohonduras.com/casi-36-mil-deportados-recibio-honduras-desde-estados-unidos-en-2020>

193 <https://criterio.hn/se-forma-una-nueva-caravana-de-migrantes-en-san-pedro-sula-con-rumbo-a-ee-uu/>

194 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1337092434652786698>

195 <https://radioprogreso.net/instante/policia-frena-caravana-de-migrantes-en-la-frontera-de-aguascalientes/>

196 <https://tiempo.hn/policia-retorna-migrantes-hondurenos-caravana/>

197 <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/12/10/honduras-la-nueva-institucionalidad-electoral-y-el-reto-de-librarse-de-la-hegemonia-del-partido-nacional/>

198 <https://elpulso.hn/?p=50828>

available on December 9.¹⁹⁹ But shortly afterwards, the CNE had to report that they had found thousands of inconsistencies in the census and demands answers.²⁰⁰²⁰¹ Salvador Nasralla presented a request at the Supreme Audit Court to investigate the RNP and its 1.7 million Lempiras Identificate project.²⁰² Criterio also reported on problems with the project. "On August 22nd the authorities of the National Registry of Persons (RNP) informed that the French consortium, Thales Group, had been declared by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) the winner of the tender process for the manufacture of the new identity card, through the company THALES - SELP, based in Poland. Subsequently, the UNDP detailed that each identity will cost US\$ 1.70 and that the contract that was signed amounts to US\$ 11,157,750.01. But the contract document is still not published. Criterio.hn has been requesting the contract since the time it was known. In the first instance the request was directed to the mail that the UNDP has made available to the public through the Identify Yourself Project (identificatehn@undp.org), but no response was obtained. Later, in August, the request was made directly to the then RNP president, Roberto Kattán, who responded that he did not have the document because the process had been carried out by the UNDP."²⁰³

Nevertheless, the RNP pushed forward with the project. They will start handing out the new identity card in the second half of 2021.²⁰⁴ "The process of applying for the new National Identification Document is about to be completed. During the year, RNP and its project Identify Yourself carried out the enrollment at the national level through which the personal data of each Honduran was updated or confirmed, to feed the new registry base, which is managed in a transparent and reliable manner. To date, the data of 4,929,124 citizens enrolled at the national level, fingerprints and facial recognition of each Honduran who attended the enrollment sessions have been collected."²⁰⁵

The political opposition questioned the role of the RNP and if they are able, i.e. willing to fix the irregularities in the census.²⁰⁶ And they voiced even worse fears. "Luis Zelaya, president of the Central Executive Council of the Liberal Party, denounced that the National Party intends to create an institutional crisis around the electoral census in order to suspend the primary elections, postpone the general process and create the conditions for a crisis that will allow the incumbent of the regime, Juan Orlando Hernández, to remain in power."²⁰⁷

On December 17, Alejandro Martínez Quesada of the CNE had to admit that some one million Hondurans had not assigned to them a voting center for the primary elections of March 14, 2021.²⁰⁸ They later announced people could vote in the same locations they voted in back in 2017 for the

199 <https://tiempo.hn/censo-electoral-provisional-disponible-9-de-diciembre/>

200 <https://confidencialhn.com/cne-demanda-respuestas-al-rnp-por-gran-cantidad-de-inconsistencias/>

201 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/pt/exigen-suspender-enrolamiento-por-irregularidades-denunciadas-por-el-cne/>

202 <https://proceso.hn/salvador-nasralla-pide-al-tsc-investigar-gastos-del-proyecto-identificate/>

203 <https://criterio.hn/contrato-con-la-empresa-thales-es-un-secreto-de-estado/>

204 <https://proceso.hn/en-segunda-quincena-de-enero-iniciara-entrega-de-nueva-tarjeta-de-identidad-anuncia-rnp/>

205 <https://elpulso.hn/?p=51434>

206 <https://proceso.hn/esperamos-que-el-rnp-no-se-preste-al-juego-de-suspender-elecciones-luis-zelaya/>

207 <https://criterio.hn/el-partido-nacional-sigue-maniobrando-para-no-dejar-el-poder-denuncia-luis-zelaya/>

208 <https://elpulso.hn/?p=51316>

general elections.²⁰⁹ ContraCorriente published an overview of the irregularities in the electoral census.²¹⁰ On December 31, the CNE announced that they had returned the electoral census to the RNP asking them to clean it up.²¹¹

At the end of the month, the CNE presented the list of internal movements running in the coming primary elections. There are three for the Liberal Party, two for the National Party, and 4 for Libre. The three movement inside the Christian Democracy Party were rejected for not complying with "the minimum requirements".²¹² There is also an internal movement of the National Party which was left out and its leader, Loreley Fernández, reacted by calling the leaders of the National Party "criminals".²¹³

And Light at the End of a Month

Difficult to see some light, not just after this month, but the entire year. Nevertheless, it is always impressive to see how the Honduran people, against all obstacles, continue to work towards a better future, towards the country they deserve.

209 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1430218-410/honduras-electores-podran-votar-mismos-centros-2017>

210 <https://contracorriente.red/2020/12/17/las-irregularidades-en-el-costoso-censo-nacional-electoral/>

211 <https://confidencialhn.com/cne-devuelve-la-base-de-datos-del-enrolamiento-al-rnp-para-que-corrija-los-errores/>

212 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2543-honduras-listas-papeletas-electorales-14-movimientos-van-a-primarias>

213 <https://confidencialhn.com/loreley-fernandez-califica-de-delincuentes-a-lideres-de-su-propio-partido/>

Another Month at the Honduras Forum Switzerland

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-

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-

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