



# *Another Month in Honduras...*

## Human Rights Monitor – April 2021

While March saw important trials outside of Honduras, in April there were several important hearings and trials in Honduras. Three directly involved state security forces, twice for murder, once for torture. Most headlines made the trial of David Castillo in the case of Berta Cáceres; seven days in court took place this month and the process will continue in May. Several human rights defenders also faced trial for ongoing criminalization cases. And then, there was also the trial of Mario Zelaya for the IHSS corruption case which ended in one conviction, but also seven charges dropped. Outside of the court rooms, the pandemic still hits hard a Honduran people desperately waiting for promised vaccines. Journalist saw their difficult situation reflected in the worst ranking yet of Honduras in the Press Freedom Index. 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

April started with 189'726 COVID-19 cases and 4622 confirmed deaths.<sup>1</sup> This latter number once again did not correspond with the death reported by the Funeral Association of Honduras which had registered 11'361 deaths on April 12.<sup>2</sup> The month ended with 212'333 COVID-19 cases and 5281 confirmed deaths.<sup>3</sup>

By the end of the month, health experts warn that the new COVID-19 variants would continue to hit Honduras hard.<sup>4</sup>

## State Reaction

The BCIE sent another \$500'000 to the JOH regime to combat the pandemic.<sup>5</sup> Then, the World Bank announced a \$20 million loan for Honduras.<sup>6</sup>

## Health Sector

Already on the first day of the month, the first health worker died, doctor Wilfredo Cruz Campos. 81 doctors have died so far during the pandemic.<sup>7</sup> A week later, doctor Gonzalo Pascua died<sup>8</sup> and shortly afterwards Albert Grant.<sup>9</sup> On April 14, COVID-19 took the life of another doctor, Óscar Armando Espinoza Madrid.<sup>10</sup> A week later, the 23-year old nurse Belkis Lara and doctor Pablo José Cámbar died.<sup>11</sup>

March had ended with the Easter Holidays for which the JOH regime opened up Honduras.<sup>12</sup> Many observers believed this to be linked to the events in New York, i.e. to divert attention from JOH's drug trafficking links (see also last month). Many medical experts denounced the possible fallout of this decision on the health sector. And already by the beginning of the month, the situation looked grim. "The head of the Pneumonia Service of the "Hospital del Tórax" in Tegucigalpa, the Honduran capital, Dr. Suyapa Sosa, said that in view of the collapse of the hospital network and the lack of supplies, a "war code" has been declared in which doctors will give priority to Covid patients with a greater chance of survival."<sup>13</sup> The Medical Association of Honduras (CMH) denounced the lack of drugs to treat COVID-19 patients.<sup>14</sup> "Medical personnel in different hospitals

1 <https://proceso.hn/honduras-suma-683-nuevos-contagios-y-17-decesos-por-covid-19/>

2 <https://confidencialhn.com/asociacion-de-funerarias-reporta-380-muertes-sospechosas-de-coronavirus-en-los-primeros-dias-de-abril/>

3 <https://proceso.hn/honduras-acumula-212-mil-333-casos-y-5-mil-281-defunciones-por-covid-19/>

4 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/aplicacion-movil/confirman-la-presencia-de-nueva-cepa-de-covid-19-en-honduras/>

5 <https://proceso.hn/bcie-entrega-segunda-donacion-a-honduras-por-500-mil-para-la-emergencia-de-la-covid-19/>

6 <https://proceso.hn/bm-prestara-50-millones-a-el-salvador-y-20-a-honduras-para-la-vacunacion-contra-la-covid/>

7 <https://proceso.hn/fallece-por-covid-19-el-doctor-wilfredo-cruz-campos-en-tegucigalpa/>

8 <https://proceso.hn/pandemia-ya-cobra-82-vidas-de-medicos-en-honduras-tras-el-deceso-de-gonzalo-pascua/>

9 <https://tiempo.hn/por-covid-muere-medico-albert-grant/>

10 <https://proceso.hn/muere-en-tegucigalpa-odontologo-hondureno-a-causa-de-la-covid-19/>

11 <https://tiempo.hn/muere-enfermera-belkis-lara-en-tela/>

12 <https://proceso.hn/mas-de-30-mil-viajeros-internacionales-visitan-honduras-en-semana-santa/>

13 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2825-honduras-hospitales-activan-codigo-de-guerra-ante-colapso-por-covid>

14 <https://tiempo.hn/ihss-sin-medicamentos-para-covid-19-ligia-ramos/>

in the capital expressed concern, as the intensive care units remain at maximum capacity and the rooms available for COVID-19 have very few spaces.<sup>15</sup> Doctor Suyapa Figueroa warned especially about the consequences of the Easter Holidays on the rural areas.<sup>16</sup>

On April 5, even the Ministry of Health now seems to see the gravity of the situation. "The Ministry of Health (Sesal) informed this Monday that in view of the fact that the specialty hospitals dedicated to the care of covid-19 have reached their maximum capacity and that an increase of infections is expected after the holiday granted during Easter Week, it was decided to take some measures to face the health crisis."<sup>17</sup> At the same time, the Association of Municipalities of Honduras (Amhon) warned that due to the lack of transfers, as of that week between 150 and 160 triage centers would be closed nationwide.<sup>18</sup> In the coming days, more and more mayors warn about the lack of state transfers to the municipalities and its negative effects on the pandemic response.<sup>19</sup> On April 7, the JOH regime promised 40 million Lempiras to keep the triage centers open.<sup>20</sup> The same day, El Heraldo reported that the Ministry of Health imposed a gag order to the triage centers establishing that the only spokesperson authorized to give statements to the media will be Dr. Harry Bock Melara.<sup>21</sup>

On April 9, "[i]n view of the new wave of increase of covid-19 cases in the country, the Honduran Institute of Social Security (IHSS) in Tegucigalpa, Francisco Morazán, has declared a state of emergency, informing the population of the cancellation of outpatient consultations at its attention center."<sup>22</sup> Shortly afterwards, El Tiempo reported that the situation in the department of Olancho is so bad that they started to bury people in mass graves.<sup>23</sup> The mayor of Juticalpa warned that Olancho was breaking down.<sup>24</sup> On April 19, the El Torax hospital exceeded its patient care capacity for COVID-19 patients.<sup>25</sup> The hospital occupation rate in Tegucigalpa surpassed 90%.<sup>26</sup> Shortly afterwards, medical staff at the University Hospital protested against the ongoing lack of biosafety equipment.<sup>27</sup> Microbiologist denounced outstanding salary adjustments and more staff, promised back in 2019.<sup>28</sup> They warned about a possible strike<sup>29</sup>. And so did workers at Honduras' psychiatric hospitals.<sup>30</sup>

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15 <https://proceso.hn/unidades-de-cuidados-intensivos-permanecen-al-100-y-cupos-en-hospitales-capitalinos-son-escasos/>

16 <https://tiempo.hn/suyapa-figueroa-desastre-covid-19/>

17 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1454537-466/anuncian-medidas-incremento-casos-coronavirus-honduras-semana-santa-salud>

18 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/aplicacion-movil/mas-de-150-triajes-cerraran-por-falta-de-fondos>

19 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1454762-410/triajes-falta-fondos-municipios-honduras-pandemia-tranferencias-operacion-fuerza-honduras>

20 <https://confidencialhn.com/aprueban-40-millones-de-lempiras-para-atender-triajes/>

21 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1455052-466/imponen-mordaza-coordinadores-triajes-no-informen-casos-covid>

22 <https://criterio.hn/ihss-cae-en-el-colapso>

23 <https://tiempo.hn/fosas-comunes-sepultan-olanchanos-colapso-covid/>

24 <https://criterio.hn/olancho-esta-cayendo-lentamente-ante-el-covid-19-dice-alcalde-de-juticalpa/>

25 <https://proceso.hn/hospital-el-torax-sobrepasa-su-capacidad-de-atencion-a-pacientes-covid-19/>

26 <https://proceso.hn/capacidad-hospitalaria-por-covid-supera-el-90-en-tegucigalpa/>

27 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/aplicacion-movil/trabajadores-del-hospital-escuela-protestan-en-demanda-de-equipo-de-bioseguridad-de-calidad/>

28 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/04/22/microbiologos-anuncian-paro-de-labores-el-proximo-lunes-piden-aumento-salarial/>

29 <https://tiempo.hn/honduras-microbiologos-paro-de-labores-lunes/>

30 <https://confidencialhn.com/trabajadores-de-hospitales-psiquiatricos-paralizaran-labores-desde-el-lunes/>

By the end of March, the promised vaccine doses by the JOH regime had still not materialized and on April 6, the Ministry of Finance confirmed that they did not know when the Sputnik V vaccine doses would arrive in Honduras.<sup>31</sup> Even worse, "[d]espite the fact that Honduran authorities have publicly stated that there is a contract for the acquisition of the Russian vaccine Sputnik V, the Ministry of Health denied Contracorriente the contract information requested through the Law of Access to Public Information, arguing that the vaccine is in the process of acquisition."<sup>32</sup> Also in April, the JOH regime announced to be in talks with China about another vaccine.<sup>33</sup>

By that point, Honduras solidified its position as the country with the worst vaccination rate in Central America.<sup>34</sup> Ever more desperate, the JOH regime seemed to task the private sector to buy the vaccines. "On Thursday, the Minister of Finance, Marco Midence, celebrated on social networks the signing of an agreement with the Honduran Council of Private Enterprise (COHEP) that allows this organization to negotiate with pharmaceutical companies, using the government platform, to purchase and import vaccines."<sup>35</sup> On April 12, "[t]he President of the National Congress, Mauricio Oliva Herrera, presents a draft decree to authorize the purchase of vaccines against Covid-19 by private companies and the pharmaceutical industry."<sup>36</sup> This led to a controversial debate.<sup>37 38</sup> Shortly afterwards, the commissioner at the Institute for the Access to Public Information (IAIP) revealed that the Health Secretariat requested to keep some parts of the purchase agreement with Russia for Sputnik V secret.<sup>39</sup> ContraCorriente highlighted how the inability of the JOH regime to procure COVID-19 vaccine extends the health crisis in Honduras.<sup>40</sup>

On April 16, only, 6000 doses of the Sputnik V vaccine arrived in Honduras.<sup>41</sup> The next day, the National Anti-Corruption Council (CNA) signed an agreement with the business lobby COHEP to guarantee the transparency of the vaccine purchase by private businesses.<sup>42</sup> On April 22, COHEP promised that private businesses would buy 1.8 million doses of vaccine.<sup>43</sup> The representative of AstraZeneca in Central America promises 200'000 for Honduras by the end of May.<sup>44</sup>

As no more Sputnik V doses had arrived in Honduras, foreign minister Lisandro Rosales traveled to Russia and on his return at the end of April, he promised that 40'000 doses of the 4.2 million purchased doses would arrive within a week.<sup>45</sup> Rosales expressed interest in the new Russian

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31 <https://proceso.hn/no-hay-fecha-para-llegada-de-vacunas-sputnik-v-a-honduras-reconoce-el-ministro-de-finanzas/>

32 <https://contracorriente.red/2021/04/08/secretaria-de-salud-niega-informacion-de-contrato-de-vacuna-por-estar-en-proceso-de-adquisicion/>

33 <https://tiempo.hn/salud-compra-de-vacunas-sinovac-a-china/>

34 <https://proceso.hn/honduras-con-peor-registro-de-vacunacion-contra-covid-19-en-centroamerica/>

35 <https://criterio.hn/compra-de-vacuna-covid-19-por-la-empresa-privada-desnuda-la-inoperancia-y-corrupcion-del-gobierno-de-honduras/>

36 <https://confidencialhn.com/presidente-del-congreso-nacional-mauricio-oliva-herrera-presenta-proyecto-de-decreto-para-autorizar-la-compra-de-vacunas-contra-el-covid-19-a-la-empresa-privada-y-la-industria-farmaceutica/>

37 <https://radioprogreso.hn/aplicacion-movil/con-decreto-buscan-autorizar-a-que-empresa-privada-compra-vacunas-y-las-venda-al-pueblo-hondureno/>

38 <https://confidencialhn.com/compra-de-vacunas-es-negocio-entre-el-gobierno-y-el-cohep-senala-suyapa-figueroa/>

39 <https://tiempo.hn/iaip-salud-reserva-contrato-con-fondo-ruso-vacuna/>

40 <https://contracorriente.red/2021/04/21/incapacidad-del-gobierno-para-adquirir-vacunas-contra-covid-19-extiende-la-crisis-sanitaria-en-honduras/>

41 <https://proceso.hn/arriba-lote-de-seis-mil-vacunas-sputnik-v-las-primeras-compradas-por-honduras/>

42 <https://twitter.com/cnahonduras/status/138318444739465223>

43 <https://confidencialhn.com/un-millon-800-mil-vacunas-comprara-el-cohep-de-acuerdo-al-ultimo-censo-de-empresas/>

44 <https://radioprogreso.hn/aplicacion-movil/astazeneca-enviara-a-honduras-200-mil-vacunas-a-finales-de-mayo/>

45 <https://tiempo.hn/80-mil-vacunas-sputnik-v-honduras/>

vaccine Sputnik Light which promises to only need one application.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, there was more criticism of the lack of transparency of the purchase<sup>47</sup>, even in the corporate press.<sup>48 49</sup> The Institute for Access to Public Information (IAIP), later announced that one application of Sputnik V cost \$9.95.<sup>50</sup> Later, the Finance Minister said that the vaccine cost \$19.90 per person for both shots.<sup>51</sup>

