

Another Month in Honduras...

Human Rights Monitor – May 2021

Honduras commemorated the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. But one day before, a trans woman was murdered and another one violently lost her life at the end of the month. Over 110 women have been murdered so far in Honduras this year. In the case of Berta Cáceres, the trial against David Castillo continued with over 20 days in court. The ZEDEs also made headlines again, especially because the Nationalists in Congress approved a controversial tax exemptions. The protest against this went beyond social movements and included voices in corporate media outlets. The COVID-19 crisis still has a tight grip on Honduras and the lack of vaccines continues to be a huge problem widely attributed to the JOH regime. Last but not least, Honduras' political elite decided on going to the general elections in November with just minor electoral reforms in place. At the same time, the political opposition failed to form a strong alliance. 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

The Secretary of Health confirmed the presence of the Cholera-causing bacteria in Honduras; it was detected in Santa Cruz de Yojoa.¹ A few days later, they tried to reassure the public that so far, there had been no cholera cases detected.² And by the end of the month, El Heraldo reported: "Water samples from the tributaries that were again taken to various laboratories show minimal levels of the bacteria that transmits cholera, so there is no risk of an outbreak of the disease, said Marlon Pineda, mayor of the municipality of Santa Cruz de Yojoa."³

May started with 213'167 detected COVID-19 cases and 5318 confirmed deaths.⁴ At the same time, the Funeral Home Association of Honduras had registered more than 11'000 COVID-19 deaths.⁵ By May 14, their registered death toll rose to over 13'000.⁶ At the end of the month, their number rose to over 14'000.⁷ Meanwhile, the official count was 6353 deaths and 238'227 cases.⁸

Health Sector

With the new strains of COVID-19 ravaging Honduras, the situation of children worsened. Out of 100 infected children, three have to be hospitalized.⁹ A good triage system would help alleviating the situation, but the opposite takes place in Honduras. "The Vice Mayor of the municipality of Tela, Atlántida and Triage Coordinator, Dr. Gloria Zelaya, is clear in stating that due to lack of funds from government transfers, the triage of the municipality will be closing operations. "Since January we are only with municipal funds and you know that taxes have dropped as is normal due to business closures because of the pandemic, so there has been between 30 and 40% less income", explained Dr. Zelaya."¹⁰ On May 6, the CNA also published an investigation into the triage centers in Honduras highlighting numerous problems.¹¹ ¹² By May 15, 71 triage centers had already closed again due to lack of funding.¹³ A few days later, the CNA published a second report on the issue.¹⁴ "The report indicated that triage staffing is insufficient to meet the population demand for suspected and infected COVID-19 patients. It added that some triage centers are understaffed on the front line to ensure optimal care. In addition, the CNA found that 80 percent of the triage centers visited do

1 <https://proceso.hn/salud-confirma-presencia-de-la-bacteria-causante-del-colera-en-santa-cruz-de-yojoa/>

2 <https://tiempo.hn/brote-de-colera-yojoa-se-toman-medidas/>

3 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1466948-466/descartan-colera-honduras>

4 <https://proceso.hn/honduras-supera-los-213-mil-contagios-y-suma-37-decesos-para-acumular-cinco-mil-318-muertes/>

5 <https://criterio.hn/mas-de-1400-hondurenos-murieron-en-abril-por-covid-segun-asociacion-de-funerarias/>

6 <https://tiempo.hn/muertes-por-covid-19-en-honduras-funerarias-sinager/>

7 <https://criterio.hn/14-mil-decesos-por-la-covid-19-registra-la-asociacion-de-funerarias-en-honduras/>

8 <https://proceso.hn/honduras-cierra-mayo-con-646-nuevos-casos-y-37-decesos-por-la-covid-19/>

9 <https://proceso.hn/de-cada-100-menores-positivos-de-covid-19-tres-necesitan-hospitalizacion/>

10 <https://radioprogreso.hn/aplicacion-movil/se-viene-el-cierre-del-triaje-en-tela-atlantida/>

11 <https://twitter.com/cnahonduras/status/1390311878820343808>

12 <https://proceso.hn/triajes-carecen-de-personal-medico-y-falta-de-presupuesto-para-su-manejo-revela-cna-en-informe/>

13 <https://proceso.hn/suman-71-los-triajes-cerrados-para-enfrentar-el-covid-19/>

14 <https://twitter.com/cnahonduras/status/1395017792068390914>

not have enough oxygen to cover the total number of patients."¹⁵ The CNA even published a third report on this subject.¹⁶

The first reported death of a health worker this month was on May 12, Iveth Zeped, a 29-year old doctor. 2 doctors had died by that time this year, in total 86 had died.¹⁷ At least 50 nurses have died as well and their lives were commemorated in Honduras yesterday on the International Nurses Day.¹⁸ On May 14, another doctor, Bernardo Ávila Castellano, died to COVID-19.¹⁹

Back in March, Honduras had received 48'000 vaccines doses and the JOH regime promised to vaccinated health workers. ContraCorriente made public that the JOH regime chose to use the vaccine doses to give one shot to 48'000 health workers instead of fully immunizing 24'000 health workers giving them two shots.²⁰ This means that they all failed to get the second shot four weeks later. But there was hope that they would get it with some delay as on May 4, 189'000 more vaccines doses arrived through the Covax mechanism.²¹ The JOH regime announced that medical staff, the elderly and renal patients should benefit from the vaccines.²² But they also promised to journalists to get access by end of the month.²³

Just a day later, bad news followed in that the Sputnik V vaccines were further delayed.²⁴ The Secretary of Finance announced to have held talks with Pfizer for the purchase of 4.2 million doses.²⁵ Probably the most interesting story regarding vaccines this month was regarding a call by seven Honduran mayors to the president of El Salvador asking for the donation of vaccines.²⁶ 27 17'000 of 34'000 promised vaccines doses arrived on May 13.²⁸ The mayors who called on the president of El Salvador were then threatened by the Honduran foreign minister.²⁹ On May 14, 40'000 more Sputnik V doses arrived in Honduras.³⁰ But the next day, the good news became sweet-sour. "The batch of 40 thousand Russian Sputnik V vaccines that arrived on Friday in Honduras, will be kept refrigerated until the second component arrives and inoculate the same number of people, reported Saturday the head of the Expanded Program of Immunization (PAI), Ida Berenice Molina. (...) In this sense, she explained that the batch of 40 thousand doses of Sputnik V that arrived yesterday to the country is of component one; this vaccine has two components, one is in the first application and component two is the one that is applied with an interval of 21 days. "We are

15 <https://proceso.hn/cna-detecta-escasez-de-insumos-e-insuficiencia-en-satisfacer-demanda-poblacional-en-triajes-del-occidente/>

16 <https://twitter.com/cnahonduras/status/1397193069074780165>

17 <https://proceso.hn/otra-joven-doctora-fallece-por-covid-19-en-la-capital-hondurena/>

18 <https://tiempo.hn/dia-internacional-enfermera-aneeah-lamenta-muerte-companeros/>

19 <https://proceso.hn/muere-por-covid-19-medico-bernardo-avila-castellanos/>

20 <https://contracorriente.red/2021/04/30/en-aparente-baja-de-contagios-medicos-del-norte-de-honduras-esperan-completar-su-inmunizacion/>

21 <https://www.paho.org/es/noticias/4-5-2021-entrega-covax-segundo-lote-vacunas-honduras>

22 <https://confidencialhn.com/grupos-de-personas-que-recibiran-vacuna-anti-covid-19-durante-mayo-en-honduras/>

23 <https://tiempo.hn/vacunacion-periodistas-covid-honduras-en-mayo/>

24 <https://tiempo.hn/ministra-alba-flores-vacunas-rusas-en-honduras/>

25 <https://confidencialhn.com/finanzas-negocia-con-farmaceutica-moderna-cobertura-de-vacunacion-a-largo-plazo/>

26 <https://criterio.hn/el-salvador-dona-34000-dosis-de-vacuna-anti-covid-19-a-alcaldes-de-honduras/>

27 <https://contracorriente.red/2021/05/15/alcaldes-de-honduras-reciben-primeras-17000-vacunas-de-nayib-bukele-y-despiertan-un-conflicto-geopolitico/>

28 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1463583-466/honduras-vacunas-donadas-salvador-bukele-alcaldes>

29 <https://radioprogreso.hn/aplicacion-movil/alcaldes-amenazas-de-parte-de-canciller-de-la-republica/>

30 <https://proceso.hn/lote-de-40-mil-vacunas-rusas-llegan-a-honduras/>

waiting for component two to start with the inoculation and ensure that second dose in the time interval, we need to have both components," she argued."³¹

The lack of vaccines created an uncomfortable situation for JOH. He then blamed "diplomatic reasons" for why Honduras has no access to vaccines.³² Criterio reacted: "Hernández's speech is interpreted as an act of manipulation and an insult to the intelligence of Hondurans because the vaccine has been acquired by governments of right, center and left in Latin America and without intermediation of any actor. For the expert in constitutional law and human rights, Joaquín Mejía, Hernández's argument only reflects his incapacity and mediocrity in assuming his responsibility in the face of the pandemic and specifically in the provision of the vaccines, "because if one looks at the region, all governments, regardless of their ideological position, from what is called the left, such as Nicaragua, to the right in Guatemala or the center in Costa Rica and El Salvador, everyone did their homework", as well as Panama and the rest of Latin America."³³ The discussion then went beyond the region. "Taiwan condemned China on Wednesday for seeking to use vaccines for political gain after Taipei's diplomatic ally Honduras said it was considering opening an office in China in a bid to acquire much needed COVID-19 shots."³⁴ On March 13, Congress in Honduras approved the opening of such an office.³⁵ Two days later, the Health Minister Alba Consuelo Flores promised to sign a purchase agreement with Pfizer for 4.4 million vaccine doses.³⁶

Somehow ignoring all of the above, the Secretary of Health unconvincingly claimed that by October, 81% of Hondurans would be vaccinated.³⁷ Maybe, they were hopeful due to the announced loan of \$35 million by the BCIE to buy vaccines.³⁸ But on May 17, several media outlets reported on high-level disputes at the Secretary of Health regarding the (lack of a) vaccine strategy in Honduras.³⁹ ⁴⁰ A day later, the JOH regime boasted to have signed a pre-purchase for 4.5 million doses of the Pfizer vaccine.⁴¹ Medical experts criticize the JOH regime for presenting the pre-purchase agreement with Pfizer as a success with imminent benefits. "Figuroa said that it is "risky to say that they have purchased when all they are really doing is the first step, which is to sign a letter of intent to purchase, and obviously the shipment of the vaccines takes and may take a long time and they do not deliver the whole quantity. (...) The president of the CMH said that, by selling false hopes, the government intends to "remove the impression left by their own irresponsibility in the Honduran people, who we see that they have been more than irresponsible by not signing, by not making a purchase of vaccines on time". "⁴²

