

Another Month in Honduras...

Human Rights Monitor – January 2021

The humanitarian crisis in Honduras found international attention this month as the first and biggest migration caravan since the corona pandemic took off in mid-January. A combination of a pandemic, two hurricanes hitting Honduras in later 2020, an abysmal response by the JOH regime and a lack of perspective among the corruption and human rights violation left again thousands of Honduras without any other option than trying to leave. Congress also showed again how it rather worsens the situation of minorities and vulnerablized groups by changing the constitution to forever ban same-sex marriage and abortions instead of using its power to improve the situation of Honduras. There were also setbacks in the Berta Cáceres case and the Guapinol case. Further corruption cases were undermined, meanwhile Honduras dropped further in an international corruption index. Last but not least, JOH's drug trafficking links prominently reappeared in the national and international headlines thanks to newly released court documents from New York. 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 COVID-19 Crisis

492 dengue cases have been reported so far this year.¹ 70% of deaths related to dengue are of minors, i.e. below 15 years old.²

The year started with 122'974 COVID-19 cases and 3160 officially recognized deaths.³ But once again, the funeral homes explained that they have reported more than double the amount of deaths.⁴ By January 31, there were 147'843 COVID-19 cases and 3610 confirmed deaths.⁵

State Reaction

On January 3, JOH presented a new executive decree with which he pretended to legalize the restrictions on the constitutional rights which had been in place since the beginning of the pandemic.⁶ Three days later, JOH called for an emergency meeting due to the worrisome situation at Honduras' hospitals (see below).⁷ At the same time, there is the ongoing attempt to misuse the pandemic for further undermining democracy. "At the request of Nationalist Congressman Tomás Zambrano, the Legislative Branch discussed and approved a bill aimed at ensuring that by 2021 municipalities are not obliged to hold open town halls, due to the health emergency caused by COVID-19."⁸

Even though it has been a very deadly month, by the end of January, almost no new measures were in place.

Health Sector

On January 1, already the first health worker, the nurse Leonor Rodríguez, died to COVID-19.⁹ Three days later, the first doctor in the new year, Marco Tulio Martínez Ávila, died.¹⁰ Just a day later, another doctor, the orthopedist Carlos Castillo, died.¹¹ On January 22, another nurse, Maribel Chávez, as well as another doctor, Arquímedes Rodríguez, died to COVID-19.¹² The last week of

1 <https://elpulso.hn/?p=52398>

2 <https://confidencialhn.com/alertan-que-el-70-de-muertes-por-dengue-son-de-menores-de-edad/>

3 <https://proceso.hn/honduras-reporta-19-nuevos-decesos-y-otros-211-contagios-de-covid-19-en-inicio-de-ano-nuevo/>

4 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2559-honduras-alarmante-funerarias-registran-casi-8-000-muertos-por-covid>

5 <https://proceso.hn/honduras-acumula-147843-casos-y-3610-decesos-por-covid-19/>

6 <https://confidencialhn.com/ejecutivo-amplia-limitacion-a-garantias-constitucionales-y-solicita-ratificacion-al-legislativo/>

7 <https://tiempo.hn/joh-convoca-reunion-de-emergencia-por-covid-19/>

8 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/portada/eliminar-desarrollo-de-cabildos-municipales-es-una-medida-antidemocratica-y-autoritaria/>

9 <https://tiempo.hn/primera-enfermera-fallece-covid-2021/>

10 <https://tiempo.hn/covid-19-fallece-fundador-medicasa-marco-martinez/>

11 <https://proceso.hn/fallece-reconocido-medico-ortopeda-por-covid-19-en-san-pedro-sula/>

12 <https://confidencialhn.com/en-la-capital-muere-doctor-y-enfermera-por-sospechas-de-covid-19/>

January cost the lives of another 5 doctors^{13 14}, among them the 31-year old Victoria García¹⁵, and another nurse.¹⁶ Over 60 doctors have died so far and according to ANEEAH, 35 nurses.^{17 18}

The last year ended with increasingly alarming calls from health experts regarding a resurgence in corona cases and full intensive care units. This trend continued in January with the Leonardo Martínez Hospital in San Pedro Sula being the first one to announced a full corona ward.¹⁹ On January 3, Proceso Digital reported that hospitals in general in San Pedro Sula could not take up any more corona patients.²⁰ The next day, the JOH regime announced the allocation of 100 million Lempiras to extend the work done in the triage centers and medical brigades.²¹ While doubtful, that all the money would really arrive there, the need was unquestioned. In El Progreso, they even ran out of corona tests at the triage centers.²²

By January 12, even Sinager warned that the Honduran health system was about to collapse.²³ The same day, another hospital announced to be full.²⁴ And more followed the coming days.^{25 26 27 28} Honduras would need 240 additional ICU beds, i.e. three times as there currently are.²⁹ Doctor Rony Antúnez warns that corona patients have to go through a real odyssey to find a place at a hospital. "We have to wait until someone dies to give their bed to someone else".³⁰ By the end of the month, warnings about the Honduran health system become more imminent by the day. On January 22, WHO/PAHO representative Piedad Huerta expressed concern about the situation in Honduras.³¹ The next day, Carlos Umaña, doctor and president of the Association of Doctors of the IHSS in San Pedro Sula, said that their prophecies that if nothing would be done, ICUs would collapse, had in the meantime become reality.³² And the following news did not reassure the public: "The president of the National Association of Auxiliary Nurses of Honduras (ANEEAH), in the San Pedro Sula chapter, Luis Cerrato, warned that they could abandon the COVID wards, in protest because they have lowered the salaries of their members who work in the mobile hospital and in the triage centers."³³

13 <https://proceso.hn/fallecen-dos-medicos-y-suman-61-los-decesos-por-covid-19-en-honduras/>

14 <https://confidencialhn.com/muere-reconocido-medico-por-covid-19-en-tegucigalpa/>

15 <https://proceso.hn/muere-otra-profesional-de-la-medicina-a-causa-del-covid-19-en-honduras/>

16 <https://tiempo.hn/covid-19-muere-ihss-enfermera-cristina-colindres/>

17 <https://proceso.hn/un-medico-muere-por-covid-cada-tres-dias-en-honduras/>

18 <https://criterio.hn/35-enfermeras-han-fallecido-a-causa-del-covid-19-y-unas-2990-se-han-contagiado/>

19 <https://proceso.hn/sin-cupo-para-pacientes-covid-19-en-el-hospital-leonardo-martinez/>

20 <https://proceso.hn/hospitales-sampedranos-sin-cupos-para-pacientes-con-covid-19/>

21 <https://proceso.hn/gobierno-asigna-l-100-millones-para-extender-centros-de-triaje-y-brigadas-medicas-por-tres-meses/>

22 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/instante/no-hay-pruebas-pcr-en-triajes-de-el-progreso-yoro/>

23 <https://proceso.hn/a-punto-de-colapsar-sistema-sanitario-por-relajamiento-ciudadano-segun-sinager/>

24 <https://tiempo.hn/uci-hospital-escuela-100-ocupacion-pacientes-covid-19/>

25 <https://confidencialhn.com/reportan-que-triaje-del-centro-civico-gubernamental-sobrepasa-su-capacidad-de-atencion/>

26 <https://proceso.hn/uci-del-hospital-maria-en-su-100-por-ciento-de-capacidad/>

27 <https://proceso.hn/colapsada-sala-covid-19-en-el-hospital-gabriela-alvarado/>

28 <https://tiempo.hn/colapsa-sala-covid-19-hospital-gabriela-alvarado/>

29 <https://proceso.hn/salas-uci-el-espejo-del-estado-critico-de-la-pandemia/>

30 <https://tiempo.hn/medico-odisea-covid-honduras/>

31 <https://proceso.hn/situacion-de-covid-es-preocupante-hay-mucho-relajamiento-ciudadano-dice-representante-de-ops-en-honduras/>

32 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2610-urgente-colapsan-salas-uci-en-norte-de-honduras>

33 <https://proceso.hn/aneeah-amenaza-con-abandonar-salas-covid-por-rebaja-del-sueldo/>

On January 27, the Health Secretariat officially handed over the mobile hospital to the University Hospital in Tegucigalpa. They promised that the first patients will be taken in in the coming 24 hours.³⁴ Shortly afterwards, it was made public that they would only receive patients with mild corona symptoms.³⁵