On April 29. Congress approved the Special Law for the Regulation of Vaccines and Medical Treatments for the Fight against the Humanitarian and Sanitary Emergency as a Consequence of COVID-19, by National or Foreign Individuals or Legal Entities.<sup>52</sup> "Throughout the debate process, citizens and opposition deputies denounced their resentment at the approval of a law that prevents the population from having access to justice in favor of natural or legal persons, national or foreign, that provide health services, manufacture, and develop medicines or other medical treatment products against Covid-19."<sup>53</sup>

In the midst of the pandemic, the JOH regime also failed again to pay its bills for the treatment of Hondurans in need of dialysis.<sup>54</sup> The Finance Minister later announced that they paid 60 million Lempiras to the company Dialysis of Honduras.<sup>55</sup> But their total debt is 100 million.<sup>56</sup>

## Corruption

"The Special Prosecutor's Office for Transparency and Fight against Public Corruption (Fetccop) and the Technical Agency for Criminal Investigation (ATIC) are conducting inspections at the Health Regulation Agency (ARSA), for refusing to hand over documentation of the alleged irregular purchase of 474 thousand masks."<sup>57</sup>

## Mobile Hospitals

The mobile hospitals arrived back in the headlines this month. First, the auditing body at Invest-H finally recognized that they were not up to the task.<sup>58</sup> "Yes, it is the worst scam because when you buy turnkey it has to be on time and according to what was agreed and even more so when you pay in advance and none of those three things have been fulfilled."<sup>59</sup> Second, a week later, and months too late, the MP finally had both Marco Antonio Bográn Corrales and Alex Alberto Moraes Girón arrested for the purchase of the mobile hospitals which cost Honduras \$47 million without bringing

46 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1459765-410/honduras-muestra-interes-vacuna-sputnik-light-lista-mayo->

47 <https://radioprogreso.hn/aplicacion-movil/lluvia-de-criticas-por-confidencialidad-en-la-compra-de-vacuna-rusa/>

48 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1459415-410/compra-vacuna-rusa-coronavirus-covid-honduras-secretividad>

49 <https://proceso.hn/bajo-informacion-reservada-compro-honduras-vacunas-a-rusia-cuestiona-empresario/>

50 <https://proceso.hn/10-dolares-por-vacuna-pagara-honduras-a-rusia-segun-iaip/>

51 <https://tiempo.hn/finanzas-vacunas-sputnik-v-honduras/>

52 <https://tiempo.hn/cn-compra-de-vacunas-facilitacion/>

53 <https://criterio.hn/rechazan-aprobacion-de-ley-que-exime-a-proveedores-de-medicamentos-durante-pandemia/>

54 <https://criterio.hn/nuevamente-suspenden-dialisis-a-nivel-nacional-por-falta-de-pago>

55 <https://confidencial.hn.com/60-millones-deseMBOLSA-finanzas-a-dialisis-de-honduras/>

56 <https://confidencial.hn.com/pacientes-renales-piden-compromiso-por-parte-del-gobierno-para-salvar-sus-vidas/>

57 <https://confidencial.hn.com/ejecutan-inspecciones-en-la-arsa-por-negarse-a-entregar-documentacion-de-la-compra-de-474-mil-mascarillas/>

58 <https://proceso.hn/hospitales-moviles-tecnicamente-no-están-aptos-reconoce-interventora-de-invest-h/>

59 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/04/06/interventor-de-investh-reconoce-que-hospitales-moviles-son-la-peor-estafa-y-pide-disculpas/>

any benefit.<sup>60</sup> <sup>61</sup> While welcome that this took place, given that it is Honduras, one immediately wonders why now? From where should attention be diverted away? The botched primary elections? JOH's drug trafficking links? And there is also the fear that the new Penal Code will let them off easily.<sup>62</sup>

OACNUDH welcomed the arrest and highlighted the important link between corruption and human rights violations.<sup>63</sup> Apart from the arrest of the two men, the MP also announced to send out an international arrest warrant against Axel López, representative of the company Elmed Medical System which sold the mobile hospitals.<sup>64</sup> The MP further presented 50 pieces of evidence in what they now call "mega-fraud" in the purchase of the seven mobile hospitals.<sup>65</sup> On April 15, a judge decided to open trial against Marco Bográn and Alex Moraes and send them to pre-trial detention.<sup>66</sup> Bográn's defense team challenged the pre-trial detention.<sup>67</sup> At the same time, El Libertador reported: "Although an international alert has already been issued to capture the Guatemalan businessman, Axel López, and in Honduras Marco Bogran and Alex Moraes are in preventive detention, the Attorney General's Office has informed that for the moment it will not act against the intellectual authors who ordered Invest-H to purchase the seven mobile hospitals. It should be noted that for the moment only the former head of Finance, Rocío Tábor, who by order of Juan Hernández, delegated Bográn to purchase the supplies, has testified before the ATIC; meanwhile, the head of Health, Alba Consuelo Flores, assures that she has no pending accounts in this case."<sup>68</sup>

So far, JOH has been left out of the legal procedures in the case of the mobile hospitals. But the MP should also investigate him. "The evidence exposes the direct participation of Juan Orlando Hernández (JOH) in the acquisition of isolation enclosures, but the Public Prosecutor's Office seems not to know, now it ensures that the holder of Invest-H, Marco Bográn, acted alone to remove from the vaults of the Government 1,200 million lempiras (48 million dollars)."<sup>69</sup>

## Human Rights

Social movements and indigenous organizations published their next joint press release during the pandemic. "After the primary and internal elections, Hondurans seem to live in two parallel universes, on the one hand, the universe of those who fight furiously over the electoral results, and on the other, the universe of the vast majority of the population who pay the consequences of the deterioration and capture of public institutions, such as hurricane victims, victims of the pandemic or those fleeing in caravans. Faced with this dangerous scenario, we make our pronouncement in

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60 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/175-abril2021/7456-c-o-m-u-n-i-c-a-d-o>

61 <https://proceso.hn/exdirector-de-invest-h-marco-bogran-declaro-ante-el-ministerio-publico/>

62 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/04/09/sostienen-que-nuevo-codigo-penal-jugara-a-favor-de-marco-bogran-y-alex-moraes>

63 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1380331874770378753>

64 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1455292-466/alerta-internacional-capturar-axel-lopez-guatemalteco-hospitales>

65 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/175-abril2021/7469-50-medios-de-prueba-propuestos-por-el-mp-exponen-mega fraude-en-la-compra-de-siete-hospitales-moviles>

66 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/175-abril2021/7505-mp-logra-auto-de-formal-procesamiento-y-prision-preventiva-contr-primeros-implicados-en-el-sonado-caso-hospitales-moviles>

67 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/04/15/defensa-de-marco-bogran-presentara-recorso-de-apelacion-contr-auto-de-prision/>

68 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2856-honduras-fiscalia-aun-no-va-por-peces-gordos-de-hospitales-moviles>

69 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2865-honduras-joh-autorizo-compra-de-hospitales-fiscalia-bogran-actuo-solo>



this Public Manifesto number forty-three":<sup>70</sup> Number 44 followed on April 16<sup>71</sup> and number 45 on April 23.<sup>72</sup>

The pandemic hits already vulnerabilized groups especially hard. "The hospital of Puerto Lempira in Gracias a Dios is abandoned, the few personnel are not enough and there are no supplies, denounced Mirna Wood Flores, vice-president of the Moskitia Asla Takanka Association (MASTA)."<sup>73</sup> "Territorial organizations of the Mosquitia area denounced this Wednesday before the Public Ministry and the National Commissioner of Human Rights (Conadeh) the political governor of the department of Gracias a Dios, Rina Koritza Mejía Ruiz, for alleged negligence in the management of social assistance directed to the inhabitants of this sector."<sup>74</sup>

## Economy

"The leader of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), Efrain Rodriguez, said that more than 50,000 small and medium enterprises have closed in Honduras during the Covid-19 pandemic."<sup>75</sup> "The director of the Economics Department of the National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH), Henry Rodriguez, estimates that 70% of workers who were formally employed have fallen into the category of underemployed."<sup>76</sup>

## Poverty

"Poverty in Honduras increased to 70% in 2020, up 10.7 percentage points from 59.3% in 2019, driven by the COVID-19 pandemic and tropical storms Eta and Iota."<sup>77</sup> "Getting sick with Covid-19 and being treated in private clinics is not for everyone. According to the doctor and also congressman Denis Castro Bobadilla, you have to have at least 1 million lempiras on hand to be admitted and treated by private doctors."<sup>78</sup>

In the first three months of 2021, Honduras received 29% more in remittances compared to 2020.<sup>79</sup>

## Education

"The director of the Institute of Educational and Social Research and Evaluation of the Pedagogical University, Russbel Hernandez, revealed this Friday that about 1.4 million children and adolescents are out of the educational system due to the Covid-19 pandemic."<sup>80</sup>

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70 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/cuadragésimo-tercero-manifiesto-publico/>

71 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/cuadragésimo-cuarto-manifiesto-publico/>

72 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/manifiesto-publico-numero-45/>

73 <https://proceso.hn/interponen-denuncia-por-contratacion-de-36-medicos-para-la-mosquitia-y-que-no-laboran-en-la-zona/>

74 <https://criterio.hn/pueblos-misquitos-denuncian-a-gobernadora-de-gracias-a-dios-por-retener-ayuda-y-dejar-vencer-2000-sacos-de-arroz/>

75 <https://criterio.hn/mas-de-50-mil-pequenas-y-medianas-empresas-han-cerrado-en-honduras/>

76 <https://criterio.hn/honduras-70-de-los-empleos-formales-han-caido-a-categoria-de-subempleo/>

77 <https://proceso.hn/la-pobreza-en-honduras-subio-a-70-en-2020-por-culpa-de-eta-iota-y-la-covid/>

78 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/aplicacion-movil/hasta-un-millon-de-lempiras-cobran-clinicas-privadas-para-ingresar-a-pacientes-con-covid-19/>

79 <https://proceso.hn/las-remesas-enviadas-a-honduras-suben-29-pese-a-la-covid-19/>

80 <https://confidencialhn.com/en-punto-critico-educacion-del-pais-por-covid-19-1-4-millones-de-ninos-excluidos-del-sistema-educativo/>

"Teachers' leader Jaime Rodriguez today questioned the government for pretending to open educational centers under the pilot mode despite the increase in cases of coronavirus. He added that schools and colleges do not have the basic conditions to implement the biosecurity measures required to combat the pathogen."<sup>81</sup> "In addition, the latest report of the organization, Casa Alianza Honduras, has reported at the end of March that more than two million children (primary and secondary) have been left out of the education system. According to the document, this 2021 only 75 thousand students have enrolled in basic education."<sup>82</sup> The JOH regime promised \$71 million for some 1200 schools.<sup>83</sup>

## Human Rights and Their Defenders

Amnesty International published its yearly report. On Honduras, they wrote: "During the COVID-19 pandemic, the security forces used excessive force to implement lockdowns and to police protests. Health workers highlighted the health risks posed by the lack of personal protection equipment (PPE) in hospitals. Honduras remained one of the most lethal countries for human rights defenders."<sup>84</sup>

On Earth Day, OACNUDH called on Honduras to sign and ratify the Escazú Agreement for the protection of environmental defenders.<sup>85</sup> UN Resident Coordinator in Honduras Alice H. Shackelford agrees.<sup>86</sup> "This day, in commemoration of International Mother Earth Day and the entry into force of the Escazu Agreement, FIAN Honduras organized a day with advocates and legal professionals focused on the relevance of Honduras' accession to this treaty in the midst of multiple environmental conflicts caused by extractive projects in Honduras."<sup>87</sup>

## Assassinations

The MP present an arrest warrants for the alleged killers of Lenca defender Félix Vásquez López last December.<sup>88</sup>

## Attacks, Criminalization and Harassment

CESPAD published an analysis of the criminalization against the members of defenders at the Santabarbarens Environmental Movement (MAS).<sup>89</sup>

Pasos de Animal Grande reported on the situation Hernán Rafael Silva Martínez. "He denounced a fierce persecution for having documents evidencing alleged corruption in the armed forces and

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81 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/04/21/el-magisterio-cuestiona-al-gobierno-por-los-pilotajes-en-centros-educativos/>

82 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2875-honduras-dos-millones-de-ninos-no-estudian-educacion-sin-plan-de-retorno>

83 <https://proceso.hn/destinaran-unos-71-millones-de-dolares-para-atender-a-mas-de-mil-200-centros-educativos-de-honduras>

84 <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/POL1032022021ENGLISH.PDF>

85 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1385330079786483713>

86 <https://twitter.com/aliceshackel/status/1385402079984951296>

87 <https://criterio.hn/acuerdo-de-escazu-es-vital-en-honduras-para-evitar-conflictos-ambientales/>

88 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/175-abril2021/7565-mp-presenta-requerimiento-fiscal-por-el-crimen-del-lider-indigena-felix-vasquez>

89 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/04/14/covuntura-desde-los-territorios-estrategias-de-criminalizacion-hacia-las-personas-defensoras-del-movimiento-ambientalista-santabarbarens-mas/>

since then the military has been employing different persecution strategies in search of the documents. On April 8, 2021, when he was on his way home, he managed to take a photograph of one of the vehicles that was following him."<sup>90</sup>

"The Human Rights Roundtable in Honduras demands that the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Judiciary put an end to the misuse of criminal law against human rights defenders belonging to the Organization, Alternative for Community and Environmental Claims of Honduras (ARCAH), who must appear at an initial hearing on April 13, 2021, in clear inequality compared to the poultry company El Cortijo, which pollutes the Choluteca River, but is treated with kid gloves by the justice system and is not punished for its actions against the environment by the Honduran State, which uses criminalization to bury peaceful protest in the country."<sup>91</sup> On April 12, there was a protest in solidarity with the criminalized ARCAH defenders.<sup>92</sup> Pasos de Animal Grande spoke with criminalized ARCAH defender Christopher Castillo.<sup>93</sup>

