

Another Month in Honduras...

Human Rights Monitor – August 2022

C, N, D, S, these four letters were widely discussed this September. They stand for the National Defense and Security Council, a body mentioned in the 1982 constitution, but which came only to (in)fame under the JOH regime. He used the CNDS to bring all three state powers under his control. The new administration presented a reform this month, hoping to bring it through Congress in one debate. This failed, among other things because the reform did contain some problems, and spurred a widespread debate about the separation of powers and more. By the end of the month, it seemed that Libre came to an agreement with PSH and the Liberal Party, but Congress still has to decide about the fate of the CNDS. Another hot topic, and an acronym as well, has been the CICIH, an International Commission against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras. The Xiomara administration presented a proposal to the UN to a previously presented Memorandum of Understanding. The main debate this month was about the powers of such a mission and if it would have its own prosecutorial powers. Also in August, the hearings in the Gualcarque Fraud case concluded after 14 testimonies, 5 expert witnesses and over 200 pieces of evidence. A ruling is expected for September. The Supreme Court election preparation also made progress. The 14 representatives for the Nomination Board were chosen and they should soon start their work together. 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

Human Rights and Their Defenders

On August 30, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) started a four-day visit to Honduras.¹ A group of national and international human rights organizations presented a list of demands the IACHR should ask from the Honduran government.²

Attacks, Criminalization and Harassment

On August 9, during the International Day of Indigenous Peoples, OFRANEH held a rally in front of the MP and filed a complaint (see below). But instead of investigating the disappearance of the young Garífuna men or the attacks against Garífuna communities it was made public on August 19 that the MP was investigating OFRANEH's general coordinator Miriam Miranda together with the current government minister Luther Castillo and human rights lawyer Edy Tábor.^{3 4} This was met with widespread condemnation. OACNUDH expressed concern and called on the State to abstain from criminalizing defenders.⁵ UN Permanent Resident Coordinator Alice H. Shackelford agreed and praised the work of the three defenders.⁶ Even the Human Rights Ministry of Honduras called on the MP to stop.⁷

"The twelve water defenders in the community of Pajuiles in Tela, Atlántida, continue to be criminalized by the National Police despite having been definitively dismissed by the courts, denounced the Broad Movement for Dignity and Justice (MADJ)."⁸

"The leader of the Lenca Indigenous Council of Reitoca, Francisco Morazán, Magdaleno Flores García, denounced through his social networks, that the Municipal Mayor of that municipality, Marlon Neftalí Osorto, stigmatizes him and puts his physical integrity at risk."⁹

C-Libre denounced that in the Bajo Aguán, armed men attacked campesino families of a peasant cooperative.¹⁰

On August 30, OFRANEH sent out an alert: "Arrested Geovany Bernárdez community defender and member of OFRANEH for alleged crime of usurpation of community land in Guadalupe, Colón, which was appropriated by Canadian Patrick Forseth. Racism inserted in the court Trujillo promotes persecution of Garifunas".^{11 12}

1 <https://proceso.hn/mision-de-cidh-inicia-visita-a-honduras-para-conocer-sobre-derechos-humanos/>

2 <https://cejil.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Pliego-petitorio-de-organizaciones-de-la-sociedad-civil-Visita-CIDH-Honduras-2022-1.pdf>

3 <https://im-defensoras.org/2022/08/alerta-defensoras-honduras-persecucion-hostigamiento-y-criminalizacion-contra-miriam-miranda-integrante-de-la-ofraneh-y-defensora-de-derechos-humanos-tras-la-protesta-ante-las-instalaciones-del/>

4 <https://criterio.hn/ministerio-publico-criminaliza-a-defensores-que-exigen-justicia-y-alto-al-racismo/>

5 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1560724911638908933>

6 <https://twitter.com/aliceshackel/status/1560753847424933889>

7 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1562183854949007361>

8 <https://criterio.hn/criminalizacion-en-pajuiles-atlantida-continua-pese-a-sobreseimiento-definitivo-a-defensores/>

9 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/cl/index.php/portada-alertas/1522-alcalde-de-reitoca-estigmatiza-y-pone-en-riesgo-a-lider-de-consejo-indigena>

10 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/cl/index.php/portada-alertas/1525-grupo-armado-ataca-a-tiros-a-campesinos-de-la-cooperativa-nueve-de-agosto-en-santa-rosa-de-aguan>

11 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1564595006911938560>

12 <https://twitter.com/baraudawaguchu/status/1564606508071010326>

Indigenous Peoples

A comment by former president Mel Zelaya at the beginning of the month caused irritation when he told an indigenous representative that there was no money ("no hay dinero") for a local road in their community. "Every human being deserves respect, but if there is a population that deserves even more respect for what they have had to suffer, and continue to suffer, after 500 years of colonization and dispossession, it is the Indigenous Peoples of Honduras. That is why I repudiate Mel's undignified treatment of the indigenous representative president of the La Campa Pro-Highway Committee on the day of the "Nuestras Raíces" event, who was mocked for daring to ask for economic support for his community project."¹³

"The Cayos Cochinos are a microcosm of Central American inequality. The gleaming archipelago off the Honduran coast is home to Garifuna fishing communities who live in misery and in constant conflict with authorities who have prohibited catching fish. The islands are an Eden for tourists, a goldmine for big business, and a hellscape for islanders struggling to survive."¹⁴

On August 9, Honduras commemorated the International Day of Indigenous Rights.¹⁵ On that occasion, Garifuna communities were mobilizing in Tegucigalpa. OFRANEH was demanding justice for the disappeared young Garífuna men as well as for ongoing and theft. They also presented their demands at the MP, but they were not welcomed.¹⁶ UN resident coordinator Alice H. Shackelford reacted on Twitter: "The rights of the indigenous peoples of Honduras are inviolable and State institutions must ensure their fulfillment. I call on the @MP_Honduras to ensure the right to be heard by attending to @ofraneh and opening dialogue based on their concerns and demands."¹⁷ At the end of the month, OFRANEH accompanied by other indigenous and social movements marched to the Supreme Court presenting an amparo against the Attorney General and his deputy for the lack of an investigation into the forced disappearance of four Garífuna youth in Triunfo de la Cruz over two years ago.¹⁸

On August 18, COPINH announced: "Today was installed the Table of Integral Attention to COPINH, between our organization and the government of Xiomara Castro with the objective of providing a solution to the historical abandonment of the Lenca communities by the State of Honduras."¹⁹

At the end of the month, the Federation of Pech Indigenous Tribes of Honduras (Fetriph) denounced that the destruction of the Río Plátano Biosphere continues while at the same time they lose their way of life. "Hernández expressed concern about the future of the Pech people, who depend on the reserve. "More than anything I call on the current government, the authorities, the Secretary of the Environment to use their good offices with the Environmental Prosecutor's Office, so that we can go to the reserve and stop the damage that is occurring." Hernández affirmed that the government

¹³ <https://criterio.hn/no-hay-dinero-para-el-pueblo-y-la-danza-de-millones-para-los-banqueros-y-politicos/>

¹⁴ <https://elfaro.net/en/202207/centroamerica/26306>

¹⁵ <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1557076486301032448>

¹⁶ <https://criterio.hn/en-dia-internacional-de-los-pueblos-indigenas-exigen-al-mp-justicia-y-respeto-a-sus-derechos/>

¹⁷ <https://twitter.com/aliceshackel/status/1557145990259679232>

¹⁸ <https://criterio.hn/ante-negligencia-del-mp-presentan-amparo-para-garantizar-investigacion-por-desaparicion-de-jovenes-garifunas/>

¹⁹ <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1560382634701864960>

authorities have given little importance to the reserve and that militarizing it has not yielded the positive results promoted, since the "massive destruction continues".²⁰