The Health Secretariat promised this month to have organized 9.4 million vaccine doses for Honduras.³⁶ But this will take time, they hope for 23'000 doses by February.³⁷ On January 21, several media outlets reported that the JOH regime had rejected an offer by AstraZeneca of 4 million doses of corona vaccine even though the funds would have been available.³⁸ ³⁹ As a consequence, they are still awaiting the first batch to arrive in Honduras. According to calculations by El Libertador, it would cost some \$110 million to vaccinate the Honduran people.⁴⁰ Throughout the remainder of the month, the JOH regime used the promise of vaccines to cover up its abysmal pandemic response in the last year. JOH held a TV announcement on the subject promising 800'000 doses by the end of February.⁴¹ ⁴²

Human Rights

Human rights organizations and social movements published another joint manifesto during the pandemic. "We begin with the deepest humanitarian crisis in history, which smells of narco-dictatorship and the failure of neoliberalism, with its by-products of misery for the people, shameless concentration of wealth in reduced elites promoting organized crime and repression. In the face of this crisis and with our love for organized struggle, this gathering of organizations pronounces itself in this Thirty-Seventh public manifesto".⁴³

Corruption

At the start of the month, the CNA denounced that the audit committee at Invest-H, whose 180-day mandate would on January 24, had been unable to present a partial report on the promised audit of the purchase of the so-called mobile hospitals.⁴⁴ At the same time, they continue to postpone the promised functionality of the hospitals. On January 8, the new date was set to February.⁴⁵ At the end of the month, people protested in Tegucigalpa at the site where a promised mobile hospital should be operating.⁴⁶ Their great slogan: "If it were a drug lab, it would already be operating".⁴⁷

34 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1438720-466/secretaria-de-salud-entrega-oficialmente-hospital-movil>

35 <https://proceso.hn/habilitan-atencion-en-hospital-movil-de-tegucigalpa-pero-solo-para-pacientes-leves/>

36 <https://proceso.hn/honduras-contara-con-9-4-millones-de-dosis-de-vacuna-contra-la-covid-19-segun-salud/>

37 <https://tiempo.hn/honduras-23-mil-vacunas-contra-covid-febrero/>

38 <https://tiempo.hn/salud-no-acepto-vacunas-covid-19-cohep/>

39 <https://criterio.hn/astazeneca-ofrecio-a-honduras-4-millones-de-vacunas-contra-la-covid-y-la-secretaria-de-salud-no-acepto/>

40 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2606-reportaje-con-110-millones-de-dolares-se-vacuna-al-pueblo-hondureno>

41 <https://twitter.com/JuanOrlandoH/status/1356066981426855936>

42 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1439547-466/presidente-herandez-vacuna-honduras-coronavirus-covid-covax>

43 <https://copinh.org/2021/01/manifiesto-publico-37-enero-2021/>

44 <https://criterio.hn/junta-interventora-de-invest-h-aun-no-se-pronuncia-sobre-el-no-funcionamiento-de-los-hospitales-moviles/>

45 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1434420-466/gustavo-boquin-interventor-invest-hospitales-listos-febrero>

46 <https://criterio.hn/hospital-movil-de-tegucigalpa-no-esta-en-operaciones-porque-no-cumple-requerimientos-tecnicos/>

47 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1352838628121034752>

On January 11, the CNA published a report on the failures of the audit committee at Invest-H.⁴⁸ "In the eye of the hurricane are the controllers of Inversión Estratégica Honduras (Invest-H), who have been criticized for their inability to put the mobile hospitals, acquired by the former director of this entity, Mr. Marco Bográn, into operation. In this sense, several sectors of civil society have pointed out their criticism against the officials, who have been in office for six months earning a salary of more than 200,000 lempiras."⁴⁹

"The Superior Court of Accounts (TSC), indicated this Thursday, through a press release, that after an investigation, it found inconsistencies in the purchase of fans by the Permanent Contingency Commission (Copeco), and forwarded the report to the Public Prosecutor's Office as it found indications of criminal responsibility."⁵⁰

Poverty

Remittances sent to Honduras increased a bit last year to \$5729 million.⁵¹ "A World Bank study indicates that one in four children are affected by not receiving adequate food in Honduras and that 60% of children under five years of age suffer from chronic malnutrition."⁵²

Economy

According to the business lobby COHEP, more than 800'000 formal and informal jobs were lost in 2020.⁵³

Education

While the teachers' union continued to denounce that some 400'000 pupils were excluded from the education system as a consequence of the pandemic, the JOH regime claimed that the alternatives they offered to in-class teaching were sufficient.⁵⁴ But the same month, Regional UNICEF director Jean Gough called on Honduras to get school children back to class.⁵⁵ But on January 20, Criterio wrote: "The deadly escalation of recent weeks, in which at least 17 teachers have lost their lives, the high positivity rate and the incidence of Covid-19 in minors and people in the 20 to 40 age group, plus the few preparations in biosecurity protocols in public schools and colleges prevent the return to face to face classes in the country."⁵⁶ Teachers announced that they would only return to on-site classes if there are biosecurity safety protocol in place and the educational community is immunized.⁵⁷

48 <https://twitter.com/cnahonduras/status/1348630365586522112>

49 <https://criterio.hn/si-los-interventores-de-invest-h-no-dan-resultados-no-deberian-continuar-en-el-cargo-cna/>

50 <https://proceso.hn/tsc-apunta-inconsistencias-en-compra-de-ventiladores-y-remite-informe-al-mp/>

51 <https://www.elpais.hn/2021/01/10/migrantes-dicen-presente-con-5729-9-millones-en-remesas-en-cierre-del-2020/>

52 <https://criterio.hn/hambre-desnutricion-pandemia-y-miseria-honduras/>

53 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/economia/1434857-466/juan-carlos-sikaffy-se-perdieron-alrededor-de-800000-empleos-en-honduras-durante>

54 <https://tiempo.hn/estudiantes-vinculados-al-sistema-educativo-honduras/>

55 <https://confidencialhn.com/representante-de-unicef-considera-que-sistema-educativo-hondureno-debe-retornar-a-clases-presenciales/>

56 <https://criterio.hn/altos-niveles-de-contagio-no-permiten-volver-a-clases-presenciales-afirma-la-fomh/>

57 <https://criterio.hn/hasta-que-estudiantes-y-alumnos-estén-vacunados-volveremos-a-clases-presenciales-fomh/>

As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, some 22'000 students had to leave their studies at UNAH.⁵⁸

Human Rights and Their Defenders

Honduran news outlet reported that the Human Rights Minister Karla Cueva had put in her resignation due to health reasons. She had done that already 2 months ago.⁵⁹

Attacks, Criminalization and Harassment

CESPAD published an important article on the criminalization of social struggles during the pandemic using MILPAH and ADEPZA as examples.⁶⁰

The National Network of Women Human Rights Defenders sent out an alert on January 12 regarding the whereabouts of defender Yajaira Liceth Calix Vanegas who has not been seen since January 2.⁶¹

Indigenous Peoples

On the sixth-month of the forceful disappearance of the five young men from the Garífuna community Triunfo de la Cruz, there was a worldwide call for justice.^{62 63}

The Case of Berta Cáceres

A new date was set for an evidentiary hearing against David Castillo in the Berta Cáceres case, Monday, January 11, 9am.⁶⁴ But on this January 11, the hearing was once again suspended. COPINH denounced it. "On 9 occasions the oral trial stage has been suspended in this case due to the defense's delaying tactics. These tactics only seek to delay the process against Castillo. Even with the delays. We will continue to demand ceaselessly justice for Berta".⁶⁵ EU Parliamentarian Tilly Metz denounced the dilatory tactics by the defense of David Castillo.⁶⁶ OACNUDH once again would have been observing the hearing and after the suspension called for a swift resolution of the petition by the defense.⁶⁷

Later this month, a new date was set again for the hearing⁶⁸ only to be suspended again when the date came.⁶⁹

58 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/contexto/item/3069-ante-la-crisis-generada-por-covid-19-al-menos-22-mil-estudiantes-han-desertado-de-la-unah>

59 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1437614-466/renuncia-karla-cueva-ministra-derechos-humanos-honduras-gobierno>

60 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/01/15/coyuntura-desde-los-territorios-adepza-y-milpah-como-opera-la-criminalizacion-de-la-lucha-territorial-en-tiempos-de-pandemia/>

61 <http://im-defensoras.org/2021/01/alerta-defensoras-honduras-se-desconoce-el-paradero-de-la-defensora-yajaira-calix-vanegas-desde-el-2-de-enero-de-2021/>

62 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1351175523364446208>

63 <https://radioprogreso.net/instante/garifunas-demandan-justicia-a-seis-meses-de-la-desaparicion-forzada-de-sus-lideres/>

64 <https://copinh.org/2021/01/convocan-a-audiencia-de-proposicion-de-pruebas-contra-david-castillo/>