31 <https://proceso.hn/lote-de-40-mil-vacunas-rusas-se-congelaran-hasta-que-llegue-segundo-componente/>

32 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1463063-466/juan-orlando-hermandez-honduras-ha-donado-medicamentos-el-salvador>

33 <https://criterio.hn/el-absurdo-y-ridiculo-discurso-ideologico-del-presidente-de-honduras/>

34 <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2021-05-12/taiwan-says-china-seeking-political-gain-with-honduras-vaccine-move>

35 <https://confidencialhn.com/congreso-nacional-aprueba-mocion-para-instalar-oficina-comercial-en-china-para-adquirir-vacunas-contra-el-covid-19-2/>

36 <https://tiempo.hn/compra-de-vacunas-de-pfizer-honduras/>

37 <https://tiempo.hn/hondurenos-vacunados-en-octubre-ministra-de-salud/>

38 <https://tiempo.hn/bcie-prestamos-a-honduras-compra-de-vacunas/>

39 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2925-honduras-dr-cosenza-muestra-desacuerdo-con-decisiones-en-salud>

40 <https://proceso.hn/viceministro-de-salud-denuncia-que-propias-autoridades-le-cuestionan-y-defiende-derecho-a-la-vacuna/>

41 <https://tiempo.hn/honduras-contrato-compra-vacunas-de-pfizer/>

42 <https://criterio.hn/gobierno-sigue-vendiendo-falsas-expectativas-a-hondurenos-suyapa-figuroa/>

On May 19, almost 200 organizations, churches, businesses sent a joint letter to the Biden administration asking for the donation of vaccine doses to Honduras.⁴³ By that time, "[a]ccording to data from the Ministry of Health (Sesal), Honduras has vaccinated only 1% of its population. Only 5687 frontline health personnel have been vaccinated with the two doses, and 108,538 people, including health personnel and older adults, have been vaccinated with the first dose."⁴⁴ On May 22, the first batch of the vaccine doses purchased by the IHSS arrived in Honduras, 86'400 out of 204'000.⁴⁵ The next day, 81'600 doses arrived.⁴⁶ And another day later, the remaining 36'000 doses arrived.⁴⁷ The same day, Congress approved a \$35 million credit to buy vaccines.⁴⁸ ⁴⁹ JOH then promised vaccine doses for one million Hondurans for June.⁵⁰

At the end of the month, there was some good news for health care workers. "The president of the National Association of Nurses and Auxiliary Nurses of Honduras, ANEEAH, Josué Orellana, reported that after the Ministry of Health failed to comply with several agreements related to payment of debts, retirement and the hiring of personnel, they have reached new agreements."⁵¹

Corruption

"Honduras, in 2020, spent close to 6 billion lempiras (about 248.8 million dollars) in response to the pandemic. However, although the promise was that with that budget hospitals would be built and vaccines would be purchased, more than a year later, not a single hospital has been built and the only purchase made for hospital infrastructure was seven mobile hospitals that turned out to be a fraud. In terms of vaccination, Honduras is currently the most backward country in Central America."⁵²

The mobile hospitals were never good enough to serve as real hospitals. But some at least served as very expensive triage centers. Now, Dr. Carlos Umaña denounces that the mobile hospital in San Pedro Sula is being looted. "I have information that there is some extraction of equipment; we know that there is a mobile hospital whose beds have been removed and are being moved to another place. I have been informed by residents of where the mobile hospitals are," he revealed.⁵³ The MP announced an investigation.⁵⁴

43 <https://confidencialhn.com/sociedad-civil-y-sectores-envian-carta-a-joe-biden-para-obtener-donacion-de-vacunas-anticovid/>

44 <https://contracorriente.red/2021/05/22/vacunacion-avanza-lento-en-honduras-esta-semana-continuan-los-adultos-mayores/>

45 <https://proceso.hn/llegan-primeras-vacunas-anticovid-adquiridas-por-el-ihss/>

46 <https://proceso.hn/llega-segundo-lote-de-vacunas-compradas-por-el-ihss/>

47 <https://proceso.hn/llega-al-pais-el-tercer-lote-de-vacunas-astrazeneca-adquiridas-por-el-ihss/>

48 <https://proceso.hn/aprueban-prestamo-de-35-millones-para-compra-de-vacunas-contra-el-covid-en-honduras/>

49 <https://criterio.hn/mas-endeudamiento-para-comprar-vacunas-contra-la-covid-19/>

50 <https://tiempo.hn/joh-vacunacion-honduras-dosis-pfizer/>

51 <https://radioprogreso.hn/aplicacion-movil/enfermeras-logran-nuevos-acuerdos-con-el-gobierno/>

52 <https://contracorriente.red/2021/05/26/de-las-promesas-de-juan-orlando-herandez-al-fraude-de-los-hospitales-moviles/>

53 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/05/10/denuncian-saqueo-de-equipo-de-los-hospitales-moviles-fiscalia-anuncia-investigacion/>

54 <https://confidencialhn.com/de-oficio-investiga-mp-denuncias-sobre-saqueo-en-hospital-movil/>

"The Association for a More Just Society (ASJ) denounced that they identified that during the vaccination days against SARS-CoV-2 at least six officials of public and private entities, together with their families, were vaccinated without being a priority and even falsified documents."⁵⁵

Reporteros de Investigación published a six-part investigation into corruption and the response to COVID-19.⁵⁶ Part 1⁵⁷. Part 2 featured JOH prominently. "At least four indications suggest that Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández was personally interested in the purchase of the seven mobile hospitals that were supposed to serve COVID-19 patients. However, his interest had little to do with the national pandemic emergency. The evidence suggests that JOH was interested in the possibility of using the money from the overvaluation of the hospitals to buy favors and indefinitely postpone the conviction of his brother Juan Antonio Hernández, alias Tony, accused of drug trafficking in the United States."⁵⁸ Part 3⁵⁹ and Part 4⁶⁰. Part 5 focused on the US. "In the same appearance Heide Fulton [former chargé d'affaires to Honduras], Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Programs in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, to a question about the expulsion of Maccih from the country, responded that "the United States, its allies and independent civil society remain committed to combating corruption and impunity, in addition to the continued promotion of transparency, accountability and Honduran law".⁶¹ On May 30, Part 5⁶² followed and the next day, Part 6.⁶³

Economy

Members of 19 public unions protested outside the Ministry of Finance demanding the payment of outstanding paychecks.⁶⁴

Poverty⁶⁵

Honduras, together with Mexico and Ecuador has seen the highest rise in extreme poverty in 2020.⁶⁶ "This week, in collaboration with agencies of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the annual report of the Global Network Against Food Crisis (GNAFC) was published, revealing that 2.9 million Hondurans are suffering from famine."⁶⁷

55 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/05/14/asj-denuncia-que-funcionarios-estatales-y-privados-se-vacunaron-sin-ser-prioridad/>

56 <https://www.reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2021/05/25/covidgate-como-llegamos-a-esta-propuesta/>

57 <https://www.reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2021/05/25/juan-orlando-hermandez-ligado-a-saqueo-de-mas-de-mil-millones-que-eran-para-covid-19/>

58 <https://www.reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2021/05/26/el-dinero-de-hospitales-moviles-quizas-haya-ido-a-parar-al-juicio-del-hermano-del-presidente/>

59 <https://www.reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2021/05/27/diez-mega-saqueos-y-cinco-mil-muertes-por-covid-19/>

60 <https://www.reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2021/05/28/la-gran-mentira-del-negocio-de-las-vacunas-al-25-de-mayo-solo-hay-para-el-2/>

61 <https://www.reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2021/05/29/ante-el-saqueo-planean-nueva-mision-anticorruptcion-que-viene-a-honduras-impulsada-por-ee-uu/>

62 <https://www.reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2021/05/30/la-basura-movil-y-una-empresa-turca-sin-interacciones-en-la-web/>

63 <https://www.reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2021/05/30/la-basura-movil-y-una-empresa-turca-sin-interacciones-en-la-web/>

64 <https://confidencialhn.com/sindicalistas-realizan-protestas-por-el-incumplimiento-a-los-derechos-laborales/>

65 <https://tiempo.hn/asj-680-mil-alumnos-clases-virtuales/>

66 <https://criterio.hn/mexico-honduras-y-ecuador-paises-donde-aumento-la-pobreza-extrema/>

67 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2897-tres-millones-de-hondurenos-mueren-de-hambre-segun-onu>

"The president of the Central Bank of Honduras (BCH), Wilfredo Cerrato, stated that so far this year, \$2.3 billion in remittances have been received, \$700 million more than at the same time last year."⁶⁸

Education

For weeks, the education authorities pushed for in-person classes again, against the fears of the teachers. This month, the authorities also recognized that this would not be possible for the time being.⁶⁹ According to ASJ, 680'000 Honduran school children only have class, virtually, for one hour a day.

Human Rights and Their Defenders

OACNUDH and the MP signed a "Letter of Understanding with the purpose of establishing a framework for technical cooperation aimed, among other things, at strengthening the capacity for criminal investigation of human rights violations in the country".⁷⁰

Iris Rosalía Cruz is the new Minister of Human Rights.⁷¹

Attacks, Criminalization and Harassment

CESPAD published an important analysis on what lies behind the criminalization of especially peasant defenders.⁷²

On May 10, MADJ sent out an alert as the Honduran police besieged the Tolupeán community of San Francisco de Locomapa, even shooting at Tolupeán defenders.^{73 74} "A contingent of the National Police at gunpoint supported the illegal logging of the forest of the Tolupeán indigenous people of the San Francisco de Locomapa Tribe, in the department of Yoro, this May 10, 2021. The National Police was responsible and acted with total impunity under the command of Class I, officer Pineda, who arrived in patrol car number PN-952."⁷⁵ MADJ denounces the lack of an investigation by state authorities.⁷⁶ OACNUDH expressed concern.⁷⁷ 32 international NGOs present in Honduras published a joint statement in support of the Tolupeán defenders.⁷⁸

68 <https://criterio.hn/remesas-siguen-sosteniendo-la-economia-en-honduras/>

69 <https://proceso.hn/sinager-descarta-pilotaje-en-el-sector-educacion-para-retornar-a-clases-presenciales>

70 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/autor-login/176-mayo2021/7715-oficina-del-alto-comisionado-de-las-naciones-unidas-para-los-derechos-humanos-y-ministerio-publico-acuerdan-frente-comun-para-la-investigacion-de-violaciones-a-derechos-humanos>

71 <https://proceso.hn/juramentan-a-nuevas-ministras-de-derechos-humanos-y-miambiente/>

72 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/05/25/recuperacion-o-invasion/>

73 <https://madj.org/2021/05/12/barbarie-y-terrorismo-de-estado-contra-el-pueblo-tolupan-de-locomapa-la-vida-digna-del-pueblo-tolupan-no-puede-valer-menos-que-una-troza-de-madera/>

