

# *Another Month in Honduras...*

## Human Rights Monitor – February 2021

Honduras once again shocked the world with the murder of nursing student Keyla Martinez in police custody. But no widespread protests, no international media coverage and not even tweets by US Senators were able to get just one police officer charged. But five university students faced trial for participating in a protest demanding justice for Keyla. Maybe this, maybe the drug trafficking accusations against JOH, maybe the ongoing impunity for the post-electoral murders by state security forces in 2017 finally caught up with the US Senate as eight Senators presented the Honduras Human Rights and Anti-Corruption Act of 2021 this month which reinvigorated calls for JOH's resignation. 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

On February 2, Health authorities declared a red alert in eight departments of the country, due to the increase of dengue cases.<sup>1</sup> By February 30, 1250 dengue cases had been documented already this year in Honduras.<sup>2</sup>

February began with 148'951 COVID-19 cases and 3614 confirmed deaths.<sup>3</sup> "The president of the Medical Association of Honduras (CMH), Suyapa Figueroa, has reported that the National Risk Management System (Sinager) has stopped applying tests to find positive cases of Covid-19 and that in this context the figures of the virus reported by the Government are far from reality. In an interview with EL LIBERTADOR, Figueroa said that for several weeks now the tests have been discontinued and that now the procedure is only being carried out in triage centers. "Active search was stopped to confirm cases through PCR tests. So that figure is not real," he stressed."<sup>4</sup> But also the reported number of death is sadly too low. "In statements to Radio Progreso, the Secretary of the National Association of Funeral Homes of Honduras, Jesus Moran, said that Honduras closed the month of January with 1,203 deaths. He also pointed out that the year 2020 closed with 7,620 deaths."<sup>5</sup>

By mid-February, the director of the Pan American Health Organization, Carissa Etienne, stated that in all North and Central American countries Covid-19 cases are showing reductions, with the exception of Honduras.<sup>6</sup> At the end of the month, there were 170'304 COVID-19 cases and 4151 confirmed deaths.<sup>7</sup> But as always, this number is sadly much too low. According to the Funeral Homes Association, 9625 people have so far died to COVID-19.<sup>8</sup>

## State Reaction

The CNA published a new report on the inefficient management of the Honduran government with funds for the treatment of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>9 10</sup>

## Health Sector

February began with the death of yet another two nurses to COVID-19, Rosa Delia Mejía and Mirna Figueroa.<sup>11</sup> The next day, two doctors died, Marlene Starkman<sup>12</sup> and Adalid Gálvez.<sup>13</sup> These

1 <https://confidencialhn.com/salud-emite-alerta-roja-en-ocho-departamentos-por-aumento-de-dengue-en-honduras/>

2 <https://proceso.hn/honduras-reporta-mil-250-casos-de-dengue-en-primeros-54-dias-del-ano/>

3 <https://proceso.hn/honduras-suma-mil-108-contagios-y-otras-cuatro-muertes-por-coronavirus/>

4 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2634-honduras-urgente-gobierno-dejo-de-hacer-busqueda-activa-de-covid-colegio-medico>

5 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/aplicacion-movil/en-enero-fueron-mil-203-fallecidos-por-covid-19-asociacion-de-funerarias/>

6 <https://criterio.hn/casos-de-covid-19-bajan-en-centroamerica-pero-siguen-aumentando-en-honduras/>

7 <https://proceso.hn/honduras-supera-los-170-mil-contagios-y-llega-a-4-mil-151-decesos-por-covid-19/>

8 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/instante/a-casi-un-ano-de-la-pandemia-honduras-registra-mas-de-9-mil-muertes-segun-duenos-de-funerarias/>

9 <https://twitter.com/cnahonduras/status/1361373020057722881>

10 <https://criterio.hn/investigacion-del-cna-revela-ineficiente-gestion-de-honduras-con-los-fondos-covid-19/>

11 <https://proceso.hn/dos-enfermeras-fallecen-por-covid-19-en-atlantida-y-yoro/>

12 <https://tiempo.hn/muere-covid-19-doctora-marlene-henriquez-starkman/>

13 <https://hch.tv/2021/02/02/muere-anestesiologo-adalid-galvez-por-covid-19/>

two days set the stage for another tragic month for the Honduran health workers. In the first week of February, 7 doctors<sup>14 15 16 17</sup> and 3 nurses died to COVID-19<sup>18</sup>. By the same time, over 100 health workers had died during the pandemic to COVID-19.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, it is no surprise that 30 IHSS doctors resigned fearing for their lives.<sup>20</sup> And in the coming days, health workers protested in various parts of the country.<sup>21 22 23 24</sup> In one case, they joined the teachers and together demanded the resignation of both the Minister of Health and of Education.<sup>25</sup>

In the remainder of the month, as protests continued<sup>26 27</sup>, six more doctors<sup>28 29 30 31 32 33</sup> and four more nurses<sup>34 35 36 37</sup> died to COVID-19. Among the doctors was the 27-year old Yasser Amir Cuéllar Fuentes. This led to an uproar. Especially because he was not allowed to be treated at the IHSS because he was not insured, even though he was doing his social service as a doctor.<sup>38 39</sup> The Honduran Medical Association (CMH) demanded a suspension of the social service.<sup>40</sup>

On February 9, "[t]he president of the National Association of Nurses and Auxiliary Nurses of Honduras (ANEEAH), Josué Orellana, revealed this Tuesday that at least 166 nursing centers throughout the country have had to close due to lack of personnel. "This situation has us worried because the closure of the centers has occurred in the interior of the country, where these people have to go to other communities to obtain medical services".<sup>41</sup> "The triage coordinator at the mobile hospital in the municipality of Villanueva, in northern Honduras, Ezer Castellanos, presented his irrevocable resignation due to the lack of government response to the health crisis generated by the Covid-19 pandemic."<sup>42</sup> Radio Progreso spoke with doctor Ligia Ramos. "We are living difficult

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- 14 <https://tiempo.hn/doctor-candido-mejia-hondurenos-lamentan-muerte/>
  - 15 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1440393-466/medicos-enfermera-covid-honduras-pandemia-muertos>
  - 16 <https://confidencialhn.com/fallece-doctora-karen-tabora-por-covid-19-en-la-capital/>
  - 17 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1441110-466/muere-doctora-wendy-nunez-de-centeno-covid>
  - 18 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1440393-466/medicos-enfermera-covid-honduras-pandemia-muertos>
  - 19 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2650-honduras-71-medicos-y-37-enfermeras-suman-los-martires-del-covid-19>
  - 20 <https://www.laprensa.hn/sanpedro/1440850-410/por-temor-al-covid-30-medicos-del-ihss-tramitan-su-retiro-honduras>
  - 21 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/instante/el-lunes-se-van-a-paro-los-medicos-en-el-progreso-yoro/>
  - 22 <https://www.radiohrn.hn/honduras-plataforma-de-salud-y-educacion-piden-cabeza-de-ministros-alba-consuelo-flores-y-arnaldo-bueso>
  - 23 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1440939-466/medicos-exigen-implementos-de-bioseguridad-vacunas-y-mejoras-laborales-frente-al-covid-19>
  - 24 <https://contracorriente.red/2021/02/06/en-esta-guerra-estamos-solos-y-la-estamos-perdiendo-habla-el-personal-en-primer-a-linea/>
  - 25 <https://www.radiohrn.hn/honduras-plataforma-de-salud-y-educacion-piden-cabeza-de-ministros-alba-consuelo-flores-y-arnaldo-bueso>
  - 26 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/aplicacion-movil/siguen-las-protestas-de-los-medicos-en-el-norte-del-pais/>
  - 27 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/aplicacion-movil/protestan-trabajadores-de-la-salud-del-hospital-mario-catarino-rivas/>
  - 28 <https://tiempo.hn/sps-covid19-muere-doctor-ciriaco-villalvir/>
  - 29 <https://proceso.hn/muere-el-medico-en-servicio-social-yasser-cuellar-por-covid/>
  - 30 <https://proceso.hn/muere-el-doctor-angel-sabillon-por-covid-19-y-suman-75-los-decesos-en-el-gremio-medico/>
  - 31 <https://tiempo.hn/muere-el-doctor-gustavo-bustillo-patch-adams/>
  - 32 <https://proceso.hn/fallece-por-covid-19-el-doctor-marco-vinicio-benavidez/>
  - 33 <https://tiempo.hn/fallece-doctor-mario-lanza-sandoval-fundador-hospital-cemesa/>
  - 34 <https://confidencialhn.com/otra-enfermera-fallece-por-covid-19-en-san-pedro-sula/>
  - 35 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1444186-466/honduras-personal-salud-victimas-covid>
  - 36 <https://proceso.hn/fallece-por-covid-19-la-enfermera-gladys-ondina-alfaro-en-el-norte-de-honduras/>
  - 37 <https://confidencialhn.com/bajo-sospecha-de-covid-19-fallece-enfermera-auxiliar-en-san-pedro-sula/>
  - 38 <https://tiempo.hn/umana-ley-impidio-atendieran-yasser/>
  - 39 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/instante/yasser-es-victima-del-sistema-doctor-carlos-umana/>
  - 40 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/02/16/colegio-medico-insta-que-se-suspenda-el-servicio-social-a-los-futuros-galenos/>
  - 41 <https://proceso.hn/por-falta-de-personal-de-enfermeria-han-cerrado-166-centros-de-salud/>
  - 42 <https://criterio.hn/renuncia-coordinador-de-triage-en-villanueva-cansado-de-la-indiferencia-del-gobierno-ante-la-pandemia/>

times because there is no adequate strategy or a way to manage the pandemic in a technical and scientific way from all sides, because the virus not only affects health but also the economy and the emotional and psychological stability of the entire population. It has not been seen in a comprehensive way with the right people who have to make the decisions so that it affects us as little as possible."<sup>43</sup> "The spokesperson for the College of Microbiologists of Honduras, Miriam Aguilera, requested the corresponding authorities to close the country completely for two weekends to avoid further contagions of coronavirus."<sup>44</sup>

Also this month, El Libertador denounced: "While Hondurans leave the hospitals with their prescriptions in hand because there are no medicines or go to several pharmacies looking for low prices, the Ministry of Health (Sesal) lets the drugs expire in warehouses. The government lacks transparency mechanisms in purchases and supplies to health centers and scientific processes to acquire the inputs that will heal the people. Between 2018 and 2020, a loss of more than 40 million lempiras in expired medicines has been identified."<sup>45</sup> "The Honduran health system has no budget to deal with the covid-19 pandemic, to the extent that in public hospitals it is said that everyone has to be responsible for the purchase of their own personal protective equipment, according to the president of the Honduran Medical Association (CMH), Suyapa Figueroa."<sup>46</sup>

On February 2, the Health Minister Alba Consuelo Flores promised a first batch of vaccine doses, 124'000, by the end of the month.<sup>47</sup> But given the track record of the JOH regime so far, not many believe the promises.<sup>48</sup> And this seem warranted. In January, JOH had promised 800'000 doses through the COVAX mechanism (see last month). On February 4, the PAHO/WHO published a press release clarifying that this had not been confirmed by that moment.<sup>49</sup> A week alter, Congress ratified the Executive Decree that allowed the creation of the Health Regulation Agency (ARSA), elevating it to the rank of Law in Honduras. This was one of the requirements demanded by the World Health Organization (WHO), the Global Access Fund for Vaccines COVID-19 (Covax) and the pharmaceutical companies for Honduras to acquire the vaccine against COVID.<sup>50</sup> This sounded unproblematic, but of course, there was more to it. "Opposition deputies have denounced that in a virtual session, the Honduran parliament approved the Health Regulation Agency Law with only 39 votes, which gives full power to President Hernandez to "appoint the three commissioners at his discretion and decision, without requiring them to have experience in the health field".<sup>51</sup> Due to the new law, the purchases would not be subject to the rules established in the State Procurement and Contracting Law.<sup>52 53</sup>