65 <https://copinh.org/2021/01/nuevamente-es-suspendida-la-audiencia-de-proposicion-de-pruebas-contra-david-castillo-coautor-en-el-asesinato-de-berta-caceres/>

66 <https://twitter.com/MetzTilly/status/1348974925743337474>

67 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1348731551312392197>

68 <https://copinh.org/2021/01/manana-21-01-21-audiencia-contra-david-castillo/>

69 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1352270407009759233>

Just days later, the Gualcarque Fraud corruption case had also been postponed. COPINH denounced this and demanded again that they and the Río Blanco would be recognized as victims in the case.⁷⁰

LGBTQ

"Hours after he received the Franco-German Human Rights and Rule of Law Award [see last month], José Zambrano, an LGTBI rights defender, had his house set on fire, from which he had to flee with three members of his family to save their lives."⁷¹

In the same constitutional reform infinitely criminalizing abortion (see below), Congress also prohibited same-sex marriage.⁷² OACNUDH raised concern.⁷³

Freedom of Expression and Journalists

The CPH does not even try to hide anymore its closeness to the JOH regime. "This Saturday the new Board of Directors of the College of Journalists of Honduras (CPH) was appointed, the new president of the guild, an unknown in journalism, Osman Reyes, a "high official" of the Hernandez government, serving as spokesman for the police-military 911 emergency system."^{74 75}

Violence against Women

"The historical and invisible pandemic of violence against women in Honduras closed in 2020 with catastrophic figures, since the 911 line reported more than 100 thousand calls for domestic violence, said Cristina Alvarado, member of the Women's Movement for Peace Visitación Padilla, in Radio Progreso. According to data from the Observatory of Violence at the public university, 2020 closed with more than 300 femicides, "a figure similar to that of previous years despite the confinement, where it is said that the best thing is to stay at home," said Alvarado, assuring that in Honduras staying at home is not a safe place for women."⁷⁶ On January 25, women protested on the Day of the Honduran Woman against the situation they face everyday in Honduras. More than 300 women were murdered last year and calls to 911 for domestic violence had increased by 16%.^{77 78}

Another form of violence against women is the prohibition of abortion in all cases in Honduras. But this does not seem enough for some. On January 10, journalist Jeff Ernst tweeted: "In response to Argentina's legalization of abortion, a Honduran [Nationalist] legislator proposes legal modifications that would make it practically impossible for abortion to become legal for any

70 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1349493159261331458>

71 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/denuncias/item/3047-en-peligro-su-vida-queman-la-casa-de-jose-zambrano-defensor-lgtbi>

72 <https://criterio.hn/congreso-de-honduras-blinda-prohibicion-de-matrimonio-entre-personas-del-mismo-sexo/>

73 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1352455247931846658>

74 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2628-alerta-colegio-de-periodistas-cae-en-activistas-del-partido-nacional>

75 <https://criterio.hn/funcionario-del-911-presidente-del-colegio-de-periodistas-de-honduras/>

76 <https://radioprogreso.hn/instante/honduras-cerro-2020-con-cifras-catastroficas-en-violencia-contra-las-mujeres/>

77 <https://confidencial.hn.com/mujeres-realizan-planton-en-celebracion-del-dia-de-la-mujer-en-honduras/>

78 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/contexto/item/3066-movilizaciones-en-el-dia-de-la-mujer-organizaciones-de-mujeres-senalaron-que-sus-derechos-están-en-retroceso>

circumstance in Honduras."⁷⁹ The UN System in Honduras expressed concern⁸⁰ and women protested outside Congress.⁸¹ Nevertheless, "[w]ith eyes on this year's elections, Honduran Congress moving ahead with what it calls "Shield against abortion in Honduras" - legal reforms that would make it practically impossible to legalize abortion for any circumstance now or in the future".⁸² OACNUDH followed with another press release. "UN human rights experts* today condemned a bill that would essentially block any possible progress on the sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls in Honduras, a country where one in four girls have been pregnant at least once before their 19th birthday**."

On January 21, Congress approved, against the will of the opposition and in record speed, a constitutional reform⁸³ which makes a future decriminalization of abortion impossible.⁸⁴ OACNUDH "laments" the decision.⁸⁵ Jeff Ernst highlighted one of the dire consequences of this. "Meanwhile, a 10-year-old girl was just forced to give birth after being raped, because in Honduras there are no exceptions for abortion - and because of this reform there might never be - and to make matters worse, emergency contraceptives are also banned."⁸⁶ And the same day, El Tiempo reported that hospitals in Honduras reject operating women who don't want to have (anymore) kids.⁸⁷ In the coming days, more people and organization protested against it⁸⁸, e.g. Doctors without Borders condemned the reform.⁸⁹

At the end of the month, the UN System in Honduras followed with another press release. "[I] expresses its concern over the approval of the reform that incorporates the absolute prohibition of abortion in Article 67 of the Honduran Constitution and Article 112 regarding the prohibition of egalitarian marriage. (...) In view of the above, the United Nations system in Honduras urges the National Congress to reconsider the ratification of this reform and, in the future, to ensure the agreement of any bill with the groups directly affected, in order to guarantee its discussion in the three debates required by the Constitution of the Republic. It also reaffirms its availability to provide technical advice to the National Congress on this matter."⁹⁰

On January 28, the Nationalist-controlled Congress definitively ratified the constitutional reform prohibiting in perpetuity abortion and same-sex marriage.⁹¹ US Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky tweeted: "I am appalled that Honduras is taking steps to roll back #SRHR and make it impossible to

79 <https://twitter.com/jeffgerst/status/1348482013066620928>

80 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDHHN/status/1350102395586539520>

81 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/investigacionespag/item/3058-porque-violenta-convenios-internacional-mujeres-protestan-ante-el-parlamento-por-iniciativa-de-ley-contra-el-aborto>

82 <https://twitter.com/jeffgerst/status/1351249207714308098>

83 <https://confidencialhn.com/publican-reforma-constitucional-que-resguarda-articulos-contrala-aborto-y-proteccion-del-matrimonio/>

84 <https://criterio.hn/nacionalistas-blindan-despenalizacion-del-aborto-en-el-congreso-nacional/>

85 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDHHN/status/1352451477869129730>

86 <https://twitter.com/jeffgerst/status/1352343366340665345>

87 <https://tiempo.hn/trabas-hospitales-mujeres-operarse-hijos/>

88 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1352724663185649666>

89 <https://proceso.hn/msf-condena-ley-que-prohibe-el-aborto-en-honduras/>

90 <https://honduras.un.org/es/108906-la-onu-manifiesta-su-preocupacion-por-la-aprobacion-de-la-reforma-constitucional-que-impide>

91 <https://criterio.hn/congreso-nacional-ratifica-reforma-que-blinda-despenalizacion-del-aborto/>

legalize abortion – on top of its existing draconian abortion ban! Access to #reprohealth services, including abortion, is a human right!"⁹²

Protection Mechanism

Pasos de Animal Grande denounced on January 12, that “[t]he Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice has not responded to an appeal for protection, which implies that the National Police should respect the work of the people who serve as councilors in the National Protection Council, which has been violated on countless occasions when it comes to verifying human rights violations. Dina Meza, Executive Director of the Association for Democracy and Human Rights, ASOPODEHU, and a councilwoman representing human rights organizations, filed an Appeal for Protection before the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice for the obstruction of their work by police agents on November 2, 2020 when they tried to verify the physical conditions and detention of journalists Cesario Padilla and Miriam Elvir of the organization C-LIBRE.”⁹³

Political Prisoners

The Convergence against Continuity and the Committee for the Freedom of Political Prisoners reminded us about the fate of the political prisoners who still face criminalization while impunity reigns for the human rights violations by the JOH regime during the post-electoral repression three years ago.^{94 95}

Extractive Industries

With the ratification of the Escazú agreement by Argentina and Mexico, it will come into force on April 22. Honduras has not signed it yet. OFRANEH denounced: "Honduras, participated in the negotiations, however at the same time through presidential agreement 008-2015 approved the express licenses, thus destroying the process of environmental licenses as safeguards. Hypocritical government, violator of human rights and nature."⁹⁶ MADJ denounced that Congress approved "a package of extractive projects that will create and generate more conflicts in the national territory".⁹⁷

92 <https://twitter.com/janschakowsky/status/1354490381325447170>

93 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/denuncias/item/3054-sala-de-lo-constitucional-dilata-respuesta-a-recurso-de-amparo-interpuesto-con-concejal-del-consejo-nacional-de-proteccion>

94 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/tres-anos-despues-del-fraude-electoral-los-presos-politicos-siguen-sujetos-al-proceso-penal-y-la-impunidad-estatal-se-fortalece/>