74 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1391940646043361284>

75 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/denuncias/item/3150-balazos-contra-indigenas-indefensos>

76 <https://twitter.com/MovAmplioHn/status/1392143885728731138>

77 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDHn/status/1392251962201157639>

78 <https://twitter.com/MovAmplioHn/status/1394395500716175360>

"A single judge of the Sentencing Court of the City of Comayagua sentenced two peasants from San Pedro de Tutule, La Paz, who are members of the Empresa Asociativa Campesina 8 de febrero in that department, for the crime of usurpation."⁷⁹

Last month, human rights defenders belonging to ARCAH faced criminalization. This month, they were threatened. "The circulation of cars without license plates and tinted windows with unknown men in front of the houses of the seven environmentalists on trial is already unbearable, they believe there could be an imminent attack against their lives."⁸⁰

"Marlon Neptali Osorto, mayor of the municipality of Reitoca, illegally entered the house of Renán Ovidio Zelaya, active member of the Lenca Indigenous Council of Reitoca CILR, to threaten him to death, which may have a direct connection with the defense of the Petacón River in that community, as denounced by the organization Madre Tierra in a public statement, this May 14, 2021."⁸¹

"Human rights organizations, peasant organizations and the team of defense lawyers demanded that the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice resolve the Appeal for Protection filed in favor of Víctor Vázquez and José Santos Vijil, indigenous leaders who are being accused of forced displacement and are in jail. The Coalition Against Impunity CCI, the Justice for the Peoples Law Firm BJP, the Honduran Center for the Promotion of Community Development CEHPRODEH and the Independent Lenca Indigenous Movement of La Paz-Honduras MILPAH, held the Press Conference "Access to land and territory: the criminalization of indigenous peoples and peasants", this May 26, 2021."⁸² But on May 28, a judge denied them to await trial outside prison.^{83 84}

Indigenous Peoples

On May 5, Criterio reported on the threat of eviction against more than 5000 members of the Tolupán community Agalteca in Yoro.⁸⁵

Investigations by the MP sent two hopeful signs this month. The MP presented a challenge against a court ruling to drop the charges against a public employee who "in her capacity as registrar of the IP, registered the donation of a plot of land of 10,439.33 square meters, thus violating the provisions of the law in relation to the prohibition of registration of properties in favor of third parties, when the land belongs to indigenous and Afro-Honduran peoples".⁸⁶ And in a second case, "[t]he Prosecutor's Office of Ethnic Groups and Cultural Heritage obtained in oral and public trial the conviction of the former vice minister of the Secretariat of Natural Resources and Environment (SERNA), Norman Gilberto Ochoa Henríquez for abuse of authority, after proving that in 2010 the accused irregularly granted the environmental license for the development of the hydroelectric dam

79 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/juez-de-comayagua-condena-a-dos-campesinos-que-se-encuentran-en-proceso-de-recuperacion-de-tierra/>

80 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/denuncias/item/3151-vigilancia-extrema-contra-ambientalistas-enjuiciados>

81 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/denuncias/item/3152-alcalde-se-mete-a-la-casa-para-amenazar-a-muerte-a-defensor-de-derechos-humanos>

82 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/denuncias/item/3166-sistema-de-justicia-hondureno-se-encarga-de-tener-bajo-prision-a-defensores-indigenas>

83 <https://twitter.com/BufeteBJP/status/1398398409313292296>

84 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/denuncias/item/3170-poder-judicial-parcializado-jueza-violento-el-debido-proceso-en-juicio-contra-defensores-de-la-paz>

85 <https://criterio.hn/bajo-amenaza-de-desalojo-ilegal-mas-de-5-mil-integrantes-de-comunidad-tolupan-en-yoro/>

86 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/autor-login/176-mayo2021/7696-recurso-de-apelacion-por-sobreseimiento-a-favor-de-funcionaria-del-ip-de-la-ceiba-acusada-de-registrar-tierras-garifunas-a-terceros>

La Ensenada, located in La Ceiba, Atlántida, particularly to the detriment of the Garifuna communities of Sambo Creek and Corinto."⁸⁷

OACNUDH met with members of OFRANEH and it reiterated "its commitment to continue accompanying @ofraneh's valuable work for dignity and justice."⁸⁸ OACNUDH also traveled to Yoro and met with Tolupán communities. "During the visit to the San Francisco Locomapa tribe, #OACNUDH condemned the acts of violence against people of the Tolupán people and reiterated its call for authorities to take the necessary measures to prevent violence."⁸⁹

Forced Disappearance

On May 18, a virtual forum took place on the forced disappearance of the five young men from the Garifuna community Triunfo de la Cruz which led to the creation of SUNLA, the Garifuna Committee for the Investigation and Search for the Disappeared of Triunfo de la Cruz.⁹⁰ EU Parliamentarian Miguel Urbán Crespo supports OFRANEH in calling for SUNLA to be part of the official investigation into the forced disappearance of the young Garifuna men.⁹¹

The Case of Berta Cáceres

The trial against David Castillo continued this month⁹² after a weekend break on May 3. Just reprinting here the great summaries by Karen Spring would take several pages. So I refer directly to her blog for Day 8⁹³ and Day 9⁹⁴. The next day, the trial was first postponed to the afternoon and then suspended.⁹⁵ Padre Melo commented on the importance of the trial. "Punishing David Castillo will open a door against impunity."⁹⁶ Day 10⁹⁷ took place on May 6. The same day of the trial, the Expert Mission accompanying the Berta Cáceres Cause met with CONADEH "to address follow-up strategies to ensure risk prevention and protection of human rights defenders acting as parties to the proceedings in the Case".⁹⁸ Day 11⁹⁹, Day 12¹⁰⁰, Day 13¹⁰¹ and Day 14¹⁰² took place as scheduled. Day 15¹⁰³ and Day 16¹⁰⁴ were both very short. The next day, Day 17¹⁰⁵, of the trial took longer again.

87 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/176-mayo2021/7716-historico-fallo-contra-ex-viceministro-que-otorgo-ilegalmente-licencia-ambiental-a-hidroelectrica-en-territorio-garifuna>

88 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1395191135145013256>

89 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1398404138027864069>

90 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/contexto/item/3157-estado-de-honduras-evidencia-que-no-quiere-llegar-a-la-verdad-sobre-desaparicion-de-garifunas>

91 <https://twitter.com/MiguelUrban/status/1395763816965689345>

92 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/especial/bertha-caceres/item/3146-abogado-victor-fernandez-despues-de-este-juicio-vamos-contra-esta-estructura-empresarial-criminal-violenta-y-corrupta>

93 <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2021/5/3/day-eight-trial-against-david-castillo>

94 <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2021/5/4/day-nine-trial-against-david-castillo>

95 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/139030340495454377>

96 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/especial/bertha-caceres/item/3149-padre-melo-si-se-castiga-a-david-castillo-se-abrira-una-puerta-contra-la-impunidad>

97 <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2021/5/6/day-ten-trial-against-david-castillo>

98 <https://twitter.com/MisionCaso/status/1390888142979440646>

99 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1390888142979440646>

100 <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2021/5/10/day-twelve-trial-against-david-castillo>

101 <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2021/5/11/day-thirteen-trial-against-david-castillo>

102 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1392646339670990860>

103 <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2021/5/13/day-fifteen-trial-against-david-castillo>

104 <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2021/5/14/day-sixteen-trial-against-david-castillo>

105 <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2021/5/15/day-seventeen-trial-against-david-castillo>

On May 16, Day 18¹⁰⁶ took place before another one-day break. Day 19¹⁰⁷, Day 20¹⁰⁸, Day 21¹⁰⁹ and Day 22¹¹⁰ took place as scheduled. But then the trial was suspended again because a judge was reportedly not feeling well, first one day, then an additional two days. The trial then continued on May 25 with Day 23.¹¹¹ Day 24¹¹² Day 25¹¹³ and Day 26¹¹⁴ followed.

The later was especially important with Daniel Atala Midence on the stand, even though just for a short moment. "Daniel Atala Midence first appeared on zoom to testify but after objections from the prosecutors, was told by the court he had to appear in person. Once he took the stand in person, Atala Midence informed the court that he was making use of his constitutional right not to testify, arguing that he is under investigation. After the prosecutors confirmed that this is indeed correct and after several protests by the private accusers, Atala will not be required by the court to testify."¹¹⁵ Lawyer Edy Tábora still sees Atala's appearance as a great success. "[I]t is already a great political, legal and social achievement that Daniel A. invokes that he cannot "testify against himself" and that the @MP_Honduras recognizes that he is under investigation."¹¹⁶ ¹¹⁷ And the real problem is that after three years in possession of proof against him, the MP has not presented an accusation.¹¹⁸ Until the end of the month, Day 27¹¹⁹, Day 28¹²⁰ and Day 29¹²¹.

Apart from the trial against David Castillo, there was more news this month linked to the Berta Cáceres case. CESPAD published a report on the Gualcarque Fraud case.¹²² On May 19, COPINH reported on some good news regarding the Agua Zarca case. "The Dutch development bank FMO will not grant a loan to the Ficohsa bank from Honduras after all. According to a spokesperson for FMO, negotiations on the \$60 million loan have been discontinued. This marks a remarkable turn in an extremely sensitive dossier for the Hague-based development bank. (...) The most piquant accusation is that, according to the NGOs, Ficohsa was involved in financing DESA, a Honduran company that wanted to build a hydroelectric plant that was also financed by FMO. During the local people's opposition to the construction of that power plant, the prominent activist Berta Cáceres was murdered in 2016. This caused a storm of international criticism of the human rights situation in the Central American country. When it became clear that DESA employees were involved in the murder, FMO withdrew from the Agua Zarca project."¹²³ COPINH demanded the clarification of the

106 <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2021/5/16/day-eighteen-trial-against-david-castillo>

107 <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2021/5/18/day-nineteen-trial-against-david-castillo>

108 <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2021/5/19/day-twenty-trial-against-david-castillo>

109 <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2021/5/20/day-twenty-one-trial-against-david-castillo>

110 <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2021/5/21/day-twenty-two-trial-against-david-castillo>

111 <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2021/5/25/day-twenty-three-trial-against-david-castillo>

112 <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2021/5/26/day-twenty-four-trial-against-david-castillo>

113 <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2021/5/27/day-twenty-five-trial-against-david-castillo>

114 <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2021/5/28/day-twenty-six-trial-against-david-castillo>

115 <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2021/5/28/day-twenty-six-trial-against-david-castillo>

116 https://twitter.com/Edy_Tabora/status/1398449360933900290

117 https://twitter.com/Edy_Tabora/status/1398453624758546432

118 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/especial/berta-caceres/item/3169-artimanana-u-observancia-de-la-ley-mp-anuncia-que-daniel-atala-es-investigado-y-pide-que-no-testifique>