43 <https://radioprogreso.net/nh/la-pandemia-desenmascara-a-un-gobierno-corrupto-y-sus-intenciones-de-privatizar/>

44 <https://confidencialhn.com/college-de-microbiologos-requiere-cierre-total-del-pais-por-dos-fines-de-semanas/>

45 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2701-honduras-40-millones-en-medicina-vendida-botados>

46 <https://www.elpais.hn/2021/02/22/sistema-sanitario-de-honduras-no-tiene-presupuesto-para-seguir-atendiendo-la-pandemia/>

47 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1439961-410/honduras-primer-lote-vacunas-coronavirus-ministra-salud->

48 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/contexto/item/3076-poblacion-hondurena-no-tiene-credibilidad-en-que-haya-compras-ade cuadas-en-las-vacunas-de-covid-19>

49 <https://proceso.hn/aun-no-hay-fecha-para-primera-entrega-de-vacunas-a-honduras-segun-ops-y-oms/>

50 <https://proceso.hn/congreso-nacional-crea-ley-de-la-agencia-de-regulacion-sanitaria-en-honduras/>

51 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2665-alerta-congreso-crea-nuevo-invest-en-honduras>

52 <https://proceso.hn/congreso-aprueba-compra-directa-de-vacunas-contr-la-covid-por-parte-del-ihss-y-sesal/>

53 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2703-honduras-urgente-congreso-aprueba-cheque-en-blanco-para-vacunas>

By mid-February, the delivery of the promised vaccines were first postponed to March<sup>54</sup> The JOH regime started to blame PAHO/WHO for the delay.<sup>55</sup> Later, the delivery of the first batch was further postponed to May.<sup>56</sup> Another source for vaccines would be buying it directly from the pharmaceutical companies. La Prensa reported that talks with AstraZeneca and the IHSS are moving forward promising vaccines by May.<sup>57</sup> UNAH also approved the Russian vaccine Sputnik V and urged its purchase.<sup>58</sup> In the coming days, the JOH regime continued to blame others for its failures to get vaccine doses to Honduras.<sup>59</sup> Libre, on the other hand, blamed JOH directly. "Let it be clear that there is a proven inability by Juan Orlando Hernandez in the management of the pandemic and now in the acquisition of the vaccine in particular; all Central American countries already have a vaccination process, started at least one acquisition process and we are at zero," said the parliamentarian. Calix made a comparison with other countries such as Costa Rica that put the first vaccine on December 24, Panama is on its second batch of imported vaccines, likewise El Salvador already has its first batch of vaccines on Salvadoran soil and Honduras does not even have a purchase process started."<sup>60</sup>

On February 24, it was announced that Israel donated 5000 doses of the Moderna vaccine to Honduras.<sup>61</sup> The next day, in a bid media show<sup>62 63</sup>, the vaccines arrived in Honduras and were given to health workers.<sup>64</sup> The JOH regime also announced that they will receive 70'000 doses of Sputnik V in March.<sup>65</sup> And at the end of the month, there was some good news. "The Covax/Gavi alliance confirmed this Friday that it will deliver to Honduras 428 thousand doses of vaccines against COVID-19, which will arrive in the country between March and May, as part of the donation of this mechanism to the country achieved through the efforts of the Government."<sup>66</sup>

## Corruption

The saga of the mobile hospitals opened a new chapter at the beginning of the month as the notorious Guatemalan businessman Axel López demanded to be paid for the transfer of the hospitals from Turkey to Honduras. He asks for over 37 million Lempiras.<sup>67</sup> The same day, the CNA published a new report on the mobile hospitals. The report concluded once again that the hospitals were not suitable for COVID-19 patients.<sup>68</sup> But it brought forward also some more disturbing findings. "Due to its shortcomings, the mobile hospital installed on the premises of the Mario

54 <https://confidencialhn.com/ahora-hasta-en-marzo-llegaria-el-primer-lote-de-vacunas-contr-la-covid-19/>

55 <https://proceso.hn/honduras-culpa-a-oms-por-retraso-en-arribo-de-vacunas-y-la-que-compro-el-ihss-ahora-llegara-en-mayo/>

56 <https://proceso.hn/astrazeneca-no-puede-entregar-vacuna-en-abril-revela-el-presidente-herandez/>

57 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1443659-410/vacuna-contr-covid-19-ihss-llega-mayo-honduras>

58 <https://proceso.hn/unah-da-visto-bueno-para-que-honduras-adquiera-la-vacuna-sputnik-v/>

59 <https://confidencialhn.com/por-confianza-en-la-ops-honduras-se-quedo-sin-vacunas-justifica-canciller-pide-disculpas-a-la-poblacion/>

60 <https://confidencialhn.com/por-todo-lo-que-se-han-robado-no-daremos-cheque-en-blanco-al-pn-senala-calix-sobre-compra-de-vacunas/>

61 <https://tiempo.hn/vacunas-donadas-por-israel-en-honduras/>

62 [https://twitter.com/Presidencia\\_HN/status/1364984122582663168](https://twitter.com/Presidencia_HN/status/1364984122582663168)

63 <https://twitter.com/JuanOrlandoH/status/1365044659978969094>

64 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1445518-466/aplican-primera-vacunas-covid-19-honduras-medicos-pandemia-donacion-israel>

65 <https://proceso.hn/honduras-recibira-70-mil-dosis-de-la-vacuna-rusa/>

66 <https://proceso.hn/covax-anuncia-que-enviara-mas-de-428-mil-dosis-de-vacunas-anticovid-a-honduras-entre-marzo-y-mayo/>

67 <https://confidencialhn.com/axel-lopez-exige-reembolso-por-flete-de-los-hospitales-moviles/>

68 <https://twitter.com/cnahonduras/status/1356236058653044736>

Catarino Rivas Hospital represents a high risk of contagion for medical personnel, who have gone to the extreme of using disposable diapers and avoiding eating food during their shift."<sup>69</sup> ContraCorriente also dedicated an article to the topic and concluded that people die in Honduras as a consequence of the irregular purchases by the JOH regime.<sup>70</sup> Later, it was made public that the audit board at Invest-H has so far failed to present the final report on the purchase of the seven mobile hospitals.<sup>71</sup> The CNA, meanwhile, presented an official complaint against the JOH regime for human rights violations as a consequence of the purchase of the mobile hospitals.<sup>72</sup>

On February 12, the MP inspected the mobile hospital in Tegucigalpa and found "anomalies".<sup>73</sup> <sup>74</sup> The auditing body of Invest-H hired the New York based company EISNER-AMPER for \$99'000 to audit the mobile hospital purchases.<sup>75</sup> The CNA filed a formal complaint against the State of Honduras linked to the purchase of the mobile hospitals.<sup>76</sup>

## Human Rights

The Coalition against Impunity published a long report on "the deepening of the human rights crisis in Honduras as a consequence of the management of COVID-19"<sup>77</sup> as well as three short bulletins.<sup>78</sup> <sup>79</sup> <sup>80</sup> Indigenous organizations and social movements published their 40<sup>th</sup> joint press release during the pandemic.<sup>81</sup>

## Economy

Last year, due to the pandemic and the hurricanes, the Honduran tourism sector lost \$1.3 billion and some 100'000 jobs.<sup>82</sup> The Honduran economy shrunk by 8.5% in 2020.<sup>83</sup>

## Poverty

According to COHEP, poverty levels have reached 68.7% and extreme poverty affects 44% of the population.<sup>84</sup> CARE Honduras warned about an ever worsening situation of hunger in Honduras. "The severity of acute food insecurity in Honduras has reached unprecedented levels and the Integrated Food Security (IPC) analysis projects that the situation will worsen in the coming months

<sup>69</sup> <https://criterio.hn/personal-medico-usa-panales-desechables-dentro-de-hospital-movil-por-alto-riesgo-de-contagio/>

<sup>70</sup> <https://contracorriente.red/2021/02/01/pacientes-de-covid-19-mueren-por-compras-irregulares-en-honduras/>

<sup>71</sup> <https://proceso.hn/pgr-senala-que-no-ha-recibido-informe-final-de-invest-h-en-caso-de-hospitales-moviles/>

<sup>72</sup> <https://criterio.hn/cna-presenta-queja-contra-exdirector-de-invest-h-y-los-interventores-encubridores/>

<sup>73</sup> <https://tiempo.hn/ministerio-publico-anomalias-hospital-movil-tegucigalpa/>

<sup>74</sup> <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1442446-466/ministerio-publico-inspecciona-hospital-movil-de-tegucigalpa-y-denuncia-abandono>

<sup>75</sup> <https://tiempo.hn/99-mil-dolares-costara-auditoria-de-invest-h-a-hospitales/>

<sup>76</sup> <https://twitter.com/cnahonduras/status/1363849090514235393>

<sup>77</sup> <http://cespad.org.hn/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Informe-CCI-Covid19-y-Gesti%C3%B3n-Estatal-comprimido.pdf>

<sup>78</sup> [https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/BC\\_BOLETIN-1\\_ABORDAGE-GENERAL-DE-COVID.pdf](https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/BC_BOLETIN-1_ABORDAGE-GENERAL-DE-COVID.pdf)

<sup>79</sup> [https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/BC\\_BOLETIN-2-GRUPOS-DE-VULNERABILIDAD.pdf](https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/BC_BOLETIN-2-GRUPOS-DE-VULNERABILIDAD.pdf)

<sup>80</sup> [https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/BC\\_BOLETIN-3\\_LOS-DESC.pdf](https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/BC_BOLETIN-3_LOS-DESC.pdf)

<sup>81</sup> <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/cuadragesimo-manifiesto-publico/>

<sup>82</sup> <https://proceso.hn/honduras-perdio-1300-millones-dolares-y-100000-empleos-en-turismo-en-2020/>

<sup>83</sup> <https://tiempo.hn/bch-economia-honduras-contrajo-8-5-2020/>

<sup>84</sup> <https://tiempo.hn/cohep-44-aumentado-pobreza-extrema-en-honduras/>



leaving more than one third of the population facing severe hunger."<sup>85</sup> And so did the UN World Food Program.<sup>86 87</sup> Last but certainly not least, "[t]he impact of Covid-19 plus hurricanes Eta and Iota has hit women the hardest and threatens to further deepen the so-called feminization of poverty, according to the Rapid Gender Analysis in Honduras presented by CARE and UN Women Honduras."<sup>88</sup>

## Education

Because of the high prevalence of COVID-19 cases, the Secretary of Education dropped the idea of pilot classes with physical attendance of pupils.<sup>89</sup> And there is still no plan in place for inclusive digital classes.<sup>90 91</sup> Nevertheless, the JOH regime tried to present its education policy as a success claiming that more than 1 million Honduran students have access to free internet.<sup>92</sup>

Radio Progreso interviewed Wilmer Vásquez, director of Coiprodén, about the state of the Honduran education system. According to Vásquez, it is in a state of "intensive care".<sup>93</sup> Criterio published a long article on "a collapsed education system".<sup>94</sup>

## Human Rights and Their Defenders

"The State of Honduras will receive 223 recommendations from the member states of the United Nations Human Rights Council on March 15, 2021, arising from the Universal Periodic Review 2020, where it will adopt the commitment to comply with them and align itself with the international standards to which it has the responsibility and duty to continue guaranteeing them to the society. (...) On February 26, a virtual meeting was held between Alicia Shackelford, resident coordinator of the United Nations UN in Honduras, Isabel Albaladejo, representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Honduras, OHCHR and some representatives of the member countries of the UN Human Rights Council, on the implementation of the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review."<sup>95</sup>

US Representative Jan Schakowsky spoke out support for Bertha Oliva. "I recognize the courageous work of Bertha Oliva and the Committee of the Detained-Disappeared in Honduras (COFADEH). For over 38 years COFADEH has pursued justice and truth for victims of human

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85 <https://www.care-international.org/news/press-releases/honduras-nearly-one-third-of-the-population-face-severe-hunger>

86 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2710-onu-hace-llamado-urgente-por-hambruna-que-azota-honduras>