95 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/exigen-libertad-para-los-presos-politicos-y-que-se-cierren-los-procesos-penales/>

96 <https://twitter.com/baraudawaguchu/status/1353368014578724872>

97 <https://twitter.com/MovAmplioHn/status/1355272218448691208>

Guapinol

On January 23, it was made public that the hearing of the eight Guapinol defenders planned for the next day was suspended without just cause.⁹⁸ A week later, the Municipal Committee in Defense of the Commons and Public Goods together with other organizations published a press release. "The illegally imprisoned Guapinol River defenders must be released this week by the Court of Appeals of La Ceiba who now have the case in their hands. Last Friday, Magistrates Irasema Guillén, Rubenia Galeano, Jimmy Chirinos and Garín Enoc Urquía, received the appeal against the arbitrary December 19, 2020 ruling issued by Judge Zoé Guifarro of the Court of Appeals of Tocoa, who, without legal basis, denied to substitute the preventive measure of preventive detention during a long expected hearing. The December ruling violated the Constitution, the Criminal Procedure Code and international treaties and the defenders, in remand since September 1, 2019, now depend on the judicial independence of the Appellate Court Magistrates to put an end to their arbitrary detention."⁹⁹ The same week, national and international human rights organizations continued to call for their liberation.¹⁰⁰ ¹⁰¹ "The International Human Rights Clinic at the University of Virginia School of Law, along with 11 international human rights organizations(1), today filed an amicus curiae brief over the continued detention of the human right activists known as the "Guapinol Water Defenders" who have spent more than 500 days in pre-trial detention for events related to a peaceful protest to protect a water source in the Carlos Escaleras National Park. The COVID19 pandemic has only compounded concerns over the defender's health and well-being in prison." on.¹⁰²

On January 27 a press conference and protest rally was held outside the MP yesterday demanding freedom for both the Guapinol defenders.¹⁰³ ¹⁰⁴ OACNUDH recalled the obligation of the justice operators to guarantee the right to defend human rights.¹⁰⁵ But for the time being, they all fell on deaf ears and soon afterwards human rights defender and lawyer Edy Táborá denounced that the Appeals Court failed to emit a resolution in the case. "It is unfortunate that the only deadlines that the @PJdeHonduras strictly complies with are the vacation deadlines. What due process, what legal certainty in Honduras!"¹⁰⁶

Corruption and Its Enemies

2021 started with over 25 high-level corruption cases scheduled at the courts, among them the retrial against the former first lady Rosa Elena Bonilla de Lobo.¹⁰⁷

98 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1352997962419482624>

99 <https://www.guapinolresiste.org/post/honduran-court-of-appeals-must-release-guapinol-river-defenders-this-week>

100 <https://twitter.com/guapinolre/status/1354062814227402753>

101 <https://www.cejil.org/es/cejil-decision-corte-apelaciones-debe-considerar-estandares-derechos-humanos-garantizar-derecho>

102 <https://www.guapinolresiste.org/post/legal-human-rights-experts-file-brief-over-ongoing-illegal-detention-of-guapinol-river-defenders>

103 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1354508287786455040>

104 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1354604469686837255>

105 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1354451740410654720>

106 https://twitter.com/Edy_Tabora/status/1354966397986754560

107 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1432824-466/honduras-mas-de-25-casos-alto-impacto-a-juicio-2021>

Honduras dropped 11 position in the Corruption Perceptions Index¹⁰⁸ reaching an all time low since 2012.¹⁰⁹ A day later, the newly appointed head of the disputed Transparency Secretariat showed her real purpose, questioning the corruption index by Transparency International and trying to whitewash the JOH regime.¹¹⁰

The Onslaught against the Anti-Corruption Bodies

CESPAD published an important question on why the MP is ignoring the important work by UFERCO. "However, since then, both the Attorney General, Óscar Fernando Chinchilla Banegas, and the Director of Prosecutors, Daniel Arturo Sibrián Bueso, have forgotten about the Prosecutorial Unit. Some investigating agents and prosecutors from other units claim that UFERCO was left alone. "Neither the conditions for the personnel that used to be from UFECIC and now from UFERCO, are the same. Their salaries were lowered and the interest of the Attorney General himself declined to the extent that, since then, there is no communication neither with him nor with the higher commands", said a former agent of the Public Prosecutor's Office."¹¹¹ One man who wants to change this, is Luis Santos, head of UFERCO.¹¹² After the publication of the new Corruption Perceptions Index (see above), he commented. "Surely, Honduras this year will be cited as an example around the world, as one of the most corrupt countries, as was Singapore at the time, since with consistent actions managed to reduce, in a little more than a decade the rates of corruption. With the difference that Singapore bet seriously to the fight against corruption, passed laws that led to jail the corrupt ... in Honduras the opposite happens, laws, reforms and interpretations are passed that release the corrupt, which will worsen the situation more and more every day."¹¹³

Patuca III

In yet another corruption case, Patuca III, the accused were absolved (see also last month).¹¹⁴

Rosa Elena Bonilla de Lobo

More than a month has passed since new judges had been nominated in the corruption case against the former first lady Rosa Elena Bonilla de Lobo, but so far they failed to set a new trial date.¹¹⁵

CESPAD published an important piece of analysis on this case and the Pandora case. "In the resolution of the Pandora and Caja chica de la Dama cases, the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ) of Honduras made an analysis far from carrying out a serious and effective investigation in accordance

108 <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/nzl>

109 <https://proceso.hn/honduras-cae-11-puestos-en-indice-de-percepcion-de-transparencia/>

110 <https://confidencialhn.com/titular-de-transparencia-duda-que-honduras-este-en-nivel-muy-bajo-de-corrupcion/>

111 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/01/25/por-que-el-ministerio-publico-ignora-a-la-uferco/>

112 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/np/en-respaldo-de-la-uferco-y-del-trabajo-de-luis-javier-santos/>

113 <https://twitter.com/LuisSan16779987/status/1355386397910302722>

114 <https://confidencialhn.com/tribunal-de-sentencia-absuelve-imputados-en-caso-patuca-iii/>

115 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1438501-466/rosa-elena-lobo-honduras-juicio>

with the principles of due process, and the duty to issue decisions duly grounded, complete and consistent with the claims of the parties. Likewise, it used arguments that were not duly reasoned and, in the Pandora case, it violated the right to equality by granting unequal treatment to the accused, conclude two legal watchdogs presented today in Tegucigalpa. The documents prepared by the Center for the Study of Democracy (CESPAD), in collaboration with the Anti-Corruption Coalition (CAC), and the support of Lawyers Without Borders Canada (ASFC), also point out that the various appeals filed by UFECIC before the Judiciary, did not pave the way for rectification and access to justice, while the resolutions of the CSJ, lacked the proper judicial motivation. All this, as a whole, violated the guarantee of due process, by not respecting basic national and international standards."¹¹⁶

Asfura

"The Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ), declared in the last hours without place the petition presented by the Prosecutor's Office in the case involving the mayor of the capital, Nasry "Tito" Asfura. The Court of First Instance for the Deprivation of Property of Illicit Origin, did not admit the request filed by the State Prosecutor's Office, in relation to the deprivation of property of the mayor, Nasry "Tito" Asfura. According to the court's resolution, the admissibility requirements were not met, since it was raised in an incorrect manner, with erroneous grounds, that is to say, invoking equivalent assets as grounds."¹¹⁷

IHSS

The MP sent out a press release stating that they were still awaiting the courts to set a new date in the IHSS corruption case against Mario Roberto Zelaya Rojas and José Ramón Bertetty Osorio.¹¹⁸

State Security Forces

There were some changes in the hierarchies of the National Police Force this month.¹¹⁹

Four members of the police force were accused of various crimes, among them theft with violence, aggravated intimidation and illegal deprivation of liberty.¹²⁰ In another case, four police agents accused of various crimes were sent to pre-trial detention.¹²¹

Post-Electoral Human Rights Violations

The Convergence against Continuity and the Committee for the Freedom of Political Prisoners reminded us about the fate of the political prisoners who still face criminalization while impunity

¹¹⁶ <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/01/27/sentencias-de-los-casos-pandora-y-caja-chica-de-la-dama-justicia-o-impunidad/>

¹¹⁷ <https://confidencialhn.com/declaran-sin-lugar-peticion-presentada-por-fiscalia-en-caso-de-alcalde-capitalino/>

¹¹⁸ <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/171-enero2021/6883-mp-a-la-espera-que-se-senale-repeticion-de-juicio-en-el-que-hace-mas-de-tres-anos-se-habia-absuelto-a-mario-zelaya-y-jose-bertetty>