The Case of Berta Cáceres

The Gualcarque Fraud case continued before court this month. Day 4 of the Gualcarque trial took place on August 2. The court denied the evidence presented by COPINH and the Río Blanco community.²¹ "As COPINH reports, both documents outline the amount of money obtained in the fraudulent contracts & the profits that the criminal group expected to earn through the irregular approval of the Agua Zarca contract, licenses, permits, etc."²² During Day 5²³ and 6²⁴, there were various testimonies with one historic one. "For the first time a member of the Atala Zablah family is asked to speak about the Agua Zarca Hydroelectric Project and its nefarious and illegal investment."²⁵ Day 7²⁶ saw the court excluded expert witness Angel Baide Valladares from the case. "He was proposed as a consultant in favor of David Castillo and has been excluded from the process due to the fact that he does not have updated credentials and for not appearing at the appropriate procedural time."²⁷ ²⁸ On Day 8, an expert opinion concluded that there was no due diligence in the review and analysis of the documentation submitted to SERNA by DESA.²⁹ The hearings concluded on August 22 after 14 testimonies, 5 expert witnesses and over 200 pieces of evidence.³⁰ COPINH denounced that the last day of the hearings was not publicly transmitted.³¹ ³²

LGBTQ

LGBTQ+ defender Amelia Cerón denounced that so far this year, 15 members of the LGBTQ+ community have been murdered.³³

In the IACtHR case Vicky Hernández vs. Honduras on the murder of trans activist Vicky Hernández, the court ordered 12 reparation measures. Only 2 have been complied with so far.³⁴

On August 3, a court sentenced an MS-13 member to 15 years in prison for the murder of the 18-year old María Fernanda Martínez, a member of the LGBTQ+ community. A second gang member involved was still facing trial.³⁵

At the end of the month, evangelical priests protested the inclusion of the LGBTQ+ community in the September 15 march, the national holiday of Honduras. It is now unclear if they are allowed to participate. The Minister of Education, Daniel Sponda, refers to the Permanent Inter-Institutional Civic Committee (Cocip).³⁶

²⁰ <https://criterio.hn/restricciones-en-biosfera-del-rio-platano-solo-castigan-a-pueblos-indigenas/>

²¹ <https://twitter.com/HondurasNow/status/1554605169660383232>

²² <https://twitter.com/HondurasNow/status/1554606314155900928>

²³ <https://twitter.com/HondurasNow/status/1555190519323574272>

²⁴ <https://twitter.com/HondurasNow/status/1555384164488253440>

²⁵ <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1555368913181065216>

²⁶ <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1556680936401637378>

²⁷ <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1556729713468506112>

²⁸ <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1556751837264580611>

²⁹ <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1557044427377582080>

³⁰ <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1560710864034041859>

³¹ <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1560710864034041859>

³² <https://proceso.hn/finaliza-juicio-oral-en-caso-fraude-sobre-el-gualcarque/>

³³ <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/08/26/al-menos-15-muertes-violentas-de-miembros-de-la-comunidad-lgbtq-se-reportan-en-2022/>

³⁴ <https://criterio.hn/poblacion-lgbtq-a-la-espera-de-cumplimiento-de-medidas-de-reparacion-dictadas-por-caso-vicky-herandez/>

³⁵ <https://www.mp.hn/publicaciones/15-anos-de-prision-a-asesinato-confeso-de-joven-del-colectivo-lgbtq/>

³⁶ <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/08/30/desfilara-el-movimiento-lgbtq-el-15-de-septiembre-aqui-lo-que-expreso-el-ministro-de-educacion/>

Freedom of Expression and Journalists

C-Libre published its yearly report on the State of Freedom of Expression in Honduras, "From Repression in the Public Space to Digital Silencing".³⁷ "In 2021, three trends of aggression to freedom of expression were marked, the first linked to political violence -in electoral coverage-, the second identified in the violent repression of social protest, especially in La Esperanza, Intibucá, where citizens joined dozens of demands for the clarification of the crime of nurse Keyla Martínez, at the hands of the police, and the last related to attacks on women journalists, communicators and community spokeswomen, whose patterns seem to change the forms of aggression to freedom of expression."³⁸

Congress announced plans to decriminalize so-called crimes of honor: libel, defamation and slander. This would be an important step as this "crimes" are widely used to silence journalists.³⁹

"The owner of the Aviva TV Channel in Danlí, El Paraíso, Jaime Nery Díaz, was the victim of denial of justice, at the Special Prosecutor's Office for Human Rights, when he was about to file a complaint against the Municipal Corporation, including the mayor, Abraham Kafati, of that city."⁴⁰ C-Libre later also denounced that the mayor was persecuting Jaime Nery Díaz.⁴¹

"The social communicator, Rafael Vallejo, owner of the Facebook page, La Hora de El Corpus, denounced having been threatened by the municipal mayor of El Corpus, Choluteca, Luis Andrés Rueda, after a publication in which he questioned the alleged investment of one million lempiras in works carried out in the center of the municipality, which are not visible."⁴²

Violence against Women

ContraCorriente reported on violence against women in Honduras, the current situation and what should be done to counter it.⁴³ The number of femicides rose to 180 by the beginning of the month with an impunity rate stuck at 95%.⁴⁴ By mid-August, the number rose to 200.⁴⁵ At the same time, 52 women had been disappeared in the first 7 months of 2022, among them 32 minors.⁴⁶

"The Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR) filed an amicus curiae brief before the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ) to support the appeal of unconstitutionality filed by Somos Muchas and 20 organizations against the decree that absolutely prohibits the interruption of pregnancy."⁴⁷

Women's rights and feminist organization have demanded for years the approval of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (OP-CEDAW). But recently, Their hope grew with Xiomara Castro becoming the first female president of Honduras.⁴⁸

³⁷ <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/cl/index.php/gestion-del-conocimiento/informes/1533-informe-anual-de-libertad-de-expresion-ile>

³⁸ <https://proceso.hn/visibilizan-nuevos-patrones-para-silenciar-y-censurar-periodistas/>

³⁹ <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/aplicacion-movil/en-poder-del-congreso-nacional-propuesta-para-despenalizar-delitos-contra-el-honor/>

⁴⁰ <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/cl/index.php/portada-alertas/1527-fiscalia-de-derechos-humanos-niega-acceso-a-la-justicia-a-dueno-de-medio-de-comunicacion-independiente>

⁴¹ <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/cl/index.php/portada-alertas/1532-sigue-la-persecucion-contra-dueno-de-canal-de-television-en-danli-el-paraiso>

⁴² <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/cl/index.php/alertas/amenazas/1531-comunicador-social-denuncia-amenazas-por-parte-del-alcalde-de-el-corpus-choluteca>

⁴³ <https://contracorriente.red/2022/08/05/mujeres-en-honduras-se-siguen-enfrentando-a-la-violencia-en-medio-del-abandono-estatal/>

⁴⁴ <https://proceso.hn/honduras-registra-180-muertes-violentas-contra-mujeres/>

⁴⁵ <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/aplicacion-movil/escalada-de-femicidios-deja-ya-mas-de-200-mujeres-asesinadas-en-honduras/>

⁴⁶ <https://criterio.hn/al-menos-52-mujeres-han-desaparecido-en-honduras-en-2022-32-son-menores-de-edad/>

⁴⁷ <https://criterio.hn/presentan-nuevo-amicus-curiae-contra-decreto-que-prohibe-de-forma-absoluta-el-derecho-al-aborto/>

⁴⁸ <https://criterio.hn/por-conservadurismo-y-patriarcado-dudan-se-apruebe-protocolo-cedaw/>

Protection Mechanism

There was quite some controversy about the protection mechanism for human rights defenders these last weeks (see previous month). On August 15, Minister of Human Rights, Natalie Roque, stated that the rescue of the mechanism is a priority for the Xiomara administration.⁴⁹ A day later, she further said: ""The Protection Mechanism is not being canceled, that is not the purpose of the restructuring process that we have carried out in recent days," Roque clarified. "It is very difficult in a context in which we are coming out of the regime of Juan Orlando Hernández where a series of officials and servants were created who fulfilled functions because they were in an institutional framework, however, they had strong commitments to the policies and practices of that regime and this is very clearly perceived by defenders, journalists and justice operators", she said (...) "We have indications of violation of confidentiality, theft of information and improper treatment of information of persons under protection measures", she explained. (...) On the other hand, she revealed that the mechanism's budget has been doubled and affirmed that the implementation of the measures is guaranteed, but she remarked that the security of the people under protection cannot be guaranteed with personnel who are not trusted. (...) Among the 14 profiles of the new personnel are lawyers, sociologists, journalists, communicators and social workers with ample experience in the promotion and protection of human rights, she said."⁵⁰