87 <https://www.wfp.org/stories/honduras-parents-skip-meals-so-their-children-can-eat>

88 <https://criterio.hn/pandemia-y-huracanes-han-hecho-retroceder-los-derechos-de-las-mujeres-en-honduras/>

89 <https://elpulso.hn/?p=52425>

90 <https://radioprogreso.hn/aplicacion-movil/inicia-el-ano-lectivo-en-honduras-sin-una-plataforma-digital-inclusiva/>

91 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2632-honduras-inicio-el-ano-escolar-y-los-ninos-no-tienen-internet>

92 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1439924-466/internet-gratis-honduras-david-matamoros-batson>

93 <https://radioprogreso.hn/portada/la-educacion-esta-en-cuidados-intensivos-red-coiprodén/>

94 <https://criterio.hn/honduras-en-el-abismo-por-un-sistema-educativo-colapsado/>

95 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/monitoreo/item/3100-onu-anuncia-el-periodo-de-adopcion-de-recomendaciones-del-epu2020-para>

rights abuses committed by state security forces, like Keyla Martinez who was killed while in Honduran government custody. Thank you for all you do, Bertha!"<sup>96</sup>

## Assassinations

Front Line Defenders published its yearly report which "details the physical assaults, defamation campaigns, digital security threats, judicial harassment, and gendered attacks faced by HRDs, especially women and gender non-conforming human rights defenders". Honduras remains one of the deadliest country in the world for HRDs and per capita it has the highest murder rate of HRDs after Colombia.<sup>97</sup>

## Attacks, Criminalization and Harassment

The Women Human Rights Defenders Network published 42 alerts for attacks against WHRDs in 2020, in one third of the cases the police was directly involved.<sup>98</sup> Pasos de Animal Grande denounced threats against human rights defender Deninson Euceda working at the Center for Human Development (CDH) in Choluteca.<sup>99</sup> In Manto, Olancho, 14 environmentalists had the charges against them dismissed after having been criminalized for five years for opposing logging in their community.<sup>100</sup> Still hoping to have their charges dropped are some 30 indigenous Lenca campesines organized in the CNTC.<sup>101</sup>

OFRANEH sent out an alert on February 27. "Last night the Maya Chortí indigenous, Ángel María Hernández Lozano from the community of Florido, Santa Rita, Copán, was arrested after [criminalizing] charges against him had been dismissed in 2016."<sup>102</sup>

## Indigenous Peoples

"With the arrival of February also comes negative news for the Tolupán people, the criminalization processes initiated against the indigenous and social fighters of the San Francisco Locomapa tribe have been reopened and our compañeros and compañeras have been forced once again to attend the courts to weekly sign a form as an alternative to the prison sentence imposed by a court to favor the businessman Wilder Domínguez who is dedicated to the unconsulted cutting of timber in the territories that the indigenous have ancestrally possessed."<sup>103</sup> "Members of the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Honduras, CONPAH, exposed that while the population was kept in quarantine by the Covid-19 pandemic, there was exploitation against the peoples of the Mosquitia, in Gracias a Dios, where they even usurped signatures to promote the opening of roads and

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96 <https://twitter.com/janschakowsky/status/1365131183894454272>

97 <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/resource-publication/global-analysis-2020>

98 <https://criterio.hn/cuatro-de-cada-diez-denuncias-de-defensoras-hondurenas-en-2020-fueron-por-agresiones-de-policias/>

99 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/denuncias/item/3085-represores-no-hacen-tregua-para-atacar-a-defensor-de-derechos-humanos-en-el-sur-de-honduras>

100 <https://criterio.hn/sobreseimiento-definitivo-para-defensores-que-se-opusieron-a-explotacion-forestal-en-manto-olancho/>

101 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/1819-solicitan-al-tribunal-absolver-a-defensores-de-la-tierra-criminalizados>

102 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1365712138946416640>

103 <https://madj.org/index.php/2021/02/01/reinician-los-procesos-de-criminalizacion-contra-el-pueblo-tolupan/>

destruction of the territory. Santiago Flores, lawyer and member of CONPAH, explained to [pasosdeanimalgrande.com](http://pasosdeanimalgrande.com) that some unknown persons usurped names of the leaders of the community organizations to promote the opening of roads and to have access to the region illegally.<sup>104</sup>

## Forced Disappearance

Almost seven months have passed since the forceful disappearance of the five young men from the Garífuna community Triunfo de la Cruz. OFRANEH launched SUNLA (Basta Ya), the Garífuna Investigation and Search Committee for the Disappeared from Triunfo de la Cruz.<sup>105</sup>

## The Case of Berta Cáceres

At the beginning of the month, for the 10th time, the evidentiary hearing against David Castillo, was postponed.<sup>106</sup> But then, finally, on February 10, the hearing started, even though Castillo's defense had tried to postpone it again.<sup>107</sup> US Congressman Chuy García tweeted: "Justice for the murder of Berta Cáceres should not be postponed any longer. Today David Castillo will finally have a hearing. It is time for everyone involved to be held accountable for this crime."<sup>108</sup> After a day in court, the hearing was suspended until February 18.<sup>109</sup>

On the 18<sup>th</sup>, the hearing continued. "Berta Cáceres' family's legal team presents evidence against David Castillo, employee of the Atala family and co-perpetrator of the crime. The evidence against Castillo, is compelling and cannot be dismissed by justice."<sup>110</sup> They also proposed Pedro Atala, Jacobo Atala, Pedro Atala and Daniel Atala, as witnesses.<sup>111</sup> "The evidence linking David Castillo and the Atala family to the crime of #BertaCáceres is overwhelming and compelling. These cannot be dismissed by justice. Honduras must demonstrate that no one is above justice."<sup>112</sup> COPINH then denounced that "David Castillo's defense opposes the presentation of an expert testimony that would show how the role of #BertaCáceres as a woman leader and defender Lenca as an aggravating factor in the crime against her".<sup>113</sup> The hearing concluded the same day and a resolution on what is the evidence admitted for the trial was expected for February 25.<sup>114</sup> But on the 25<sup>th</sup>, COPINH sent out an alert as the resolution was rescheduled for March 1.<sup>115</sup>

A second case related to Berta Cáceres and COPINH is the Gualcarque Fraud corruption case. This month, national and international human rights organizations wrote an open letter to the Supreme

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104 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/denuncias/item/3098-misquitos-denuncian-que-les-despojaron-de-sus-tierras-y-destruyeron-el-territorio-mientras-est-an-en-cuarentena-por-covid-19>

105 <https://radioprogreso.net/portada/crean-comite-garifuna-de-investigacion-y-busqueda-de-desaparecidos-de-triunfo-de-la-cruz/>

106 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1357414455999619074>

107 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1359575614152445952>

108 <https://twitter.com/RepChuyGarcia/status/1359619770732208133>

109 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1359618722818891776>

110 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1362439939326156800>

111 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1362449926265921541>

112 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1362477061475033095>

113 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1362535248031023105>

114 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1362604665339265027>

115 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1365066667861176320>

Court regarding the unjustified delay in the resolution of the Amparo filed by COPINH in which they had demanded to be recognized as victims in the case.<sup>116</sup>

## Freedom of Expression and Journalists

ASOPODEHU published a summary report on the situation of journalists in 2020.<sup>117</sup> On February 7 journalist Nelson Flores died to COVID-19. So far 8 journalists have died to COVID-19.<sup>118</sup>

C-Libre denounced that "[e]lements of the Military Police of Public Order (PMOP) removed journalist Jorge Posadas and his cameraman while they were presenting the progress of the construction of the mobile hospital in Santa Rosa de Copán, Copán department, western Honduras".<sup>119</sup> In total, C-Libre documented 11 attacks on freedom of expression by the beginning of February in 2021.<sup>120</sup> Journalist Selvin Euceda, denounced threats against him by a follower close to a Liberal Party deputy. "Euceda told C-Libre that he received a call from Jimmy Arturo Sánchez, threatening to sue him, after the communicator publicly claimed in his television program that the current congressman for Choluteca, Carlos Lara Watson, did not make the payment for propaganda in the last electoral process of 2017."<sup>121</sup>

"The journalist Cesar Silva, condemned that the Court of Appeals of Francisco Morazán, favored Abelardo Mendoza, accused of the crime of attempted murder in the first instance when he tried to kill in February 2018 the journalist, while he was broadcasting live a program on the channel UNE TV. The CSJ [Supreme Court] lowered the crime of attempted homicide to the crime of threats, on Friday, January 29, where the justice system sought to hold an abbreviated hearing, therefore the journalist's legal team filed the corresponding appeals to not allow his case to remain in impunity."<sup>122</sup>

## Violence against Women

The EU as well as the Spanish, French and German embassies expressed their "concern about the constitutional reform on the prohibition of abortion and recalls the international standards and recommendations to the State of Honduras on women's rights" (see last month).<sup>123</sup>

At least 35 women have been murdered in the first weeks of 2021. Women's rights and feminist organization denounce this "horror" situation.<sup>124</sup> "Violence against women is a problem in Honduras because so many women die that there is hardly an investigation process in each of the cases. When the right to life is not guaranteed and even less so when in the custody of police authorities it is a

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116 <https://twitter.com/MisionCaso/status/1361424919188357125>

117 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/amenazas/redes-de-periodistas/item/3073-informe-redes-de-comunicadores-sociales-y-periodistas>

118 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/libertad-de-expresion/1810-fallece-nelson-flores-el-octavo-periodista-en-honduras-que-muere-a-causa-de-covid-19>

119 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1312-militares-sacan-a-periodista-que-informaba-desde-construccion-de-hospital-movil-en-zona-occidente>

120 <https://radioprogreso.hn/instante/se-han-emitido-11-alertas-por-agresiones-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/>

121 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1318-mediante-llamada-amenazan-a-periodista-por-reclamar-deuda-a-congresista>

122 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/libertad-de-expresion/1818-justicia-hondurena-intenta-beneficiar-a-quien-atento-contr-periodista>

123 <https://twitter.com/UEenHonduras/status/1356240762204266497>

124 <https://tiempo.hn/cem-h-situacion-horror-35-crmenes-mujeres/>

clear violation of the human rights they swore to serve and protect".<sup>125</sup> Twitter user Mar put together an important list of facts about femicide in Honduras. "1. The criminal type of femicide was introduced in 2013. Since then, less than 10% of cases have been classified as such. Impunity is fueled by discrimination against women. 2. Contrary to the common belief that more men are killed than women, it is impossible to sustain this when contrasting the rate of decrease in male homicides with the rate of decrease in female homicides over the last 10 years (49% vs. 26%). 3. Firearms are the type of weapon used in 56% of cases of violent deaths of women. Guess what is one of the main sources of illegal weapons in the region? The only authorized arms distributors: the military and police arsenal of HONDURAS. 4. Contrary to global trends in which femicide in the context of domestic violence is the most frequent, in Honduras, it is femicide in the context of organized crime. 5. Of the cases of women criminalized for the crime of abortion in 12 years, only 14.8% are unresolved or "in impunity", in contrast to more than 90% impunity in cases of femicide or violent deaths of women."<sup>126</sup>

The UN and the EU published a joint press release condemning femicides in Honduras. "Violence against women and girls has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, which constitutes a matter of public emergency that affects the country's development and a clear violation of human rights with profound implications for women's health, economic, educational, social and cultural opportunities."<sup>127</sup> The organizations that make up the November 25th Platform presented the "Diagnosis of public policies on violence against women and girls in the context of covid-19 and the hurricanes".<sup>128</sup> Violence against women is a systemic problem that does also reach the digital sphere. "So far this year, at least four virtual events convened by women's organizations in Honduras have been victims of cyber attacks. The most recent occurred this Tuesday, when the organization CARE and UN Women Honduras called for the presentation of the results of the Rapid Gender Analysis in Honduras: a panorama in the face of Covid-19 and Eta and Iota, which exposes "the precarious conditions" that these phenomena are causing for women. However, the event was sabotaged with denigrating and offensive verbal messages from "unidentified, anti-democratic, disrespectful people opposed to the advancement of the rights of women and girls," the organizations said in a statement."<sup>129</sup>