119 <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2021/5/29/day-twenty-seven-trial-against-david-castillo>

120 <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2021/5/30/day-twenty-eight-trial-against-david-castillo>

121 <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2021/5/31/day-twenty-nine-trial-against-david-castillo>

122 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/05/17/las-redes-de-corrupcion-detras-de-la-concesion-de-rios-en-honduras-gualcarque-la-evidencia-de-la-colusion-entre-la-empresa-privada-y-los-poderes-del-estado/>

123 <https://copinh.org/2021/05/ingles/>

responsibilities of the banks Ficohsa, BCIE and the Dutch bank FMO in the violence suffered by the Lenca indigenous community of Rio Blanco and the murder of Berta Cáceres.¹²⁴

LGBTQ

May started with an attack on a trans woman in Santa Barbara. "OACNUDH condemns the attack suffered by Rebecca, a trans woman from Santa Barbara, who was assaulted by four men, and calls on the State to conduct an investigation into the facts that includes the hypothesis of a hate crime because of her gender identity."¹²⁵

In Geneva, "[h]uman rights experts from the UN and regional bodies today urged governments, faith-based institutions and religious leaders to embrace the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual and gender diverse (LGBT) community with respect and compassion, and to reject policies, laws and practices that discriminate or fuel prejudice."¹²⁶

"This May 17, 2021, as part of the International Day against Homophobia, Lesbophobia and Transphobia, human rights organizations of the LGTBI community in Honduras, highlighted the advances and challenges that still keep a community of diversity, marginalized and without respect for their sexual orientation."¹²⁷

Assassination

Trans woman Valery Pereira was murdered in La Lima, Cortés on May 14.¹²⁸ OACNUDH condemned the murder.¹²⁹ The assassination took place just days before the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia.¹³⁰ ¹³¹ A second trans woman, Karencita, was murdered on May 25. OACNUDH again condemned the murder.¹³²

Freedom of Expression and Journalists

"On World Press Freedom Day, the United Nations in Honduras highlights the fundamental role of journalists in ensuring the enjoyment of the collective right to information."¹³³ The same day, C-Libre held a protest rally outside CONADEH demanding that the State comply with its obligation to promote and respect the work of the media at all times.¹³⁴ And the next day, the UK ambassador Nick Whittingham expressed concern about the criminalization and violence suffered by journalists in Honduras.¹³⁵

¹²⁴ <https://criterio.hn/copinh-exige-esclarecer-responsabilidad-de-ficohsa-bcie-y-fmo-en-crimen-de-berta-caceres/>

¹²⁵ <https://twitter.com/OACNUDHNN/status/1388626999858585602>

¹²⁶ <https://oacnudh.hn/los-expertos-de-la-onu-istan-a-los-lideres-religiosos-a-mostrar-respeto-y-compasion-por-las-personas-lgbt/>

¹²⁷ <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/contexto/item/3154-la-homofobia-es-un-obstaculo-para-que-la-comunidad-lgtbi-goce-de-derechos-en-honduras>

¹²⁸ <https://www.elheraldo.hn/sucesos/1463784-466/matan-miembro-comunidad-lgtbi-la-lima-honduras-violencia>

¹²⁹ <https://twitter.com/OACNUDHNN/status/1393378021709602824>

¹³⁰ <https://criterio.hn/comunidad-lgtbi-de-honduras-exige-un-cese-a-los-crimenes-de-odio/>

¹³¹ <https://twitter.com/OACNUDHNN/status/1394459593481273344>

¹³² <https://twitter.com/OACNUDHNN/status/1397378034462826503>

¹³³ <https://honduras.un.org/es/126149-en-el-dia-mundial-de-la-libertad-de-prensa-naciones-unidas-en-honduras-resalta-el-rol>

¹³⁴ <https://criterio.hn/pandemia-de-covid-19-debilite-aun-mas-la-libertad-de-prensa-en-honduras/>

¹³⁵ <https://proceso.hn/reino-unido-preocupado-por-la-violencia-a-los-periodistas-en-honduras/>

On May 6, journalist Pablo Chavarría was assaulted by members of the national police while covering a protest by cab drivers in the municipality of Santa Cruz de Yojoa.¹³⁶ And a week later, as part of the attack against the Tolupe community (see above), armed men linked to the logging company also attacked the community radio.¹³⁷ Journalist Milton Turcios was threatened in person by an unknown man on two occasions.¹³⁸ C-Libre published four more alerts regarding threats against journalists.¹³⁹ ¹⁴⁰ In one case, journalist Dassaev Aguilar received several threats after an interview with Secretary of the Presidency, Ebal Diaz, questioning him about the Honduran government's position to promote the ZEDES.¹⁴¹ In another case, "[m]embers of the Presidential Honor Guard (GHP) blocked journalist Gabriela Campos from covering the "Álvaro Contreras" award ceremony on May 25 at a hotel in Tegucigalpa. Campos, who works for Canal 36 (Cholusat Sur), said that when she arrived at the hotel for the award ceremony and where Juan Orlando Hernández arrived, members of the Presidential Honor Guard denied her access to the place, arguing that they were "simply following orders".¹⁴²

"Honduran journalist Thirzia Karina Galeas Núñez was detained in Georgia, United States, upon requesting political asylum after fleeing Honduras for having been threatened and assaulted since 2010 by agents of the government of Juan Orlando Hernández (2014-present) and Porfirio Lobo (2010-2014). The 34-year-old journalist is being held at the Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Georgia. Galeas, a freelance journalist, has worked for several media outlets, including the daily Conexihon and the organization C-Libre."¹⁴³

At the end of the month, journalists started to get vaccinated with Sputnik V.¹⁴⁴ Reporteros de Investigación denounced that the JOH regime promotes hate against independent journalists and leaves them without the vaccine.¹⁴⁵ At the same time, many observers questioned the decision to have journalists vaccinated before more vulnerable groups.¹⁴⁶ Why would someone want to benefit journalists in an electoral year...

Assassinations

"The National Observatory of Violence (ONV) of the National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH) on Thursday called on the Government to investigate and not leave in impunity the violent deaths of 90 journalists and communicators killed between 2005 and 2020."¹⁴⁷ ¹⁴⁸

136 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1357-corresponsal-de-hch-agredido-por-policias-en-protesta-de-transportistas>

137 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1359-personas-afines-a-empresario-maderero-destruyen-instalaciones-de-radio-comunitaria>

138 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/amenazas/item/3160-estas-hablando-demasiado-le-dice-hombre-en-motocicleta-al-periodista-milton-turcios>

139 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1363-periodista-es-amenazado-al-publicar-reportaje-en-yoro>

140 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1365-estas-hablando-demasiado-amenazas-de-un-motociclista-a-periodista-en-el-occidente-de-honduras>

141 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1364-amenazan-a-periodista-luego-de-entrevistar-a-funcionario-de-gobierno>

142 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1367-guardia-presidencial-impide-a-comunicadora-cubrir-entrega-de-premios-a-periodistas>

143 <https://www.reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2021/05/30/detienen-a-periodista-hondurena-al-solicitar-asilo-en-estados-unidos/>

144 <https://proceso.hn/vacunas-rusas-sputnik-v-para-los-periodistas-hondurenos/>

145 <https://www.reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2021/05/23/joh-promueve-discurso-de-odio-contra-periodistas-independientes-mientras-los-deja-sin-vacunas>

146 <https://criterio.hn/agenda-oculta-en-la-vacunacion-de-periodistas-en-honduras/>

147 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1466648-410/piden-investigar-la-muerte-violenta-de-90-periodistas-hondure%C3%B1os-desde-2005>

148 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/amenazas/item/3167-muertes-violentas-contra-periodistas-envian-un-mensaje-de-restriccion-para-decir-la-verdad>

Violence against Women

On the first day of the month, three women were murdered.¹⁴⁹ At least 110 women have been murdered so far this year.¹⁵⁰

"Victoria suffered an obstetric emergency in 2010, she did not know she was pregnant and when she went to the hospital, the medical staff who attended her reported her for abortion. The legal process she faced lasted eleven years. She was exposed in the media and had to flee the place where she lived, for years she was unable to get a stable job and has dealt with post-traumatic stress since that day. During the oral and public trial in April 2021, the Public Prosecutor's Office (MP) asked for an acquittal due to lack of evidence and the court acquitted her. She now tells her story under protection to avoid being stigmatized or discriminated against."¹⁵¹

Political Prisoners

Ten COVID-19 cases were detected in the women's prison in Támara this month.¹⁵²

Extractive Industries

Let's start with some good news.¹⁵³ "The U.S. government withdrew financial support this week from a proposed dam in Honduras that is at the center of a simmering conflict between local residents and developers. Two opponents of the project have been killed. The decision by the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, (DFC), which provides funding for private-sector projects, marked a victory for the activist groups in Honduras and the United States that had urged the agency to drop the project."¹⁵⁴

"More than a thousand metallic and non-metallic mining concessions, energy and hydrocarbon projects have been granted by the Government, 100 of these have been settled in indigenous territory; due to the seriousness of this reality, which other media outlets address superficially or simply do not include in their agendas, EL LIBERTADOR presents this investigation with the purpose of creating active awareness in society."¹⁵⁵

On May 5. Criterio reported on a protest by residents of Baracoa, Cortés against the installation of a thermoelectric power plant in the vicinity of their community. "They denounced that by means of a virtual town hall, the authorities intend to approve the project in spite of the opposition of the citizens."¹⁵⁶

149 <https://proceso.hn/en-menos-de-24-horas-tres-mujeres-han-sido-asesinadas-en-honduras/>

150 <https://proceso.hn/110-mujeres-han-sido-asesinadas-en-honduras-durante-2021-60-de-casos-perpetrados-por-sus-parejas/>

151 <https://contracorriente.red/2021/05/20/criminalizada-once-anos-por-una-emergencia-obstetrica/>

152 <https://tiempo.hn/casos-de-covid-19-carcel-de-mujeres-honduras/>

153 <https://twitter.com/MovAmplioHn/status/1398109392680128514>

154 <https://www.vice.com/en/article/bvzm43/biden-just-killed-funding-for-a-controversial-dam-trump-tried-to-build-in-honduras>

155 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2905-honduras-investigacion-mas-de-1-100-concesiones-aprobo-gobierno>

156 <https://criterio.hn/pobladores-de-baracoa-protestan-contrainstalacion-de-planta-hidroelectrica/>

On May 17, social movements followed the call by COPINH to protest the extractive development model in Honduras.¹⁵⁷ ¹⁵⁸ Riot police harassed protesters.¹⁵⁹