On April 14, IM-Defensoras sent out an alert. "Today, April 14, 2021, at around 9:00 am, armed men burst into the facilities of the Council for the Integral Development of Peasant Women (CODIMCA) requesting information about the general coordinator of the organization and when they did not get an answer they beat and tied up two colleagues from the technical team who were in the facilities."<sup>94</sup> OACNUDH condemned the attack.<sup>95</sup> CESPAD later published a further article on the possible motivations for the attack.<sup>96</sup>

"For defending the forest, two peasants will be submitted to Oral and Public trial in the Court of Siguatepeque, Comayagua, after seven years of judicial persecution. The peasants José Dolores Aguilar (53) and Enrique Rivera (68) have been criminalized since March 21, 2014. In 2015 they remained 6 months deprived of liberty, achieving alternative measures to prison being the Committee of Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared in Honduras (COFADEH), their guarantor. The lawyers Dora Oliva and María Elena Fonseca will advocate this Wednesday, April 21, for justice to be applied in favor of the members of the Peasant Associative Company "12 de febrero" located in Los Llanos, Taulabé, in the center of the country. More than seven thousand peasants have been criminalized in Honduras for defending their right to land."<sup>97</sup>

On April 28, "[f]our UN Special Rapporteurs sent a letter of allegations[1] to the State of Honduras expressing their "deep concern" about the prosecution and pre-trial detention of Víctor Vásquez and José Santos Vijil, human rights defenders from the department of La Paz."<sup>98</sup>

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90 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/denuncias/item/3129-me-quieren-asesinar-porque-descubri-actos-ilicitos-en-las-fuerzas-armadas>

91 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/denuncias/item/3131-ministerio-publico-quiere-sepultar-la-protesta-pacifica-en-honduras>

92 <https://confidencialhn.com/protestan-por-proceso-judicial-injusto-contra-siete-ambientalistas/>

93 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/denuncias/item/3136-me-quieren-ver-presos-y-haran-todo-lo-que-puedan-para-lograrlo>

94 <http://im-defensoras.org/2021/04/alerta-defensoras-honduras-hombres-armados-atacan-a-companeras-del-equipo-tecnico-de-codimca-y-roban-informacion-de-la-organizacion/>

95 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1382507864099586049>

96 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/04/20/por-que-ocurrio-el-asalto-a-las-mujeres-campesinas-de-codimca/>

97 <https://www.defensoresonlinea.com/por-defender-un-derecho-fuimos-a-parar-a-la-carcel/>

98 <https://oacnudh.hn/cuatro-relatorias-especiales-de-la-onu-expresan-su-preocupacion-por-criminalizacion-de-defensores-lencas-de-la-paz/>

The Coalition against Impunity denounced the death threats against environmental defender Juan María Cruz from MASSVIDA.<sup>99</sup>

## Indigenous Peoples

On April 5, OFRANEH's Miriam Miranda sent out an alert: "We raise alarm! Alejandro Camacho Torres, Mexican, who together with his wife Rosario Fajardo Ruiz filed the lawsuit against sisters #Jennifer and Marianela Mejia, threatens Garifuna with machete in hand. Trujillo police protect the Mexican. We hold him responsible for what happens".<sup>100</sup>

A week later, OFRANEH commemorated the 224 years of resistance by the Garífuna people in Honduras and made clear that currently, there is nothing to celebrate.<sup>101 102 103</sup> "The general coordinator of the Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras (OFRANEH), Miriam Miranda, said that Honduras is experiencing a humanitarian crisis that is normalized and executed from the power with the aim of expelling from the territory not only the Garifuna and indigenous peoples, but the population in general. From OFRANEH, Miranda denounced that there is a "gradual and silent genocide" that is reflected in the Garífuna communities through the murder of 40 members of the community in three years, but which is also manifested in the hundreds and thousands of Hondurans who leave the country through the migrant caravans."<sup>104</sup> "OACNUDH emphasizes that, to date, indigenous and Afro-Honduran peoples continue to suffer discrimination, exclusion and high rates of poverty and violence. The Office urges the Honduran State to respect, promote and guarantee the rights of the Afro-Honduran people."<sup>105</sup> April also marked the 9<sup>th</sup> month since the forceful disappearance of the Garífuna defenders Snaider, Suami, Milton and Gerardo.<sup>106 107</sup>

On April 18, COPINH sent out an alert. "COPINH member imprisoned for being poor. Celso Hernandez, a 20 year old member of COPINH has been imprisoned since the night of Saturday, April 17 for wanting to bring his family the firewood needed to cook their food."<sup>108</sup> Another alert, by IM-Defensoras was sent out the next day. "On Friday, April 16, 2021, Garífuna defender Mabel Robledo, leader of the community of Nueva Armenia, Atlántida, and member of the Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña, received a death threat from an unknown individual allegedly linked to organized crime."<sup>109</sup>

"A team from the Public Prosecutor's Office composed of prosecutors, forensic personnel and court agents carried out the exhumation of the body of Tolupán leader Oscar Adán Mejía in the

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99 <https://criterio.hn/denuncian-amenazas-de-muerte-contra-defensor-ambiental-del-sur-de-honduras/>

100 <https://twitter.com/baraudawaguchu/status/1379150354588311557>

101 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/138159929983010820>

102 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1381617864243822595>

103 <https://radioprogreso.hn/porada/ataques-y-criminalizacion-marcan-224-anos-de-presencia-garifunas-en-honduras/>

104 <https://criterio.hn/en-honduras-hay-una-crisis-humanitaria-normalizada-para-promover-el-saqueo/>

105 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1381721519898951681>

106 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1383786441285672960>

107 <https://twitter.com/EuropaOfraneh/status/1383779979717005317>

108 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1383910012376915971>

109 <http://im-defensoras.org/2021/04/alerta-defensoras-honduras-amenazan-de-muerte-a-defensora-y-lideresa-garifuna/>

department of Yoro, in northern Honduras. The exhumation was carried out in order to obtain more information leading to the clarification of his murder, which occurred in December 2020 in the municipality of Morazán."<sup>110</sup> <sup>111</sup>

## The Case of Berta Cáceres

On April 6, the trial against David Castillo started. But three days earlier, COPINH's general coordinator Berta Zúniga and COPINH members Laura Zúniga and Camilo Bermúdez were arrested by the police. The three of them were later released but it sent a worrisome signal.<sup>112</sup> On the day of the trial, COPINH denounced that the court would not allow the presence of international human rights observers in the court room.<sup>113</sup> OACNUDH also lamented this decision and wrote that this would limit the effectiveness of their work.<sup>114</sup>

Karen Spring published again a detailed overview of the court proceedings. She started her summary with an important observation. "COPINH and Berta Cáceres's family do not consider David Castillo to be an intellectual author of Berta's murder despite being charged as such. COPINH has publicly stated that Castillo was following orders and that he was protecting the interests of others. For these reasons, COPINH calls Castillo a co-author of Berta's murder to make it clear that Castillo is responsible for her murder, but not the only person that made the decision or paid for Berta to be killed." After a five hour delay because Castillo was not brought to court on time, they first day ended with the court rejecting a "request by the defense to delay the trial noting that the Defense had sufficient time (since September 2020) to seek the relevant evidence needed for expert witness testimony/analysis. The court also ruled that they would not consider new pieces of evidence that had not been presented in the evidentiary hearing".<sup>115</sup> The first day of trial was accompanied by statements of solidarity with Berta's family and COPINH, e.g. by EU Parliamentarians<sup>116</sup> <sup>117</sup> and US members of Congress.<sup>118</sup>

On Day 2, "[t]he lawyers (acusador privado) representing Berta Cáceres's family present additional evidence including documents outlining a bank transfer for over \$1,254,000 USD authorized by DESA's Chief Financial Officer, Daniel Atala to Pensa, the company directed by David Castillo (see pictures published by COPINH below). The date of the bank transfer is February 29, 2016 and the money is suspected to be direct evidence of payments made and authorized by DESA executives to Castillo, who then gave money to now-convicted murderer, Douglas Bustillo, while discussing plans to carry out some sort of action around the date of the bank transfer and just days before Berta Cáceres was murdered. The defense asked the judges to recuse themselves from the case. The court ruled that the trial will be suspended until the Appeals Court rules on the defense's motion. [NOTE:

<sup>110</sup> <https://criterio.hn/exhuman-cadaver-de-lider-tolupan-asesinado-en-el-departamento-de-yoro/>

<sup>111</sup> <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/175-abril2021/7513-exhuman-en-yorito-yoro-cadaver-de-ex-presidente-de-tribu-tolupan>

<sup>112</sup> <https://twitter.com/ErikaGuevaraR/status/137853090509582342>

<sup>113</sup> <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1379478143787008003>

<sup>114</sup> <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1379560832678379520>

<sup>115</sup> <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2021/4/6/day-one>

<sup>116</sup> <https://twitter.com/MiguelUrban/status/1379479940349976583>

<sup>117</sup> <https://twitter.com/MetzTilly/status/1379468255824379905>

<sup>118</sup> <https://twitter.com/RepSires/status/1379501623605653507>

This is the fourth time that the defense has attempted to recuse the judges. Lawyer Victor Fernandez predicts that the Appeals court will rule within the next few days and if denied, the trial could continue next week]"<sup>119</sup> COPINH held a press conference outside the court after the suspension.<sup>120</sup> OACNUDH expressed concern about "the repeated delays that impede access to justice and the effective search for truth for the victims".<sup>121</sup> CEJIL called on "the State of Honduras to take all necessary measures to guarantee the safety of Berta Cáceres' family and COPINH".<sup>122</sup> The IACHR also voiced concern,<sup>123</sup> On April 14, the Appeals Court rejected the newest dilatory tactic by the defense of David Castillo.<sup>124</sup>

CESPAD published an interview with Victor Fernandez. "[He] is leading the defense of one of the most complex cases in his career: the crime of indigenous leader Berta Cáceres. However, this lawyer faces power structures in Honduras that maneuver to prevent the investigation from reaching high-level businessmen who are allegedly linked to the crime. CESPAD spoke with Fernández and he tells us how, on behalf of the victims, the doors have been closed to him to learn about the progress of the investigation, the case has been declared confidential and even, in the trial, there have been practices that violate international conventions and national laws on human rights."<sup>125</sup> El Faro published an article by Edy Táborá on the role of David Castillo in the murder of Berta Cáceres.<sup>126</sup>

On April 26, the trial finally continued. once again, Karen Spring published a great summary. "The opening remarks have still not taken place. The parties continue to present new evidence and objections or clarifications of evidence previously presented before the court. Castillo's defense team objects to the following evidence presented on day two by the private accusers (acusador privado) representing the Cáceres family:

- The written expert analyses, specifically arguing that the sources listed in the bibliographies are subjective and non-scientific elements. They also argue that the issue of gender - a subject of one expert testimony - is not relevant in the case.
- The documents that demonstrate Castillo's legal role in the Panamanian company PEMSA and object to the document demonstrating the million dollar bank transfer authorized by Daniel Atala to PEMSA (directed by David Castillo) days before Berta was murdered.

The defense presents 10 new pieces of evidence, most of which are objected to by the prosecutors and the private accusers, and presents three nulidades (legal objections) to evidence presented by the prosecutors and private accusers as well as the court's resolution of the evidentiary hearing."<sup>127</sup>

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119 <https://www.aquiabajocom/blog/2021/4/7/day-two-trial-against-david-castillo-co-author-of-berta-caceres-murder>

120 <https://copinh.org/2021/04/presentan-nueva-prueba-que-evidencia-el-pago-de-un-miembro-de-la-familia-atala-a-david-castillo-un-dia-antes-del-asesinato/>

121 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1379976500179566594>

122 <https://www.cejil.org/es/cejil-honduras-debe-garantizar-proteccion-familia-berta-caceres-y-copinh-juicio-contra-david>

123 <https://twitter.com/CIDH/status/1380531414152663040>

124 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/138238979873271330>

125 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/04/12/asi-ha-operado-el-sistema-judicial-de-honduras-en-el-juicio-del-asesinato-de-berta-caceres/>

126 <https://elfaro.net/es/202104/columnas/25425/Los-asesinos-de-Berta-C%C3%A1ceres-al-descubierto.htm>

127 <https://www.aquiabajocom/blog/2021/4/26/day-three-trial-against-david-castillo-co-author-of-berta-caceres-murder>



OACNUDH once again had to express concern that both victims and observers were not allowed to be at the trial.<sup>128</sup> Interestingly, the MP retweeted this.<sup>129</sup>

The next day, Spring highlighted the following points:

- "Court rejects the documents presented as evidence by the attorneys of the Cáceres' family that demonstrate David Castillo's role in the company PEMSA and the bank transfer request solicited by Daniel Atala from CONCASA to PEMSA for \$1.254 million just days before Berta's murder.
- Court accepts all three of the expert witnesses (arguably a unique acceptance in the Honduran judicial context) proposed by the private accusers representing the Cáceres family (...)
- The court decides to allow Laura Zúniga and David Castillo's mother into observe the trial. COPINH denounces that this equates their participation in the process and in doing so, the court is rejecting Laura's unique legal status as a victim which gives her the right to actively participate in the process.
- At 7:30 pm, the opening statements were presented and the murder charge against David Castillo were formalized. The trial has now begun. The defense's principal argument is that the Honduran state and investigators manipulated the investigation from the beginning, excluding relevant lines of investigation. The prosecutors focused their remarks on Castillo's role within the organized criminal group that murdered Berta, specifically his communications with Bustillo. The private accusers argued that the context of the case began as early as the granting of the concession to build the Agua Zarca dam and Berta's role in resisting the project lead DESA - it's employees like Castillo and executives - to monitor, criminalize, and murder her."<sup>130</sup>

On April 28, the trial continued. Karen Spring highlighted the following points: "

- Today, the trial consisted of the witness testimony from investigator Jesús Perdomo and a brief expert analysis by ballistic expert Olman García who studied the gun found in Henry Hernandez's home [Hernandez was convicted in November 2018 of Berta's murder] that matched fragments and bullets found during the autopsy and at the crime scene. In addition, several documents and the relevant physical evidence were ratified by state agents involving inspections of the crime scene; inspections of the convicted men's houses raided by investigators, several cell phones that were seized; the firearm found in Hernandez's home; and the bullets recovered from the autopsy and crime scene.
- Investigative agent Jesús Perdomo testified that the first line of investigation into Berta Cáceres murder was based on a theory that it was a crime of passion. The second line of

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128 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1386823766500597763>

129 [https://twitter.com/MP\\_Honduras/status/1386830874113609729](https://twitter.com/MP_Honduras/status/1386830874113609729)

130 <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2021/4/27/day-four-trial-against-david-castillo-co-author-of-bera-cceres-murder>

investigation involved an individual that lived in a neighborhood close to the scene of the murder. Then investigators began to consider lines of investigation related to DESA and threats that Berta had received, according to testimonies of COPINH members, for resisting the Agua Zarca dam.