## Political Prisoners

The MP requested a four year prison sentence for the political prisoner, 24-year old teacher Rommel Baldemar Herrera Portillo. He has been in pre-trial detention for almost two year, since May 2019.<sup>130</sup> On February 20, he was sentenced to exactly these 4 years in prison. The sentence can be

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125 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/aplicacion-movil/van-25-mujeres-asesinadas-en-2021-segun-observatorio-de-la-violencia/>

126 <https://twitter.com/marcelaariasmon/status/1359347704124633090>

127 <https://honduras.un.org/es/111522-la-onu-y-la-ue-condenan-los-femicidios-en-honduras>

128 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/contexto/item/3077-senala-diagnostico-vulnerabilidades-de-las-mujeres-fueron-desenterradas-por-la-covid-19-y-los-huracanes-eta-e-iota>

129 <https://criterio.hn/al-menos-4-eventos-de-organizaciones-de-mujeres-han-sido-victimas-de-ataques-ciberneticos-en-2021/>

130 <https://confidencial.hn.com/solicitan-pena-minima-para-rommel-baldemar-por-incendio-en-embajada-de-eeuu/>

commuted upon completion of two years of imprisonment, and he already has spent 20 months in prison.<sup>131</sup>

## Extractive Industries

CESPAD published an analysis on the "spillover effects" of extractivism in times of a pandemic. "The spillover effects are related to the violation of human rights and the rights of nature, in turn, are linked to the increase in territorial conflict, and are more palpable when analyzed through changes in the laws of citizen participation or in the framework of environmental monitoring and regulation, but also in the alteration of narratives and concepts of justice and democracy. For example, in Honduras, the application of justice consists of subjecting defenders of the commons to judicial processes in courts of national jurisdiction (Guapinol Case), which are instances in which crimes related to organized crime and illicit association are judged. In the same direction, the Public Prosecutor's Office (MP) and the Police Investigation Directorate (DPI) have been the entities in charge of fabricating false evidence to prosecute defenders at the national level".<sup>132</sup>

Criterio reported on the struggle to protect the Jilamito river. "The installation of a hydroelectric project valued at US\$75.562 million and financed by IDB Invest and the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (IFC), keeps the inhabitants in a permanent encampment, five of whom are being prosecuted for their resistance in defense and conservation of the river for human use."<sup>133</sup> Throughout the month, they continued to cover this struggle.<sup>134 135</sup>

Criterio had also more on the newest hydroelectric projects by the JOH regime who seemed to be using last year's hurricanes as an excuse to push through disputed projects (see last month). Congress recently approved them, but "[n]one of the approved articles mention community participation or prior and informed consultation, despite the fact that many of the projects are in areas inhabited by indigenous peoples".<sup>136</sup> Radio Progreso also covered it. "Hurricanes Eta and Iota revealed the country's vulnerability to these natural phenomena. This pretext laid the groundwork for the Government to propose handing over flood mitigation to banks and energy companies. On January 6, the Official Gazette La Gaceta published Executive PCM 138-220, which sets forth the conditions under which the dams will be built. According to former congressman Aníbal Cálix, this document opens the way to the privatization of the works."<sup>137</sup>

MASSVIDA warned about them. Apart from not having been consulted with the local indigenous and campesino communities, the projects will bring about drought in the south of Honduras and the are economically problematic. "Article two of Executive Decree number PCM-138-2020 stipulates: "In the event that these projects are not economically or socially viable to be operated by a third

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131 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/pena-minima-y-conmutable-para-rommel-baldemar/>

132 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/02/18/analisis-efectos-derrame-de-los-extractivismos-en-tiempos-de-pandemia-marco-que-agudiza-la-crisis-territorial-en-honduras/>

133 <https://criterio.hn/los-protectores-del-rio-jilamito-y-la-guerra-por-el-agua-en-el-caribe-de-honduras/>

134 <https://criterio.hn/proyecto-hidroelectrico-jilamito-un-entramado-del-poder-economico/>

135 <https://criterio.hn/jilamito-un-proyecto-extractivista-patrocinado-por-la-cooperacion-internacional/>

136 <https://criterio.hn/gobierno-aprueba-construccion-de-represas-sin-cumplir-requisitos-de-medio-ambiente-y-ley-de-contratacion-del-estado/>

137 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/portada/gobierno-aprovecha-emergencia-para-entregar-construccion-de-represas-a-empresa-privada/>



party or the awarding process fails, the reimbursement of the investments made in the structuring of the same shall be the responsibility of the State of Honduras through the Ministry of Finance, which shall reimburse the same within a maximum period of twelve months from the date the reimbursement is requested by the trustee". "The State of Honduras will have to return the money if the project does not work and the Ministry of Finance (SEFIN) would have to make the refund in less than 12 months, with this type of thing is what makes one indignant," said the environmentalist Chirinos."<sup>138</sup> CESPAD published also an analysis.<sup>139</sup>

But there was also some good news regarding the protest against another hydroelectric project on the Mezapa river.<sup>140</sup> "The defenders of the Pajuiles community scored a victory with the decision of the Tela Sentencing Court that granted final dismissal to twelve defendants, eleven men and one woman, for their actions in defense of the Mezapa River."<sup>141</sup>

## Guapinol

Back on January 28, the Appeals Court in La Ceiba should have resolved an appeal by the criminalized Guapinol defenders (see last month). As reported previously, this has not taken place. Pasos de Animal Grande published an important article on the human rights violations this entails.<sup>142</sup> On February 15, there was an update in the case. "The Municipal Committee in Defense of Common and Public Goods filed a formal complaint before the Special Prosecutor's Office for Transparency and Fight against Public Corruption FETCCOP, of the Public Prosecutor's Office, MP, for the adulteration of act number 083-2016 signed by public official Norma Agripina García and also of Abuse of Authority by officials of Mi Ambiente to illegally impose a Plant of the Company Inversiones ECOTEK, owned by Lenir Pérez and Ana Facussé and investors linked to the U.S. company Nucor. According to members of the Municipal Committee in Defense of Common and Public Goods, the minutes were adulterated adding that three communities agreed in the open meeting to the socialization and approval of a project to generate 50 Watts of energy in the Guapinol River."<sup>143</sup>

"The Criminal Sentencing Court has scheduled an oral and public trial from Monday, February 22 to Friday, February 26, 2021, against the defender of the Guapinol River, Jeremías Martínez, accused of usurpation of public space and damages to the detriment of the mining company Inversiones Los Pinares. Attorney Omar Menjivar, legal representative of Jeremías Martínez, reminded Radio Progreso that the accusation against the defender of the Guapinol River does not exist because who is accused is another person with the same name, even though there is a difference of 20 years of age."<sup>144</sup> On February 22, the trial began.<sup>145</sup> In this context, he was able to

<sup>138</sup> <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/mirada-al-sur/1815-concesiones-hidroelectricas-en-rio-choluteca-incrementaran-sequia-en-el-sur>

<sup>139</sup> <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/02/15/coyuntura-desde-los-territorios-honduras-que-hay-detras-de-la-construccion-de-las-14-represas/>

<sup>140</sup> <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/portada/pajuiles-logra-sobresimiento-defectivo-para-13-luchadores-y-luchadoras/>

<sup>141</sup> <https://criterio.hn/pajuiles-y-el-triunfo-de-una-lucha-comunitaria-inclaudicable-en-defensa-del-territorio/>

<sup>142</sup> <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/denuncias/item/3080-corte-de-apelaciones-debio-resolver-el-28-de-enero-recuso-a-favor-de-defensores-presos-de-guapinol>

<sup>143</sup> <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/denuncias/item/3086-denuncian-ante-mp-adulteracion-de-acta-para-favorecer-operaciones-de-empresa-minera-y-de-explotacion-de-hierro-en-tocoa-colon>

<sup>144</sup> <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/aplicacion-movil/el-lunes-inicia-juicio-contradefensor-del-rio-guapinol/>

<sup>145</sup> <https://www.guapinolresiste.org/post/guapinol-jerem%C3%ADas-mart%C3%ADnez-in-detention-26-months-faces-trial-this-week>

see his wife again whom he had not seen for a year.<sup>146</sup> "At the end of the first day of the Oral and Public Trial of Jeremías Martínez, lawyer Edy Tábora denounced in a press conference that the Public Prosecutor's Office, MP, wants the case of Jeremías Martínez to serve as a lesson to prevent other people from continuing to demonstrate."<sup>147</sup> On day 2, the trial was suspended. It will take up again on March 8.<sup>148</sup>

## **ZEDEs**

Beth Gaglia and Andrea Nuila published an important investigation for Nacla into the so-called Economic Development and Employment Zone (ZEDEs) in Honduras, focusing on the Próspera ZEDE planned in Crawfish Rock, Roatán.<sup>149</sup>

## **Corruption and Its Enemies**

FOSDEH estimated that Honduras will lose some 70 billion Lempiras to corruption this year.<sup>150</sup> CESPAD published an analysis on the link of corruption and (lack of) democracy.<sup>151</sup>

UFECIC filed before the Supreme Court of Justice an indictment against five deputies and six former Honduran deputies, for the alleged crime of embezzlement of public funds.<sup>152</sup> A lot has been reported on the alleged acts of corruption committed by Invest-H linked to the pandemic: mobile hospitals, mechanical ventilators, etc. (see above and previous monthly monitors). But much less attention has been given so far to the fact that after the hurricanes Eta and Iota, it was once again Invest-H which was given the responsibility for the reconstruction of some key highway infrastructure. And of course, there were again problems as Criterio highlighted this month.<sup>153 154</sup>

ConfidencialHN reported on a possible corruption case at the Armed Forces going up to the highest ranks. "This corruption scandal, at the level of the Army branch (E -1) of the military institution, consists in the fact that all members of the same, from troop personnel to division generals must make a monthly contribution in favor of an organization called Fundación Hermandad Manos Amigas (FHMA), which according to sources is directed by Mr. Moreno Coello, and integrated by other high-ranking military officers."<sup>155</sup> Proceso Digital reported on the intervention of the Property Registry of La Ceiba. The authorities found links to organized crime and money laundering.<sup>156</sup> OFRANEH had denounced this for years as the registry illegally registered community land.<sup>157</sup>

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146 <https://twitter.com/guapinolre/status/1363953347573727235>

147 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/contexto/item/3096-edy-tabora-mp-quiere-que-el-caso-de-jeremias-martinez-sea-una-leccion-para-que-nadie-vuelva-a-manifestarse>

148 <https://www.guapinolresiste.org/post/juicio-de-defensor-de-guapinol-suspendida-debido-a-los-retrasos-de-mp>

149 <https://nacla.org/news/2021/02/12/private-government-honduras-zede-prospera>

150 <https://tiempo.hn/fosdeh-corupcion-honduras-perdiera-70-mil-millones-2021/>

151 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/02/24/analisis-honduras-frente-al-aumento-de-la-corupcion-y-los-retrocesos-democraticos-a-mayor-corupcion-menos-democracia/>

152 <https://confidencialhn.com/presentan-requerimiento-fiscal-contra-5-diputados-y-6-ex-diputados-por-malversacion-de-fondos-publicos/>

153 <https://criterio.hn/empresas-constructoras-de-hospitales-moviles-tambien-beneficiadas-tras-eta-e-iota/>

154 <https://criterio.hn/honduras-cuando-la-corupcion-se-viste-de-emergencia-y-legalidad/>

155 <https://confidencialhn.com/se-destapa-escandalo-de-corupcion-en-las-fuerzas-armadas-de-honduras/>

156 <https://proceso.hn/descubren-ligues-con-el-crimen-organizado-en-el-instituto-de-la-propiedad-de-la-ceiba/>