On May 24, Congress also approved a reform to speed up dam constructions.¹⁶⁰

ZEDES

"The Secretary of the Presidency, Ebal Diaz, announced the delivery of a bill aimed at granting tax exemptions for the Special Economic Development Zones (Zedes) despite the rejection of the majority that qualify them as the sale of Honduran territory. Díaz explained that the initiative, promoted by President Juan Orlando Hernández, is aimed at granting tax benefits to the Zedes, as is established for the free trade zones."¹⁶¹ This announcement was widely denounced.¹⁶² FOSDEH labeled it "a bet on institutional weakness".¹⁶³

On May 14, news outlets reported that the community of Satuyé, located near La Ceiba, will become the third Special Economic Development Zone (ZEDE) under the management of the Prospera Honduras consortium.¹⁶⁴ In the south, people in Zacate Grande live under threat of the imposition of such a ZEDE.¹⁶⁵ Protests against ZEDES took place both in Roatán and Tegucigalpa.¹⁶⁶ The National Party and the JOH regime, meanwhile, continued to defend the idea of the ZEDES.¹⁶⁷

ContraCoriente has an important article on the ZEDES and a ruling coming from Vienna. "In October 2020 Patrice Fuchs, an Austrian journalist, shared information about ZEDES on her twitter. In one tweet she wrote that Barbara Kolm, vice president of the Austrian National Bank (Österreichische Nationalbank), was building a luxury tax oasis in Honduras for the world's libertarians, adding that such a project had been the subject of local protests and that a human rights activist had been killed. Kolm then proceeded to prosecute him on charges of defamation, libel and slander. At today's court hearing on May 20, 2021, the Regional Court for Criminal Matters in Vienna (Landesgericht für Strafsachen Wien) ruled in favor of Barbara Kolm. Although there are many substantive aspects that deserve further analysis, at least two relevant issues that were discussed in Kolm v. Fuchs are highlighted below. The first is the composition of the Committee for the Adoption of Best Practices (CAMP). And the second is on the conceptualization of ZEDES as tax oases."¹⁶⁸

157 <https://copinh.org/2021/05/liberation-of-territories-is-justice-for-berta/>

158 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/contexto/item/3155-movilizacion-para-el-cierre-de-concesiones-que-no-aprueban-las-comunidades-indigenas>

159 <https://twitter.com/RedDefensoras/status/1394357237523566596>

160 <https://tiempo.hn/cn-aprueba-reformar-contrato-agilizar-construccion-represas/>

161 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/05/10/joh-envia-ley-al-legislativo-para-otorgar-exenciones-de-impuestos-a-zedes/>

162 <https://criterio.hn/zedes-impactaran-en-la-recaudacion-fiscal-y-profundizaran-la-desigualdad-en-honduras/>

163 <https://proceso.hn/esfuerzos-de-implementacion-de-zede-constituye-debilidad-institucional-indica-fosdeh/>

164 <https://criterio.hn/honduras-anexan-puerto-de-satuye-en-la-ceiba-a-zede-prospera-de-roatan/>

165 <https://criterio.hn/zacate-grande-en-alerta-ante-amenaza-de-instalacion-de-zede/>

166 <https://criterio.hn/honduras-movilizaciones-contras-las-zedes-en-roatan-y-tegucigalpa/>

167 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/05/17/joh-asegura-que-las-zedes-no-es-venta-de-territorio-y-quienes-se-oponen-no-saben-leer/>

168 <https://contracorriente.red/2021/05/20/las-zede-en-los-tribunales-de-viena/>

On May 24, Congress approved the tax exemptions mentioned above without a qualified majority, just with the votes of Nationalist members of Congress.^{169 170} Even corporate media outlets reported on the criticism raised against this.^{171 172 173} The president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industries of Cortes (CCIC), Pedro Barquero, described it as illegal, since it was based on a law that is unconstitutional in itself.¹⁷⁴ Radio Progreso presented ZEDEs as "the sign of institutional weakening in Honduras".¹⁷⁵ "Inhabitants of La Mosquitia declared their autonomy to govern themselves and warned the government of Juan Orlando Hernández that they will not allow the installation of a Special Economic Development Zone (ZEDE) in that region."¹⁷⁶

In the last day of the month, more criticism followed, and again coming from unexpected sides. "The former president of the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industries of Honduras (Fedecámaras), Menotti Maradiaga, said Saturday that with the Employment and Economic Development Zones (Zede), micro, small a¹⁷⁷nd medium enterprises (MSMEs) "will be abandoned".¹⁷⁸ "In the opinion of the former president of the Honduran College of Economists (CHE), Liliana Castillo, the tax benefits granted to the Employment and Economic Development Zones (ZEDE) leave national investors in unfavorable conditions to compete."

On May 30, there was a protest in La Ceiba against the ZEDEs.^{179 180 181}

Deforestation

"Honduras' Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve occupies a large portion of the country's eastern region. However, despite official protection and recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Río Plátano is plagued by deforestation; satellite data show the biosphere reserve lost 13% of its primary forest cover between 2002 and 2020. Deforestation shot up in 2020, nearly doubling the amount of forest loss over 2019. 2021 may be another rocky year for the biosphere reserve, with satellite data showing several "unusually high" spikes of clearing activity so far this year. Sources say deforestation in the reserve is being driven by logging, agriculture and the drug trade."¹⁸² "According to the Forest Conservation Institute (ICF), approximately 80,000 hectares of forest are lost each year in Honduras as a result of fires and uncontrolled logging, a situation that generates

169 <https://criterio.hn/sin-los-votos-requeridos-congreso-nacional-de-honduras-aprueba-reforma-a-la-ley-de-las-zede/>

170 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2943-conozca-los-diputados-traidores-de-honduras-votaron-por-zede>

171 <https://proceso.hn/sectores-alzan-la-voz-contra-las-zedes-en-honduras/>

172 <https://proceso.hn/sectores-alzan-la-voz-contra-las-zedes-en-honduras/>

173 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1466924-466/zede-honduras-ley-votacion-diputados-congreso-nacional>

174 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1466218-466/pedro-barquero-beneficios-zede-farsa-gobierno>

175 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/pt/zedes-son-la-muestra-del-debilitamiento-institucional-en-honduras/>

176 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/05/27/habitantes-de-la-mosquitia-proclaman-autogobernanza-y-advienten-no-permitiran-zedes/>

177 <https://proceso.hn/beneficios-fiscales-a-las-zede-dejan-en-condicion-desfavorable-a-inversionistas-nacionales-segun-economista/>

178 <https://proceso.hn/mipymes-quedaran-abandonadas-con-instalacion-de-las-zede-en-honduras-menotti-maradiaga/>

179 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1399070920782880778>

180 <https://criterio.hn/ceibenos-se-movilizan-y-dicen-no-a-las-zede-en-honduras/>

181 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/contexto/item/3171-las-zede-son-una-estructura-que-violenta-la-soberania-nacional-y-de-auto-gobernanza-regida-por-extranjeros>

182 <https://news.mongabay.com/2021/04/drugs-and-agriculture-cause-deforestation-to-skyrocket-at-honduran-unesco-site/>

rejection among the inhabitants of affected communities."¹⁸³ At the same time, the Honduran Fire Fighters announced that there have been 70% less forest fires so far this year.¹⁸⁴

Corruption and Its Enemies

"The Board of Directors led by the National Party, refuses to meet again in person in the National Congress, this, in the opinion of analysts and opposition deputies, makes it easier to approve acts that affect the citizens. From the point of view of the lawyer and deputy of the PINU, Doris Gutiérrez, the virtual sessions serve for those who manage this power of the State, to regulate the expression of the legislators and also to completely control the vote counting system at the moment of submitting initiatives for discussion or voting."¹⁸⁵

In response to a request by US Congresswoman Norma Torres, the US State Department published a list of corrupt officials in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.¹⁸⁶ This is not the Engel's List expected for June and is expected to be much more exhaustive.¹⁸⁷ Six Nationalist members of Congress were mentioned.¹⁸⁸

"In order to address impunity and corruption, the National Anti-Corruption Council (CNA) in Honduras and the Myrna Mack Foundation (FMM) in Guatemala signed an agreement to promote transparency and social auditing processes for the prosecution of crimes in public administration."¹⁸⁹

The Onslaught against the Anti-Corruption Bodies

"Opposition parliamentarians denounced that the ruling party of the National Congress intends to reform the Money Laundering Law which would prevent the Public Prosecutor's Office from accessing the records of persons suspected of the crime of money laundering for the benefit of corrupt individuals and drug traffickers. The whistleblowers described the reform of 13 articles as a norm to shield themselves, especially the modification of paragraph 30, numeral 9 where it exempts the Public Prosecutor's Office from knowing the information of the Financial Intelligence Unit (UIF) of the National Banking and Insurance Commission (CNBS)."¹⁹⁰

CESPAD reports on protests by employees of the MP. "In silence and located outside the offices of the different Public Prosecutor's Offices in Honduras, the employees of the Public Prosecutor's Office have held sit-ins throughout the week. They seek to call the attention of the Attorney General and the payment of the salary is the petition that emerges as a superficial aspect of a protest that has as its background, a long-standing crisis in a Public Ministry that for a long time has not supported

183 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/05/05/icf-alerta-sobre-agravamiento-por-quema-y-tala-descontrolada-de-bosques/>

184 <https://tiempo.hn/honduras-incendios-en-2021/>

185 <https://radioprogreso.hn/instante/sesiones-virtuales-facilitan-corrupcion-e-impunidad-afirman-diputados-y-analistas/>

186 <https://torres.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/torres-list-corrupt-officials-shines-light-dark-secrets-n-triangle>

187 <https://twitter.com/jeffgerst/status/1394697743881363456>

188 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/05/18/congresista-de-ee-uu-torres-sindica-a-seis-diputados-nacionalistas-en-nomina-de-corruptos/>

189 <https://criterio.hn/organizaciones-anticorrupton-firman-convenio-para-impulsar-procesos-de-transparencia-en-honduras-y-guatemala/>

190 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/05/07/denuncian-que-reforma-a-ley-de-lavado-de-activos-blindaria-a-corruptos-y-narcos/>

its own prosecutors, including the Special Prosecution Unit Against Corruption Networks (UFERCO), the unit that handles cases of high-impact corruption."¹⁹¹

93% of those accused in corruption cases brought forward by the MACCIH have been let go since the disappearance of the MACCIH.¹⁹²

IHSS

In the IHSS corruption case, the former director Mario Zelaya and former board member José Ramón Bertetty had been found guilty last month. On May 7 was their sentencing, 31 years for both of them.¹⁹³

Pandora

"Almost three years have passed and the collaboration agreements between Fernando Suarez and the Public Prosecutor's Office have not been fulfilled. Suarez is the main witness who revealed the facts that gave life to the Pandora corruption case. However, the collaboration agreement remained on paper and it was worthless for him to reveal how the structure that diverted more than 12 million dollars from the funds of the Secretariat of Agriculture and Livestock (SAG) to the electoral campaign of the National Party in 2013, which led Juan Orlando Hernández to the Presidency of Honduras, was formed."¹⁹⁴ On May 14, "[t]he Court for the Deprivation of Domain of Assets of Illicit Origin declared the definitive deprivation of domain of three vehicles, several real estate assets and commercial companies of the defendants in the Pandora case."¹⁹⁵ On May 18, CESPAD published an update on the case.¹⁹⁶