¹¹⁹ <https://confidencialhn.com/asume-nuevo-director-general-de-la-policia-nacional-de-honduras/>

¹²⁰ <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/169-diciembre2020/6836-detencion-judicial-a-cuatro-policias-implicados-en-varios-delitos>

¹²¹ <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/171-enero2021/6870-prision-preventiva-para-cuatro-policias-involucrados-en-varios-delitos-contr-un-ciudadano>

reigns for the human rights violations by the JOH regime during the post-electoral repression three years ago.^{122 123}

Assassinations

In April, four police agents will face trial for the murder of Rinel Argueta Oliva.¹²⁴ A member of the Military Police as well as a former member of the defunct DNIC were sent to pre-trial detention accused of murder.¹²⁵ On January 19, the Security Secretariat confirmed that four members of the police force were involved in the murder of Wilmer Rigoberto Posas Ríos the previous Saturday in Cofradía, Cortés.^{126 127}

Penitentiary System

Prison authorities reported that a member of the Military Police was murdered by an inmate in the Támara prison.¹²⁸ Later this month, an inmate was murdered in the same prison.¹²⁹ In Támara, there is also a women's prison and this month, human rights organizations denounced the systematic practice of torture in the facilities.¹³⁰

International Community

JOH had talked about it for more than a year, but this month he signed an agreement with the executive director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC), Ghada Waly, to have an office opened in Honduras.^{131 132} JOH presented it as an anti-corruption measure. Historically, he always agreed to such things when he felt under pressure, e.g. opening the OACNUDH office or agreeing to MACCIH, but once his position is firm again, he straight went on to undermine their work and in the case of the MACCIH, get rid of it again entirely. Now, with the regular snapshots of his drug trafficking links coming from the US, this may seem as a helpful diversion again.

US

Biden took office this month in the US. There were widespread calls on the incoming administration to thoroughly change US policy towards Central America.^{133 134} There were some

122 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/tres-anos-despues-del-fraude-electoral-los-presos-politicos-siguen-sujetos-al-proceso-penal-y-la-impunidad-estatal-se-fortalece/>

123 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/exigen-libertad-para-los-presos-politicos-y-que-se-cierren-los-procesos-penales/>

124 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/a-finales-de-abril-juicio-oral-y-publico-contra-cuatro-policias-acusados-de-homicidios/>

125 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/171-enero2021/6889-dictan-prision-preventiva-a-policia-militar-y-expolicia-en-santa-barbara>

126 <https://confidencialhn.com/detienen-a-cuatro-policias-activos-por-la-supuesta-muerte-de-joven-en-cofradia/>

127 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/sucesos/1436725-466/cuatro-polic%C3%ADas-participaron-en-asesinato-de-hondure%C3%B1o-en-cofrad%C3%ADa>

128 <https://www.laprensa.hn/sucesos/1436155-410/recluso-mata-militar-carcel-tamara-honduras-policia-nacional>

129 <https://hch.tv/2021/01/26/se-reporta-el-asesinato-de-un-privado-de-libertad-en-tamara/>

130 <https://criterio.hn/denuncian-tortura-a-privadas-de-libertad-en-centro-femenino-de-adaptacion-social/>

131 <https://proceso.hn/honduras-y-la-onu-oficializaran-manana-apertura-de-una-oficina-anticorrupcion/>

132 <https://tiempo.hn/gobierno-inaugura-oficina-contra-droga-delito/>

133 <https://www.americas.org/letter-to-president-elect-biden-on-central-america-policy/>

134 <https://criterio.hn/biden-enviara-iniciativa-al-congreso-para-abordar-corrupcion-y-violencia-en-honduras-guatemala-y-el-salvador/>

hopeful signs, but also some very worrisome ones. The Honduras Solidarity Network denounced that "Biden's nomination for Secretary of Defence, General Lloyd Austin, is on board of directors of Nucor Corporation, US steel company behind Honduran company using paramilitares to "secure" their operations & hold Guapinol water defenders in prison".¹³⁵ ¹³⁶ InSight Crime named migration, corruption and drug trafficking as priorities for Biden. And regarding the latest, JOH was mentioned prominently. "The Biden administration enters with Hernández as a cautionary tale. It will need to make sure that the DEA and officials involved in bilateral relations are not operating in "parallel universes," Olson said. Isolating Hernández would also make a good starting point to show the administration's seriousness on anti-corruption efforts in the region, he said. A strong ambassador is crucial, he said. "It's almost easy for them," Olson said, "because he is so damaged by these cases.""¹³⁷ Latin America Daily Briefing published a great overview regarding Biden's planned immigration reform.¹³⁸ LAWG commented: "Will the \$4 billion aid package for Central America included in the immigration bill help solve why people are forced to flee their homes in Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador?" asked LAWG co-director Lisa Haugaard. "That depends what's in the package and whether it is paired with strong diplomacy against the massive corruption, human rights abuses, and authoritarian trends we are seeing in these countries. Pouring aid into corrupt, predatory governments and abusive security forces is not the answer. Nor is the answer just promoting private investment. Private and multilateral bank investments need strict safeguards in countries like Honduras and Guatemala where the needs of indigenous, Afro-descendant and poor communities are routinely ignored and their demands met with threats and violence."¹³⁹

El Faro spoke with Juan González, the National Security Council Senior Director for the Western Hemisphere and, therefore, lead advisor to Biden's Latin American policy. In it, González repeated the myth of an effective Attorney General in Honduras.¹⁴⁰

EU

EU ambassador Jaume Segura met with Attorney General Óscar Chinchilla who this month had faced a lot of criticism for the ongoing lack of results in corruption cases but also for shielding the president from drug trafficking investigations.¹⁴¹

Drug Trafficking

Cespad published an article on drug trafficking and Geovanny Fuentes, InSight Crime on on drug trafficking and Fredy Nájera.¹⁴² A cousin of the Valle Valle brothers was condemned to over seven

135 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1351725397684076546>

136 <https://www.univision.com/univision-news/latin-america/the-hidden-connection-between-a-us-steel-company-and-the-controversial-los-pinares-mine-in-honduras>

137 <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/biden-security-central-america/>

138 <https://latinamericadailybriefing.blogspot.com/2021/01/biden-proposes-sweeping-immigration.html>

139 <https://www.lawg.org/press-release-lawg-encouraged-by-president-bidens-day-1-actions-yet-urges-serious-transformation-to-u-s-immigration-system-and-u-s-policy-towards-latin-america-and-the-caribbean/>

140 <https://elfaro.net/es/202101/internacionales/25187/%E2%80%9CEI-1-%C3%ADder-que-no-est%C3%A9-listo-para-combatir-la-corrupci%C3%B3n-no-ser%C3%A1-un-aliado-para-Estados-Unidos%E2%80%99D.htm>

141 <https://twitter.com/UEenHonduras/status/1351661926410055682>

142 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/01/13/geovanny-fuentes-sus-numerosas-muertes-y-conexiones-con-altos-oficiales-policiales-y-del-ejercito-hondureno/>

months in prison for money laundering.¹⁴³ A Liberal mayoral candidate was arrested for drug trafficking.¹⁴⁴ The US Embassy announced that they would desist from the extradition request for Victor Lorenzo Flores Pineda, linked to the case of the Valle brothers.¹⁴⁵ Convicted drug trafficker and son of former president Pepe Lobo, Fabio Lobo, asked for a "compassionate release".¹⁴⁶ And then, there is also the story of the former head of police Ricardo Ramírez del Cid who faces an arrest warrant. He denounced that they, i.e. the JOH regime, is trying to silence him because he made public acts of corruption committed by them.¹⁴⁷

On January 17, ConfidencialHN reported: "Mauricio Hernandez Pineda, cousin of President Juan Orlando Hernandez, is negotiating with the U.S. justice system to plead guilty to large-scale drug trafficking. In a letter addressed today to Judge Kevin Castel, Howard Leader, the attorney in charge of Mauricio Hernandez Pineda's case, told the Court that the defense and the prosecution are currently in negotiations to define the agreements and conditions for Hernandez Pineda to plead guilty."¹⁴⁸ The Pro Honduras Network later published another update. "Recent documents obtained by Pro Honduras Network in the case of former police officer Juan Manuel Avila Meza, who was accused of drug trafficking and those involving Ruben Santos, another former police officer, as part of the criminal structure of the Cachiros in the distribution of cocaine to the United States, his defense lawyer Linda George presented a declassified document as documentary evidence in defense of Avila Meza which are excerpts from the report of Mario Mejia Vargas dated June 11, 2019, where Mauricio Hernandez confirms that Juan Orlando Hernandez and Tony Hernandez are his cousins, in the report Hernandez Pineda emphasizes that he had contact with the Hernandez Clan to obtain political power in the department of Copan and especially the department of Lempira."¹⁴⁹