157 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1364638965182197760>



## The Onslaught against the Anti-Corruption Bodies

"The former head of the now defunct Mission of Support against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH), the Peruvian Ana María Calderón, reappeared and revealed that at least 30 cases of corruption investigations in the country were not prosecuted by the Attorney General's Office."<sup>158</sup>

CESPAD published an analysis of the recently created Transparency Secretariat whose opening was accompanied by widespread criticism. They conclude that its main purpose is to whitewash the JOH regime in matters of corruption.<sup>159</sup> CESPAD also published an update on various important corruption cases and what is being done by a corrupt elite to stop them from bringing about justice.<sup>160</sup> CESPAD also inquired if the US represented a reliable ally in the fight against corruption in Honduras.<sup>161</sup>

## Hermes

UFERCO presented a new corruption case called Hermes.<sup>162</sup> Its director Luis Santos summarized it as follows: "More than L120 million were stolen from a Presidential House account through a briefcase company linked to the Pandora case, which were mostly used to pay amounts ranging from L15,000.00 to L100,000.00 per month to 77 journalists. Also, the funds were used by the accused for the purchase of vehicles, purchase of land cultivated with palm trees, payment of payroll to Club Deportivo Vida and to a company of the former Minister of Communications [JOH's deceased sister Hilda Hernández], and rental of armored vehicles for a company owned by the accused. In addition, funds were diverted for payments to companies linked to the accused and the former Minister of Communications and Strategy, among them Constructora C2, Inversiones Santa Elvira, Transportes Tita and Caribbean Fruit Export, three of them insured in the Pandora case. And something that should make us all reflect: Officials from five (5) different public institutions are involved in this case: the Presidency, TSC [Supreme Audit Court], Secretary of Economic Development, Delegate for the Green Economy and National Congress...."<sup>163</sup>

## Pandora

Cespad published an analysis on why judges let the accused in the Pandora case go. "Regarding the crime of concealment, the Supreme Court of Honduras considered as accredited that "the group of those who acted from the political electoral sphere", although they received the funds of illicit origin, in order to accredit their participation in the embezzlement and punctually the crime of money laundering, it was not enough to have received that money. The Court omitted to refer, in a timely manner, to the evidence presented by the Public Prosecutor's Office and the probative value

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158 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/02/25/con-extincion-de-la-maccih-unos-30-casos-quedaron-sin-judicializar-y-mas-de-100-sin-investigar/>

159 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/02/06/analisis-es-solo-una-percepcion-o-el-ministerio-de-transparencia-es-un-obstaculo-para-el-combate-contra-la-corrupcion/>

160 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/02/08/el-resultado-del-blindaje-a-la-corrupcion-en-honduras/>

161 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/02/11/analisis-es-estados-unidos-un-aliado-confiable-en-la-lucha-contra-la-corrupcion/>

162 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/172-febrero2021/7158-uferco-presenta-caso-de-corrupcion-vinculado-con-empresa-de-maletin>

163 <https://twitter.com/LuisSan16779987/status/1363955380087365632>

it gave to each one. In this sense, it failed to comply with the legal mandate to motivate the judicial resolutions, which consequently resulted in an arbitrary resolution affecting the due process."<sup>164</sup>

## Rosa Elena Bonilla de Lobo

"Did her functions as first lady qualify her to receive and administer state funds, was she or was she not a public official, and what was the judges' assessment to order the repetition of her judicial process? This is the axis of a discussion that could or could not lead the former first lady of Honduras, Rosa Elena Bonilla de Lobo, back to prison. Lobo de Bonilla's defense lawyers were tenacious in the trial and argued ad nauseam that she was not a public official. But other analysts of the Constitution in Honduras and criminal lawyers, assure that yes, she was a public official. They are of the opinion that the Sentencing Court in Corruption Matters, made a restrictive interpretation during the oral and public trial that took place during two months in 2019, in order not to qualify her as a public official."<sup>165</sup>

## Asfura

UFERCO received good news from the anti-corruption appeals court as it decided in their favor in the case of the mayor of Tegucigalpa Nasry Asfura and city councilor Nilvia Castillo.<sup>166</sup> Both are accused of corruption and UFERCO can now indict them. Asfura is currently the highest-polling presidential candidate of the National Party.

## State Security Forces

With state security forces continuing to make horrible headlines (see below), the police purge, i.e. its failures, became a talking point again. "From its first results, the failure of the police purge was evident, which is now unquestionable. From murder to drug trafficking, including extortion and others, are the crimes in which the new police have been involved."<sup>167</sup> "The director of the Observatory of Violence, Migdonia Ayestas, said that the death of nursing student Keyla Martinez showed that the police purification process is a mere mirage."<sup>168</sup> Radio Progreso spoke with further experts all sharing this view, while those responsible for the purge still try to defend its work and prefer to talk of some bad apples.<sup>169</sup>

Also this month, Defensores en Línea reported: "In the Sentencing Court of Trujillo, department of Colon, the Oral and Public trial began today against a military officer accused of the crimes of "torture and illegal detention" to the detriment of two brothers in the community of Francia, jurisdiction of the municipality of Limon, in the Caribbean region of the country."<sup>170</sup>

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164 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/02/17/por-estas-razones-jueces-hondurenos-dejaron-libres-a-los-implicados-en-el-caso-pandora/>

165 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/02/20/funcionaria-publica-o-no-la-discusion-que-podria-determinar-el-destino-de-una-ex-primera-dama-en-honduras/>

166 [https://twitter.com/MP\\_Honduras/status/1361784274471559170](https://twitter.com/MP_Honduras/status/1361784274471559170)

167 <https://criterio.hn/policia-depurada/>

168 <https://elpulso.hn/?p=52790>

169 <https://radioprogreso.hn/aplicacion-movil/depuracion-policial-es-un-proceso-fallido-opinan-expertos/>

170 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/con-siete-horas-de-retraso-inicio-juicio-contr-militar-acusado-de-tortura-y-detencion-ilegal/>

## Post-Electoral Human Rights Violations

Defensores en Línea denounced that “[f]or the second time the Sentencing Court of San Pedro Sula leaves the private prosecution without participation in the case of the murder of David Octavio Quiroz, an event that occurred during the protests against the electoral fraud of 2017”.<sup>171</sup>

## Assassinations

A nursing student, Keyla Patricia Martínez, was detained on February 6 night, allegedly for violating curfew, and hours later she was dead inside a rural police station. The police claimed that she hung herself.<sup>172</sup> But no one really believed this and widespread protests followed in various parts of the country.<sup>172</sup> OACNUDH announced to follow-up the case and called for an exhaustive and swift investigation.<sup>172</sup> And so did UN Resident Coordinator Alice H. Shackelford.<sup>173</sup> But the JOH regime had other plans and started to violently repress the protesters.<sup>174</sup> “OACNUDH condemns the excessive use of force by law enforcement officers against demonstrators today in La Esperanza, Intibucá, in the context of protests over the death of Keyla Martínez.”<sup>175</sup>

Unlike other similar cases, even corporate medial outlets like El Heraldito highlighted the irregularities, e.g. the police claiming that Keyla died in the hospital after a suicide attempt while the medical report clearly states that she was already dead when she arrived at the hospital.<sup>179</sup> And of course, there is the fact that people have died previously under suspicious circumstances in police custody.<sup>180</sup> On February 9, an autopsy by the MP confirmed that Keyla had been murdered.<sup>182</sup> The MP also requested that the police agents at the station in La Esperanza be transferred to Tegucigalpa and be placed at the order of the prosecutors investigating the homicide.<sup>183</sup> But this did not take place. OACNUDH published a press release condemning her death and repeated its demand for an exhaustive investigation.<sup>184</sup>

Over the coming, new evidence came to light. Traces found in the mouth could indicate that third parties tried to prevent her from being heard by other people. Additionally, fragments of short hair, different from hers, were found on her clothes.<sup>185</sup> The legal representative of Keyla's family later said: “Observing the men's and women's cells, it can be determined that there is no place inside the cells where she could have hung herself, since there are concrete walls and a cement slab on the

<sup>171</sup> <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/nuevamente-tribunal-de-sentencia-de-sps-excluye-de-audiencia-a-acusacion-privada/>

<sup>172</sup> <https://criterio.hn/muerte-de-estudiante-de-enfermeria-en-poder-de-la-policia-es-completamente-sospechosa/>

<sup>172</sup> <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1358770150439333890>

<sup>172</sup> <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/denuncias/item/3078-demanda-de-justicia-y-repudio-nacional-e-internacional-por-muerte-de-keyla-patricia-martinez-en-celdas-policiales>

<sup>172</sup> <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1358899317122162688>

<sup>173</sup> <https://twitter.com/aliceshackel/status/1358804536190775297>

<sup>174</sup> <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/policia-nacional-reprime-manifestacion-que-exige-justicia-para-keyla/>

<sup>175</sup> <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1358972438374207488>

<sup>179</sup> <https://www.elheraldo.hn/sucesos/1441447-466/keyla-martinez-policia-informe-celda>

<sup>180</sup> <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/denuncias/item/3079-policias-tienen-las-manos-sueltas-postas-policiales-son-un-peligro-para-personas-detenidoas>

<sup>181</sup> <https://www.elheraldo.hn/fotogalerias/1441445-468/celdas-muerte-hondurenos-muertos-postas-policia>

<sup>182</sup> <https://radioprogreso.hn/portada/a-keyla-patricia-la-mataron-revela-autopsia-de-medicina-forense/>

<sup>183</sup> <https://www.elheraldo.hn/sucesos/1441683-466/keyla-martinez-homicidio-policias-puestos-disposicion-del-mp>

<sup>184</sup> <https://oacnudh.hn/oacnudh-condena-la-muerte-violenta-de-keyla-martinez-bajo-custodia-policia-y-urge-a-las-autoridades-a-una-investigacion-pronta-exhaustiva-e-imparcial/>

<sup>185</sup> <https://www.elheraldo.hn/sucesos/1442429-466/keyla-martinez-nuevas-revelaciones-enfermera-honduras>

ceiling. The door is practically her height, there is a small window but it was too high for Keyla."<sup>186</sup> "Journalist Sandra Maribel Sánchez revealed in her program Más que Dos the testimony of two women victims of police abuse, sexual violence and intimidation. The young women told the journalist that they received intimidation from police officers to withdraw the alleged abuses they suffered at the police headquarters in La Esperanza, Intibucá."<sup>187</sup> Then, El Herald reported that the police official responsible for the precinct where Keyla was murdered was allegedly both at the station and that he had been involved in the past in a case where a man detained by the police was killed at the police station.<sup>188</sup>

Nevertheless, by February 17, there had still not any charges filed. "To date, the Public Prosecutor's Office has still not issued a prosecutorial request, arguing that the results of the studies performed on the young woman's body are still pending. However, experts and human rights organizations assure that there is sufficient evidence and scientific proof that establishes that the young woman was murdered. That is to say that, in a trial, even if the defense of the policemen makes their appraisals, it is very difficult for them to disprove the crime of homicide, because there is a scientific proof practiced by Forensic Medicine."<sup>189</sup> Even worse, Keyla's family denounced police harassment and intimidation in order for them to drop their call for justice.<sup>190</sup>

The case also spurred international attention. US Senator Chris Coons tweeted: "I am saddened by the death of Keyla Martinez, a 26-year old student in Honduras who died in a police cell after her arrest for violating the pandemic curfew. I urge Honduran authorities to carry out a thorough and impartial investigation into Keyla's case."<sup>191</sup> The Chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Representative Gregory Meeks, tweeted: "Deeply saddened by the death of 26-year old Honduran nursing student, Keyla Martinez, after she was arrested for violating the pandemic curfew. The Honduran government must conduct a rapid & thorough investigation of Keyla's death."<sup>192</sup> Representative Chuy García tweeted: "The death of Keyla Martinez is a reminder of the violence that the Honduran people, particularly women, face daily. There must be a transparent investigation of her murder and those responsible must be held accountable."<sup>193</sup>