Open Chest

Some of the corrupt official highlighted by the US State Department (see above) and investigated by UFERCO are part of the Open Chest case.¹⁹⁷ "For more than two years, the Specialized Prosecutorial Unit Against Corruption Networks (Uferco) has been waiting for a court to rule on the appeals filed in the corruption case known as Arca Abierta. "It is unusual that it takes so long for an appeal in such a case" although "we are not surprised," Uferco head Luis Javier Santos told Criterio.hn."¹⁹⁸

191 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/05/31/por-que-los-fiscales-del-ministerio-publico-de-honduras-llevan-una-semana-en-protesta/>

192 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/05/19/el-93-por-ciento-de-acusados-por-la-extinta-maccih-fueron-puestos-en-libertad/>

193 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/176-mayo2021/7654-mp-obtiene-penas-de-31-anos-de-carcel-para-mario-zelaya-y-jose-bertetty-y-de-15-anos-para-su-socio-en-caso-jc-maradiaga-ihss>

194 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/05/11/mientras-mayoria-de-vinculados-a-pandora-quedan-en-libertad-principal-testigo-sigue-estancado-en-su-juicio/>

195 <https://proceso.hn/declaran-con-lugar-privacion-de-dominio-sobre-varios-bienes-de-imputados-del-caso-pandora/>

196 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/05/18/por-estas-razones-jueza-privado-del-dominio-de-bienes-a-personajes-que-drenaron-fondos-en-el-caso-pandora/>

197 <https://contracorriente.red/2021/05/18/oscar-najera-y-diputados-implicados-en-arca-abierta-incluidos-en-reporte-de-corrupcion-presentado-al-congreso-de-eeuu/>

198 <https://criterio.hn/uferco-lleva-mas-de-dos-anos-esperando-sentencia-de-justicia-hondurena-en-caso-arca-abierta/>

State Security Forces

"Has the police purge in Honduras implied a state effort to build a reliable, efficient and transparent National Police or is it part of the project of militarization of public security, what have been the main achievements and obstacles of the police purge in Honduras, and what is the context and implications of militarization in the country? In the CESPAD Forum, "In the Context of Militarization: Has the police purge in Honduras been effective?", sociologists Eugenio Sosa and Mirna Flores, analyzed the issue of militarization in Honduras and whether or not the police purge that began in the last decade has worked."¹⁹⁹

A court rejected an appeal by the former general commissioner of the police, Leonel Luciano Saucedo Guifarro. He and his wife Patricia Sbeltlana Estrada Pacheco are accused of money laundering. The court confirmed the opening of a trial against them as well as the pre-trial detention.²⁰⁰ A member of the Armed Forces was sent to pre-trial detention accused of trafficking in forbidden ammunition.²⁰¹

Post-Electoral Human Rights Violations

Trial will be opened against a police sub inspector for attacking a young man during a protest in March 2018.²⁰² In a second case, "OACNUDH accompanied Kevin Pérez and the @reddeabogadas at the initial hearing against a military officer in command of an operation where the young man was shot at and beaten in Choluteca during the 2017 post-election crisis".²⁰³

Repressions

"This Friday, May 14, human rights defender Marlon Alexander García appeared before the Public Prosecutor's Office to hand over some videos that he himself recorded, where a police officer shoots him with a rubber bullet, during a social protest on June 25, 2019. Although the Public Prosecutor's Office called the member of the Network of Human Rights Defenders of the South of the country (REDEHSUR), the investigation process is late and there is no progress, lawyer Dora Oliva, who accompanied him to the meeting, told defensoresenlinea.com."²⁰⁴

Assassinations

Last month, several important trials involving state security forces accused of murder took place. The case of the TIGRES agents accused of murdering Rinel Argueta Oliva only concluded on May 10. The four TIGRES agents were absolved.²⁰⁵

199 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/05/21/en-contexto-de-militarizacion-ha-sido-efectiva-la-depuracion-policial-en-honduras/>

200 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/176-mayo2021/7637-confirman-auto-de-formal-procesamiento-y-prision-preventiva-al-comisionado-general-de-policia-leonel-sauceda>

201 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/176-mayo2021/7651-dictan-prision-preventiva-en-contra-de-militar-por-trafico-de-municiones-prohibidas>

202 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/176-mayo2021/7686-auto-de-formal-procesamiento-para-sub-inspector-de-policia>

203 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDHHN/status/1395376573675622400>

204 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/dos-anos-despues-mp-solicita-informacion-a-defensor-victima-de-policia/>

205 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/con-voto-disidente-jueces-absuelven-a-policias-tigres-del-crimen-de-rinel-argueta/>

COFADEH denounced the lack of response by the authorities regarding the forced disappearance of Osman Daniel Vásquez Martínez, son of the well-known defender Susana Vásquez in La Paz. Osman was disappeared on July 27, 2020. He was last seen being taken into a patrol car.²⁰⁶

A former police agent accused for the murder of two other police agents will await trial in prison.²⁰⁷

Penitentiary System

"The commissioner of the National Committee for the Prevention of Torture, Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (Conaprev), Glenda Ayala, said that a report on the treatment received by prisoners in the National Penitentiary was sent to the Public Prosecutor's Office so that the high commanders can be investigated."²⁰⁸ El Herald reported on the so-called The Beast, a prison cell at the Támara prison "to break the will of the prisoners" where they are held under "most inhumane conditions".²⁰⁹ OACNUDH later inspected the prison.²¹⁰

International Community

A technical mission by the IMF visiting Honduras proposed increasing the IMF loan to Honduras to \$769 million, that would be a \$239 million increase.²¹¹ ²¹² "The leaders of the political opposition and presidential candidates for the LIBRE and Salvador de Honduras parties do not accept that the IMF and other IOFs continue granting resources to the JOH government a few months before the end of its term, since they will not endorse such actions once in power. In this sense, the IMF should wait until the new government takes office to negotiate, unless its officials in Washington consider that JOH will govern even after 2021, but behind the scenes."²¹³

"The Central American Bank for Economic Integration (BCIE) will contribute 200 million dollars for the improvement of the highway between the municipalities of Santa Rosa de Copán and Ocotepeque".²¹⁴

US

Patrick Ventrell, Director for Central America at the US State Department, and Chargé d'Affaires Colleen A. Hoey met with Attorney General Óscar Chinchilla to discuss "the importance of attacking corruption and strengthening the rule of law and respect for human rights".²¹⁵ The Pro Honduras Network reacts by pointing out once more that Chinchilla was presented as a pillar of

206 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/autoridades-no-dan-respuesta-de-la-desaparicion-de-hijo-de-reconocida-defensora-de-la-paz/>

207 <https://proceso.hn/detencion-judicial-a-expolicia-por-asesinato-de-dos-agentes-de-la-policia-nacional/>

208 <https://proceso.hn/conaprev-exige-investigar-a-subdirector-de-la-penitenciaria-nacional-ante-castigos-sin-control/>

209 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1464937-466/la-bestia-celda-carcel-tamara>

210 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1396977525360889856>

211 <https://confidencialhn.com/honduras-se-endeuda-con-fmi-en-mas-de-18-mil-millones-de-lempiras/>

212 <https://proceso.hn/fmi-propone-aumentar-a-769-millones-el-apoyo-a-honduras-tras-concluir-cuarta-revision-del-acuerdo-stand-by/>

213 <https://www.alainet.org/es/articulo/212211>

214 <https://proceso.hn/el-bcie-aportara-200-millones-de-dolares-para-mejorar-carretera-en-honduras/>

215 https://twitter.com/MP_Honduras/status/1392603256023654406

defense for JOH in New York courts shielding him from investigations into his drug trafficking activities.²¹⁶

Another US delegation later this month met with representatives of different sectors, among them the head of the anti-corruption body UFERCO, Luis Javier Santos.²¹⁷

EU

The EU announced the creation of an award to recognize the work of Honduran human rights defenders.^{218 219}

"Some 70 million Euros for concrete projects for the reconstruction of the Honduran territory, made available by Spain, announced Thursday the ambassador of that European country in Honduras, Guillermo Kirkpatrick."²²⁰ "Spain and Honduras have committed this Friday to strengthen their bilateral relationship through the signing of several agreements, including one on circular migration and collaboration between diplomatic schools."²²¹

Drug Trafficking

These last months, JOH and his drug trafficking links made prominent headlines and May was not different. "Today the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York filed new documents in the case of Geovanny Fuentes Ramírez, due to a request from his defense, in which they ask for a new trial for their client due to alleged "inconsistencias" presented during the trial held in March 2021, in which Fuentes was found guilty of three crimes related to drug trafficking and the use of machine guns and destructive devices to move hundreds of tons of cocaine to the United States. Within the fifty-six page document entitled "Prosecution's Opposition to Defendant's Post-Trial Motions," the prosecution recounts the involvement of Honduran Attorney General Oscar Chinchilla and National Congress President Mauricio Oliva in the illicit activities carried out by Juan Orlando Hernandez, as accomplices in protecting and creating laws to prevent the future extradition of Hernandez and his drug trafficking associates."²²²

On May 10. "[t]he sentencing hearing was held (..) for former police officer Ludwig Criss Zelaya, accused of crimes related to drug trafficking and the use of machine guns and destructive devices. During the hearing, Judge Lorna G. Schofield sentenced Criss Zelaya to 144 months in prison (12 years). Criss Zelaya worked as a collaborator of members of the Cachiros cartel in their criminal activities, including multiple murders, including that of journalist Anibal Barrow. Jason Richman, representing the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, participated in the

216 https://twitter.com/Prohn_Honduras/status/1392652090921701376

217 <https://twitter.com/usembassyhn/status/1394786049847595009>

218 <https://proceso.hn/ue-anuncia-creacion-de-premio-europa-de-derechos-humanos-en-honduras/>

219 <https://proceso.hn/funcionarias-de-eeuu-reafrican-apoyo-a-uferco-en-lucha-contra-la-corrupcion/>

220 <https://confidencialhn.com/espana-pone-a-disposicion-70-millones-de-euros-para-la-reconstruccion-de-honduras/>

221 <https://www.elpais.hn/2021/05/28/espana-y-honduras-refuerzan-su-relacion-con-un-acuerdo-de-migracion-circular/>

222 <https://prohondurasnetwork.com/2021/05/22/oscar-chinchilla-y-mauricio-oliva-involucrados-en-el-trafico-de-drogas-de-juan-orlando-hernandez-segun-fiscales-en-new-york/>

hearing and during the defense arguments, Criss Zelaya's attorney mentioned that Honduras is a narco-state, where corruption prevails and even the president of this country is involved in drug trafficking".²²³