Extractive Industries

"Indigenous peoples' leaders demanded the prompt accession and implementation by the State of Honduras to the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean, known as the Escazú Agreement."⁵¹

Back in May, Congress announced the creation of a special commission investigating the approval of energy contracts under the JOH regime. In Namasigüe, Choluteca, inhabitants are awaiting the results of this investigation having suffered criminalization these last years due to their resistance to an energy project.⁵²

Mining

Nacla reports on the destruction of a 200-year old Maya Chortí cemetery by the mining company Aura Minerals. "MINOSA, a subsidiary of the U.S.-based multinational mining company Aura Minerals, enjoys free rein in the municipality of La Unión. Despite the legally binding decision taken at the 2015 cabildo abierto, the company had exhumed over a hundred bodies by 2018 as part of its strategy to exploit the gold deposits below the cemetery. The company did so in full view of municipal authorities, who on a number of occasions colluded with MINOSA to undermine community decision-making power. (...) In the weeks and months that followed, MINOSA seems to

49 <https://proceso.hn/rescatar-el-mecanismo-de-proteccion-es-prioridad-para-el-gobierno-ministra-roque/>

50 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/08/16/mecanismo-de-proteccion-no-se-esta-cancelando-sino-refundando-aclara-secretaria-de-ddhh/>

51 <https://criterio.hn/pueblos-indigenas-de-honduras-exigen-al-estado-que-se-adhiera-al-acuerdo-de-escazu/>

52 <https://criterio.hn/poblacion-de-namasigue-continua-vigilante-sobre-contratos-de-energia/>

have given up any pretense of respect for Honduran law. Shortly after the initial mass exhumations, an appeals court overturned Judge Tabora's ruling. In March, the Ministry of Natural Resources issued a subsequent executive notice reiterating the company's obligation to halt all activity in the area. Video footage of mining activities taken after the communique's publication indicate that the company has continued to prepare the area for exploitation."⁵³

"Municipalities of the Olancho and Colón departments are demanding that the National Congress repeal legislative decree 252-2013 to free the Carlos Escaleras Mejía Botaderos Mountain National Park and revoke the concessions that are based on this decree. The demand has been made through a public statement, which states that 34 water sources that feed the municipalities of Bonito Oriental, Tocoa and Sabá in the department of Colón and Gualaco and San Esteban in the department of Olancho depend on the Botaderos National Park. Also the municipality of Olanchito in the department of Yoro, affecting more than 45,000 inhabitants of these communities."⁵⁴ "The repeal of decree 252-2013, George explained to Criterio.hn, would solve part of the conflict and would give the communities a chance to recover the national park to restore the healthy environment in which they lived prior to the arrival of the mining company and in the face of climate change and the effects it generates."⁵⁵

Agriculture

On August 12, the Minister of the Security Secretariat, Ramon Sabillón, announced in a press conference at the Presidential House, the formation of a Tripartite Commission to seek solutions to the land conflict in Bajo Aguán.⁵⁶ Additionally, Congress is analyzing the possibility to give seized land to Honduran peasant farmers.⁵⁷

CESPAD presented a new report on the Bajo Aguán. There have been 146 murders and forced disappearance in the area since 2008.^{58 59}

Corruption and Its Enemies

"The Secretariat for Transparency and Fight against Corruption delivered to President Xiomara Castro, the National Strategy for Transparency and Fight against Corruption in Honduras (ENTAH) to be approved by the Council of Ministers and become the government's policy for the period 2022-2026. In an exclusive interview with Criterio.hn, the director of transparency of the Anti-Corruption Secretariat, Jorge Arturo Reina, revealed that the president of Honduras received the ambitious national strategy that includes six strategic lines, each containing several subdivisions focused on the pillars of transparency, accountability, citizen participation and technological innovation aimed at the prevention, detection, investigation and punishment of corruption."⁶⁰

⁵³ <https://nacla.org/honduras-mining-azacualpa>

⁵⁴ <https://www.defensoresonline.com/municipios-de-olancho-y-colon-exigen-al-congreso-nacional-liberar-montana-botadero-de-mineria/>

⁵⁵ <https://criterio.hn/derogar-expansion-de-zona-de-amortiguamiento-del-parque-nacional-primer-paso-para-solventar-conflicto-de-guapinol/>

⁵⁶ <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/08/12/comision-tripartita-busca-solucionar-conflicto-de-tierra-en-el-bajo-aguan/>

⁵⁷ <https://proceso.hn/congreso-inicia-analisis-de-proyecto-para-adjudicar-tierras-incautadas-a-campesinos-en-honduras/>

⁵⁸ https://twitter.com/CESPAD_HONDURAS/status/1562082948865826816

⁵⁹ <https://twitter.com/PBicanada/status/1563122147152650240>

⁶⁰ <https://criterio.hn/entah-la-politica-de-transparencia-y-anticorupcion-que-pretende-impulsar-el-gobierno-de-honduras/>

The Supreme Audit Court (TSC) announced on August 2 that they would hold the former ENEE directors legally responsible for a 710 million loss at the national energy company.⁶¹ At the end of the month, the MP announced that they were conducting an investigation into him.⁶²

The former mayor of Cucuyagua, Copán was accused of money laundering, the sum in question is 815 million Lempiras.⁶³ "The Superior Court of Accounts (TSC) revealed irregularities in the Central Executive Council of the Liberal Party (CCEPL) in the expenditure and liquidation of funds destined for the 2021 primary elections process."⁶⁴

"The Superior Court of Accounts (TSC) has elaborated settlement reports with false documentation, denounced this Tuesday the head of the Specialized Fiscal Unit Against Corruption Networks (UFERCO), Luis Javier Santos. "We bring elements of proof to accredit that the Superior Court of Accounts is committing a crime by elaborating reports based on evidence that is false," Santos told reporters."⁶⁵ ⁶⁶

ConfidencialHN reports that the Catholic Church in Honduras and its Cardinal Oscar Andrés Rodríguez had access to funds from the controversial Security Tax (tasa de seguridad) under JOH.⁶⁷ Charges were also filed against the former head of the National Banks and Securities Commission (CNBS), accused of money laundering.⁶⁸

CICIH

The installation of a UN-backed anti-corruption mission may come one step closer. "The government is reviewing the memorandum of understanding sent by the United Nations (UN) for the installation of the International Anti-Corruption Commission. This was announced by the Minister of the Presidency, Rodolfo Pastor de María, who answered some rumors. "We are not nervous, on the contrary we are excited, it is something that we ourselves have requested", he said."⁶⁹ Foreign Minister Enrique Reina also commented on this. The Presidential House and the Secretariat of Transparency continue working together in the process that will lead to sign the agreement for the installation of the International Commission Against Impunity in Honduras (CICIH), said the Chancellor of the Republic Eduardo Enrique Reina. The official explained in an appearance at the Presidential House, that meetings are being held to finalize the counter-proposal that Honduras will make to the Memorandum, and that they are looking for an independent and more autonomous mechanism and to collaborate in such a way that the CICIH will have the special conditions to be able to work."⁷⁰ The Xiomara administration also announced that such a body would be investigating all administrations, including the current one.⁷¹

61 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/tsc-informe-responsabilidad-penal-exautoridades-enee-perdida-millones-CN9384664>

62 <https://elpulso.hn/2022/08/31/fiscalia-investiga-a-exgerente-de-la-enee-por-cancelar-contrato-millonario/>

63 <https://criterio.hn/excalcalde-de-cucuyagua-copan-javier-lopez-alvarado-acusado-de-lavar-mas-de-1-815-millones/>

64 <https://proceso.hn/tsc-revela-irregularidades-en-liquidacion-de-fondos-desembolsados-en-el-ccepl/>

65 <https://proceso.hn/grave-denuncia-titular-de-uferco-dice-tsc-elabora-informes-con-pruebas-falsas/>

66 <https://criterio.hn/tribunal-superior-de-cuentas-comparsa-de-politicos-para-beneficiar-y-blindar-a-corruptos/>

67 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/08/22/iglesia-catolica-se-beneficio-con-fondos-de-tasa-de-seguridad-poblacional/>

68 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/08/29/interponen-denuncia-ante-la-uferco-contra-exfuncionarios-de-la-cnbs-por-lavado-de-activos/>