- COPINH published documents (see below) during the course of today's proceedings questioning the role of Security Minister Julian Pacheco in promoting the first line of investigation mentioned by agent Jesús Pacheco; and documents related to the military careers of Douglas Bustillo and Mariano Díaz Chavez questioning whether high-level military officials also knew about and were part of the murder. <sup>131</sup>

On day 6, the following took place:

- “Rosalina Dominguez, a Lenca leader from the community of Rio Blanco testified. Dominguez declared that David Castillo had visited Rio Blanco on a few occasions insisting that the Agua Zarca project be built (see photos below). Dominguez described the role that Berta Cáceres and COPINH played in assisting the community defend their territory and the violence that was caused by DESA including the destruction of crops, murder, threats, etc. Dominguez spoke about Berta mentioning Castillo, telling Dominguez that Castillo would send her weird messages inviting her to go to swim in the river, and that if anything ever happened to her, it would be Castillo's fault.
- One investigative document describing the raid on Douglas Bustillo's home included the discovery of parts of an M16 weapon. During the course of the day, COPINH publicly denounced that the weapon belonged to the Honduran Armed Forces and under Honduran law, it is illegal for unauthorized individuals to possess such military-grade weapons (see photos below).
- In one investigative document, an agent spoke about finding uniforms with the logos and names of the 'Anti-Narcotics Directorate' (DLCN) and 'Attorney General' in DESA's office when it was raided.
- Several documents were ratified by individuals involved in the investigations, raids, and seizures of property related to the murder case. All investigative documents used as evidence by the prosecutors have been presented and ratified.
- The live transmission continued to cut out regularly throughout the day making it extremely difficult to follow the proceedings. Some parts were missed entirely. Trial was suspended at 9:20 pm.”<sup>132</sup>

On April 30, the last day of trial this month took place. Karen Spring highlighted the following main points of the day.

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131 <https://www.aquiabajos.com/blog/2021/4/28/day-five-trial-against-david-castillo-co-author-of-bera-cceres-murder>

132 <https://www.aquiabajos.com/blog/2021/4/29/day-six-trial-against-david-castillo>



- " Investigative agent José Paloma testified that during the raid on the house and arrest of Mariano Díaz Chavez, Diaz Chavez approached him and told the agent that Douglas Bustillo had contracted hitmen to kill Berta Cáceres and previously, had offered Díaz Chavez 500,000 Lps [~\$20,000 USD] to carry out the murder which he declined. The money was given to Bustillo by a DESA manager. He also specified that Cáceres was killed because she opposed a dam project.
- The forensic doctor that conducted the autopsy and determined the cause of Berta's death testified that Berta was shot four times but killed by two bullets that damaged her lungs and caused blood to drain into her thorax (hemothorax). Within minutes, the injuries would have caused her death which was classified as a homicide.
- Several documents were ratified [by error, it was reported yesterday that this part of the evidence had concluded, but it continued today].
- Castillo's defense team was more insistent today about highlighting and questioning errors made by investigative agents including delays between the moment that property was seized from a suspect and the time the chain of custody was started; the lack of signatures on investigative reports, the expertise of agents to conduct inspections, etc. This questioning is in line with Castillo's defense strategy.
- The trial was suspended at 10:11 pm and convened for Monday, May 3rd at 8:30 am after the lawyers representing the Cáceres' family asked the court to reconsider the decision to schedule the trial for tomorrow (Saturday, May 1st). The request was granted."<sup>133</sup>

One case also linked to the murder of Berta was resolved this month. "A criminal execution court in Tegucigalpa has granted a letter of release to retired police commissioner María Luisa Borjas after commuting her sentence for the payment of money. The also deputy for the Libertad y Refundación (Libre) Party had been sentenced to two years and eight months of imprisonment for the crime of slander constituting defamation against Camilo Atala. Borjas was accused of the crime of defamation, which no longer exists in the new Penal Code."<sup>134 135</sup>

## LGBTQ

"Within the LGBTI (Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex) universe, trans and gender-diverse people tend to suffer higher levels of exclusion, stigma and social prejudice, according to a report by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR)."<sup>136</sup> Also at the Inter-American Human Rights System, at the court, a case regarding Honduras makes headlines. "Outraged by a long-ignored slaying in Honduras, lawyers are urging a human rights court in

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133 <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2021/4/30/day-seven-trial-against-david-castillo>

134 <https://criterio.hn/dan-carta-de-libertad-a-maria-luisa-borjas-tras-conmuta-de-pena/>

135 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/denuncias/item/3130-pague-por-un-delito-inexistente-para-no-morir-en-prision>

136 <https://criterio.hn/exclusion-social-de-las-personas-trans-y-de-genero-diverso-requiere-atencion-urgente-cidh/>

Central America to force governments to better protect transgender people in a region where they are targets."<sup>137</sup>

## Assassination

Vanessa Zúniga, a trans woman and activist was murdered on March 31, 2021, precisely the same date on which the International Day of Transgender Visibility was commemorated.<sup>138</sup>

## Freedom of Expression and Journalists

The situation of journalists continues to worsen in Honduras as reflected in the so far worst ranking in the Freedom of Press Index by Reporters without Borders. Honduras ranks 151 out of 180 countries.<sup>139</sup> The Inter-American Press Society (SIP) came to the same conclusion regarding the situation in Honduras.<sup>140</sup>

Pasos de Animal Grande warned about the situation of journalists as 19 individual and 3 collective attacks had been recorded in the first three months of 2021.<sup>141</sup> And the situation did not improve in April. C-Libre denounced that journalists were not allowed to cover the public hearing in the case of the murder of journalist Erick Martínez Ávila. The case goes back to May 2012.<sup>142</sup> "The cameraman of HCH television channel, Carlos Perez was assaulted this Friday night, April 9, while covering an event where four people were killed in a neighborhood of San Pedro Sula, department of Cortes, northern Honduras. Perez was filming an event in the San Carlos de Sula neighborhood, where police agents were apprehending four people. However, when he was covering the event for the television channel, he was removed from the area and subsequently assaulted. During the transmission "En Directo" for the HCH news program, police violence was observed against the cameraman and his partner, Orlin Castro (reporter), where pushing, hitting and violent attitude towards Pérez was observed."<sup>143</sup> On April 27, C-Libre denounced that a police agent threatened the journalist Daniel Mejía with his service weapon.<sup>144</sup>

At least five journalists and social communicator have died so far in 2021 to COVID-19.<sup>145</sup> ASOPODEHU published a short report on journalistic work in a pandemic.<sup>146</sup>

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137 <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/29/world/americas/honduras-transgender-rights.html>

138 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/denuncias/item/3123-otro-crimen-contra-comunidad-lgbt-condenan-asesinato-de-la-defensora-trans-vanessa-zuniga>

139 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/amenazas/item/3139-clasificacion-mundial-de-la-libertad-de-prensa-2021-periodismo-una-vacuna-contra-la-desinformacion-vetada-en-mas-de-130-paises>

140 <https://proceso.hn/la-inseguridad-para-ejercer-el-periodismo-en-honduras-continua-senala-la-sip/>

141 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/monitoreo/item/3132-nadie-hara-algo-si-atacan-a-periodistas-en-honduras>

142 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1337-impedimento-en-coertura-informativa-denuncian-periodistas-asignados-a-fuente-judicial>

143 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1343-policias-agreden-a-camarografo-durante-coertura-de-suceso-en-zona-norte>

144 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1341-policial-vial-amenaza-con-su-arma-de-reglamento-y-filma-con-su-celular-a-periodista>

145 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1342-cinco-periodistas-han-muerto-por-covid-19-registrados-hasta-marzo>

146 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/amenazas/item/3144-pandemia-y-periodistas-en-honduras-entre-la-muerte-las-amenazas-precariidad-laboral-y-la-secretividad-de-la-informacion>

## Violence against Women

"Women's rights organizations demanded justice for Alejandra on Tuesday, on the second anniversary of the gang rape of which the minor was a victim and for which only one of the culprits has been sentenced. The movement "I do not want to be raped" issued a statement in which they denounced the impunity in this crime committed against Alejandra, then 16 years old, in a hotel in the municipality of La Ceiba, northern Honduras."<sup>147</sup>

"Women who make up the Women's Movement for Peace, Visitación Padilla, arrived this Thursday morning (22/04/2021) to the headquarters of the Supreme Court of Justice in Tegucigalpa to demand a stop to the murder of women. "So far this year, we have registered 72 women who have died in the country because of gender violence, they continue to delay our rights, they forget our rights and see us as a thing, they do not recognize us, there is impunity on the part of the Justice Operating System", said on Radio Progreso Dalila Flores of the Women's Movement."<sup>148</sup>

## Extractive Industries

"An action of unconstitutionality against the suspension of open town meetings and the establishment of the same through virtual means, was presented by various organizations united in the Coalition Against Impunity, this April 20, 2021, before the Constitutional Chamber of the Honduran Court of Justice."<sup>149</sup>

## Mining

### Guapinol

"Two months ago, the Court of Appeals of La Ceiba cemented the collusion between the judiciary and the Inversiones Los Pinares mining company to illegally keep eight water defenders from Guapinol and Sector San Pedro in jail as punishment for their defense of the rivers in the Carlos Escaleras National Park against the threat of an iron oxide mining project. Tomorrow, Wednesday, April 7, at 10:30 a.m.: the families of the defenders arbitrarily imprisoned, the Municipal Committee in Defense of the Common and Public Goods of Tocoa and its legal team will present an injunction in the Supreme Court to guarantee their rights and obtain the freedom of the comrades who have been imprisoned for their defense of the environment."<sup>150</sup> "The eight illegally detained Guapinol and Sector San Pedro water defenders filed an injunction today against the distorted and malicious ruling of the Court of Appeals of La Ceiba for violation of fundamental rights established in the Constitution of the Republic and International Human Rights Treaties. The legal action comes one day after the filing of a Habeas Corpus by the National Human Rights Ombudsperson

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147 <https://criterio.hn/a-dos-anos-de-la-violacion-grupal-exigen-justicia-para-alejandra/>

148 <https://radioprogreso.hn/aplicacion-movil/mujeres-demandan-justicia-por-alto-numero-de-feminicidio/>

149 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/denuncias/item/3140-organizaciones-accionan-en-contra-de-los-cabildos-virtuales-en-las-comunidades-por-ser-discriminatorias>

150 <https://www.guapinolresiste.org/post/filing-of-constitutional-appeal-freedom-for-guapinol-now>

(CONADEH) Commissioner, Blanca Izaguirre, urging the application of international standards to guarantee the immediate release of the defenders."<sup>151</sup>

On April 24, the Municipal Committee for the Defense of Commons and Public Goods sent out an alert that people linked to Inversiones Los Pinares visited the criminalized Guapinol defenders in prison to intimidate them.<sup>152</sup> OACNUDH expressed profound concern.<sup>153</sup>

## Hydroelectricity

Over 60 national and international organizations wrote an open letter to the US Treasury calling on them to oppose the financing of the Jilamito hydroelectric project through the Inter-American Development Bank and the US International Development Finance Corporation.<sup>154 155</sup>

"The community of Mejocote in the municipality of Gracias, department of Lempira, some 250 kilometers east of Tegucigalpa, capital of Honduras, has denounced that through the president of the Water Board, the population is being pressured to build a hydroelectric dam on the Río Grande de Mejocote. They claim that they are even resorting to deception to get the inhabitants to sign attendance lists that are presented as guarantees that they agree with the hydroelectric dam."<sup>156</sup>

## Corruption and Its Enemies

"The authorities of the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ) announced that they will strengthen the corruption circuit in order to expedite the handling of cases."<sup>157</sup> CESPAD published a reflection on the role of the international community in fighting corruption in Honduras.<sup>158</sup>