JOH

Thanks to a newly released US court document, JOH's drug trafficking links once again made international headlines this month.¹⁵⁰ ¹⁵¹ The document reiterate that he received millions of dollars in bribes, it has a alleged statement from JOH that he planned to shove drugs "right up the noses of the gringos"¹⁵², it also highlights again the role of the Armed Forces in protecting drug traffickers,¹⁵³ and it undermines another poster child of the US, Honduran Attorney General Óscar Chinchilla, who allegedly also protected the drug trafficking activities of Tony Hernández and other JOH associates. Even corporate media outlets in Honduras could not ignore this, while also publishing

143 <https://criterio.hn/diputados-opositores-piden-juicio-politico-contra-presidente-de-honduras-por-actividades-de-narcotrafico/>

144 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/sucesos/1435855-466/con-droga-capturan-a-precandidato-a-alcaldedel-movimiento-de-luis-zelaya>

145 <https://confidencialhn.com/estados-unidos-cancela-peticion-de-extradicion-para-victor-lorenzo-flores-pineda>

146 <https://tiempo.hn/fabio-lobo-solicita-liberacion-compasiva-eeuu-covid-19/>

147 <https://confidencialhn.com/giran-orden-de-captura-contra-ex-director-de-la-policia-que-denuncio-actos-de-corrupcion/>

148 <https://confidencialhn.com/primode-joh-negocia-con-fiscalia-de-ee-uu-para-declararse-culpable-de-narcotrafico/>

149 <https://prohondurasnetwork.com/2021/01/30/segun-documentos-mauricio-hernandez-pineda-acepta-ser-primode-juan-orlando-hernandez/>

150 <https://www.univision.com/univision-news/latin-america/honduran-president-sought-access-to-cocaine-lab-court-documents>

151 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/09/honduras-president-bribes-drug-traffickers-juan-orlando-hernandez>

152 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1434689-466/fiscalia-nueva-york-joh-queria-meter-droga-narices-gringos>

153 <https://apnews.com/article/noticias-473f53c9b241e10f0ee8c262bd0d79cd>

statements of JOH denying all and everything.¹⁵⁴ The next day, he even claimed that drug transit through Honduras was reduced by 83% in the last years.¹⁵⁵

But this did not convince and the coverage, nationally and internationally, continued. InSight Crime wrote: "With new accusations that Honduras President Juan Orlando Hernández directly brokered deals to protect traffickers in exchange for drug money, the president himself has emerged as a lynchpin in Honduras' descent into a narco-state."¹⁵⁶ In Honduras, Víctor Meza shared an important observation: "Many will say that this is nothing new, that we already knew it and that it is of no greater importance. They are wrong. It is true that many things are already public knowledge and are aired in detail in the gatherings of friends or in the intimacy of the bedrooms. But there are still many others that hide names and secrets, actions and excesses. And there, as they say, the devil is hidden in the details. The novelty of the new revelations leaked from the judicial corridors of New York is not only their official character but also the magnitude and dimension of their meaning. State prosecutors, that is, operators of the American judicial system, have presented official documents that involve our tenant of the Presidential House in criminal actions within the sinister plot of organized crime in general and drug trafficking in particular. Nothing less."¹⁵⁷

The newest revelations were once again accompanied by questions regarding a future trial of JOH in the US.¹⁵⁸ Lawyer Raúl Pineda Alvarado presented the possibility that JOH may even promote being accused in Honduras to avoid an eventual extradition to the US.¹⁵⁹ Social movements and organizations called on the MP to investigate JOH.¹⁶⁰ But at the same time, they put little faith in it. "Criminal lawyer Omar Menjívar regretted on Wednesday that nothing happened in Honduras in response to the accusations made by the New York prosecutor's office against Chief Executive Juan Orlando Hernández. Menjívar indicated that, although these conjectures are not new "what does cause indignation is to know that the Public Ministry (MP), is colluded with all this criminal mafia that has taken over the State."¹⁶¹ As a consequence, there were also calls to get rid of Attorney General Óscar Chinchilla.^{162 163}

On January 14, two Libre and a Pinu congressman presented an official call to impeach JOH to Congress.¹⁶⁴ CESPAD, meanwhile, published a new analysis on a possible trial of JOH in the US.¹⁶⁵ In Honduras, the impeachment was dead on arrival and was rejected by the Nationalist controlled Congress.¹⁶⁶

154 <https://proceso.hn/fiscales-del-distrito-sur-dicen-que-el-presidente-hondureno-protegio-y-coordino-acciones-con-narcos-casa-presidencial-los-desmiente/>

155 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1434772-410/reporte-departamento-estado-honduras-reduccion-transito-droga-seis-a%C3%B1os-eua>

156 <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/honduras-president-allegations-narco-state/>

157 <https://criterio.hn/entre-el-asombro-y-el-desencanto/>

158 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/01/12/presidente-de-honduras-a-las-puertas-de-una-acusacion-formal-en-new-york/>

159 <https://radioprogresohn.net/instante/joh-podria-promover-ser-acusado-en-honduras-raul-pineda/>

160 <https://confidencialhn.com/exigen-al-ministerio-publico-inicie-investigacion-contra-joh-en-base-a-informacion-de-fiscales-extranjeros/>

161 <https://confidencialhn.com/fiscalia-hondurena-no-actua-contra-joh-porque-esta-coludido-con-esa-mafia-criminal-subraya-penalista/>

162 <https://criterio.hn/fiscal-general-deberia-renunciar-por-incapaz-y-no-proceder-contra-funcionarios-implicados-en-narcotrafico/>

163 <https://radioprogresohn.net/np/un-fiscal-5-estrellas-para-el-narcotrafico/>

164 <https://criterio.hn/diputados-opositores-piden-juicio-politico-contra-presidente-de-honduras-por-actividades-de-narcotrafico/>

165 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/01/21/fiscalia-de-nueva-york-con-un-claro-objetivo-juan-orlando-herandez/>

166 <https://criterio.hn/congreso-nacional-inaugura-cuarta-legislatura-negando-juicio-politico-contra-juan-herandez/>

On January 21, the Pro Honduras Network reported that the sentencing of JOH's brother Tony Hernández would be postponed once again.¹⁶⁷ "Defense of Juan Antonio Hernández requests that the sentencing hearing be held until the Court resumes its normal activities."¹⁶⁸ Later it was made public that the new date was set to March 23.¹⁶⁹

At the end of the month, JOH gave an interview to AFP. He talked about his brother's situation, a convicted drug trafficker awaiting his sentence.¹⁷⁰ JOH claimed that the case would be revisited.¹⁷¹ JOH also commented on what he intends to do once his presidency ends in January 2022 - leave public life and write his memoirs.¹⁷²

Varia

JOH

Radio Progreso published an important short article on where to go from here, i.e. the situation in Honduras and the newest revelations coming from the US. "In the spirit of seeking consensus, we launch the first ones to be debated. In order to confront the crisis of the economic model, it is urgent to: 1) promote a fiscal pact, which revises the payment of income tax to fortunes, tax exemptions and tax evasion; 2) reach a consensus on labor, employment generation, labor laws and salaries; 3) review the mining and hydroelectric concessions granted in the last decade; 4) review Coalianza concessions and management of trusts.

With regard to the institutional collapse, it is urgent to work on these five consensuses: 1) establish a new system of transparency in public management, to confront the high levels of corruption; 2) review the mechanisms for second degree elections such as magistrates and general prosecutors and appoint new authorities; 3) review the country's budgetary priorities; 4) a new proposal for the health and education system; 5) electoral reforms that facilitate participation and transparency in the process.