69 <https://proceso.hn/gobierno-revisa-memorando-de-onu-para-dar-siguiente-paso-a-instalar-la-cicih-en-honduras/>

70 <https://proceso.hn/canciller-certifica-compromiso-para-la-instalacion-de-la-cicih-y-se-espera-suscripcion/>

71 <https://elpulso.hn/2022/08/11/aseguran-que-la-cicih-tendra-la-facultad-de-investigar-a-todos-los-gobiernos/>

Transparency Minister Edmundo Orellana is hopeful that a CICIH could already be installed in the first months of 2023.^{72 73} On August 22, an important step towards the installation of the CICIH took place. "Honduras, through Foreign Minister Enrique Reina, delivered this Monday to the representative of the UN-Honduras, Alice Alice Shackelford, the proposals and comments to the Memorandum of Understanding to establish the International Commission against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (CICIH)."^{74 75} The next day, Civil society organizations called on the government to publish the content of their response to the UN.⁷⁶ Foreign Minister Enrique Reina shared it the same day.⁷⁷ "In the document, the Honduran State made some changes to the original letter sent by the UN, while at the same time instructing certain conditions for the CICIH to operate in the country, such as, for example, that it not be a "private prosecutor". In the original document, the UN requested to carry out investigations independently, as well as to become a private prosecutor. However, the Government limits this function and only gives it the power to "accompany in the conduct of investigations for the exercise of actions in an independent manner".^{78 79}

One of the recurring topics, especially around the possible installation of a UN-backed anti-corruption mission is the legality of the congressional leadership. Expediente Público takes a closer look at this. In the article, lawyer Joaquín Mejía offers a definitive answer to the question. The question has been resolved when the - Nationalist-controlled - Constitutional Chamber decided not to admit a constitutional challenge against the president of Congress, Luis Redondo.^{80 81} On August 25, the congressional Anti-Corruption Commission and the Ethics and Transparency Commission met with several UN representatives, UN Permanent Resident Coordinator Alice H. Shackelford and OACNUDH representative Isabel Albaladejo among them. "For Alice Shackelford it is imperative that the National Congress continues on the path traced by President Luis Redondo and promotes the repeal of those laws that impede and hinder the frontal attack against corruption. "The Penal Code is an example, but we can mention much more legislation; we congratulate the commission for the work done on the repeal of the Secrecy Law, which was a very important step", Shackelford emphasized."⁸²

The Onslaught against the Anti-Corruption Bodies

When the MACCIH was still in Honduras, they tried for years to have Congress approve the Efficient Collaboration Law. This endeavor was being picked up again this month by the new Congress.⁸³ This is seen by many as one of the requisites for the installation of a UN-backed anti-corruption body. And expected, here the National Party showed its real colors again by trying to stall the law as they had successfully done under JOH.⁸⁴ ContraCorriente spoke with three experts -

72 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/cicih-honduras-2023-xiomara-castro-FN9609564>

73 <https://confidencialh.com/blog/2022/08/17/ministro-de-transparencia-ratifica-que-la-cicih-llegara-al-pais/>

74 <https://proceso.hn/honduras-entrega-a-onu-propuestas-y-comentarios-al-borrador-para-establecer-la-cicih-confirma-canciller/>

75 <https://twitter.com/EnriqueReinaHN/status/1561790659429801992>

76 <https://criterio.hn/demandan-revelar-contrapropuesta-que-gobierno-entregó-a-naciones-unidas-para-instalar-cicih/>

77 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/que-dice-contrapropuesta-honduras-onu-cicih-FE9710337>

78 <https://confidencialh.com/blog/2022/08/24/gobierno-niega-a-la-cicih-facultad-para-acusacion-penal-que-respete-separacion-de-poderes-y-el-quehacer-de-la-fiscalia/>

79 <https://criterio.hn/propuesta-de-honduras-sobre-cicih-se-mantiene-pero-descarta-que-sea-acusador-privado/>

80 <https://www.expedientepublico.org/sombras-de-ilegalidad-en-junta-directiva-del-congreso-agudizan-crisis-politica-en-honduras/>

81 <https://proceso.hn/junta-directiva-del-cn-es-legal-quienes-la-cuestionan-están-equivocados-redondo/>

82 <https://proceso.hn/onu-cree-que-hay-leyes-que-obstruyen-lucha-contrala-corupcion-y-dice-cicih-es-necesaria-para-honduras/>

83 <https://proceso.hn/congreso-retoma-analisis-para-aprobar-la-lev-de-colaboracion-eficaz-en-honduras/>

84 <https://confidencialh.com/blog/2022/08/12/lev-de-colaboracion-eficaz-podria-generar-injusticia-y-debe-ser-revisada-senala-diputado-mario-perez/>

Juan Francisco Sandoval, former head of the Special Prosecutor's Office against Impunity (FECI) in Guatemala; Ana María Calderón, the former head of the MACCIH; Luis Javier Santos, head of the Specialized Prosecutor's Unit Against Corruption Networks (UFERCO) - on what is needed for a successful installation of the UN-backed body.⁸⁵

Criterio published an article on the lessons that should be learnt from the CICIG in Guatemala and MACCIH in Honduras for the hopeful installation of a UN-backed anti-corruption body. One lesson is just the needed approval of the above-mentioned law.⁸⁶ At the same time, the executive had at the beginning of the month not yet responded to the UN memorandum, which was made public at the end of July, in which the international organization - among other requests - puts as a condition that the anti-corruption mechanism be independent and be constituted as a private prosecutor.^{87 88 89}

About two months ago, the Honduran anti-corruption body at the MP, UFERCO, was strengthened. A new analysis by CESPAD showed this month that there is still some way to go to have a truly independent and strong UFERCO.⁹⁰

On August 24, Criterio had positive news on the hope reform of the Penal Code. "The Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ) admitted an appeal of unconstitutionality filed by popular movements against the reforms to the Penal Code that criminalize protests and modify the Money Laundering Law, considered an impunity pact and a blow to the fight against corruption."⁹¹

Congress

Under the previous three Nationalist governments, Congress had a so-called departmental fund allegedly for social projects but of the 2.3 billion Lempiras spent, only 62 million were audited by the TSC. The later handed over the collected evidence to the MP and UFERCO.^{92 93}

Mobile Hospitals

"The Criminal Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ) admitted Thursday a cassation appeal filed by the Public Prosecutor's Office (MP) to the sentence of Marco Bográn and Alex Moraes, former officials of Inversión Estratégica de Honduras (Invest-H) convicted in the case of corruption in the purchase of mobile hospitals. According to the MP's spokesman, Yuri Mora, this appeal seeks to repeat the trial against both former officials, since both defendants were acquitted for the crime of violation of the duties of public officials and fraud."⁹⁴ On August 15, the MP presented "a document called "The Truth of the Facts" where it assures that it requested the extradition of businessman Axel López and denounces interested sectors that conspire to hinder the investigations on the mega fraud of more than 47 million dollars".^{95 96}

85 <https://contracorriente.red/2022/08/12/claves-para-una-cicig-exitosa-voluntad-politica-y-cuidarse-de-los-poderes-ocultos/>

86 <https://criterio.hn/puntos-clave-que-llevaron-a-la-macch-y-la-cicig-ser-extinguidas-que-deben-servir-a-la-cicig/>

87 <https://contracorriente.red/2022/08/05/honduras-analiza-memorandum-de-la-onu-en-el-que-solicita-que-la-cicig-sea-acusador-privado/>

88 <https://criterio.hn/otorgar-facultades-de-accion-penal-a-cicig-retrasaria-su-instalacion-al-requerir-reforma-constitucional/>

89 <https://criterio.hn/gobierno-asegura-que-cicig-se-concretara-naciones-unidas-espera-respuesta-a-memorandum/>

90 <https://cespad.org.hn/los-supra-poderes-de-la-uferco/>

91 <https://criterio.hn/ante-negligencia-del-mp-presentan-amparo-para-garantizar-investigacion-por-desaparicion-de-jovenes-garifunas/>

92 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/tsc-inicia-proceso-entrega-expedientes-fondo-departamental-YF9403346>

93 <https://criterio.hn/uferco-comienza-a-recibir-expedientes-del-tsc-relacionados-a-corrupcion-en-uso-de-fondos-departamentales/>