"The former Attorney General of the State, Edmundo Orellana, said this Tuesday that the reforms to the Law of the Complementary Optional Regime for the Administration of Private Pension Funds approved by the National Congress are an attack on the savings of the people who are contributing. (...) In this sense, he pointed out that "it is practically a confiscation of assets because those funds that are in the pension system belong to the account holders", who are the ones who are in this situation."<sup>159</sup>

On April 29, the JOH regime announced the intervention of the National Teachers' Welfare Institute (Inprema).<sup>160</sup> Social sectors fear that the institution would be raided by the JOH regime and in response the Platform for the Defense of Public Health and Education was reactivated.<sup>161 162</sup>

151 <https://www.guapinolresiste.org/post/honduras-supreme-court-must-correct-distorted-ruling-free-arbitrarily-detained-guapinol-defenders>

152 <http://www.hondurastierralibre.com/2021/04/honduras-terror-estado-de-honduras.html>

153 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1386069096878460929>

154 <https://twitter.com/SOAWatch/status/1382752110173945860>

155 <https://criterio.hn/piden-a-ee-uu-cancelar-financiamiento-a-proyecto-hidroelectrico-sobre-el-rio-jilamito/>

156 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2866-honduras-en-lempira-hidroelectrica-engana-lencas-para-explotar-maravilla-ambiental>

157 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1459131-466/circuito-anticorruccion-poder-judicial>

158 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/04/27/analisis-para-enfrentar-la-captura-del-estado-y-las-redes-de-corruccion-la-comunidad-internacional-es-la-unica-salida-que-tiene-honduras/>

159 <https://criterio.hn/reformas-a-ley-de-afp-son-un-atentado-al-ahorro-de-las-personas-cotizantes-edmundo-orellana/>

160 <https://proceso.hn/gobierno-interviene-el-inprema-por-bajos-niveles-de-eficiencia-administrativa/>

161 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/04/29/dirigencia-magisterial-denuncian-que-gobierno-busca-asaltar-al-inprema-con-interventora-y-las-afp/>

162 <https://confidencialhn.com/medicos-y-maestros-anuncian-reactivacion-de-plataforma-para-la-defensa-de-la-salud-y-educacion/>

## The Onslaught against the Anti-Corruption Bodies

"The Special Prosecutorial Unit Against Corruption Networks (UFERCO) continues to operate without auditors and with fewer prosecutors and investigators. And although it is the Fiscal Unit that follows the trail of several financial investigation cases, involving billions of lempiras in corruption cases of the Porfirio Lobo administration and the two administrations of Juan Orlando Hernandez, they do not advance because there is no support from the Attorney General's Office of Honduras. Human resource limitations have the UFERCO staff adrift, and far from receiving the required support from the Attorney General's Office, their work is weakened daily. Five auditors are currently working, but they cannot cope with the cases that are currently being processed before the country's Courts of Justice. The team of the Center for the Study of Democracy (CESPAD), had access to the testimony of several investigators who affirm that the obstacles they have to complete the investigation of the cases left by the Special Prosecutor Unit Against Impunity and Corruption (UFECIC), with the Support Mission Against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH), limit the financial investigation of at least 60 high impact investigations. These are investigations of three government administrations, involving billions of lempiras that are literally at a standstill."<sup>163</sup>

"The former Attorney General of the Republic, Edmundo Orellana Mercado, considers that the only way to depoliticize the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ) is to elect magistrates who do not represent political parties in Honduras. According to Orellana, the independence of the Judiciary is not achieved by increasing the term of office of the magistrates, but by electing suitable professionals who will not represent political parties in the CSJ. (...) Orellana's reaction is in allusion to the proposal presented by Congressman José Luis Cruz before the National Congress, to extend to 30 years the term of the CSJ magistrates, according to him, in order to end the interference of the political class in the Judicial Power."<sup>164</sup>

## IHSS

Thanks to the new Penal Code, two accused in the IHSS corruption case may await trial in freedom.<sup>165</sup> And more bad news followed. The former IHSS director Mario Zelaya was found guilty on one account but was absolved of all other charges. His sentencing will take place on May 7.<sup>166</sup> The MP challenged the verdict.<sup>167</sup>

## Pandora

Two people involved in the Pandora corruption case have been murdered recently. "Former sentencing judge Indiana Beatriz Castellanos, who was executed by unknown persons and whose body was found in the Roble Oeste neighborhood, in the south of the capital, dealt with some high-impact cases, such as the Pandora case. In fact, the former judicial official and the also deceased

<sup>163</sup> <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/04/26/60-investigaciones-de-alto-perfil-paralizadas-dentro-la-uferco/>

<sup>164</sup> <https://proceso.hn/csj-se-despolitizara-solo-eligiendo-magistrados-que-no-representen-a-partidos-politicos-exfiscal-orellana/>

<sup>165</sup> <https://elpulso.hn/2021/04/23/dos-implicados-en-mega fraude-al-ihss-podrian-defenderse-en-libertad-por-recibir-sobornos/>

<sup>166</sup> <https://prohondurasnetwork.com/2021/04/28/tribunal-absuelve-de-siete-delitos-a-mario-zelaya-por-corrupcion-en-desfalco-de-ihss/>

<sup>167</sup> <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/175-abril2021/7610-mp-prepara-recurso-de-casacion-a-la-espera-que-tribunal-enmiende-ultimo-fallo-favorable-a-mario-zelaya>

former criminal judge Melvin Bonilla - who died last March - were legal representatives of several accused of the theft of around 282 million lempiras from the Ministry of Agriculture to finance political campaigns."<sup>168</sup>

## Asfura

Nationalist presidential candidate Nasry Asfura already faces charges for corruption (see previous months) and this month Expediente Público reported about another case he is involved in. "Nasry Asfura is a shareholder of the garbage collection company Sulambiente, which sued the municipality of San Pedro Sula for a total of US\$8.1 million without having provided any service. A report by Expediente Público uncovers how the transaction took place, how Asfura hides its identity under the name of another firm and how its partners, once the case is won, return the shares to their original partner".<sup>169</sup> On April 27, UFERCO once again investigated the offices of the Mayor's Office of the Central District (AMDC) as part of a corruption investigation.<sup>170</sup>

## State Security Forces

"The Public Prosecutor's Office, through the Special Prosecutor's Office for Human Rights (FEDH), obtained a formal indictment with measures other than pre-trial detention against police officers Santos Mauricio Baquedano Miralda and Carlos Edgardo Osorio, for allegedly being responsible for the crime of breaking and entering, as defined in Article 203 of the Penal Code."<sup>171</sup> "In another case, substitutive measures were decreed against preventive police officer Josué Adonay Reyes Cáceres for cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment by a public official or employee to the detriment of Jorge Amílcar Santamaría Zavala."<sup>172</sup>

COFADEH has been accompanying these last three month the case of Cristian Aguiluz, who was disappeared after having been detained by the National Anti-Mara and Pandilla Force (FNAMP).<sup>173</sup>

## Post-Electoral Human Rights Violations

While justice has still not been served for the numerous murders by state security forces and further human rights violations during the post-electoral repression in 2017, the criminalization of protesters continues. "The Sentencing Court of San Pedro Sula rescheduled for November 30 and December 1 of this year the oral and public trial against 11 residents of the municipality of Pimienta who participated in the protests against the electoral fraud of 2017. The trial was scheduled to take

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168 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/04/07/abogada-y-exjueza-ultimada-defendia-junto-a-fallecido-penalista-a-varios-encausados-en-pandora/>

169 <https://expedientepublico.org/alcalde-de-tegucigalpa-nasry-asfura-el-papi-de-la-basura/>

170 <https://confidencialhn.com/uferco-ejecuta-inspeccion-en-la-alcaldia-capitalina-por-mal-uso-de-fidecomisos/>

171 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/175-abril2021/7536-auto-de-formal-procesamiento-contra-agentes-policiales>

172 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/175-abril2021/7539-fiscalia-del-litoral-atlantico-registra-cuatro-condenas-ademas-de-proceso-contra-policia-por-tratos-crueles-inhumanos-o-degradantes>

173 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/a-tres-meses-de-la-detencion-y-posterior-desaparicion-de-cristian-la-fnamp-no-da-respuesta-sobre-su-paradero/>

place on April 22 and 23, but due to the fact that the Courts were unable to summon all the defendants, it was rescheduled for the end of November of this year.”<sup>174</sup>

## Repressions

A protest demanding the reconstruction of flood dykes destroyed by the hurricanes Eta and Iota last year was repressed by the police.<sup>175 176</sup>

## Assassinations

In the case of the murder of Keyla Martínez who died in police custody in February, the head of the Directorate of Police Disciplinary Affairs (Didadpol) Allan Argeñal, recommended to the Ministry of Security the dismissal of the officers responsible for her arrest, but nothing more.<sup>177</sup> This led to widespread indignation.<sup>178</sup> Keyla's mother wrote an open letter to the Police Investigation Bureau (DPI) demanding results in the investigation into the murder of her daughter.<sup>179</sup> On April 13, Didadpol assured that the case of Keyla had been closed. Allan Argeñal, head of Didadpol, assured that "the discharge hearings were held for two policemen and ordered that they be separated from the institution".<sup>180</sup> The MP did not agree and on April 16, they filed charges of aggravated femicide against one of the involved police agents.<sup>181</sup> OACNUDH welcomed this.<sup>182</sup> A day later, a judge decided to maintain the arrest of police agent Rolando Perdomo Sarmiento.<sup>183</sup> Keyla's cousin, Lilith Cáliz, who is part of the legal team representing her case, denounced: "The arrest of Officer Jarol is a scapegoat and a way to distract the attention of Keila's family and the entire Honduran people."<sup>184</sup>

At the same time, Defensores en Línea denounced: "A police contingent attacked demonstrators in front of the Court of Justice in La Esperanza, department of Intibucá, where they transferred the basic scale policeman, Jarol Rolando Perdomo Sarmiento, accused of the crime against Keyla Martínez."<sup>185</sup> During the initial hearing on April 20, the MP presented its proof against the police agent. "[T]he investigations and scientific technical expertise determine that he was inside the cell for five to six minutes where the young woman was deprived of liberty and then remained outside the premises in a suspicious manner and without returning to his position as assistant to the commander of the police station and in charge of the keys to the cells and custody of the detainees. Prosecutors and investigators also determined that there was manipulation of the crime scene by the

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174 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/a-finales-de-noviembre-se-desarrollara-juicio-oral-contra-criminalizados-de-pimienta/>

175 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/denuncias/item/3126-policias-reprimen-una-caminata-pacifica-de-pobladores-afectados-por-los-huracanes-eta-e-iota>

176 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/aplicacion-movil/policia-reprime-a-pobladores-del-valle-de-sula-que-demandan-reparacion-de-bordos-y-dragado-de-rios/>

177 <https://www.radioh.hn/didadpol-recomienda-a-seguridad-el-despido-de-dos-policias-vinculados-en-muerte-de-keyla-martinez-en-posta-policia/>

178 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/aplicacion-movil/condenan-falta-de-castigo-contra-implicados-en-asesinato-de-keyla-martinez/>

179 <https://tiempo.hn/madre-keyla-martinez-carta-dpi/>

180 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/sucesos/1456398-466-cierran-caso-keyla-martinez-separacion-agentes-policiales>

181 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/175-abril2021/7522-mp-interpone-requerimiento-fiscal-por-femicidio-de-keyla-patricia-martinez-en-posta-de-la-esperanza>

182 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1383221034334048262>

183 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/sucesos/1457460-466/policia-mato-keyla-martinez-posta>

184 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/lilith-calix-la-detencion-del-oficial-jarol-es-un-chivo-expiatorio-y-alguien-con-el-que-pretenden-distraer-la-atencion-de-la-familia-de-keila-y-de-todo-el-pueblo-hondureno/>

185 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/entre-disturbios-inicio-audiencia-contra-policia-implicado-en-la-muerte-de-keyla/>



same police officer accused of the crime."<sup>186</sup> It seemed that the MP tried to blame just one low-level police agent for everything while the family denounced that more members of the police force were involved.<sup>187</sup> The family and human rights organizations also denounced that the court was completely militarized in an alleged show of support for the accused police agent.<sup>188 189</sup>

On the second day of the hearing, the judge decided on pre-trial detention for Perdomo.<sup>190</sup> During the hearing against the police officer, two videos were shown. One showed that the crime scene were tempered with. "In the second video, according to Lili Cálix's account, at the moment of being taken to the bathroom by a police agent Keyla Martínez complained that her cell was dirty and that there was a bad smell there. "In the transfer that they take Keyla to the bathroom, she alludes that she smells like urine and when the authorities showed up at that place, the cell was clean and without any bad smell.""<sup>191</sup> At the same time, "[r]elatives of Keyla Martinez denounced that they have received threats and intimidation from state repressive bodies outside the Court of Letters in La Esperanza, Intibucá, where a hearing is being held against one of the police officers involved in the death of the young university student."<sup>192</sup> "These intimidating and threatening acts have been experienced most strongly by Nancy Rodriguez, the younger sister of the young nurse, who has been very visible in demanding justice for the crime of her relative."<sup>193</sup>

Reporteros de Investigación calls for the investigation of the intellectual authors of the murder of nursing student Keyla Martínez. "On the other hand, anyone who knows how the hierarchical structure within the Honduran National Police works knows that it is strange that they want to make the Honduran people believe that a single low-level police officer could have power in a police station full of other police officers and put at risk all the people detained, because a single police officer had access without security controls to a cell to cause Keyla's asphyxiation even though there were more of his colleagues that same night. According to the statement given by the doctor who was with Keyla, as well as the doctor who received the young woman in the emergency room of the hospital, there were several police officers in the police post and in the patrol car that transferred the young woman to the medical center. Also the message in this argument is that a single police officer, accustomed to receive orders in a hierarchical pyramid, dared to commit an act within a police post and went further because he also had control, experience and intelligence to modify the crime scene by ordering the transfer of the body in a police patrol: discover the fallacy."<sup>194</sup>