Throughout the month, protests continued.<sup>194</sup> COFADEH denounced that four young men were detained by the police after participating at a protest in the Central Park in Tegucigalpa. Later, it was made public that actually five students had been detained. They were released about a day later facing a hearing in the coming week. COFADEH took up their legal defense.<sup>194</sup> On February 23, the

<sup>186</sup> <https://www.elheraldo.hn/sucesos/1442462-466/keyla-martinez-colgase-celda-policia-honduras>

<sup>187</sup> <https://www.reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2021/02/13/audio-de-dos-mujeres-abusadas-en-posta-policial-de-intibuca-antes-de-la-muerte-de-keyla/>

<sup>188</sup> <https://www.elheraldo.hn/sucesos/1442895-466/keyla-martinez-homicidio-policia-subcomisionado>

<sup>189</sup> <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/aplicacion-movil/ministerio-publico-sigue-sin-librar-requerimiento-fiscal-en-caso-keyla-martinez/>

<sup>190</sup> <https://confidencial.hn.com/familia-de-keyla-martinez-denuncia-intimidacion-y-persecucion/>

<sup>191</sup> <https://twitter.com/ChrisCoons/status/1360578549007200261>

<sup>192</sup> <https://twitter.com/HouseForeign/status/1362031545918308362?s=20>

<sup>193</sup> <https://twitter.com/RepChuyGarcia/status/1362256662359388161>

<sup>194</sup> <https://criterio.hn/protestas-por-homicidio-de-estudiante-de-enfermeria-continuan-fuertes-en-honduras-mientras-la-policia-responde-con-represion/>

<sup>194</sup> <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1360394541484961792>

<sup>194</sup> <https://www.defensoresonlinea.com/berta-oliva-en-honduras-la-labor-de-la-defensoria-de-derechos-humanos-esta-cada-vez-mas-en-precaria-indefension/>

hearing took place.<sup>195</sup> "Cristopher Flores, Alex Laguna and Josué Fonseca had their charges provisionally dismissed, while Eduardo Molina and Joel Rojas, who were charged with damages and arson, were formally indicted with alternative measures to pre-trial detention, at the Initial Hearing held on February 24 and 25, 2021."<sup>196</sup>

On February 15, "[t]he family of Erick Davinson Barrientos Avilés, denounced that the National Police shot the young man, causing his death hours later. According to the family's version, Erick had allegedly driven his work car into a cone of the Dirección Nacional de Vialidad y Transporte (DNVT - which is a dependency of the National Police) in the El Carrizal neighborhood of Comayagüela at about 2 p.m. on Monday, February 15. At the scene there were police and military, who fired several shots at Erick, in front of the family hardware store. He was driving a dump truck in which he was hauling stone from the municipality of Talanga, the family said in an interview with the channel Hable Como Habla Televisión Digital (HCH)." A day later, it was reported that only 21-year old Erick was shot by a member of the Armed Forces.<sup>199</sup> The MP then went on to charge him<sup>200</sup> and he was sent to pre-trial detention.<sup>200</sup> But while human rights defenders and political prisoners are sometimes locked up for years without trial, the Honduran Judicial System works swiftly and shows leniency in the case of state security forces. A court decided to provisionally drop the charges against member of the Armed Forces Levis Russi Rivera accused of murdering Erick. Proceso Digital wrote that Russi Rivera could not be clearly identified as the one having shot Erick<sup>202</sup>, while El Tiempo wrote that they had claimed that it was an accident. But there is a video in which one hears four shots.<sup>202</sup> OACNUDH voiced concern and asked for an ongoing investigation.<sup>202</sup>

COFADEH raises alarm about another similar case. "Family members are demanding answers about the whereabouts of Cristian Javier Aguiluz Melgar, 20 years old, who disappeared after being arrested by agents of the National Anti Maras and Gangs Force (FNAMP), in the city of San Pedro Sula, Cortés, they reported."<sup>205</sup> And last, but not least problematic. "The family and friends of Eblin Noel Corea Maradiaga (17), murdered by soldiers of the Siguatepeque Battalion, will not know the decision of the Comayagua Sentencing Court on the murderer of the minor until March 15."<sup>206</sup>

## International Community

Japan and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) donated \$1 million to El Salvador and Honduras for the education sector during the pandemic.<sup>206</sup> Congress approved a \$10 million credit

195 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/audiencia-inicial-para-cinco-estudiantes-que-exigian-justicia-para-keyla-martinez/>

196 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/amenazas/item/3099-caso-de-cinco-jovenes-enjuiciados-sistema-de-justicia-usa-el-derecho-penal-para-detener-las-protestas-en-honduras>

199 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2689-honduras-militares-asesinan-joven-volquetero>

200 <https://tiempo.hn/mp-homicidio-militar-disparo-a-empleado-de-ferreteria/>

200 <https://tiempo.hn/carcel-militar-acusado-mato-a-empleado-de-ferreteria/>

202 <https://proceso.hn/sobreseimiento-provisional-a-efectivo-militar-procesado-en-muerte-de-joven-hondureno/>

202 <https://tiempo.hn/libertad-militar-acusado-matar-erick-barrientos/>

202 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1364367323956658176>

205 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/joven-desaparece-luego-de-ser-detenido-por-la-fnamp/>

206 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/se-pospone-sentencia-contra-militar-por-muerte-de-eblin-noel-corea/>

206 <https://www.radiohonduras.hn/bid-y-japon-dan-un-millon-de-dolares-a-honduras-y-el-salvador-para-educacion>

from the BID. "The resources will be used to finance the implementation of the "Program for climate-resilient forest restoration and forestry for the sustainability of water-related ecosystem services".<sup>207</sup> Then, there was another announcement by the BID for "a comprehensive plan through which it has up to 1.6 billion dollars available to support Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua in their disaster reduction plans and projects over the next two years".<sup>208</sup>

The Central American Bank for Economic Integration (BCIE) announced a \$150 million credit for a housing project<sup>209</sup> in Honduras as well as \$15 million for the coffee sector.<sup>210</sup> Later this month, the BCIE also announced to support the JOH regime with \$5.8 million for feasibility studies for six dams.<sup>211</sup>

## US

"Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken spoke with Honduran Foreign Minister Lisandro Rosales today. Secretary Blinken emphasized our commitment to working with Honduras to address the structural problems that lead people to migrate – corruption and lack of respect for human rights, lack of economic opportunity, and insecurity. They discussed continued U.S. government support for Honduras as it responds to the COVID-19 pandemic and recovers from the devastation caused by Hurricanes Eta and Iota. Secretary Blinken noted the strong bonds between the people of our two countries and reaffirmed our commitment to the bilateral relationship."<sup>212</sup> Also this month, the former US chargé d'affaires to Honduras, Heide Fulton, and Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, Jon E. Piechowski, spoke to Honduran journalists about the role of the US in fighting corruption in Honduras.<sup>213</sup>

## EU

"The European Union and Honduras signed a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) on forest law enforcement, governance and trade in timber products with the EU in Brussels on Tuesday, with the aim of reducing illegal logging in the Central American country."<sup>214</sup>

## Drug Trafficking

Throughout the month, the Pro Honduras Network dedicated various articles to what they call the "Hernández Cartel".<sup>215</sup> In one article, they outlined how the US Attorney's Office in New York holds

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207 <https://proceso.hn/cn-modifica-articulos-de-la-ley-del-rnp-para-que-personal-del-proyecto-identificate-entreguen-la-nueva-identidad/>

208 <https://proceso.hn/bid-presenta-millonario-plan-de-apoyo-a-reduccion-desastres-en-centroamerica/>

209 <https://proceso.hn/el-bcie-aprueba-150-millones-de-dolares-a-honduras-para-programa-de-vivienda/>

210 <https://proceso.hn/bcie-invertira-15-millones-en-fideicomiso-de-la-iniciativa-para-la-transformacion-regional-de-la-caficultura/>

211 <https://proceso.hn/el-bcie-financiara-estudios-de-factibilidad-para-seis-represas-en-honduras/>

212 <https://www.state.gov/secretary-blinkens-call-with-honduran-foreign-minister-rosales/>

213 <https://proceso.hn/salida-de-maccih-es-un-paso-atras-pero-eeuu-apoya-lucha-desde-el-mp-fulton/>

214 <https://proceso.hn/la-ue-y-honduras-firman-un-acuerdo-para-reducir-la-tala-ilegal-de-madera/>

215 <https://prohondurasnetwork.com/2021/02/05/conozca-la-estructura-del-cartel-hermanez-y-sus-socios-ademas-de-como-y-donde-han-operado-en-honduras-2/>



JOH responsible for drug trafficking<sup>216</sup> and has a case ready against him.<sup>217</sup> Interestingly, this was later taken up by international media outlets. Reuters reported: "U.S. prosecutors are investigating Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez, according to a new court filing, piling pressure on a leader who prosecutors have already accused of participation in the nation's bloody narcotics trade."<sup>218</sup>

The Washington Post reports on JOH's situation now that Biden is the US president. "For four years, Hernández had built his governing program around the demands of the Trump administration, which in turn had stayed out of Honduran domestic affairs. Now that arrangement was ending. Hernández, like heads of state around the world, was preparing for an extreme change in American foreign policy — and trying to figure out how to refashion himself from a Trump ally into a Biden one. The stakes are higher for Hernández than perhaps any other world leader. Not only are the political and economic fortunes of his country inextricably linked to the United States, but Hernández himself is one of few sitting presidents ever to be implicated in drug trafficking by the U.S. Justice Department. (...) Whatever Biden does to restore accountability to U.S. foreign policy, it is likely Hernández who has the most to lose. For more than a decade, he has navigated changes in U.S. policy, shape-shifting as necessary to insulate himself. But it is the extradition treaty with the United States that he pushed to implement when he was president of the Honduran Congress that now might pose the biggest threat to him."<sup>219</sup> It does not help JOH's case that "[e]vidence and witnesses implicating Juan Orlando Hernandez in drug trafficking were admitted (..) by Judge Kevin Castel to be presented during the trial of Geovanny Fuentes Ramirez".<sup>220</sup>

Just as JOH, the involvement of the Armed Forces in drug trafficking activities was highlighted this month. And they continued to deny any involvement. In the newest iteration, they claim that international media outlets are behind the accusation, even though their involvement had been clearly stated in US court documents.<sup>221</sup> <sup>222</sup> Also this month, a US court rejected a request by convicted drug trafficker and the former president's son Fabio Lobo for a so-called compassionate release. He is convicted to 24 years in prison and wrongly thought that the corona pandemic could offer an excuse for a, very, early release.<sup>223</sup>

On February 18, the former director of the National Police Force, Ramirez del Cid, had his properties raided.<sup>224</sup> The Honduras Solidarity Network explained: "Ex-director of Honduran National Police, Ramirez del CID who had been vocally critical of JOH is wanted for money laundering. State investigative officials raided his properties this morning & there is an arrest

216 <https://prohondurasnetwork.com/2021/02/01/segun-la-fiscalia-en-new-york-juan-orlando-hermandez-es-responsable-junto-a-tony-de-conspirar-para-trafficar-drogas-hacia-eeuu/>

217 <https://prohondurasnetwork.com/2021/02/06/fiscalia-ya-tiene-construido-caso-contr-a-juan-orlando-hermandez-y-presiona-a-gobierno-de-honduras-para-que-ejecute-la-extradicion-de-posibles-testigos-que-podrian-declarar-en-su-contr-a/>

218 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-honduras/honduran-president-target-of-u-s-investigation-court-filings-show-idUSKBN2A8291>

219 [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the\\_americas/honduras-president-narcotraficking-herandez/2021/02/11/1fa96044-5f8c-11eb-ac8f-4ae05557196e\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/honduras-president-narcotraficking-herandez/2021/02/11/1fa96044-5f8c-11eb-ac8f-4ae05557196e_story.html)

220 <https://prohondurasnetwork.com/2021/02/12/pruebas-y-testigos-que-involucran-a-juan-orlando-hermandez-con-el-trafico-de-drogas-fueron-admitidos-el-dia-de-hoy-por-el-juez-kevin-castel-para-que-se-presenten-durante-el-juicio-de-geovanny-fuentes/>