94 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/sala-penal-admite-recuso-casacion-sentencia-marco-bogran-alex-moraes-MX9426394>

95 <https://proceso.hn/mp-espera-extradicion-de-axel-lopez-proveedor-de-hospitales-moviles-y-denuncia-complot-a-investigaciones/>

96 <https://www.mp.hn/publicaciones/comunicado-5/>

IHSS

The MP started talks with Panama about the restitution of \$1 million, stolen as part of the IHSS corruption case.⁹⁷ On August 25, "[i]n a preliminary hearing, the National Unit of Fiscal Support (UNAF) formalized the accusation and requested the opening of a trial against 14 people implicated in a mega-fraud of more than 158 million lempiras in the Honduran Institute of Social Security (IHSS), in relation to works not executed or half executed in its Regional Hospital of the North and peripheral clinics of Cálpules in San Pedro Sula and Torocagua in Comayagüela".⁹⁸ The case was later sent to trial.⁹⁹

State Security Forces

Jared Olson reported on police violence and corruption in Honduras. "Amid allegations that an elite Honduran police force colluded with a notorious gang while carrying out death-squad activities, observers are asking whether the administration of President Xiomara Castro has the political power or will to reform the country's security forces. According to an investigation last month by Honduran journalists, the National Anti-Gang Police Force and military police conducted extrajudicial executions and torture, while planting evidence and working in collusion with MS-13, the most prominent street gang in Honduras."¹⁰⁰

On August 26, "[t]he Court of Appeals for Administrative Disputes ruled in favor of some 1,300 purged police officers, as confirmed by lawyer German Licon. The legal representative of the policemen stated that finally light is being seen in all the effort that has been made since 2016 when he pointed out that "arbitrarily" a Purge Commission committed wrongdoings by unjustifiably separating many uniformed officers who today sought the reestablishment of their rights".¹⁰¹

Repressions

Today, the initial hearing will be held against the municipal police agent Jairo Alberto Flores López, accused of attempted homicide against José Humberto Duarte on April 29, 2019 during a day of peaceful protests in the defense of health and education.¹⁰²

Penitentiary System

At the beginning of the Xiomara administration, they announced the demilitarization of prisons. On August 9, the spokeswoman of the National Penitentiary Institute (INP), Digna Aguilar, announced that "[a]ll penitentiaries in the country will now be under the administration of the National Police".¹⁰³

⁹⁷ <https://www.mp.hn/publicaciones/mp-coordina-recuperacion-a-favor-del-ihss-de-mas-de-un-millon-de-dolares-incautados-en-panama/>

⁹⁸ <https://www.mp.hn/publicaciones/unaf-formaliza-acusacion-por-desfalco-de-158-millones-de-lempiras-en-el-ihss/>

⁹⁹ <https://www.mp.hn/publicaciones/auto-de-apertura-a-juicio-contra-14-involucrados-en-fraude-de-158-millones-de-lempiras-en-el-ihss/>

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/8/24/can-honduras-tackle-deep-seated-police-corruption>

¹⁰¹ <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/08/26/corte-de-apelaciones-falla-a-favor-de-policias-depurados/>

¹⁰² <https://www.defensoresonline.com/a-audiencia-inicial-agente-municipal-acusado-de-disparar-contra-una-persona-durante-las-protesta-de-defensa-de-la-salud-y-educacion/>

¹⁰³ <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/08/09/policia-nacional-queda-a-cargo-de-todos-los-centros-penitenciarios/>

Two inmates of two different Honduran prisons died in mid-August. According to prison authorities, one allegedly fell by accident 25m down and another inmate was found hung in his cell. In this case, they don't know if it was suicide or murder.¹⁰⁴

Militarization

Not following through with her promise to demilitarize Honduras has gained president Xiomara already some criticism (see previous monitors). This month, the JOH-era Military Police was sent to Guapinol, not to protect the community, but rather the mining company Inversiones Los Pinares.¹⁰⁵

International Community

"The government of Honduras revealed three reports prepared by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which had been declared secret by the regime of Juan Orlando Hernández, in which they point out that tax exemptions are inequitable and inefficient and recommend their extinction or gradual elimination."¹⁰⁶ This launched a debate in Honduras with the Xiomara administration announcing to revise tax loopholes. The estimated loss due to the current tax regime is \$1,6 billion.^{107 108} But at the same time, Criterio reported that new tax exemptions for US companies were being considered.¹⁰⁹

Foreign Minister Eduardo Enrique Reina met with his Palestine counterpart Read Malki in Colombia. He later announced that the Xiomara administration is planing to open up a consulate in Palestine.¹¹⁰ This spurred a debate about the Honduran embassy in Israel, which was moved under JOH to Jerusalem.^{111 112} The government sent mixed signals regarding a return of the embassy to Tel Aviv.¹¹³

The BCIE announced a possible installation of a fifth turbine at the El Cajón hydroelectric plant financed by Taiwan.¹¹⁴

US

Padre Melo and Joaquín Mejía commented on the role of SOUTHCOM in human rights training for Honduran armed forces.¹¹⁵ "Who would have thought? The worst nightmare for democracy in Honduras (the Armed Forces), as Victor Meza used to say, and those who have financed that nightmare, now sponsor human rights training."^{116 117} Defense Minister José Manuel Zelaya Rosales later gave an interview to Diálogo Américas on this.¹¹⁸

¹⁰⁴ <https://elpulso.hn/2022/08/15/sistema-penitenciario-reporta-dos-decesos-en-varias-carceles-hondurenas/>

¹⁰⁵ <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/component/k2/item/6165-violatoria-presencia-policia-militar-llego-para-proteger-a-la-minera-inversiones-los-pinares-en-guapinol>

¹⁰⁶ <https://criterio.hn/informes-develados-por-gobierno-revelan-que-fmi-demanda-eliminar-privilegios-fiscales/>

¹⁰⁷ <https://criterio.hn/gobierno-de-xiomara-castro-trabaja-en-un-plan-para-revisar-las-exoneraciones-fiscales/>

¹⁰⁸ <https://elpulso.hn/2022/08/02/el-cohep-aclara-que-no-se-opone-a-la-revision-de-exoneraciones-fiscales/>

¹⁰⁹ <https://criterio.hn/presidenta-castro-ofrece-exoneraciones-a-empresarios-de-ee-uu-mientras-el-sar-condena-dichos-beneficios/>

¹¹⁰ <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/gobierno-honduras-planea-instalar-consulado-palestina-relacion-bilateral-FJ9496236>

¹¹¹ <https://proceso.hn/honduras-contempla-retornar-su-embajada-a-tel-aviv/>

¹¹² <https://proceso.hn/buscamos-mejorar-atencion-consular-de-hondurenos-en-palestina-enrique-reina-canciller-de-honduras/>

¹¹³ <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/08/08/consideran-que-un-nuevo-cambio-de-ciudad-de-embajada-de-honduras-en-israel-podria-enviar-una-imagen-de-inestabilidad/>

¹¹⁴ <https://proceso.hn/bcie-plantea-posibilidad-que-taiwan-financie-la-instalacion-de-quinta-turbina-en-el-cajon/>

¹¹⁵ <https://dialogo-americas.com/es/articles/honduras-cultura-militar-fundada-en-derechos-humanos/#.YvatyC1nWhB>

¹¹⁶ <https://twitter.com/LawyersforHR/status/1558639456084697088>

¹¹⁷ <https://criterio.hn/cuestionan-que-militares-hondurenos-sean-capacitados-en-derechos-humanos-por-comando-sur/>

¹¹⁸ <https://dialogo-americas.com/articles/professionalization-of-honduran-armed-forces-based-on-human-rights/>

Three US members of Congress, Lou Correa, John Katko and Tony Gonzales, were on a visit in Honduras. US ambassador Laura F. Dogu tweeted: "We will meet with business leaders to advance our close business ties in San Pedro Sula. We will also meet with local government and NGO leaders to discuss migration management."^{119 120} On the second day of their visit, they also met with congressional president Luis Redondo.¹²¹ On August 18, the Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade, Marisa Lago, arrived in Honduras¹²². She and the US ambassador met with the US-Honduran Chamber of Commerce.¹²³