Martín Adolfo Díaz Contreras, accused of drug trafficking, will be extradited to the US.²²⁴ He appealed the decision.²²⁵ A few days later, the US requested the extradition of the former head of the National Police, Juan Carlos “El Tigre” Bonilla. "A few months ago, Manhattan U.S. Attorney Geoffrey S. Berman stated that "Juan Carlos Bonilla Valladares, former chief of the Honduran National Police, allegedly abused his positions in Honduran law enforcement to flout the law and play a key role in a violent international drug trafficking conspiracy".²²⁶ "Experts say the extradition request raises the stakes for President Juan Orlando Hernández, who U.S. prosecutors have already accused of receiving millions in bribes from drug traffickers, including \$1 million from the former leader of Mexico’s Sinaloa Cartel, Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán. “[Bonilla] is a very pivotal figure, and if he was extradited to the United States and decided to cooperate, it would be the final nail in the coffin of Hernández,” said Mike Vigil, a former chief of international operations for the Drug Enforcement Administration."²²⁷

Proceso Digital published an overview of all the 23 Hondurans extradited so far to the US.²²⁸ And more may follow. "The president of the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ), Rolando Argueta, said Tuesday that among the extradition requests are people linked to organized crime and former members of the Security Secretariat."²²⁹

Varia

May Day

The second May Day during the pandemic took place yesterday and also in Honduras, there were smaller, more local protest marches.^{230 231 232}

JOH

"The questioned President Juan Orlando Hernández is giving away things, left and right, the famous solidarity bonus to families affected by the hurricanes in the Sula Valley, as part of his welfare policy which consists of converting the poor into votes, to guarantee the continuity of the National Party, said sociologist Eugenio Sosa on Radio Progreso. (...) The political analyst sustains that Juan

223 <https://prohondurasnetwork.com/2021/05/10/ex-policia-ludwig-criss-zelaya-es-sentenciado-a-doce-anos-de-carcel-juan-orlando-es-nuevamente-nombrado-por-sus-vinculos-con-el-narcotrafico/>

224 <https://proceso.hn/conceden-extradicion-a-eeuu-del-hondureno-martin-adolfo-diaz-contreras-por-narcotrafico/>

225 <https://tiempo.hn/csj-apelaran-solicitud-de-extradicion-de-hondureno-martin-diaz/>

226 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1463575-466/estados-unidos-pide-extraditar-juan-carlos-el-tigre-bonilla-narcotrafico>

227 <https://www.vice.com/en/article/epnxbz/an-ex-cop-allegedly-killed-for-the-honduran-president-now-the-us-wants-him-in-prison>

228 <https://proceso.hn/cortes-de-nueva-york-donde-mas-confiesan-los-capos-hondurenos/>

229 <https://proceso.hn/exmiembros-de-la-secretaria-de-seguridad-entre-solicitados-en-extradicion-revela-el-presidente-de-la-csj/>

230 <https://radioprogressohn.net/portada/alto-a-las-suspensiones-laborales-y-construccion-de-bordos-demandas-de-clase-obrera-este-1-de-mayo/>

231 <https://radioprogressohn.net/instante/vacuna-urgente-y-gratuita-entre-las-demandas-del-01-de-mayo-en-honduras/>

232 <https://criterio.hn/falta-de-justicia-social-el-calvario-de-la-clase-trabajadora-en-honduras/>

Orlando Hernández knows that his ratings dropped by the rejection of the people but he is using the economic resources of the State to ensure that his party and its candidate, Nasry Asfura, wins the presidency, to negotiate a quota of power and to continue enjoying impunity."²³³

"The Biden administration plans to release by the end of June a list of corrupt Central American officials who may be subject to sanctions, a U.S. special envoy told Reuters, as Washington seeks to cut back on a root cause of increased migration to the U.S.-Mexican border. (...) Asked whether Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez might be targeted, Zuniga said: "I'm not going to comment on him because of the Department of Justice engagement on his case." Hernandez is under U.S. investigation for alleged links to drug cartels. He denies any involvement in drug smuggling."²³⁴

On May 24, JOH presented himself and his party as victims of an international campaign trying to get rid of them in the coming elections. "They have sought to convince a group of radical politicians and NGOs that we are living in a dictatorship, these groups have an international political agenda against the National Party and are determined to seek any mechanism to prevent the party from winning the elections."²³⁵

Migration

16'291 Hondurans had been deported between January 1 and April 25.²³⁶ This is 11.8% less than in 2020.²³⁷ Proceso Digital reported that a Honduran migrant was hit by a car of the border patrol near Kingsville, Texas and died.²³⁸ "United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees Kelly Clements said (..) that the situation of Hondurans who have fled for their lives "is devastating."²³⁹ By May 16, 502 minors had been deported to Honduras.²⁴⁰

"On the tenth anniversary of the discovery of the clandestine graves in San Fernando, the National Human Rights Institutions of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico (hereinafter "the Institutions") and the Offices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights of Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico (hereinafter "the Offices") call on the States of the region to redouble their efforts to protect migrants in the face of persistent human rights violations and to guarantee the rights of migrants in the region, as well as to guarantee the victims their rights to truth, justice and reparation, so that events such as those in San Fernando are not repeated."²⁴¹

On May 27, the Wall Street Journal reported: "Vice President Kamala Harris on Thursday unveiled the agreements of 12 companies and organizations to invest in Guatemala, Honduras and El

233 <https://radioprogreso.net/aplicacion-movil/con-regalias-joh-busca-la-continuidad-del-partido-nacional-eugenio-sosa/>

234 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-immigration-centralamerica-exclus-idCAKBN2CM2HR>

235 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/05/24/quien-dijo-miedo-joh-carga-contra-sus-adversarios-y-medios-de-comunicacion/>

236 <https://proceso.hn/en-promedio-cada-dia-son-deportados-136-hondurenos/>

237 <https://proceso.hn/la-deportacion-de-hondurenos-indocumentados-disminuye-11-8-en-cuatro-meses/>

238 <https://proceso.hn/inmigrante-hondureno-muere-tras-ser-atropellado-por-la-patrulla-fronteriza/>

239 <https://proceso.hn/la-situacion-de-los-hondurenos-que-han-huido-es-devastadora-segun-acnur/>

240 <https://proceso.hn/un-promedio-de-12-menores-retornados-a-diario-registra-honduras/>

241 <https://oacnudh.hn/indh-y-onu-derechos-humanos-llaman-al-respeto-y-garantia-de-los-derechos-humanos-de-las-personas-migrantes/>

Salvador as part of the administration's efforts to deal with a surge of migrants from Central America at the U.S. southern border."²⁴²

Elections

The CNE officially called for the general elections for November 28, 2021.²⁴³ They have a 600 million budget.²⁴⁴

"Because it is urgent to independently supervise the financing of political parties; to carry out high impact investigations in conjunction with the Public Prosecutor's Office on the use of illicit resources in electoral campaigns; to ensure compliance with the Clean Politics Law by political parties and candidates in the area of accountability and to lift bank secrecy for political parties and their candidates, the Center for the Study of Democracy (CESPAD) proposes reforms to the Law on Financing, Transparency and Oversight of Political Parties and Candidates."²⁴⁵ "Civil society organizations filed this May 20, 2021, an appeal for annulment before the Institute of Access to Public Information, IAIP, on resolution 086-2018 that prevents Honduran citizens from knowing who is financing political campaigns in Honduras."²⁴⁶ CESPAD also published an analysis on the primary elections through a gender perspective.²⁴⁷ On May 13, another piece an analysis was published by CESPAD. "Fragmentation and the need for political articulation: an analysis of partisan loyalty and voting intention in Honduras".²⁴⁸

On May 2, Xiomara Castro expressed optimism about a possible political alliance to get rid of the National Party.²⁴⁹ Two days later, she announced that there would not be an alliance after all.²⁵⁰ Yani Rosenthal presented this month the so-called Option B, i.e. that Libre and the Liberal Party join in an alliance without naming a presidential front runner. If together they get more votes than the National Party, the president will be decided between Libre and the Liberal Party depending on who got more individual votes, Xiomara Castro or Yani Rosenthal. But no one else believes in this and the the CNE said that this would not be allowed.²⁵¹

Another hope for change in Honduras, apart from a strong opposition alliance, would be a thorough electoral reform. But this failed to materialize since the 2017 elections and as expected, now the defenders of the status-quo say that there is not enough time.²⁵² They have said this for months..."With 22 days to the end of the deadline for the approval of the new Electoral Law and Electoral Justice Law, the political actors accuse each other of being responsible for not approving

242 <https://www.wsj.com/articles/biden-administration-taps-private-sector-to-invest-in-central-america-11622113201>

243 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1466718-466/elecciones-generales-convocatoria-honduras-cne-2021>

244 <https://proceso.hn/cne-cuenta-con-un-presupuesto-de-1-600-millones-para-realizar-las-elecciones-generales/>

245 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/05/09/cespad-propone-reformas-a-la-ley-de-financiamiento-y-fiscalizacion-a-partidos-politicos/>

246 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/contexto/item/3161-demandan-organizaciones-ante-iaip-resolucion-que-reserva-informacion-sobre-campanas-politicas-debe-ser-anulada>

247 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/05/11/analisis-las-recientes-elecciones-primarias-y-la-participacion-politica-de-las-mujeres-una-mirada-con-perspectiva-de-genero/>

248 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/05/13/analisis-fragmentacion-y-necesidad-de-articulacion-politica-un-analisis-sobre-la-fidelidad-partidaria-y-la-intencion-del-voto-en-honduras/>

249 <https://confidencialhn.com/hay-posibilidades-de-una-alianza-xiomara-castro/>

250 <https://criterio.hn/no-habra-alianza-presidencial-xiomara-castro/>

251 <https://confidencialhn.com/yani-rosenthal-propone-opcion-b-insiste-en-una-alianza-partidaria/>

252 <https://proceso.hn/ya-no-hay-tiempo-ni-voluntad-para-aprobar-nueva-ley-electoral-dice-vicepresidente-del-cn/>

the regulations. Experts on the subject warned that the lack of instruments to regulate the upcoming elections would generate a political crisis of greater dimensions."²⁵³ "The former president of the defunct Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE), Augusto Aguilar, accused a segment of members of the ruling party's parliamentary bench in the National Congress for refusing to approve the new Electoral Law and Electoral Justice Law."²⁵⁴ On May 15, the talk about Option B resurfaced again. Liberal Party leaders presented it as an alternative to electoral reforms.²⁵⁵ The CNE continued to oppose the idea. "In this sense, CNE Councilwoman Rixi Moncada said that in defense of the principle of legality and as a fundamental pillar in the framework of the rule of law, option B has no constitutional support in Honduras."²⁵⁶