221 <https://proceso.hn/a-interpretaciones-de-medios-internacionales-atribuye-senalamientos-de-colusion-con-el-narco-el-jefe-de-las-ffaa/>

222 <https://twitter.com/innercitypress/status/1361100299524595714>

223 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1443814-466/corte-nueva-york-rechaza-solicitud-preliberacion-fabio-lobo>

224 <https://radioprogreso.hn/aplicacion-movil/ex-jefe-de-la-policia-ramirez-delcid-perseguido-por-lavado-de-activos/>

warrant out for Ramirez & his spouse. An internal narco fight?"<sup>225</sup> A week later, the Pro Honduras Network reported: "New documents in the case of Geovanny Fuentes Ramirez, the alleged drug trafficker awaiting trial, reveal that Commissioner Ramon Martinez Hernandez is among his contacts within the Honduran National Police. The prosecution intends to present during Ramirez's trial WhatsApp conversations extracted from his phone seized at the time of his capture, in which he exchanges communication with Martinez and another alleged military officer named Ramon Zuniga alias "Comanche." In these conversations Geovanny Fuentes talks, among other topics, about the murders carried out in Honduras after Tony's trial, the strategies to find out if his phones were tapped and to eliminate information from them, and Juan Orlando Hernandez's intention to eliminate possible witnesses and threats."<sup>226</sup> In the ninth multiple killing this year, on February 26, at least 6 people were murdered. Among them was the former deputy police commissioner Normando Lozano López, one of five police officials mentioned in the Tony Hernández case.<sup>227</sup>

And then, there were also three new extradition requests from the US.<sup>228</sup>

## Varia

### JOH

Radio Progreso looked back at 11 years of “narcodictatorship” under JOH, first four years as the president of Congress, then seven years as president.<sup>229</sup> Javier Suazo put together a helpful overview of all the arguments why JOH may, against his repeated promises, want to stay in power.<sup>230</sup> InSight Crime published an investigation into the National Party. "The party that has governed Honduras since 2010 has become a federation that welcomes politicians and officials involved in criminal businesses ranging from timber to drug trafficking to the misappropriation of public funds." The investigation focused on what has been publicly known as the Hernández Clan around JOH.<sup>231</sup> InSight Crime also published the results of a two-year investigation, which included visits to eight Honduran border departments, into organized crime in Honduras.<sup>232</sup>

By the end of the month, the situation grew even more tense for JOH. "Oregon's U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley, and Senators Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Richard Durbin (D-IL) today led a group of eight lawmakers in introducing the Honduras Human Rights and Anti-Corruption Act of 2021—legislation that lays out a comprehensive framework for combating corruption, impunity, and human rights violations in Honduras. The introduction comes as U.S. federal prosecutors made public that they are investigating Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández for accepting large

<sup>225</sup> <https://twitter.com/hondurasol/status/1362524902302097411>

<sup>226</sup> <https://prohondurasnetwork.com/2021/02/22/conversaciones-de-whatsapp-mencionan-a-juan-orlando-geovanny-fuentes-y-sus-supuestos-aliados-dentro-de-las-ffaa-y-la-policia-nacional-de-honduras/>

<sup>227</sup> <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2720-honduras-en-masacre-asesinan-empresario-y-expolicia-citado-en-juicio-tony>

<sup>228</sup> <https://confidencialhn.com/tres-nuevas-solicitudes-de-extradicion-de-eeuu-recibe-csj/>

<sup>229</sup> <https://madj.org/index.php/2021/02/02/cuarta-legislatura-y-11-anos-de-narcodictadura/>

<sup>230</sup> <https://www.alainet.org/es/articulo/210785>

<sup>231</sup> <https://insightcrime.org/investigations/one-party-many-crimes-honduras-national-party/>

<sup>232</sup> <https://insightcrime.org/news/drugs-porous-borders-politics-crime-honduras/>



bribes from, and giving assistance to, an alleged drug trafficker who delivered thousands of kilos of cocaine throughout the United States. In response to the news—which adds to a long list of cases by U.S. prosecutors in which Hernández has been implicated or directly accused of involvement in drug trafficking—the bill would impose sanctions on the Honduran president for corruption and human rights abuses and suspend U.S. security assistance and export licenses for covered defense articles and munitions items to the Honduran police and military, among other provisions."<sup>233</sup>

As expected, the bill reinvigorated the calls for JOH's resignation. And it was widespread, by the CNA,<sup>234</sup> the political opposition,<sup>235</sup> the Medical Association of Honduras,<sup>236</sup> the Alignment against Continuity<sup>237</sup> and others.<sup>238</sup> JOH reacted with an emergency address to Congress repeating his standard talking points<sup>239</sup>, but also threatened that antinarcotics cooperation with the US could “collapse” if US authorities believe “false testimony”.<sup>240</sup> Opposition politicians called his appearance a “show” and the public reacted with having the hashtag #JuanOrlandoEsNarco trending.<sup>241</sup> The next day, voices calling for his resignation grew even louder with an especially noteworthy call by the Honduran Bar Association (CAH). A longtime stronghold of the National Party, it has a new leadership now. “It is unavoidable for the Honduran Bar Association to pronounce itself in the only possible way, to get out of the crisis generated by the permanence of Juan Orlando Hernandez in the position of President of the Republic. Therefore, the Bar Association demands the immediate and irrevocable resignation of Juan Orlando Hernandez as President of the Republic.”<sup>242</sup>

Another day later, 30 opposition politician officially demanded JOH's resignation<sup>243</sup> presenting 37 reasons, “among these, the link with drug trafficking, the new Penal Code, allegations of electoral fraud in 2013 and 2017, impeachment and election of magistrates to the Supreme Court of Justice, the continuity of Attorney General Óscar Chinchilla and acts of corruption in the midst of the covid-19 pandemic”.<sup>244</sup> Additionally, “[f]ormer president Porfirio Lobo described current president Juan Orlando Hernández as a mythomaniac and advised him to leave power to face US justice for alleged links to drug trafficking”.<sup>245</sup> Then, 10 members of the Armed Forces were dismissed “for committing serious misconduct in the institution”.<sup>246</sup> But some experts rather believe it has to do with a growing discontentment in the Armed Forces with JOH.<sup>247 248</sup>

233 <https://www.merkley.senate.gov/news/press-releases/merkley-leahy-durbin-colleagues-introduce-legislation-to-tackle-corruption-human-rights-violations-in-honduras-2021>

234 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1445368-466/cna-renuncia-presidente-honduras-juan-orlando-hernandez-narcotrafico>

235 <https://tiempo.hn/oposicion-reacciona-discurso-joh-renuncia/>

236 <https://criterio.hn/colegio-medico-de-honduras-exige-renuncia-de-presidente-hernandez/>

237 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/pronunciamento-iniciativa-de-suspension-de-ayuda-del-gobierno-de-los-estados-unidos-a-honduras/>

238 <http://www.hondurastierralibre.com/2021/02/une-tv-noticias.html>

239 <https://criterio.hn/presidente-de-honduras-asegura-que-no-es-narco-en-comparecencia-ante-el-congreso/>

240 <https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-central-america-honduras-latin-america-united-states-45fd0ad2c7989177af8310221c2af062>

241 <https://criterio.hn/tendencia-juanorlandoenarcho-la-respuesta-de-los-hondureños-al-show-del-gobernante/>

242 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2716-honduras-historico-abogados-se-suman-a-exigir-dimision-de-joh>

243 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2724-honduras-30-diputados-exigen-renuncia-de-joh>

244 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/02/26/diputados-opositores-comienzan-a-firmar-iniciativa-para-exigir-la-renuncia-de-joh/>

245 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/02/26/pepe-arremete-contra-joh-y-pide-a-oliva-demostrar-que-no-esta-subordinado/>

246 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1445969-466/separan-oficiales-ffaa-honduras-faltas-graves>

247 <https://criterio.hn/trasciende-descontento-al-interior-de-las-ff-aa-por-apoyo-de-cupula-a-juan-hernandez/>

248 <https://tiempo.hn/fuerzas-armadas-separacion-oficiales/>

At the end of last year, the JOH regime promised to prioritize education and health in the 2021 budget. An investigation by Criterio now shows that not much is left of the promise and it rather served, again, to try to boost the image of the JOH regime home and abroad.<sup>250</sup> This month it was made public that Alexander Mendoza, a.k.a. El Porky, was acquitted for the murder of two public prosecutors. This raised a lot of questions because he had been in prison in 2015 and was freed in an armed operation in which four people died in 2020 and he is still on the run. "It should be remembered that in October 2020, Ricardo Ramírez del Cid and Henry Osorto Canales, who were part of the high command of the National Police, denounced that by the will of the ruler Juan Hernández, the MS-13 governs from the Presidential House. And it is that according to the version of the ex-officers, Mendoza, also known as Yulan Archaga Carías, is the cousin of Eduin Iván Archaga, Cavalry Major and member of the Presidential Honor Guard."<sup>251</sup>

## Elections

According to the CNE, the primary and main elections will cost almost \$73 million.<sup>252</sup> Initially, the primary elections should have been conducted with the new ID cards, but their rolling out had been postponed and this month was even further postponed to April or even May.<sup>253</sup> And those who hope for a renewal of Congress through the elections may be disappointed to hear that 74% of congresswo/men run for reelection.<sup>254</sup>

At the beginning of the month, CESPAD published a short overview of the three main parties and where they stand in light of the current electoral cycle.<sup>255</sup> They also published the study "Citizen assessment of the role of the Clean Politics Unit in the 2017 General Elections". "In the month of November the 2021 general elections will be held in Honduras, however, the electoral process will be carried out on the basis of a much more decimated UPL [Clean Politics Unit] than in the 2017 electoral process since, according to CESPAD's analysis, budgetary, technical personnel and computer equipment limitations persist. But, especially, the UPL lacks a solid auditing team to carry out the documentary inquiries in situ, which would allow it to verify the information of the campaign expenditure reports, submitted by the obligated subjects established by the Law of Financing, Transparency and Control of Political Parties."<sup>256</sup>

The Pro Honduras Network published various articles on the drug trafficking links of presidential hopefuls in the current primary elections.<sup>257</sup> <sup>258</sup> But there are also problems with corruption, both in the case of Nasry Asfura, mayor of Tegucigalpa and Nationalist presidential wannabe<sup>259</sup>, and

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250 <https://criterio.hn/presupuesto-de-salud-y-educacion-una-ilusion-que-podria-convertirse-en-un-engano/>

251 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2669-insolito-justicia-hondurena-absuelve-a-porky-liberado-por-criminales-en-2020>

252 <https://www.elpais.hn/2021/02/06/entre-33-y-35-millones-de-dolares-costaran-elecciones-primarias/>

253 <https://elpulso.hn/?p=52720>

254 <https://criterio.hn/el-74-de-los-diputados-del-partido-nacional-libre-y-partido-liberal-van-por-la-reeleccion/>

255 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/02/03/analisis-una-mirada-a-los-partidos-politicos-en-el-arranque-de-la-campana-para-las-primarias/>

256 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/02/25/elecciones-2021-en-honduras-sin-reformas-sustantivas-que-aseguren-la-fiscalizacion-efectiva-del-financiamiento-de-las-campanas-electorales/>

257 <https://prohondurasnetwork.com/2021/02/01/diputado-vinculado-en-el-trafico-de-drogas-por-la-fiscalia-en-new-york-busca-la-reeleccion-dentro-del-movimiento-de-yani/>

258 <https://prohondurasnetwork.com/2021/02/04/hermano-de-narcotraficante-y-socios-de-juan-orlando-se-postula-como-candidato-a-diputado-dentro-del-partido-nacional-en-el-movimiento-de-nasry-asfura/>