"The Secretariat of State in the Offices of Risk Management and National Contingencies (Copeco), through its head, Engineer Ramón Soto, in coordination with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID/BHA), sent humanitarian aid to the Mosquitia, in the department of Gracias a Dios."¹²⁴

The labor struggle at the US embassy construction side continued in August, the third month in a row.^{125 126 127 128} US Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky tweeted in solidarity: "As Chair of the International Workers Rights Caucus, I stand in #solidarity with workers building the new @usembassyhn in Tegucigalpa, Honduras and call on @BLHarbert to comply with the law and respect workers' rights."¹²⁹

EU

Spanish president Pedro Sánchez arrived in Honduras on Thursday 25, the first Spanish president to do so in 23 years.¹³⁰ The next day, he met with president Xiomara.^{131 132} During his visit Sánchez announced a \$70 million credit for the construction of three hospitals.¹³³

Drug Trafficking

Another Honduran wanted by the US for drug trafficking was arrested on August 7.¹³⁴ Michael Derringer Powery Wood will be held in pre-trial detention before his hearing on September 8.¹³⁵ On August 12, Honduras extradited Tokiro Ramírez Rodas, the first member linked to gangs and gangs, requested by the US for drug trafficking.¹³⁶

On August 10, US prosecutors formalized the charges against former police chief Juan Carlos "El Tigre" Bonilla during a hearing on Wednesday. His case was included in the same case file that includes the one against JOH, his brother Juan Antonio Hernandez, and drug trafficker Geovanny

¹¹⁹ <https://twitter.com/USAmbHonduras/status/1555549339916926976>
¹²⁰ <https://twitter.com/USAmbHonduras/status/1555734267577114624>
¹²¹ <https://twitter.com/usembassyhn/status/1555918220414124038>
¹²² <https://hn.usembassy.gov/es/la-subsecretaria-lago-encabezara-mision-comercial-a-centroamerica/>
¹²³ <https://twitter.com/USAmbHonduras/status/1560438928842391552>
¹²⁴ <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/08/08/copeco-envia-ayuda-humanitaria-a-mas-de-600-familias-afectadas-por-inundaciones-en-la-mosquitia/>
¹²⁵ <https://twitter.com/adriennepine/status/1559775259192356864>
¹²⁶ <https://twitter.com/adriennepine/status/1561763513278025728>
¹²⁷ <https://twitter.com/adriennepine/status/1562980392931852290>
¹²⁸ <https://twitter.com/adriennepine/status/1564628063832383488>
¹²⁹ <https://twitter.com/janschakowsky/status/1561867247504719873>
¹³⁰ <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/presidente-gobierno-espana-pedro-sanchez-llega-honduras-NY9742825>
¹³¹ <https://ellibertador.hn/2022/08/26/salud-transparencia-y-restauracion-economica-ejes-de-alianza-con-espana/>
¹³² <https://tiempo.hn/honduras-espana-memorandum-entendimiento-en-salud/>
¹³³ <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/08/27/secretario-de-salud-espana-otorga-un-prestamo-de-70-millones-para-la-construccion-de-hospitales/>
¹³⁴ <https://tiempo.hn/video-captura-michael-derringer-en-guanaja/>
¹³⁵ <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/08/08/juez-dicta-arresto-preventivo-a-extraditado-michael-derringer-powery-wood-proxima-audiencia-sera-el-8-de-septiembre/>
¹³⁶ <https://proceso.hn/tokiro-ramirez-primer-miembro-ligado-a-maras-extraditado-a-ee-uu/>

Fuentes Ramirez.¹³⁷ On August 16, El Heraldo reported: "A close source claims that "El Tigre" Bonilla will collaborate with the US Attorney General's Office. The former police chief had enough information to link politicians to drug trafficking, including two deputy security ministers and a former presidential secretary."¹³⁸ Three days later, it was reported that he declared himself not guilty in a US court.¹³⁹ This seems the expected procedure as journalist Jeff Ernst explains. First, most declare themselves innocent before starting talks with the authorities.¹⁴⁰

Criterio published an important investigation into the drug trafficking links of JOH's former Minister of Defense. "Accused by the US justice system of laundering USD 1.8 million between 2018 and 2019 for the Atlantic Cartel, Kensy Ivette García Torres, could reveal in the coming hours her criminal environment and the involvement in drug trafficking of politicians and public figures linked to power and who shared dividends from her businesses, ten of them focused on the coffee business, an activity sprinkled with drug trafficking. Garcia Torres, known in the criminal world as "the doll of the mafia," in allusion to Colombian narconovelas, for her voluptuous and contoured figure -- the product of cosmetic surgeries -- partnered in 2016 with then-Honduran Defense Minister Samuel Reyes Rendon, one of the trusted officials of former President Juan Orlando Hernandez, whom she accompanied in his first term in office (2014-2018)."¹⁴¹ Kensy García Torres was later sentenced to three years in prison.¹⁴²

"Seizures and securing of cocaine and marijuana plantations and the destruction of drug laboratories have increased, surpassing the figures since 2014, while the destruction of drug trails has been significantly reduced. Authorities claim that this was due to the co-optation of drug trafficking in the state."¹⁴³ At the same time, "[t]he Minister of Defense, José Manuel Zelaya Rosales said (...) that in Honduras it is not possible to speak of a real fight against drug trafficking, if one takes into account the state in which the current government received the Armed Forces and specifically with the issue of the radars that make up the air shield".¹⁴⁴

JOH

At the beginning of the month, JOH's legal team unconvincingly claimed that their client is mistreated in custody.¹⁴⁵ On that occasion, his wife Ana García further claimed that JOH's defense apparatus was being paid by "the Honduran diaspora community, rabbis and friends in the US".¹⁴⁶ On August 15, JOH's legal team claimed that he is under threat in his New York jail because as gang member supposedly wants to murder him.¹⁴⁷ Journalist Jeff Ernst reacted the right way: "It is true that there are threats against the Hernandezes. But not because JOH fought against organized crime,

¹³⁷ <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/fiscalia-estados-unidos-formaliza-cargos-juan-carlos-tigre-bonilla-narcotrafico-extraditado-nueva-york-FN9539878>

¹³⁸ <https://www.elheraldo.hn/elheraldoplus/investigaciones/tigre-bonilla-colaborador-fiscalia-narcotrafico-juan-orlando-hernandez-CC9598073>

¹³⁹ <https://proceso.hn/exdirector-de-la-policia-nacional-juan-carlos-bonilla-se-declara-no-culpable/>

¹⁴⁰ <https://twitter.com/jeffernst/status/1560625308650315776>

¹⁴¹ <https://criterio.hn/samuel-reyes-se-asocio-con-la-muneca-de-la-mafia-en-el-rubro-del-cafe/>

¹⁴² <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/08/13/kensy-garcia-torres-la-muneca-de-la-mafia-condenada-a-tres-anos-de-carcel-por-lavado-de-activos/>

¹⁴³ <https://criterio.hn/honduras-destruccion-de-plantaciones-de-droga-supera-registros-de-anos-antiguos/>

¹⁴⁴ <https://proceso.hn/no-podemos-hablar-de-lucha-real-al-narcotrafico-si-recibimos-unas-ffaa-con-deficiencias-ministro-de-defensa/>

¹⁴⁵ <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/defensa-de-juan-orlando-hernandez-denuncia-malos-tratos-en-la-carcel-MA9376680>

¹⁴⁶ <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/impiden-que-juan-orlando-hernandez-use-su-talit-judio-en-la-carcel-DJ9380317>

¹⁴⁷ <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/defensa-joh-mara-quiere-asesinar-expresidente-carcel-narcotrafico-ny-FM9592513>

but so that JOH does not sing in NY."¹⁴⁸ At the end of the month, El País Honduras reported that JOH's defense team was contemplating putting JOH himself on the stand as a witness.¹⁴⁹

JOH's brother also made headlines this month. "The US Attorney's Office filed a document before the Southern District Court of New York requesting the confiscation of assets of former Nationalist congressman Juan Antonio "Tony" Hernández, who was sentenced to life imprisonment plus 30 years in prison for drug trafficking crimes in the United States. The document leaked by the US government mentions that all titles, rights and interests of the former congressman should be confiscated for disposition in accordance with the law."¹⁵⁰ With the request by the US to have Tony Hernández' assets seized, the public was also reminded again that JOH's brother still owns the US \$138 million.¹⁵¹