In environmental matters, at least four consensuses should be prioritized: 1) develop a proposal for the reconstruction of embankments and dredging of the Chamelecón, Ulúa, Aguán rivers and their relief channels; 2) appoint a commission to resolve land conflicts in Aguán, Zacate grande and other regions of the country; 3) formulate a proposal to reactivate the country's agricultural system; 4) propose the protection of the country's rivers and aquifers. Here is a proposal for minimum consensus, all sectors can work their own; but the most urgent consensus, and condition, is to throw Juan Orlando and his henchmen out of the Presidential House, as the key to advancing the other consensuses."¹⁷³

167 <https://prohondurasnetwork.com/2021/01/21/sentencia-de-tony-herandez-sera-reprogramada-nuevamente-debido-a-retraso-en-la-presentacion-de-documentos-previo-a-la-audiencia/>

168 <https://prohondurasnetwork.com/2021/01/25/defensa-de-juan-antonio-herandez-solicita-que-la-audiencia-de-sentencia-se-lleve-a-cabo-hasta-que-la-corte-retome-sus-actividades-normales/>

169 <https://criterio.hn/tony-herandez-a-las-puertas-de-recibir-una-condena-no-menor-a-40-anos-de-carcel/>

170 <https://www.swissinfo.ch/spa/afp/presidente-de-honduras-espera-que-caso-contra-su-hermano-en-eeuu-vaya-a-segunda-instancia/46331990>

171 <https://tiempo.hn/joh-afp-juicio-tony-herandez-segunda-instancia/>

172 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1439325-466/a-que-se-dedicara-juan-orlando-herandez-termine-mandato>

173 <https://radioprogreso.hn/net/np/propuesta-de-consensos-minimos/>

This month was also the third anniversary of the illegal inauguration of JOH after the electoral fraud and post-electoral violence at the end of 2017 and beginning of 2018.¹⁷⁴ ContraCorriente fact-checked the recently presented report by JOH on his presidency in 2020.¹⁷⁵

Hurricanes Eta and Iota

The UN Office on humanitarian affairs communicated about the post-hurricanes situation in Honduras. "Two months after the devastating impact of Tropical Storm Eta and Hurricane Iota in Honduras, many people are still in shelters and parts of the country are still reeling from waters and mud brought about by the floods. With needs continuing to mount, the UN and partners have issued an addendum to the Flash Appeal that now sets the financing requirements at US\$90 million to help 1.4 million particularly vulnerable people."¹⁷⁶ UNICEF also warned that the two hurricanes Eta and Iota put 1.5 million Central American children at risk of serious illness due to water contamination.¹⁷⁷ ContraCorriente also reported on the ongoing suffering in Honduras post-hurricanes.¹⁷⁸

Violence

Public display of violent murders, i.e. mutilated bodies wrapped in plastic, have made headlines in the first days of 2021. "Carlos Leiva, a human rights defender, said the actions could be a practice called "the Chinese box" or known in Honduras as a smoke screen to divert public attention from President Juan Orlando Hernandez's recent involvement in drug trafficking by the New York prosecutor's office. It could also be a manipulation technique where a problem is created in order to seek a solution, and in that case it would be from the security issue (...) Another concern for human rights organizations is that this type of situation may be used to generate terror in the population and the electoral context is conducive to doing so."¹⁷⁹

Elections

Víctor Meza, who conducted a study on vote buying in the 2013 elections, expressed fears that the situation would be even worse this time around.¹⁸⁰ Fears grew even further, when one of the three companies that were disputing the provision of the election results transmission service withdrew in the last hours under the argument that the short time frame would not allow for quality work.¹⁸¹ "The withdrawal of Minsait Indra only confirms what several sectors have been indicating, that there are no conditions for a process whether primary or general and this is because the rules of the game

174 <https://criterio.hn/a-tres-anos-de-inconstitucional-y-fraudulenta-narcodictadura/>

175 <https://contracorriente.red/2021/01/26/informes-de-presidentes-de-los-poderes-del-estado-entre-la-demagogia-y-la-victimizacion/>

176 <https://www.unocha.org/story/humanitarians-target-14-million-vulnerable-people-storm-weary-honduras>

177 <https://www.unicef.org/lac/comunicados-prensa/huracanes-consecutivos-en-centroamerica-dejaron-1.5-millones-de-ninos-en-riesgo-de-enfermedades-graves>

178 <https://contracorriente.red/2021/01/30/el-bulevar-de-los-olvidados/>

179 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/contexto/item/3053-quien-opera-la-violencia-escuadrones-de-la-muerte-podrian-estar-detras-de-crmenes>

180 <https://criterio.hn/clientelismo-electoral/>

181 <https://criterio.hn/compania-proveedora-del-cne-considera-que-no-hay-garantia-de-calidad-para-elecciones-internas/>

remain the same as those of the coup d'état and the elections of 2010, 2013 and 2017."¹⁸² And still in the first week of January, there was also a scandal at the National Persons Registry (RNP) highlighting possible acts of bribery.¹⁸³ The RNP is responsible for the electoral census and later the same month, they claimed to have corrected the errors in the census (see last month).¹⁸⁴

Another problem regarding the elections has to do with the so-called Clean Politics Act. Luis Zelaya, president of the Liberal Party, denounced that some proposed reforms to the law are due to backroom dealings between the National Party and Yani Rosenthal, a pre-candidate for the Liberal Party itself.¹⁸⁵ "The National Congress reformed the Clean Politics Act and now, those candidates that due to illegal activity are unable to have bank accounts, will be able to designate third parties for the collection of money from their political campaigns."¹⁸⁶ CESPAD published an analysis on the reform. It concludes: "The basic issue is that in Honduras, as in several Latin American countries, there is no tradition in the prosecution of electoral crime. There is no history of investigating electoral crime in the country, although there have been hundreds of complaints. In some cases, for illicit association, they have been prosecuted, but as mentioned, outside the country and by initiative and interest of the US justice system. In the Honduran context, the mandate to oversee the financing of politics should be uncomfortable for the established political power, which is currently agglutinated in the governing party. In this sense, the main state entity created to oversee the financing of politics runs the risk of becoming a launderer of electoral processes with very serious transparency problems, which basically reflects one of the many weaknesses of the democratization process in the country."¹⁸⁷

Padre Melo commented on the situation just weeks before the start of the primaries. "'This Political Pact of Impunity is the instrument that leads the current electoral process," he said, explaining that this pact has led to the definition of the two Honduras. The first is a deep humanitarian crisis (...) This is not a temporary crisis, but a structural or fundamental one, which leads to the reality of the coming years. (...) The other Honduras is the one that leads the political electoral process, "which has led us to believe that all problems are solved at the polls, therefore, whoever is outside the electoral process is not Honduran and is a threat, so everyone to enlist, to seek elected office or support candidates," he said explaining that the two Honduras are connected by a bridge, whose keys to open the doors are held by the power group led by Juan Orlando Hernandez, so that the political pact of impunity has control of these two Honduras."¹⁸⁸ El Libertador additionally reported on the problematic role of the Armed Forces in the electoral process.¹⁸⁹

182 <https://criterio.hn/salida-de-empresa-espanola-confirma-falta-de-condiciones-para-elecciones-justas-en-el-pais/>

183 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1433604-466/coimas-mp-oscar-rivera-libre-doris-identificate-marvin-mirra>

184 <https://confidencialhn.com/mp-entrega-este-viernes-datos-de-hondurenos-correctos-al-cne/>

185 <https://elpulso.hn/?p=51698>

186 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2562-honduras-congreso-ratifica-dinero-ilicito-para-candidatos>

187 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/01/21/analisis-el-asunto-de-fondo-de-la-reforma-a-la-ley-de-politica-limpia/>

188 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/pt/joh-consolida-pacto-politico-de-impunidad-senala-padre-melo/>

189 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2569-honduras-politica-de-joh-ultimo-minuto-no-garantiza-elecciones>

The discussion about the Electoral Law gained further attention when on January 11. Congress' Nationalist Secretary Tomás Zambrano claimed that the law would be approved in the next days.¹⁹⁰ Opposition politicians from different parties reacted by denouncing that the purpose of the law was to prevent the formation of party alliances and to promote the reelection of President Juan Orlando Hernandez.¹⁹¹ ¹⁹² Libre further denounced the attempt by the National Party to have representatives of all 14 parties present at the ballot tables where votes are counted. Small parties have in the past sold off their credentials to the National Party giving them control over the ballot tables.¹⁹³

On January 17, CESPAD published a helpful overview of the discussions regarding the electoral reforms up to that point.¹⁹⁴ Shortly afterwards, Libre congressman Ramón Soto said the following about the situation: "The electoral law was consensual, signed, by the opinion commission, and when it was going to be approved, there was a group, because it must be said, within the National Party that they are called the "brainless, headless, heartless, who in the end opposed and turned everything upside down."¹⁹⁵ At the same time, Nationalist president of Congress Oscar Oliva blamed the opposition.¹⁹⁶ Criterio, meanwhile, denounced that everything was being done that the corrupt can continue to run Honduras, while those fighting against it, such as María Luisa Borjas, are being criminalized and with this stopped to run for office.¹⁹⁷

On January 23, campaigning officially started for the March primary elections.¹⁹⁸ ¹⁹⁹ Biosecurity protocols were clearly lacking.²⁰⁰