"The presidential candidate of the Partido Innovación y Unidad Socialdemócrata (Pinu-SD), Doris Gutiérrez warned this Monday that due to the winds that are blowing, a fraud would be brewing from now on, which will be difficult to control, as it happened in past elections. (...) She mentioned that a resolution of the National Electoral Council (CNE) is circulating in which practically makes it impossible for the Salvador Party of Honduras (PSH) to make any alliance before May 27."²⁵⁷ On May 16, El Pulso reported: "Tensions in the newly created Salvador de Honduras party (PSH) worsened after a faction loyal to Salvador Nasralla proclaimed him as the presidential candidate for next November's general elections and authorized him to make alliances, while board member Henry Osorto warned him that he would incur in a crime if he insisted with the assembly held on Saturday."²⁵⁸ The Liberal presidential candidate Yani Rosenthal, meanwhile, faces other problems. "Inversiones Alianza and Corporación Internacional Cemcal announced Monday that they have initiated legal actions against businessman Yani Rosenthal for the diversion of more than US\$25 million from the shareholders' equity of Cementos del Norte SA (Cenosa)."²⁵⁹

On May 13, Proceso Digital reported that "[m]ore than one million Hondurans living in the United States may lose their right to vote in the general elections of the Central American country next November because they do not have a valid national identity card, a pro-immigrant association in Florida denounced".²⁶⁰ By that time, the RNP had (only) handed out 1.7 million new identity cards.²⁶¹

A week short of the deadline on May 27, Congress' president Mauricio Oliva claimed that some pending electoral reforms would be approved.²⁶² "The United Nations System in Honduras is encouraged by the promising news about the deliberations in the National Congress to achieve the approval of the new Electoral Law and the Electoral Process Law. In this regard, with due respect for national sovereignty, we urge the political forces in the National Congress to finalize this

253 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/05/05/advierten-que-sin-nueva-ley-electoral-se-preve-crisis-politica-de-mayores-dimensiones/>

254 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/05/13/expresidente-del-tse-acusa-a-diputados-afines-a-joh-por-negarse-a-aprobar-ley-electoral/>

255 <https://tiempo.hn/opcion-b-dirigentes-liberales-es-una-alterativa/>

256 <https://proceso.hn/opcion-b-es-como-someter-nuevamente-a-la-ciudadania-a-elecciones-primarias-rix-moncada/>

257 <https://proceso.hn/se-fragua-un-fraude-y-obstruyen-las-alianzas-desde-el-cne-denuncia-candidata-presidencial/>

258 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/05/16/se-agudiza-crisis-en-salvador-de-honduras-nasralla-denuncia-infiltracion-y-osorto-piensa-demandarlo/>

259 <https://criterio.hn/anuncian-acciones-legales-contra-yani-rosenthal-por-desvio-de-mas-de-25-millones-de-cementera/>

260 <https://proceso.hn/mas-de-un-millon-de-hondurenos-en-eeuu-pueden-perder-derecho-al-voto-este-ano/>

261 <https://proceso.hn/un-millon-738-mil-identidades-ha-entregado-el-rnp-a-la-poblacion/>

262 <https://proceso.hn/reformas-electorales-pendientes-se-estarian-aprobando-esta-semana-segun-el-presidente-del-cn/>

important task so that the new electoral regulations can provide legal security to the electoral contest and certainty to the Honduran people."²⁶³ "What the current state of affairs shows is that there are no solid agreements between the majority benches of the National Congress on the approval of the electoral law. Beyond this, it is important to emphasize that the way in which the opinion process has been developed suggests that this decree, if socialized and approved in the next few days, would not reflect a real will to rethink the electoral system and solve the impasses of the primary elections, but would simply produce a document in which the three largest parties of the country will place some rules of the game designed exclusively for the purpose of serving the interests of their leaderships. Although the need for a new electoral law is very real, the rush for its approval at the present time is not due to a concern for modernizing the democratic mechanisms of government election, but, rather, to the fulfillment of an external agenda to try to legitimize the current state of our politics."²⁶⁴

On May 21, Julie Chang, Acting Assistant Secretary for the US Department of State's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, highlighted the importance of electoral reforms for Honduras and urged the Honduran Congress to approve them.²⁶⁵ A few days later, Congress' president Mauricio Oliva announced a session on the electoral reforms, but just hours before its start.²⁶⁶ El Libertador summarized the agreements. "The Libre, National and Liberal parties have reached a consensus on the approval of the new Electoral Law, they have overcome the "obstacles" regarding the payment of political debt, which will now be paid according to the valid votes for each party, thus eliminating the small parties from being wrapped up in the majority parties, which in the last elections allowed them 10 million lempiras, although they only obtained 3,000 votes, of the 40,000 credentials, which were clearly sold to the National Party, according to the critics of the old scheme. They also mention that the tables will be represented by five members, three from the majority and two from the minority, randomly selected, but now they will be known as "Electoral Board"."²⁶⁷

Corporate media outlets as well as the US embassy²⁶⁸ celebrated the approval of the new electoral law.²⁶⁹ The OAS also oversold them as "a significant step forward".²⁷⁰ But it was less than certain that this was a victory for democracy. "The new Electoral Law approved in the National Congress this Tuesday does not bring anything new and is the same as the current law, so the political parties can make the fraud they want, reacted the former Attorney General Edmundo Orellana. "The law is the same as the current law, only worded differently, it is more of the same", said Orellana regarding

263 <https://honduras.un.org/es/127033-comunicado-del-sistema-de-naciones-unidas-en-honduras-sobre-las-importantes-leyes>

264 <https://elpulso.hn/2021/05/19/de-donde-viene-la-agenda-de-las-reformas-electorales/>

265 <https://twitter.com/WHAAsstSecty/status/1395873650386014215>

266 <https://radioprogreso.hn/aplicacion-movil/congreso-nacional-sesionara-hoy-para-discutir-sobre-la-nueva-ley-electoral/>

267 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/2939-honduras-nueva-ley-electoral-elimina-negocio-de-partidos-pequenos>

268 <https://twitter.com/usembassyhn/status/1397366307482447877>

269 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1466059-466/congreso-nacional-ley-electoral-elecciones-honduras>

270 <https://proceso.hn/oea-califica-como-avance-significativo-aprobacion-de-la-nueva-ley-electoral-de-honduras/>

the approved reforms."²⁷¹ In the remaining days of May, more criticism followed.^{272 273 274 275} Salvador Nasralla announced that he would not run in the elections if his party does not have a representative at the polling stations.²⁷⁶ But at the same time, at the last possible moment, Nasralla and Pinu announced a political alliance for the general elections.²⁷⁷ Later, both PANAL and the movement by Wilfredo Méndez joined their alliance.^{278 279}

"Civil society organizations filed this May 20, 2021, an appeal for annulment before the Institute of Access to Public Information, IAIP, on resolution 086-2018 that prevents Honduran citizens from knowing who is financing political campaigns in Honduras."²⁸⁰ "The former sentencing judge of San Pedro Sula Gracia Maria Bertrand filed this Monday before the National Electoral Council (CNE) a request for disqualification of the candidacy of the presidential candidate of the Liberal Party, Yani Rosenthal."²⁸¹

Eta and Iota

The Central-American Bank for Economic Integration (BCIE) approved \$3.5 million for the Central American countries who suffered the consequences of the Eta and Iota hurricanes in November 2020.²⁸² At the same time, ContraCorriente reported that "[In the Chamelecón sector and the municipality of La Lima, churches and NGOs have taken a leading role in assisting those affected by storms Eta and Iota. The government announced support through the "No están Solos" program, but six months after the catastrophe, it has not reached all those affected".²⁸³ But of course, the JOH regime still wanted more money. On May 10, it presented a reconstruction plan for Honduras which would cost almost \$7.9 billion.²⁸⁴ CESPAD published two pieces of analysis of the plan.²⁸⁵ In the second one, they highlighted five critical points. 1. Legitimacy crisis of the Hernandez administration. 2. The inability of political and social articulation around the PRDS. The construction of dams without community participation and the specter of extractivism. 4. External indebtedness as the main axis of financing. 5. Reconstruction measures of an economic nature and disregard for political and social issues.²⁸⁶

271 <https://criterio.hn/nueva-ley-electoral-es-igual-a-la-ley-vigente-solo-que-redactada-de-forma-diferente-edmundo-orellana/>

272 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1466431-466/criticas-senalamientos-nueva-ley-electoral-honduras>

273 <https://twitter.com/cnahonduras/status/1397598102211776512>

274 <https://criterio.hn/congreso-de-honduras-blinda-a-corrupos-y-criminales-para-que-participen-en-elecciones-de-noviembre/>

275 <https://contracorriente.red/2021/05/27/nueva-ley-electoral-de-honduras-no-garantiza-evitar-una-nueva-crisis-segun-analistas/>

276 <https://tiempo.hn/nasralla-representacion-en-mesas-retiro-de-elecciones/>

277 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1466724-466/salvador-nasralla-y-el-pinu-confirman-alianza-presidencial>

278 <https://confidencialhn.com/plataforma-panal-que-dirige-juliet-handal-se-une-a-unoh/>

279 <https://confidencialhn.com/wilfredo-mendez-anuncia-su-respaldo-a-la-alianza-politica-denominada-unoh/>

280 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/contexto/item/3161-demandan-organizaciones-ante-iaip-resolucion-que-reserva-informacion-sobre-campanas-politicas-debe-ser-anulada>

281 <https://criterio.hn/abogada-hondurena-pide-inhabilitacion-de-yani-rosenthal-como-candidato-presidencial/>

282 <https://proceso.hn/bcie-aprueba-3-5-millones-de-dolares-para-paises-afectados-por-eta-e-iota/>

283 <https://contracorriente.red/2021/05/08/seis-meses-despues-del-desastre-damnificados-buscan-reconstruir-sus-vidas-abandonados-por-el-estado/>

284 <https://proceso.hn/plan-de-reconstruccion-para-honduras-requerira-7875-millones-de-dolares/>

285 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/05/12/coyuntura-desde-los-territorios-el-plan-de-reconstruccion-sostenible-y-sus-posibles-repercusiones-en-las-luchas-territoriales/>

286 <http://cespad.org.hn/2021/05/16/cinco-puntos-criticos-sobre-el-plan-de-reconstruccion-de-desarrollo-sostenible-en-honduras/>



"The response of the Honduran government and other actors to requests for help from citizens affected by tropical storms Eta and Iota six months after their passage through Honduras has been insufficient, warned the international organization Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) on Wednesday."²⁸⁷

And Light at the End of a Month

MADJ commemorates 13 years of struggle for dignity and justice.²⁸⁸

287 <https://proceso.hn/respuesta-de-gobierno-a-seis-meses-de-eta-e-iota-ha-sido-insuficiente-alerta-msf/>

288 <https://madj.org/2021/05/24/a-13-anos-de-lucha-seguimos-en-pie-de-lucha/>

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