Varia

Supreme Court Election

Until the end of the month, selected organizations have time to chose their representative for the Nomination Board for the selection of the new Supreme Court. CONADEH just announced that they have chosen Blanca Izaguirre and Rolando Arturo Milla as their representatives.¹⁵² The Secretariat of Transparency called for the different civil society organizations to hold an assembly to elect their representatives.¹⁵³ On August 15, the secretariat published the list of the 56 civil society organization tasked in choosing a joint representative for the Supreme Court election.¹⁵⁴ ¹⁵⁵ The next day, they chose Martha Dubón (Association of Judges for Democracy) and Tomás Andino (C-Libre) as their representatives.¹⁵⁶ ¹⁵⁷ By August 21, over half the bodies making up the Nomination Board for the Supreme Court election have by now elected their representatives. The business sector (COHEP), labor unions and university professors still had to do so. Once this is done, their representatives will together select 45 candidates for the Supreme Court out of which Congress will chose the final 15. All of this has to be finished by January 2023.¹⁵⁸ On August 23, COHEP chose Olban Valladares and Helui Castillo as their representatives¹⁵⁹ and a day later, the labor unions selected María Elena Sabillón Paz and Mauro Joel Domínguez Almendares.¹⁶⁰

By August 29, all 14 representatives of the Nomination Board for the Supreme Court election had been chosen.¹⁶¹ "In spite of the questionings and differences in the selection processes, the Labor Unions, Civil Society, the Bar Association and private enterprise itself elected, with transparency, their representatives in the Nominating Board. This could represent a sign of hope in the citizenship

¹⁴⁸ <https://twitter.com/jeffgernst/status/1559393630946738176>

¹⁴⁹ <https://www.elpais.hn/2022/08/29/defensa-de-juan-orlando-herandez-analiza-usario-como-testigo-en-su-propio-juicio-en-eeuu/>

¹⁵⁰ <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/fiscalia-eeuu-solicita-confiscacion-bienes-tony-herandez-narcotrafico-culpable-EJ9759327>

¹⁵¹ <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/tony-herandez-aun-le-debe-mas-de-138-millones-de-dolares-a-estados-unidos-YY9760155>

¹⁵² <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/conadeh-nombra-representantes-para-junta-nominadora-YD9423537>

¹⁵³ <https://elpulso.hn/2022/08/04/convocan-a-la-sociedad-civil-para-elegir-representantes-en-la-junta-nominadora/>

¹⁵⁴ <https://criterio.hn/definidas-las-56-organizaciones-de-sociedad-civil-que-aspiraran-a-ser-parte-de-la-junta-nominadora/>

¹⁵⁵ <https://tiempo.hn/comunidad-lgbt-aspira-un-magistrado-csj/>

¹⁵⁶ <https://cespad.org.hn/asi-escogieron-las-osc-a-sus-representantes-ante-la-jn-para-elegir-candidatos-a-magistrados-del-poder-judicial-de-honduras/>

¹⁵⁷ <https://tiempo.hn/cohep-gabriela-castellanos-en-la-junta-nominadora/>

¹⁵⁸ <https://proceso.hn/con-delegados-del-cah-para-junta-nominadora-avanza-la-reconstruccion-de-estado-de-derecho-edmundo-orellana/>

¹⁵⁹ <https://criterio.hn/representantes-del-cohep-ante-junta-nominadora-aseguran-que-no-habra-propuestas-bajo-la-mesa/>

¹⁶⁰ <https://tiempo.hn/centrales-obreras-representantes-junta-nominadora/>

¹⁶¹ <https://proceso.hn/integrada-junta-nominadora/>

that aspires to have an independent Supreme Court of Justice, said in Radio Progreso the human rights doctor Joaquín Mejía of the Equipo de Reflexión, Investigación y Comunicación, Eric-sj and of the Coalition against Impunity."¹⁶²

With the completion of the Nomination Board, ConfidencialHN presented the next steps in the election of the Supreme Court judges. The Board needs to be accredited by Congress, then they will elaborate an internal regulation until October 14. Also in October, they will call on possible future judges to present their candidacy. They will be evaluated until December 15. Further tests will follow and by latest January 15, the Board has to present a list of at least 45 candidates to Congress out of which 15 will be selected for a six-year period.¹⁶³

Violence

"Although July was the most violent month of Xiomara Castro's administration, homicides have decreased compared to previous years and the figures are lower than in January, during the administration of Juan Orlando Hernández."¹⁶⁴ CESPAD published a report on "Violence and criminality in Honduras: promises, responses and challenges of the Xiomara Castro's government".¹⁶⁵

Coiprodén denounced that children and young people continue to suffer daily violence in Honduras and demands that their protection should be a government priority. Over 14'000 Hondurans under 23-year old have been murdered since 1998.¹⁶⁶

Migration

More Hondurans have been deported so far this year, over 56'000, than in all 2021.¹⁶⁷ "Deportations of children in Honduras have increased by 60% compared to the previous year, 27% of these are unaccompanied minors who undertake the migratory route fleeing violence, poverty, criminality, lack of access to quality education and health in the face of the lack of public policies for the care of children."¹⁶⁸ According to the Poverty Observatory, over 90% of migrating Hondurans do this due to poverty. Sociologist Lelis Paz states that the situation in Honduras deteriorated especially after the coup and the conditions forced Hondurans to migrate.¹⁶⁹ "Sixteen percent of the total number of displaced persons in Honduras in 2021 was due to the crime of extortion, the National Commissioner for Human Rights revealed today, citing figures from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)."¹⁷⁰

In These Times reported on the White House's plan to stem migration (see previous monitor). "Last month, the White House announced more than \$1.9 billion in "private sector commitments" to Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador as part of Vice President Harris' "Call to Action" to address

¹⁶² <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/aplicacion-movil/transparencia-en-eleccion-de-junta-nominadora-alimenta-esperanza-ciudadana/>
¹⁶³ <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/08/30/conformada-junta-nominadora-para-la-seleccion-de-candidatos-a-magistrados-de-la-csj-que-sigue/>
¹⁶⁴ <https://criterio.hn/julio-cerro-como-el-mes-mas-violento-del-gobierno-de-xiomara-castro/>
¹⁶⁵ <https://cespad.org.hn/violencia-y-criminalidad-en-honduras-promesas-respuestas-y-desafios-del-gobierno-de-xiomara-castro/>
¹⁶⁶ <https://proceso.hn/ninez-y-juventud-los-mas-afectados-por-la-violencia-en-honduras-senala-ong/>
¹⁶⁷ <https://proceso.hn/deportacion-de-hondurenos-en-2022-supera-cifras-de-2020-y-2021/>
¹⁶⁸ <https://criterio.hn/mas-de-60-incrementan-deportaciones-de-ninos-y-ninas-hondurenas-que-emprenden-ruta-migratoria/>
¹⁶⁹ <https://tiempo.hn/nueve-de-10-hondurenos-migran-por-pobreza/>
¹⁷⁰ <https://proceso.hn/un-16-de-desplazados-en-honduras-en-2021-fue-por-delito-de-extorsion/>

the root causes of migration from northern Central America. The irony apparently lost on the White House is that it is promoting the same economic model that has caused so many to be forced to leave their homes and migrate in the first place. The United States has long promoted corporate interests, which generate profits for U.S. companies and local elites, at the expense of the majority of the peoples of northern Central America, and this new “Call to Action” is no different.”¹⁷¹

Honduras is not just a country where its own people leave, it is also a increasingly growing transit country. Almost 80'000 migrants have arrived in Honduras this year in the hope to continue their journey to the US. This is almost 8 times as much as in 2021.¹⁷² Congress approved an important amnesty for foreign migrants in transit to North America for the next six months in Honduras. This has to do with an administrative sanction paid by immigrants to the State, who enter irregularly through Honduran soil.¹⁷³ At the same time, Criterio reported: “Data acquired by Criterio.hn, based on requests for information to the National Migration Institute (INM), detail that in the first six months of 2022, the State coffers collected L 241,503,887.97, for administrative sanctions imposed on migrants passing through the national territory, a staggering figure that doubles and triples that obtained in previous years. In total, from 2015 to June 2022, L 544,800, 580.08 were collected.”¹⁷⁴