By the end of the month, the National Electoral Council (CNE) still did not know how the results of the primary elections on March 14 would be transmitted.²⁰¹ "The ghost of electoral fraud could come to light in the primary elections of March 14. So far everything points to the fact that the process for the contracting of the company that will be in charge of the Transmission of Preliminary Electoral Results (TREP) will be declared deserted. 47 days before the electoral process, the situation is worrisome because the Honduran people still do not know which company will be in charge of the transmission of the results of the primary elections".²⁰²

Radio Progreso spoke with sociologist Eugenio Sosa about the coming electoral process and the role of the primaries. ""These elections are in the hands of the political parties, here is going to be tested what is the internal democratic quality of the political parties because they permanently

190 <https://confidencialhn.com/nueva-ley-electoral-tiene-98-del-consenso-partidario-sera-aprobada-el-jueves/>

191 <https://confidencialhn.com/oposicion-politica-afirma-que-nueva-ley-electoral-impulsa-reeleccion-de-joh/>

192 <https://criterio.hn/hay-politicos-que-están-negociando-la-continuidad-de-juan-herandez-en-el-poder-denuncia-dirigente-liberal/>

193 <https://tiempo.hn/partidos-pequenos-mer-jari-dixon/>

194 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/01/17/analisis-desafios-2021-desbloquear-las-reformas-legales-e-institucionales-en-materia-electoral/>

195 <https://confidencialhn.com/senalan-que-grupo-de-nacionalistas-denominados-los-sin-cerebro-corazon-sin-cabeza-boicotean-aprobacion-de-ley-electoral/>

196 <https://proceso.hn/oliva-revela-que-la-oposicion-pidio-aprobar-nueva-ley-electoral-hasta-despues-de-elecciones-internas/>

197 <https://criterio.hn/justicia-de-honduras-inhabilita-a-maria-luisa-borjas-y-libera-a-corruptos-para-que-sigan-en-el-poder/>

198 <https://criterio.hn/con-violaciones-previas-arranca-oficialmente-campana-electoral-en-honduras/>

199 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/fotogalerias/1437723-468/muros-puentes-carreteras-inicia-propaganda-movimientos-politicos>

200 <https://proceso.hn/sin-protocolos-de-bioseguridad-arranca-oficialmente-propaganda-politica-en-honduras/>

201 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1438767-466/cne-maletas-papeletas-elecciones-honduras-primarias>

202 <https://criterio.hn/licitacion-del-trep-prueba-de-fuego-del-cne/>

demand national electoral democracy but when they go inward, their democratic quality, their internal democracy and their electoral democracy of competition is very low."²⁰³

Migration

Human Rights Watch published a report on the US 'Remain in Mexico' Program. "Under the "Remain in Mexico" program, people seeking asylum have to wait in Mexico and return periodically to the United States for immigration court hearings. Formally known as the "Migration Protection Protocols" (MPP), the program is anything but protective: it has sent people to some of Mexico's most dangerous cities and needlessly and foreseeably exposed them to considerable risk of serious harm. People interviewed for this report, including children, described rape or attempted rape and other sexual assault, abduction for ransom, extortion, armed robbery, and other crimes committed against them. In many cases, their attackers targeted them as they arrived in Mexico after their initial placement in the MPP or on their way back from court hearings, or as they left the migrant shelters where they stayed. In some cases, Mexican immigration officers or police committed these crimes."²⁰⁴

4797 Honduran children were deported in 2020.²⁰⁵ On January 10, another 307 Hondurans were deported from Mexico and the US to Honduras.²⁰⁶

A US Senate report highlighted this month the problems with the controversial third safe country agreements between the US and El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala.^{207 208} At the same time, the UN and IACHR urged an immediate adoption of the Law to Protect Internally Displaced People in Honduras.^{209 210}

Caravan

The first month of 2021, the first migrant caravan. They took off from San Pedro Sula on January 14.²¹¹ Guatemala immediately announced that they would not let anyone in without being registered which includes a negative corona test.²¹² They also decreed a so-called State of Prevention.²¹³ But already in Honduras, the situation looked grim. "In response to the refugee caravan, police check points are set up in the same department where caravan is gathering. Apparently movement within Honduran borders is also prohibited. US Embassy has been threatening action against caravan all week. This is the response".²¹⁴

203 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/portada/elecciones-primarias-pondran-a-prueba-calidad-democratica-de-los-partidos-politicos-en-honduras/>

204 <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/01/06/im-drowning/children-and-families-sent-harm-us-remain-mexico-program>

205 <https://tiempo.hn/ninos-retornados-a-honduras-2020/>

206 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1434966-410/estados-unidos-mexico-deportan-hondure%C3%B1os-indocumentados>

207 https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the-americas/asylum-migrants-trump-guatemala/2021/01/15/aeae4b84-56bc-11eb-a08b-f1381ef3d207_story.html

208 <https://criterio.hn/tercer-pais-seguro-violata-derechos-humanos-de-los-migrantes/>

209 https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/media_center/preleases/2021/014.asp

210 <https://www.ohchr.org/SP/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26694&LangID=S>

211 <https://criterio.hn/sale-primera-caravana-del-2021-de-honduras-rumba-a-estados-unidos/>

212 <https://elpulso.hn/?p=51906>

213 <https://confidencial.hn.com/guatemala-decreta-estado-de-prevencion-ante-ilegala-de-migrantes-hondurenos/>

214 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1349582200925167617>

The caravan is most likely the biggest one since the pandemic hit Honduras last year. Initial estimates were around 300-4000, but later went up to 9000.²¹⁵ And they did not let themselves be stopped. First, they successfully pushed through police barricades in Honduras and then later were able to enter Guatemala.²¹⁶ The Guatemalan government officially wrote to the JOH regime asking it "to contain the massive departure of its inhabitants".²¹⁷ A day later, Guatemala's security forces violently repressed the participants of the caravan. "On Radio Progreso's Facebook Live broadcast, you can see people on the ground injured and being captured by the army."²¹⁸ The Human Rights Ombudsman of Guatemala, Jordán Rodas, expressed outrage about the events²¹⁹ while the US embassy thanked Guatemala for its "efforts".^{220 221} As a consequence, the violent repression continued the next day.²²²

The verbal battle between the two countries also continued. Guatemala blaming Honduras for not holding back its migrants, Honduras denouncing the violence against its people.²²³ On January 23, ContraCorriente reported on the deported migrants "back in the Honduran mess".²²⁴ Shortly afterwards, Unicef warned about the situation of some 100 children who had participated in the caravan. "Some of the minors are injured, extremely tired or with psychological trauma".²²⁵

With the migrant caravans back in the headlines, Radio Progreso published an important article on their significance. "The phenomenon of the caravans is the desperate expression of a population that can no longer bear its situation of anguish and uncertainty, and that in these times has reached its extremes of hunger and unemployment with the pandemic, the passage of hurricanes Eta and Iota, plus the uncontrolled corruption of the core that is controlled by the State. All this is a pressure cooker in a country where the government has abandoned social public policies, and has replaced them with programs of the purest welfare populism, which in the end shows contempt for the humble people." MADJ added: "The caravans are the result of violence, impoverishment and inequality caused by military interventions, the militarization of society, organized crime and corruption and impunity on the part of the government, the National and Liberal Party, international cooperation and the military forces."²²⁶

And Light at the End of a Month

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215 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/minisitios/hondurenosenelmundo/1436210-471/caravana-migrante-honduras-guatemala-2021-frontera-biden>

216 <https://proceso.hn/caravana-de-migrantes-rompe-cercos-policiales-hondurenos-y-cruza-a-guatemala/>

217 <https://proceso.hn/guatemala-le-pide-a-honduras-que-detenga-la-salida-masiva-de-su-poblacion/>

218 <https://radioprogressohn.net/instante/reprimen-caravana-de-migrantes-hondurenos-en-chiquimula-guatemala/>

219 <https://radioprogressohn.net/instante/procurador-de-derechos-humanos-en-guatemala-condena-represion-contra-migrantes-hondurenos/>

220 <https://twitter.com/usembassyhn/status/1350873733272109058>

221 <https://twitter.com/usembassyguate/status/1350958685288345613>

222 <https://radioprogressohn.net/aplicacion-movil/nueva-represion-contra-migrantes-en-guatemala/>

223 <https://tiempo.hn/honduras-guatemala-en-pugna-historica-caravana/>

224 <https://contracorriente.red/2021/01/23/de-regreso-de-la-caravana-con-los-suenos-golpeados/>

225 <https://elpulso.hn/?p=52286>

226 <https://madi.org/index.php/2021/01/19/guerra-contra-quienes/>

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