259 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/02/02/el-alcalde-de-tegucigalpa-su-interes-de-convertirse-en-presidente-y-una-justicia-selectiva-que-le-apoya/>

another Nationalist candidate, Ricardo Alvarez.<sup>260</sup> The former Obama assessor Dan Restrepo commented on the Honduran elections. "Looking at the leading candidates or pre-candidates in Honduras, today, as an advisor to a president of the United States, I would never let any of those candidates, even if elected president of Honduras, democratically, step into the oval office with President Biden, they are frankly unacceptable."<sup>261</sup> While I agree, it is also worthwhile to read the following comment by OFRANEH: "Wasn't Dan Restrepo Obamam's advisor at the time of the Honduran coup in 2009? The mistakes caused by the coup persist to this day, among them the narco-democracy in place."<sup>262</sup>

By mid-February, there was still no agreement on how the imminent primary elections would take place. The ad-interim president of the National Election Council (CNE), Rixi Moncada, blamed the National Party for their disagreement in four main points (the CNE registry base, the credentials, the municipal and departmental counts, and the auditing of the votes).<sup>263</sup> The National Party, meanwhile, claimed that they are not in disagreement in three out of four things Moncada listed above. This has always been their tactic, blocking substantial reforms, when being called out for it, publicly saying that they are not really against it only to go back blocking this again.<sup>264</sup> PINU congresswoman Doris Gutiérrez was not surprised about these problems. "In this respect, in declarations to a capital city newspaper, Gutiérrez said that she had already foreseen this situation and that "apparently the honeymoon is over among the three parties" that integrate the CNE. She reminded that her party voted against the distribution of the electoral body among the political parties, as well as the Electoral Justice Tribunal (TJE) and the National Registry of Persons (RNP). The Constitution establishes that "it must be autonomous, independent and without subordination to any political party", said the congresswoman, and that is why "we refuse to participate in the distribution of the cake".<sup>265</sup>

On February 17, "[t]he president by law of the National Electoral Council, Rixi Moncada, denounced this day that a plot is being hatched against the transparency of the electoral process. Moncada pointed out in an urgent communiqué that tomorrow there will be a session of the CNE with the presence of Councilor Ana Paola Hall and that the meeting will be transmitted live so that the people will be aware of said plot."<sup>266</sup> But Ana Hall was not present the next meeting. "The interim president of the National Electoral Council, Rixi Moncada, reacted in an annoying way this Thursday, when she strongly requested to the Councilor of the Liberal Party, Ana Paola Hall, to join the sessions of the entity, for the transparency of the electoral process and for the democracy of the country. The fact is that the official - without specifying the reasons - announced that she is hospitalized due to health complications, for this reason Moncada insisted that "even if it is only for 5 minutes through Zoom" she should give her vote to avoid electoral fraud."<sup>267</sup> On February 20,

260 <https://confidencialhn.com/tsc-investiga-a-ricardo-alvarez-por-condonacion-de-deuda-a-coagricas/>

261 <https://criterio.hn/ningun-aspirante-a-la-presidencia-de-honduras-debe-visitar-la-casa-blanca-exasesor-de-obama/>

262 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1360253838968643585>

263 <https://criterio.hn/partido-nacional-pone-en-riesgo-transparencia-y-fidelidad-de-las-elecciones-primarias-presidenta-cne/>

264 <https://proceso.hn/partido-nacional-esta-de-acuerdo-en-tres-de-cuatro-puntos-demandados-por-libre-segun-diputado-rivera-callejas/>

265 <https://criterio.hn/emergencia-en-cne-es-consecuencia-de-alanzas-partidarias-dice-diputada-doris-gutierrez/>

266 <https://criterio.hn/se-esta-fraguando-una-trama-contrala-transparencia-de-las-elecciones-riximoncada/>

267 <https://confidencialhn.com/aunque-sea-5-minutos-via-zoom-pide-riximoncada-a-consejera-liberal-se-integre-por-la-democracia-del-pais/>

Moncada promised that the meeting regarding the organization of the coming primary elections, would continue in the presence of Hall.<sup>268</sup> So it was and Hall tried to calm the public.<sup>269</sup>

On February 27, "The National Electoral Council (CNE) decided that the counting of municipal and departmental votes in the primary and internal elections will be at the option of the participating political parties. There will also be an audit of the voting notebooks and cross-checking of data of the three parties, Liberal, National and Libre, announced on Friday the councilor Rixi Moncada."<sup>270</sup> At the end of the month, ContraCorriente published a helpful overview of the electoral situation in Honduras just days before the primary elections. "The 2021 primary elections are just around the corner, but there are still disagreements among the members of the National Electoral Council (CNE). The country, since the 2009 coup d'état, lives in an eternal political crisis."<sup>271</sup>

Apart from all this, there is also the yearly-recurring violence against politicians and the harassment of opposition politicians. According to UNAH's Violence Observatory, there have been at least 16 deaths linked to the electoral process since the beginning of last year. Six were members of the National Party, six of Libre and four of the Liberal Party.<sup>272</sup> The pre-candidate for mayor of the municipality of Copán Ruinas, in western Honduras, for the Libertad y Refundación (Libre) party, Julia Carranza, denounced that a bank has put obstacles in the way of the candidates of this political institute who want to open a bank account."<sup>273</sup> On February 17, Libre primary candidate Antonio Brevé was kidnapped in San Pedro Sula by men wearing police uniforms.<sup>274</sup>

## Migration

At the beginning of the month, the Biden presidency presented an update on the planed immigration system.<sup>275</sup> Shortly afterwards, they announced this: "The United States has suspended and initiated the process to terminate the Asylum Cooperative Agreements with the Governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras as the first concrete steps on the path to greater partnership and collaboration in the region laid out by President Biden. The termination of these Agreements is effective after the notice period stipulated in each of the Agreements, but their suspension is immediate."<sup>276</sup>

Sandra Cuffe had an important article on southwards push of the US border. "Some analysts argue that the U.S. southern border has been effectively pushed to the Mexico-Guatemala border or other borders farther south. "The Guatemalan border with Chiapas is now our southern border," said Homeland Security official Alan Bersin in a 2012 speech. But that does not reflect the reality on the

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268 <https://tiempo.hn/rix-moncada-sesion-del-cne-con-ana-paola-hall/>

269 <https://confidencialh.com/lueve-truene-o-relampaguee-elecciones-van-ana-paola-hall/>

270 <https://criterio.hn/cne-decide-que-conteo-municipal-y-departamental-sea-opcional-en-las-elecciones/>

271 <https://contracorriente.red/2021/02/28/otro-entuerto-electoral-a-menos-de-un-mes-de-las-primarias/>

272 <https://tiempo.hn/muertes-violentas-ambiente-electoral-honduras/>

273 <https://criterio.hn/precandidata-a-alcaldesa-denuncia-discriminacion-en-institucion-bancaria/>

274 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/sucesos/1443895-466/raptan-precandidato-diputado-libre-en-san-pedro-sula-antonio-breve>

275 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/02/02/fact-sheet-president-biden-outlines-steps-to-reform-our-immigration-system-by-keeping-families-together-addressing-the-root-causes-of-irregular-migration-and-streamlining-the-legal-immigration-syst/>

276 <https://www.state.gov/suspending-and-terminating-the-asylum-cooperative-agreements-with-the-governments-el-salvador-guatemala-and-honduras/>

ground, according to many migrants and researchers in Central America and Mexico. The issue is not so much that the U.S. border line has been pushed south but that the border has expanded to fill every space in between."<sup>277</sup> By the beginning of the month, 7347 Hondurans had been deported, that is 20.2% less than last year.<sup>278</sup>

Meanwhile on the way to the US, Hondurans continue to die. "An eight-year-old Honduran boy has become the latest victim in a string of drownings on the US-Mexico border as migrants attempt to cross the Rio Grande in treacherous winter conditions. The child, who has not been named, drowned on Wednesday while attempting to cross the freezing river with his family amid unprecedented Arctic conditions in the borderlands which have killed more than 30 people and left millions in Mexico and Texas without power, water and food."<sup>279</sup>

On February 12, the Biden administration announced: "'Building on a series of Executive Orders last week, the Biden Administration is announcing another step in our phased strategy to reform the nation's immigration system. Beginning on February 19, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will begin phase one of a program to restore safe and orderly processing at the southwest border. DHS will begin processing people who had been forced to "remain in Mexico" under the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP). Approximately 25,000 individuals in MPP continue to have active cases."<sup>280</sup> US Representative Nydia Velazquez and 70 of her colleagues, meanwhile, asked the Biden Admin. to use executive authority to grant Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador."<sup>281</sup>

A week later, there was another announcement. "Today, DHS [US Department of Homeland Security] began the first step in a phased approach to restore safe and orderly processing at the Southwest Border. DHS and its international partners have now initiated the virtual registration process for individuals who had been forced to return to Mexico under the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) and have a pending case before the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR). The United States is continuing to strictly enforce existing immigration laws and border security measures. Individuals should not approach the border, including at designated ports of entry, unless and until they are approved and receive appointment information through the remote registration process."<sup>282 283</sup>

But we are far away from only getting news from the US. "This week, the Biden administration did the unthinkable. It reopened a Trump-era detention site for migrant children. The detention center, a reconverted camp for oil field workers in Carrizo Springs, Texas, is expected to hold 700 children between the ages of 13 and 17, and dozens of kids have already arrived there."<sup>284</sup>

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277 <https://theintercept.com/2021/02/02/honduran-migrant-caravan-vertical-border-guatemala/>

278 <https://proceso.hn/honduras-ha-recibido-7347-deportados-este-ano-un-20-2-menos-que-en-2020/>

279 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/19/eight-year-old-honduran-boy-dies-river-us-mexico-border>

280 <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2021/02/11/dhs-announces-process-address-individuals-mexico-active-mpp-cases>

281 <https://twitter.com/NydiaVelazquez/status/1362435775737044994>

282 <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2021/02/19/dhs-statement-first-step-process-address-individuals-mexico-active-mpp-cases>

283 <https://www.state.gov/public-health-and-the-draw-down-of-the-migrant-protection-protocols-program/>

284 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/feb/24/biden-is-locking-up-migrant-children-will-the-world-still-care-with-trump-gone>

## Debt

Honduras' external debt rose to \$10.8 billion in 2020, a rise of 13.9% compared to 2019.<sup>285</sup> Pasos de Animal Grande speaks with FOSDEH economist Obed Garcí about the JOH regime and debt.<sup>286</sup>

## And Light at the End of a Month

Making up for the lack of good news at the end of the last two reports, there are two articles highlighting in one case personal, in the other case community resistance. "Dr. Mary Vallecillo, a research scientist at Brigham Young University (BUY) in Utah, was asked by the cabinet of Juan Hernandez to represent the country in the "celebration" of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, but has declined because she does not accept to represent a government that has promoted the purchase of weapons rather than the health and education of Hondurans."<sup>287</sup>

"This beautiful landscape that reveals harmony and respect between the community and natural assets was not always so. The history of Montaña Verde is one of many stories full of violence and denial of the rights of indigenous peoples. A story that, on the one hand, places rich landowners interested in controlling the land, water sources and the timber trade in the virgin forests of the communities, and on the other hand, the Lenca indigenous population protecting their territory. (...) Montaña Verde now represents a model community through food, cultural and territorial sovereignty, that is: agroecology, crop diversification, recovery of native seeds, new and old techniques for the cultivation and commercialization of products, new power and gender relations, popular and inclusive education, continues its commitment to dialogue and debate on the type of development that the communities want, all in tune with the original worldview of our Mesoamerican peoples."<sup>288</sup>

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285 <https://proceso.hn/deuda-hondurena-sube-13-9-en-2020-y-cierra-en-10849-8-millones-de-dolares/>

286 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/contexto/item/3090-fosdeh-con-juan-orlando-hernandez-ha-habido-una-cultura-de-endeudamiento-del-pais>

287 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2655-cientifica-hondurena-rechaza-representar-a-gobierno-enemigo-de-ciencia-y-pueblo>

288 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/portada/sembrar-autonomia-en-el-territorio-indigena-de-montana-verde/>

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-

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