Economy

“Barely 48.7% of Honduran women of working age have a source of employment and out of ten people that make up the discouraged population without a source of employment, six are women, a situation that reflects the great labor gap faced by women in the Central American nation. A bulletin of the Honduran Council of Private Enterprise (Cohep), called Labor Market by Gender, reveals figures that undermine women with respect to access to a source of employment and, even worse, when they obtain one, their salaries are lower than those of men.”¹⁷⁵

Education

“Illiteracy in Honduras is 12% in general and of this illiterate population, 60% are over 40 years of age and are unwilling to learn to read and write.”¹⁷⁶ More than 1.5 million Honduran youth or neither working nor studying.¹⁷⁷

Poverty

“Remittances sent to Honduras between January and July of this year increased by 19.6% compared to the same period of 2021, according to data provided Monday by the Central Bank (BCH).”¹⁷⁸

171 <https://inthesetimes.com/article/kamala-harris-joe-biden-migration-root-causes-central-america-corporate-profit>

172 <https://proceso.hn/casi-80000-migrantes-han-ingresado-a-honduras-en-2022-la-mayoria-cubanos/>

173 <https://proceso.hn/legislativo-vuelve-a-aprobar-amnistia-para-migrantes-en-transito-hacia-norteamerica/>

174 <https://criterio.hn/migrantes-de-paso-por-honduras-se-convirtieron-en-la-caja-chica-del-gobierno/>

175 <https://criterio.hn/mujeres-en-honduras-sufren-mas-desempleo-y-perciben-salarios-por-debajo-de-los-hombres/>

176 <https://criterio.hn/el-60-de-la-poblacion-adulta-en-honduras-son-personas-analfabetas/>

177 <https://proceso.hn/mas-de-1-5-millones-jovenes-no-trabajan-ni-estudian-en-honduras/>

178 <https://proceso.hn/las-remesas-enviadas-honduras-se-incrementaron-19-6-entre-enero-y-julio/>

CNDS

Libre's attempt for a swift reform of the Special Law of the National Defense and Security Council (CNDS), a JOH-era body, failed.¹⁷⁹ The opposition voted against it, but so did PSH, which demanded a wide debate on the subject.¹⁸⁰ According to the Xiomara administration, the reform would give back the independence to the corresponding State powers, powers which were all concentrated in the hands of JOH previously.¹⁸¹ Just moments before the debate about the reform in Congress, US ambassador Laura F. Dogu also tweeted that the reform needed a thorough analysis. She deleted the post, after Foreign Minister Enrique Reina reminded her that this is an internal debate.¹⁸² The next day, presidential advisor Manuel Zelaya stated that while the Law for the Defense and Security Council (CNDS) still needed to be reformed, there was an error in Libre's proposal regarding the nomination of the director and deputy director of the National Police.^{183 184}

Over the following days, there was a lively debate about the law its proposed reform. Criterio summarized it best with some important background information. "Article 287 of the 1982 Constitution of Honduras establishes the creation of the National Defense and Security Council, which must be regulated by a secondary law to be approved by the National Congress for its operation. Although the figure of the National Defense and Security Council was not used for many years, in 2011, the National Congress presided by Juan Orlando Hernandez, through Legislative Decree 239-2011, created the regulations of the National Defense and Security Council that gives absolute control to the president of the nation over the head of the Legislative Branch, the Judicial Branch, the attorney general, the minister of the Secretariat of Security and also of the Secretariat of Defense and Security, under the argument of creating security and defense policies." The government's wishes to reform are more or less widely shared, but their way of wanting to push it through in just one sitting was rejected and there is criticism towards some of its content, e.g. "article 7 which indicates that the Defense Council will be presided over by the head of the Legislative Branch assisted by an executive secretary and an assistant secretary appointed by the president, this secretary could have control over the State security institutions over the ministers. In addition, Article 9 establishes that these officials will depend only on the directives of the President, will have specialized technical equipment and a special budget assigned to them". According to the government and Libre, the proposed reform will rather allow a return to the separation of powers.¹⁸⁵

Sociologist Leticia Salomón also published a helpful analysis in which she concluded: "The Law of the Defense and Security Council is just the beginning of the dismantling of the authoritarian structure for the protection of impunity guaranteed by the previous government with the complicit silence of those who constituted and still constitute this Council. We still need to eliminate the anti-terrorist law, review the functions of the Directorate of Investigation and Intelligence, establish limits to the confidentiality or reserve of defense and security matters so that only strictly necessary

179 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/nacionalistas-liberales-psh-frustran-libre-ley-cnnds-honduras-NE9633708>

180 <https://elpulso.hn/2022/08/18/ps-h-enfatiza-que-ley-del-consejo-de-defensa-y-seguridad-requiere-amplio-debate/>

181 <https://elpulso.hn/2022/08/18/consideran-que-nueva-ley-de-seguridad-devolvera-independencia-de-poderes/>

182 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/08/18/cancilleria-pide-respeto-en-discusion-de-temas-de-pais-luego-que-embajadora-de-ee-uu-opino-sobre-ley-del-consejo-nacional-de-seguridad-y-defensa/>

183 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/manuel-zelaya-inclusion-derogacion-articulo-45-fue-un-error-quien-envio-proyecto-congreso-nacional-honduras-HA9651119>

184 <https://tiempo.hn/claves-polemica-ley-defensa-seguridad/>

185 <https://criterio.hn/derogacion-de-ley-de-defensa-y-seguridad-genera-pugna-ante-proyecto-presentado-por-poder-ejecutivo/>

information remains classified and not the barbarities that were approved in that Council so much defended by the clueless, cynical or accomplices. We only have to hope that by then the same old people do not jump out saying that communism has already arrived in the country..."¹⁸⁶ In the midst of these discussions, president Xiomara convoked the CNDS for a meeting. Her own party then called on her to postpone this until its law has been reformed.¹⁸⁷ On August 23, Libre's congressional secretary Carlos Zelaya announced that changes proposed by the opposition (Liberal Party and PSH) will be taken up while he denounced the National Party which "has only dedicated themselves to ranting and criticizing".¹⁸⁸ ¹⁸⁹ At the end of the month, El Pulso reported: "The benches of the Partido Libertad y Refundación (Libre), Partido Liberal and Partido Salvador de Honduras (PSH) held a meeting to reach a consensus for the approval of the Law of the National Defense and Security Council (CNDS)".¹⁹⁰ But it is not clear how long it will take to actually approve the reform in Congress. PSH says that they want Libre to present the proposed changes to the reform to president Xiomara.¹⁹¹ For many, a reform won't suffice and they call for the complete derogation of the law.¹⁹²

And Light at the End of a Month

"The International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearance on August 30 coincides with the National Day of the Detained and Disappeared in Honduras, and with the anniversary of this program Voices against Forgetting. Each of these three events of enormous significance in the life of COFADEH, in the struggle for truth and justice, has its own origin, its particular context and its consequences over time."¹⁹³

¹⁸⁶ <https://criterio.hn/conducir-y-administrar-la-defensa-nacional-y-la-seguridad-un-asunto-del-ejecutivo-del-legislativo-o-del-judicial/>

¹⁸⁷ <https://elpulso.hn/2022/08/22/piden-a-presidenta-esperar-nueva-ley-para-reunirse-con-el-consejo-de-seguridad/>

¹⁸⁸ <https://proceso.hn/ley-de-cnds-es-analizada-y-tendra-cambios-propuestos-por-la-oposicion-carlos-zelaya/>

¹⁸⁹ <https://proceso.hn/aprobado-el-segundo-debate-de-nueva-ley-del-consejo-nacional-de-defensa-y-seguridad/>

¹⁹⁰ <https://elpulso.hn/2022/08/30/libre-psh-y-liberales-logran-acuerdo-para-corregir-dictamen-de-ley-del-cnds/>

¹⁹¹ <https://criterio.hn/consensos-a-medias-de-fuerzas-politicas-estanca-derogacion-de-ley-del-consejo-de-defensa-y-seguridad/>

¹⁹² <https://criterio.hn/el-consejo-nacional-de-defensa-y-seguridad-desde-la-perspectiva-normativa-e-institucional/>

¹⁹³ <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/tres-grandes-hechos-en-la-misma-fecha/>

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