Pasos de Animal Grande reported on a second case involving state security forces. "Three military members of the 101st Military Brigade, are on trial in the Criminal Courts of Choluteca, for

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186 <https://proceso.hn/en-audiencia-inicial-un-policia-acusado-de-la-muerte-de-keyla-martinez/>

187 <https://criterio.hn/acusado-del-femicidio-de-keyla-martinez-no-actuo-solo-reafirma-su-madre-en-inicio-de-audiencia/>

188 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/militarizado-juzgados-de-la-esperanza-por-audiencia-de-policia-acusado-del-crimen-de-keyla/>

189 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/despliegue-policial-y-militar-en-juzgados-de-la-esperanza-es-guerra-psicologica-para-el-pueblo-que-reclama-justicia/>

190 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/175-abril2021/7561-mp-obtiene-prision-preventiva-contr-policia-por-femicidio-de-keyla-patricia-martinez-2>

191 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/sucesos/1459097-466/videos-fiscalia-homicidio-keyla-martinez-jarol-perdomo>

192 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/familia-de-keyla-denuncia-amenazas-e-intimidacion-por-elementos-policiales/>

193 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/hermana-de-keyla-denuncia-que-es-victima-de-persecucion-e-intimidacion/>

194 <https://www.reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2021/04/23/justicia-para-keyla-faltan-los-autores-intelectuales/>



torturing the young Alexander Perez, when he came from playing soccer on December 18, 2017. (...) Lawyer Nidia Castillo is interviewed by [pasosdeanimalgrande.com](http://pasosdeanimalgrande.com) and details that justice is agile to prosecute human rights defenders, but late to do so against those who hold power, in this case military of the 101st Military Brigade, who despite having committed serious torture against Kevin, are still in their posts and have time to obstruct justice, delaying the entire process that has already been going on for three years and has not gone beyond the indagatory hearing. "They have done everything possible so that the hearings do not take place. They are untouchable."<sup>195</sup>

There was also a third such case tried this month. "Rinel Ecliserio Argueta Oliva was 38 years old when agents of the Special Integrated Governmental Security Response Unit (TIGRES), assigned in the municipality of San Estebán, Olancho, took his life in the detour that goes to the community of Corral Viejo in that jurisdiction. (...) Since the incident occurred, the family of Rinel Argueta Oliva denounced the murder and began to demand punishment for all those involved in this crime. (...) The oral and public trial against the four police officers accused of Rinel's crime is scheduled for April 27, 28 and 29, and Adrián Argueta hopes that their conscience will touch their hearts and that they will be able to speak and say who is responsible for taking his brother's life."<sup>196</sup> On April 27, Defensores en Línea wrote: "Ten months after the crime against Rinel Argueta Oliva, the oral and public trial began today against four police officers from the Special Integrated Governmental Security Response Unit (TIGRES). (...) The agents are accused of being responsible for the death of Rinel Argueta Oliva, 38 years old, which occurred on June 21, 2020, near the turnoff to the community of Corral Viejo, jurisdiction of the municipality of San Esteban, in the same department."<sup>197</sup> By the end of April, the outcome of the trial was not yet known.<sup>198</sup>

## Penitentiary System

A judge ordered the redistribution of some prisoners from the so-called maximum security prison La Tolva to other prisons. "As ordered by Judge Marleny Lizett Tercero, the prison authorities must proceed to the immediate redistribution of the inmates "preferably" to prisons that allow them to have family roots, which is a legal requirement for some convicted inmates to qualify for the benefit of pre-release and subsequent parole."<sup>199</sup>

## International Community

"The Central American Integration System (SICA), the European Union (EU) and Spain presented on Tuesday an economic initiative that includes more than \$1.6 million to support Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Central America."<sup>200</sup>

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195 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/denuncias/item/3133-cuando-se-trata-de-militares-no-hay-justicia-en-honduras>

196 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/familia-de-rinel-argueta-exige-castigo-para-todos-los-policias-que-participaron-en-su-muerte/>

197 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/dio-inicio-juicio-contra-cuatro-policias-tigres-por-crimen-de-rinel-argueta/>

198 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/con- evacuacion-de-mas-pruebas-continuo-segundo-dia-de-juicio-por-crimen-de-rinel-argueta/>

199 <https://proceso.hn/ordenan-redistribucion-de-privados-de-libertad-ante-hacinamiento-en-la-tolva/>

200 <https://proceso.hn/sica-con-apoyo-de-la-ue-pone-a-disposicion-de-mypimes-16-millones-de-dolares/>

"The Central American Bank for Economic Integration (BCIE) signed today a technical cooperation agreement for \$654'500 with the Republic of Honduras to finance the consultancy for the preparation of the "Technical and Economic Prefeasibility Study for Hydraulic Infrastructures in the Lower Choluteca River Basin".<sup>201</sup>

"A mission from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) will conduct an analysis of Honduran finances to corroborate whether it has the capacity to face external indebtedness and how its economy has performed during the last year."<sup>202</sup>

## US

The US State Department published its yearly human rights report with a chapter on Honduras.<sup>203</sup> For the 12th time in a row, the Nationalist regime in Honduras failed to comply with the requirements to access the funds by the US Millennium Challenge Corporation.<sup>204</sup>

"For nine days, a U.S. troop will be conducting "an overwater personnel rescue training from April 15-24 in the Department of Colon", informed the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa through a press release.<sup>205 206</sup>

Harper's Magazin published a great article by Andrew Cockburn on "How America enables corruption in Honduras". "In recent years, Washington has expressed its fair share of laments over the little country's desperate condition, and has poured a lot of money into projects aimed at eliminating the so-called push factors driving people to flee. USAID spent \$90 million in 2020 alone promoting "good governance," fostering "competitive, resilient, and inclusive market systems," and creating "economic opportunities that incorporate women." Our partner in these worthy efforts has been Juan Orlando Hernández, often referred to as JOH, the stocky, frequently charming president of Honduras. Since he took office in 2014, Washington has relied on Hernández to implement American-devised programs for alleviating his country's ills: unemployment, violence, corruption, and most importantly, the cocaine trade. But despite insistent protests locally and abroad that Hernández oversees a repressive and corrupt regime, the United States has continued to treat him as an indispensable partner. Any lingering pretense that Hernández has been on America's side in the drug war, however, was ripped away this January by federal prosecutors in New York. (...) The suggestion that Hernández might be associated with the narcotics trade was not new in the United States, either. His brother Tony had already been tried and convicted as a major trafficker in New York in 2019. Testimony in his trial was replete with references to the Honduran leader. Still, the president's crude gangster talk about shoving drugs up people's noses was a slap in the face to all the high-level U.S. officials who had professed esteem for him over the years. Joe Biden, for instance, recalls the warm relationships he built as vice president with certain Central

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201 <https://proceso.hn/bcie-otorga-cooperacion-tecnica-por-654-mil-para-estudios-iniciales-de-represa-morolica-en-honduras/>

202 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/04/28/el-fmi-hara-analisis-sobre-capacidad-de-pago-de-la-deuda-externa-hondurena/>

203 <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/honduras/>

204 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2860-record-gobierno-lleva-12-anos-aplazado-por-corrupcion-y-danando-honduras>

205 <https://www.reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2021/04/20/estados-unidos-anuncia-entrenamientos-militares-en-colon/>

206 <https://twitter.com/jfbravo/status/1383115687711899650>

American leaders in his book *Promise Me, Dad*, citing Hernández as one of his “friends,” and a “confidant.” General John Kelly, who commanded Southcom — the Pentagon’s Central and South American division — from 2012 to 2016, was another powerful supporter (he would later become Donald Trump’s chief of staff). Concluding a visit to Tegucigalpa in June 2014, the four-star general commended the “incredible and impressive” fight against drug trafficking and organized crime being waged by Hernández and his government. (...) Despite the unwelcome attention, Hernández may be hoping that the United States will let him serve out the remaining year of his term in peace, or even run again. He would do well, however, to reflect on the fate of Manuel Noriega, Panama’s dictator in the Eighties. Heavily involved in the drug trade, Noriega was a cherished U.S. partner until the day the military picked him up and consigned him to a prison cell for the rest of his life. I asked Colonel Keith Nightingale, a Special Forces veteran who participated in the strongman’s capture, what had prompted Noriega’s old friends to turn against him. “He had,” Nightingale said, “become too obvious.”<sup>207</sup>

## Drug Trafficking

At the beginning of the month, there was a public discussion in Honduras about the situation of former police chief Juan Carlos “El Tigre” Bonilla.<sup>208</sup> The DEA announced to be expecting his extradition but the Honduran Supreme Court claimed that they have no extradition request for Bonilla.<sup>209</sup>

On April 7, the hearing against former police and JOH’s cousin Mauricio Hernández Pined started in New York. He is accused of drug trafficking.<sup>210</sup> By the end of the month, another Honduran also faced the US Attorney’s Office. “Today, the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York filed a pre-sentencing memorandum for former police officer Ludwig Criss Zelaya, who participated in a drug trafficking conspiracy along with Fabio Lobo, Juan Avila Meza and members of the Los Cachiros Cartel. The Prosecutor’s Office is requesting a sentence ranging between 19.5 and 24.4 years in prison, for crimes related to drug trafficking and use of large caliber weapons of which Ludwig previously pleaded guilty, in addition to the forfeiture of \$120 thousand dollars and a fine of \$25 thousand to \$5 million dollars, his sentence is scheduled for May 10, 2021. Within the thirty-page document, the Prosecutor’s Office states that Ludwig Zelaya is one of six members of the Honduran National Police convicted in this case for drug trafficking offenses in connection with his support of a violent Honduran drug trafficking organization known as Los Cachiros.”<sup>211</sup>

Tony Hernández’s legal team appealed his life sentence (see last month).<sup>212</sup> The defense of convicted drug trafficker Geovanny Fuentes (see last month) “sent a “memorandum of law” to Judge Kevin

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207 <https://harpers.org/archive/2021/05/narco-in-chief-how-america-enables-corruption-in-honduras/>

208 <https://prohondurasnetwork.com/2021/04/01/juan-carlos-bonilla-fue-acusado-por-eeuu-de-manera-formal-desde-el-30-de-abril-del-2020/>

209 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1454076-466/tigre-bonilla-no-ha-sido-pedido-corte-suprema-justicia-honduras-dea>

210 <https://prohondurasnetwork.com/2021/04/07/hoy-se-realiza-audiencia-dentro-del-caso-de-mauricio-hermandez-pineda-primero-de-juan-orlando-hermandez-acusado-por-narcotrafico/>

211 <https://prohondurasnetwork.com/2021/04/26/fiscalia-de-new-york-solicita-una-pena-entre-19-y-24-anos-de-carcel-para-el-ex-policia-ludwig-criss-zelaya-quien-estuvo-involucrado-en-el-asesinato-del-periodista-anibal-barrow/>

212 <https://prohondurasnetwork.com/2021/04/07/juan-antonio-hermandez-presenta-apelacion-ante-el-segundo-circuito-de-new-york/>

Castel, requesting a new trial for his client, arguing that the evidence presented in Fuentes Ramirez's case was insufficient to establish his guilt".<sup>213</sup>

Against all evidence coming out of the trials in New York, US Southern Command commander Admiral Craig Faller claimed to trust the Honduran Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces in fighting drug trafficking.<sup>214</sup>

The US sent another extradition request to Honduras for a Honduran with alleged drug trafficking links.<sup>215</sup> Shortly afterwards, Honduran authorities captured Martín Adolfo Díaz Contreras.<sup>216</sup> He will face his extradition trial on May 12.<sup>217</sup> So far, 23 Hondurans have been extradited to the US.<sup>218</sup>

On April 25, the UK announced to have sanctioned the Honduran congressman for the National Party Oscar Ramón Nájera. "In his official capacity, Oscar Ramón Nájera facilitated bribes with public officials that supported a major drug trafficking organisation, 'Los Cachiros'. Conduct of this nature seriously undermines the rule of law and trust in public institutions in Honduras. Sanctions include assets freeze and travel ban. This designation is made under the UK's Global Anti-Corruption Sanctions Regulations 2021, launched today and put in place to prevent and combat serious corruption. The Global Anti-Corruption Sanctions Regulations 2021 is secondary legislation laid under the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018. These regulations have replaced the EU's sanctions system."<sup>219</sup> <sup>220</sup>

## Varia

### JOH

The Convergence against Continuity published their interpretation of the current political situation in Honduras. "1.- Our demand is firm and precise: the immediate departure of Juan Orlando Hernandez and his henchmen is non-negotiable, and around this demand we place our struggle and pressure, and towards it we urge the convergence of all political and social instances in a national and urgent unity of action. 2.- The demand for the immediate departure of the narco-dictator and his henchmen is not in contradiction or confrontation with the electoral process, which, although covered with irregularities and vices that feed fraud, represents one of the few opportunities for a society that strives to seek democratic and peaceful ways out of the crisis through the ballot box. 3.- Nothing that leads to new scenarios can succeed with the presence of the narco-dictatorship, and elections conducted by structures controlled by organized crime embedded in the State, will lead us to a sure fraud and to the continuity of the dictatorship with or without JOH. 4.- Therefore,

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213 <https://prohondurasnetwork.com/2021/04/23/defensa-de-geovanny-fuentes-solicita-al-juez-kevin-castel-la-realizacion-de-un-nuevo-juicio/>

214 <https://proceso.hn/jefe-del-comando-sur-garantiza-confianza-en-honduras-ante-el-congreso-de-eeuu/>

215 <https://proceso.hn/eeuu-solicita-la-extradicion-de-otro-hondureno-por-narcotrafico/>

216 <https://proceso.hn/capturado-extraditable-hondureno/>

217 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1455991-410/-audiencia-pruebas-extraditable-hondure%C3%B1o-estados-unidos-narco->

218 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1455937-466/12-mayo-audiencia-extraditable-martin-adolfo-diaz-honduras>

219 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-sanctions-honduran-congressman-under-new-global-anti-corruption-regime>

220 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1459654-466/londres-sanciona-diputado-oscar-ramon-najera-corrupcion>

achieving the immediate departure of Juan Orlando Hernandez and his henchmen will pave the way for the conditions that will generate an environment of confidence for elections to be held with rules that finally respect the will of the people deposited in the ballot box."<sup>221</sup>

The Honduras Solidarity Network reported on protests in various parts of Honduras this month by people demanding the resignation of JOH.<sup>222</sup> <sup>223</sup> On April 7, the movement 100+Women for Honduras made a tour of four emblematic headquarters of the powerful that are concentrated in Tegucigalpa to denounce their support of the JOH regime.<sup>224</sup> The former head of the Armed Forces and coup general from 2009, Romeo Vásquez Velásquez, demanded that the Armed Forces take action against JOH for his links to drug trafficking and organized crime.<sup>225</sup>

With last month's prominent presence of his name in US drug trafficking trial, many wonder what the future of JOH will hold. One theory is that he will get a fake trial in Honduras to avoid being extradited to the US. On April 1, Gracia María Bertrand, a judge at a San Pedro Sula court, warned about just that. "We have information that the Public Prosecutor's Office is trying to open a quick, improvised process against Mr. Juan Orlando in order to hinder the extradition process".<sup>226</sup> Pinu congresswoman Doris Gutiérrez, meanwhile, voiced fear about a new wave of laws shielding politicians involved in drug trafficking. "They will seek internal mechanisms to avoid situations similar to those experienced by the president's brother. Those who have been mentioned or involved are going all out to avoid a heavy penalty."<sup>227</sup>

David Adams and Jeff Ernst looked into the legal evidence available to go after JOH. "While he has not formally been indicted, the evidence presented so far in court appears to highly incriminate him. "If Juan Orlando Hernandez were to be tried today, they would get a conviction," said former DEA agent Mike Vigil who is following the case closely. The DEA and the Southern District of New York declined to comment on what they say is an ongoing investigation."<sup>228</sup> On April 5, 37 civil society organizations published a joint letter demanding the immediate resignation of JOH as well as "the heads of the Public Prosecutor's Office, the National Congress, the Supreme Court of Justice and the Attorney General's Office, as well as the replacement of the military high command".<sup>229</sup>

The new US Special Envoy went on a four-day visit to Guatemala and El Salvador to investigate the root causes of migration, but not to Honduras.<sup>230</sup> Even the corporate news outlet linked his non-appearance in Honduras with last month's trials in the US.<sup>231</sup> During the press briefings at the State Department, Ned Price was also asked about the trip. "And so far at least, Vice President Harris hasn't called President Juan Orlando Hernandez of Honduras as well. Are you trying to isolate or

221 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Posicionamiento-frente-a-la-coyuntura-poli%CC%81tica-actual.pdf>

222 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1379640213836730369>

223 <https://criterio.hn/ceibenos-exigen-salida-de-juan-hermandez-de-la-presidencia-de-honduras/>

224 <https://criterio.hn/mujeres-vuelven-a-las-calles-para-manifestarse-contrajoh-en-la-capital-de-honduras/>

225 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/04/07/romeo-vasquez-incita-a-las-ff-aa-a-no-tener-miedo-y-actuar-contrajoh-gobierno/>

226 <https://criterio.hn/fiscalia-de-honduras-estaria-abriendo-investigacion-contrajoh-presidente-para-evitar-su-extradicion/>

227 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1453766-466/clase-politica-senalada-corrupcion-narcotrafico-blindarse-condena-juan-hermandez-honduras>

228 <https://www.univision.com/univision-news/latin-america/how-strong-is-the-legal-evidence-of-drug-trafficking-against-president-of-honduras>

229 <https://criterio.hn/mas-de-35-organizaciones-exigen-la-inmediata-salida-de-juan-hermandez-del-gobierno/>

230 <https://confidencial.hn.com/subrayan-que-la-no-visita-a-honduras-de-ricardo-zuniga-deja-claro-el-rechazo-del-gobierno-de-juan-orlando-hermandez/>

231 <https://proceso.hn/enviado-especial-de-estados-unidos-inicia-gira-por-guatemala-y-el-salvador/>

send some sort of message to his government given the allegations against him by U.S. federal prosecutors?" To which he answered. "I fully expect that we will be engaging with appropriate Honduran Government officials, including upon their return. (...) We continue to stand with the Honduran people as they confront these challenges. We will continue to stand with the Honduran people and civil society and those members of the Honduran Government that are committed to fighting corruption with us, because we know that our goal has to be to address these root causes, these root drivers of migration if we're going to find a long-term solution to this challenge." The follow-up question was even clearer. "Does President Hernandez present one of those challenges?" His answer: "I will say that corruption continues to be a challenge when it comes to our relationship with Honduras. We are committed to partnering with the Honduran people, with elements of Honduran civil society, and with those in the Honduran Government that are committed to working with us to root out the corruption that has become really endemic to that country."<sup>232</sup>

On April 7, a delegation from the JOH regime traveled to the US to meet representatives of the Biden administration.<sup>233</sup> There, the Honduran Foreign Minister Lisandro Rosales met with U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas.<sup>234</sup> Rosales presented the meeting as a PR win for the JOH regime. He even went on to claim that JOH would remain a reliable partner of the Biden administration.<sup>235</sup> Joaquín Mejía did not agree. "[W]ith the change of government in the United States, Juan Orlando Hernández went from being a strategic ally to becoming "poisonous" for both the United States and the international community."<sup>236</sup> But the Biden administration does not seem to have made up his mind about the JOH regime. All corporate media outlets in Honduras sprang on a recent statement by Biden advisor Juan Gonzalez on their relationship to JOH. "He is currently the elected president of Honduras, we are going to work with his government, we are going to look for areas of common interest."<sup>237</sup>

After the Berta Cáceres Act in the US Congress and the Honduras Human Rights and Anti-Corruption Act in the Senate, Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky and 20 additional members of Congress introduced the House companion to the Senate bill on April 21. "This critical legislation, which is identical to the Senate version, lays out a comprehensive framework for combating corruption, impunity, and human rights violations in Honduras. It builds on the strong foundation laid by the Berta Cáceres Human Rights in Honduras Act. The introduction comes after U.S. federal prosecutors made public that they are investigating Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández for his involvement in drug trafficking throughout the U.S. It also follows the conviction and sentencing of his brother and former Honduran Congressman Tony Hernández who will serve life in prison for his leadership in the same conspiracy – an expansive, sophisticated, and violent drug ring. In response to this rampant corruption and well documented history of human rights violations, the Honduran Human Rights and Anti-Corruption Act will impose sanctions on the Honduran president

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232 <https://www.state.gov/briefings/department-press-briefing-april-5-2021/>

233 <https://proceso.hn/canciller-rosales-discute-sobre-migracion-tps-y-danos-de-huracanes-con-el-secretario-de-seguridad-nacional-de-eeuu/>

234 <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2021/04/09/readout-secretary-mayorkas-s-meeting-honduran-foreign-minister-rosales>

235 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1455577-410/joh-socio-confiable-eeuu-pese-acusaciones-narcotrafico->

236 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/pt/joh-se-convirtio-en-un-apestado-para-la-comunidad-internacional/>

237 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1455947-466/eeuu-dispuesto-trabajar-juan-orlando-herandez>



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>238</sup>

One pillar of JOH's reign has so far been the church, so the following news did not improve his position. "The General Assembly of the Association of Pastors of Tegucigalpa and Comayagüela (APT), apologized to the Honduran people for the relationship that several religious leaders have created with the current government, putting down the spiritual for financial benefits. It is worth mentioning that the regime of Juan Hernandez, has been known for integrating committees of pastors involved in various issues of the nation to supposedly solve structural problems, as has been the case of the police purge. (...) And in this context, in a communiqué the APT has said that it rejects "any inclusion of the Evangelical Church in the Government for personal agreements of economic interests".<sup>239</sup> Another pillar, may be his PR army. "In the last five years, the government of Juan Orlando Hernández spent around four million dollars on hiring lobbyist firms in the United States on at least thirteen occasions. Prosecutors in New York denounced that one of them tried to pressure them during the trial of "Tony" Hernández, his brother, sentenced to life imprisonment plus thirty years for drug trafficking. For several analysts, all these efforts have been in vain and despite the small rapprochements with the Biden administration, its links to corruption and drug trafficking undermine any effort of cooperation."<sup>240</sup>

## Elections

March ended without the publication of the official results of the primary elections (see last report). Apart from the delay, there were also problems with accusations of fraud, nevertheless, by April 3, the CNE had only handed over two ballots with inconsistencies to the MP.<sup>241</sup> "Sociologist Eugenio Sosa predicted a new electoral crisis in the country as a consequence of the delay of official results by the National Electoral Council (CNE) after the March 14 primary elections. For the expert, the current situation of uncertainty of the electoral process is only a sample of what could happen next November if the authorities of the electoral bodies do not correct their mistakes."<sup>242</sup>

On April 7, the Liberal movement Recuperar Honduras presented a challenge at the Supreme Court demanding that the primary elections would be nullified.<sup>243</sup> On April 13, one month after the primaries had taken place, the CNE published the final results of the primaries confirming the success of Yani Rosenthal (Liberal Party), Xiomara Castro (Libre) and Nasry Asfura (National Party).<sup>244</sup> Luis Zelaya continued to denounce the primaries as fraudulent.<sup>245</sup> The president of the National Electoral Council Ana Paola Hall unconvincingly claimed that the primary elections were

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238 <https://schakowsky.house.gov/media/press-releases/schakowsky-johnson-castro-garc-kaptur-and-omar-introduce-legislation-combat>

239 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2851-honduras-pastores-piden-perdon-por-vinculos-con-gobierno>

240 <https://contracorriente.red/2021/04/17/millonario-gasto-de-herandez-en-lobistas-no-mejoro-sus-relaciones-con-estados-unidos/>

241 <https://proceso.hn/cne-remite-actas-manipuladas-de-diputados-para-investigacion-en-el-ministerio-publico/>

242 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/04/04/analista-asegura-que-primarias-abrieron-la-puerta-a-una-venidera-crisis-politica/>

243 <https://proceso.hn/movimiento-recuperar-honduras-presenta-recurso-amparo-para-anular-resultados-de-elecciones-primarias/>

244 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/eleccioneshonduras2021/1456552-508/nasry-asfura-xiomara-castro-yani-rosenthal-elecciones-primarias>

245 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2845-honduras-luis-zelaya-denuncia-ante-fiscalia-fraude-de-90-mil-votos>

the most democratic and transparent in Honduran history. This does not bode well for the general elections in November.<sup>246</sup> By the end of April, CNE had received in total 24 requests for annulment of the official declaration of the primary elections.<sup>247</sup>

While the main opposition parties failed to come together to discuss an alliance<sup>248 249</sup>, some smaller parties joined forces.<sup>250</sup> At PINU, meanwhile, Doris Gutiérrez was ratified as their presidential candidate.<sup>251</sup> By mid-April, it seemed likely that the main opposition parties would group together in two alliances, one between Yani Rosenthal (Liberal presidential candidate) and Xiomara Castro (Libre presidential candidate),<sup>252</sup> the other one between Salvador Nasralla (the presidential candidate of an opposition alliance in 2017) and Luis Zelaya (Liberal runner-up).<sup>253</sup> But Nasralla also suffered from problems inside his party.<sup>254</sup> And by the end of the month, even the alliance between Castro and Rosenthal seemed uncertain.<sup>255</sup> Political analyst and university professor Eugenio Sosa believes, as one of very few, that there exists a chance that the National Party will lose power even if the opposition cannot come together in one big alliance.<sup>256</sup> Either way, they would have until May 27 to form one.<sup>257</sup>

CESPAD published a short analysis of the primaries. "The primary elections, held last March 14, is the mechanism that the Honduran parties have with a triple purpose: (i) To legitimize the selection of people who already have the endorsement of the party elites, for the candidacies for the general elections, ii) To identify other alternative leaderships that have the support of the electorate; and iii) To measure how much and how the militancy is distributed territorially, also known as the party's hard vote." Compared to 2017, Libre received 20% more votes (now 557'862), the Liberal Party 10% more (781'583) and the National Party 15% less (1'166'985). "Nevertheless, in spite of its electoral volatility (amount of votes it loses from one election to another), the National Party has the highest number of adherents and internal cohesion (the losing pre-candidates -at different levels- have recognized the winner in spite of the irregularities in the elections), has a sustained policy to establish clientelistic relationships through social programs and has institutionalized the use of public and illicit funds in political campaigns. Therefore, he would win individually if today were the general elections, although with less than 25% of the electoral roll (and that is under the assumption that the null and blank votes would become valid in favor of the nationalist candidate). In the absence of a second round in Honduras (a reform that the Nationalist bench has cleverly blocked), the only way for a government with greater legitimacy to emerge in next November's elections is through an electoral alliance, supporting either the majority parties or an alternative

246 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/04/14/presidenta-del-cne-afirma-que-elecciones-generales-seran-unicas-y-ejemplares-y-prometen-generales-unicas-y-ejemplares/>

247 <https://proceso.hn/cne-recio-24-peticiones-de-nulidad-de-declaratoria-de-primarias/>

248 <https://proceso.hn/salvador-nasralla-tampoco-asistira-a-dialogo-convocado-por-xiomara-castro/>

249 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2861-honduras-oposicion-dividida-cachurecos-rien>

250 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/04/16/una-mujer-sera-la-candidata-presidencial-de-la-primera-alianza-politica-creo/>

251 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/eleccioneshonduras2021/1457604-508/doris-gutierrez-ratificada-candidata-presidencial-pinu>

252 <https://criterio.hn/un-exconvicto-y-una-exprimera-dama-buscan-alianza-electoral-en-honduras/>

253 <https://proceso.hn/impulso-y-senalados-la-distante-alianza-de-la-oposicion/>

254 <https://confidencialhn.com/julio-larios-niega-que-es-infiltrado-de-joh-para-destruir-el-partido-salvador-de-honduras/>

255 <https://proceso.hn/se-cancela-reunion-entre-xiomara-castro-y-yani-rosenthal-por-falta-de-consensos/>

256 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/04/20/analista-avizora-derrota-del-partido-nacional-aunque-existan-dos-alianzas-de-oposicion/>

257 <https://proceso.hn/partidos-politicos-que-buscan-alianzas-deben-de-cumplir-requisitos-e-inscribirlas-en-el-cne-antes-del-27-de-mayo-german-lobo/>



force and with the vote of those who today have no political color. In this scenario, a key actor would be the Salvadoran Party of Honduras (PSH)."<sup>258</sup> Radio Progreso spoke with the former Attorney General Edmundo Orellana about the current political situation and the outlook of the general elections in November.<sup>259</sup>

A second analysis followed by the CNA.<sup>260</sup> "In this document we can detail important findings such as the commercialization of credentials and the buying and selling of votes like vegetables in the market. The inflation of closing minutes and the manipulation of votes that have become the most common on the eve of the elections and in the face of them the rule of law must be imposed", said Castellanos.<sup>261</sup> Another report looking at the primaries in Honduras concluded that there was "disorder, violence and institutional weakness".<sup>262</sup> An investigation by CESPAD found that only 33% of the candidates having run in the primary elections complied with financial regulations. But due to a lack of effective sanctions, this is without consequence.<sup>263</sup> According to FOSDEH, the primaries cost 700 million Lempiras.<sup>264</sup>

On the last day of the month, "[d]eputies of Libertad y Refundación (Libre) and the Liberal Party denounced that the National Party bench opposes the approval of the new Electoral Law and the Electoral Justice Law with the intention of committing fraud in the general elections."<sup>265</sup>

## Migration

Sarah Bermeo and David Leblang published a policy brief on "Honduras Migration: Climate Change, Violence, & Assistance".<sup>266</sup> Last month's newest migration caravan ended for most participants already before or shortly after the Guatemalan border. By April 4, 310 Hondurans had been returned to Honduras.<sup>267</sup> "The number of undocumented Honduran immigrants apprehended at the U.S.-Mexico border has grown considerably in the current fiscal year, to the point that its first six months far exceed the records for all of 2020. The current year leaves a frightening number: every day some 755 Hondurans are caught at the border."<sup>268</sup> "The number of migrant children arriving in Mexico and hoping to enter the United States has increased ninefold from January to March this year, the U.N. Children's Fund said Monday, with an average of 275 minors entering the country every day."<sup>269</sup> At least 1045 Honduran children have so far been deported from the US, Mexico and Guatemala this year.<sup>270</sup>

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258 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/04/12/analisis-resultados-de-elecciones-primarias-en-honduras-y-las-tendencias-partidarias/>

259 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/portada/institucionalidad-hondurena-esta-fortalecida-pero-en-torno-a-joh/>

260 <https://twitter.com/cnahonduras/status/1384148050365403141>

261 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/instante/hubo-compra-y-venta-de-votos-como-verduras-en-el-mercado-cna/>

262 <https://proceso.hn/redh-concluye-que-hubo-desorden-violencia-y-debilidad-institucional-en-elecciones-en-honduras/>

263 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/04/29/analisis-en-elecciones-primarias-2021-solo-el-33-por-ciento-de-los-candidatos-cumplio-requisito-de-bancarizacion/>

264 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/04/28/yani-asfura-y-chavez-los-candidatos-que-mas-gastaron-en-internas-y-primarias/>

265 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/04/30/denuncian-que-el-oficialismo-se-opone-a-nueva-ley-electoral-para-cometer-fraude-en-noviembre/>

266 <https://dcid.sanford.duke.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2021/03/Honduras-Migration-Policy-Brief-Final.pdf>

267 <https://tiempo.hn/hondurenos-retornados-caravana/>

268 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1456954-466/a-las-puertas-de-una-explasion-migratoria-en-la-frontera>

269 <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/19/world/americas/mexico-migrant-children.html>

270 <https://www.elpais.hn/2021/04/20/eeuu-mexico-y-guatemala-han-deportado-1-045-menores-hondurenos-en-2021/>

"Joe Biden entered the White House with some inspiring yet contradictory positions on immigration and Central America. He promised to reverse Donald Trump's draconian anti-immigrant policies while, through his "Plan to Build Security and Prosperity in Partnership with the People of Central America," restoring "U.S. leadership in the region" that he claimed Trump had abandoned. For Central Americans, though, such "leadership" has an ominous ring. (...) Instead of solidarity (or even partnership) with Central America, Biden's plan actually promotes an old economic development model that has long benefited U.S. corporations. It also aims to impose a distinctly militarized version of "security" on the people of that region. In addition, it focuses on enlisting Central American governments and, in particular, their militaries to contain migration through the use of repression. The clearest statement of the president's Central America goals appears in his "U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021," sent to Congress on Jan. 20. That proposal offers a sweeping set of changes aimed at eliminating President Trump's racist exclusions, restoring rights to asylum, and opening a path to legal status and citizenship for the immigrant population. After the anti-immigrant barrage of the last four years, that proposal seems worth celebrating. (...) Read closely, a significant portion of Biden's immigration proposal focuses on the premise that addressing the root causes of Central America's problems will reduce the flow of immigrants to the U.S. border. In its own words, the Biden plan promises to promote "the rule of law, security, and economic development in Central America" in order to "address the key factors" contributing to emigration. Buried in its fuzzy language, however, are long-standing bipartisan Washington goals that should sound familiar to those who have been paying attention in these years."<sup>271</sup>

The new US Special Envoy went on a four-day visit to Guatemala and El Salvador to investigate the root causes of migration, but not to Honduras.<sup>272</sup> Even the corporate news outlet linked his non-appearance in Honduras with last month's trials in the US.<sup>273</sup> During the press briefings at the State Department, Ned Price was also asked about the trip. "And so far at least, Vice President Harris hasn't called President Juan Orlando Hernandez of Honduras as well. Are you trying to isolate or send some sort of message to his government given the allegations against him by U.S. federal prosecutors?" To which he answered. "I fully expect that we will be engaging with appropriate Honduran Government officials, including upon their return. (...) We continue to stand with the Honduran people as they confront these challenges. We will continue to stand with the Honduran people and civil society and those members of the Honduran Government that are committed to fighting corruption with us, because we know that <sup>274</sup>our goal has to be to address these root causes, these root drivers of migration if we're going to find a long-term solution to this challenge." The follow-up question was even clearer. "Does President Hernandez present one of those challenges?" His answer: "I will say that corruption continues to be a challenge when it comes to our relationship with Honduras. We are committed to partnering with the Honduran people, with elements of

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271 [https://www.salon.com/2021/04/04/will-bidens-central-america-plan-slow-migration--or-speed-it-up\\_partner/](https://www.salon.com/2021/04/04/will-bidens-central-america-plan-slow-migration--or-speed-it-up_partner/)

272 <https://confidencialhn.com/subrayan-que-la-no-visita-a-honduras-de-ricardo-zuniga-deja-claro-el-rechazo-del-gobierno-de-juan-orlando-hermandez/>

273 <https://proceso.hn/enviado-especial-de-estados-unidos-inicia-gira-por-guatemala-y-el-salvador/>

274 <https://confidencialhn.com/reunion-con-mayorkas-marca-exito-de-nuevas-gestiones-del-gobierno-de-honduras-en-washington-lisandro-rosales>

Honduran civil society, and with those in the Honduran Government that are committed to working with us to root out the corruption that has become really endemic to that country."<sup>275</sup>

On April 12, the following news made headlines. "The Biden administration has secured agreements for Mexico, Honduras and Guatemala to tighten their borders and stem the flow of migration, Special Assistant to the President for Immigration for the Domestic Policy Council Tyler Moran told MSNBC on Monday. "We've secured agreements for them to put more troops on their own border. Mexico, Honduras and Guatemala have all agreed to do this. That not only is going to prevent the traffickers, and the smugglers, and cartels that take advantage of the kids on their way here, but also to protect those children," Moran said."<sup>276</sup> The Honduran foreign minister Lisandro Rosales immediately denied that such an agreement existed<sup>277</sup> and later said that they were misunderstood.<sup>278</sup> A few days later, Guatemala also denied the existence of such an agreement and finally, even the Biden administration said that no such agreement would exist contradicting previous statements by the administration.<sup>279</sup>

By the end of the month, more news surfaced regarding a regional anti-corruption task force (see also last month). "The Biden administration is considering creating a task force of officials from the U.S. Justice and State Departments and other agencies to help local prosecutors fight corruption in Central America's Northern Triangle countries, a senior U.S. official said on Thursday. Ricardo Zuniga, U.S. special envoy for Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, also told reporters the U.S. government has authority from Congress to craft lists of Central American officials involved in corruption, revoke their travel visas and impose financial sanctions on them. (...) U.S. officials see corruption as one of the root causes of the flow of migrants, along with poverty and gang violence, and want to make sure a \$4 billion aid package being put together for the region does not fall prey to graft."<sup>280</sup> US Vice-President Kamala Harris tweeted: "To address the acute factors and root causes of migration, we're building a comprehensive strategy with governments, international institutions, the private sector, and community organizations. I met with foundation leaders to discuss their crucial work in the Northern Triangle."<sup>281</sup>

On April 27, "Vice President Harris announced that the United States is providing \$310 million in increased assistance to the Northern Triangle, including \$255 million in assistance to meet immediate and urgent humanitarian needs for people in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, refugees, other displaced people, and vulnerable migrants in the region. The assistance includes approximately \$104 million from the Department of State, \$125 million provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and \$26 million through the Department of Defense."<sup>282</sup>

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275 <https://www.state.gov/briefings/department-press-briefing-april-5-2021/>

276 <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/04/12/politics/biden-agreement-mexico-honduras-guatemala/index.html>

277 <https://proceso.hn/canciller-hondureno-desmiente-anuncio-de-eeuu-de-envio-de-policias-y-militares-a-frontera/>

278 <https://proceso.hn/despliegue-de-tropas-fue-malinterpretado-por-los-voceros-de-eeuu-segun-embajador-luis-suazo/>

279 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1456776-466/ricardo-zuniga-triangulo-norte-acuerdos-militarizar-fronteras-migrantes>

280 <https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/u-s--weighs-anti-graft-task-force-for-central-america/46558704>

281 <https://twitter.com/VP/status/1385337626836807681>

282 <https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/apr-27-2021-united-states-announces-increased-assistance-people-of-el-salvador-guatemala-honduras>

## Eta and Iota

After the two hurricanes Eta and Iota hit Honduras, the JOH regime commissioned a report on the reconstruction of Honduras by an advisory council. This report was presented this month.<sup>283</sup> On April 19, the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (BCIE) announced a \$200 million investment to rebuild the road network affected by the hurricanes Eta and Iota last year.<sup>284</sup> ConfidencialHN reported that "[f]ollowing the damage caused by tropical storms Eta and Iota in November 2020, only 20 percent of the affected areas have been repaired in the Sula Valley, the area most affected by the passage of the meteors".<sup>285</sup>

On April 22, Congress approved an emergency bill to finance up to \$150 million dollars for the recovery of the communities most affected by hurricanes Eta and Iota. One small problem, the approved projects will be executed among others by the notorious Invest-H, infamous for the mobile hospital saga.<sup>286 287</sup>

## Climate Crisis

Congress declared a state of climate crisis. "According to the articles, within the framework of the climate emergency, governmental and municipal institutions at all levels must implement strong adaptation and mitigation measures and their co-benefits with an environmental justice perspective to reduce vulnerability and develop capacities and resilience to face climate change in the short, medium and long term."<sup>288</sup>

## And Light at the End of a Month

ADEPZA celebrated its 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary.<sup>289</sup>

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283 <https://confidencialhn.com/informe-final-de-grupo-asesor-para-la-reconstruccion-nacional/>

284 <https://proceso.hn/bcie-prepara-inversion-de-usd-200-millones-para-carreteras-en-honduras/>

285 <https://confidencialhn.com/solo-en-un-20-han-reparado-zonas-danadas-por-eta-y-iota-en-el-valle-de-sula/>

286 <https://criterio.hn/congreso-aprueba-mas-compras-directas-para-proyectos-que-ejecutara-invest-h-y-otras-instituciones/>

287 <https://tiempo.hn/investh-reconstruccion-eta-iota/>

288 <https://confidencialhn.com/emergencia-climatica-hasta-2030-aprobara-el-congreso-nacional/>

289 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1382353667739811843>

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

Past Activities:

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Upcoming Activities:

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