

Another Month in Honduras...

Human Rights Monitor – September 2022

The situation of Honduran human rights defenders was discussed in Geneva this month where the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Nada Al-Nashif, called on the Honduran authorities to "strengthen its National Protection System for Human Rights Defenders, including by providing it with the necessary financial resources". Given the equally dire situation of women, feminist organizations proposed the creation of an Inter-institutional Commission on violent deaths of women and femicides. This in the month where the femicide in a police station of nursing student Keyla Martínez finally went to trial. September also saw a meeting between President Xiomara and UN Secretary General António Guterres to discuss among other things the installation of a UN-backed anti-corruption mission, the CICIH. Honduras was also hit by heavy rainfalls leaving at least 13 people dead and over 60'000 people affected. Then, there were also the independence day celebrations, for many the first ones under a democratically-elected government since the coup d'état. 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

"The United Nations Office for Human Rights today denounced recent attacks against at least 120 human rights activists in Honduras, in the form of threats, harassment and in some cases assassinations, and called on the government of the Central American country to make more efforts to protect this group. "Two-thirds of the victims are environmental activists, many of them indigenous or Afro-Honduran," said the acting UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Jordanian Nada Al-Nashif, in her speech at the opening of the 51st session of the UN Human Rights Council. Al-Nashif called on the Honduran authorities to "strengthen its National Protection System for Human Rights Defenders, including by providing it with the necessary financial resources".¹ In New York, Honduran human rights defenders held a parallel meeting to the UN General Assembly denouncing the persecution of environmental defenders.²

"The [Human Rights] Minister, Natalie Roque, met with the President of the [UN] Human Rights Council, Federico Villegas, to exchange ideas and at the same time to strengthen bilateral ties with interactive dialogues on a wide range of issues related to the area."³ Foreign Minister Enrique Reina, meanwhile, met with Eamon Gilmore, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights.⁴

Attacks, Criminalization and Harassment

OFRANEH's Miriam Miranda denounced acts of police harassment against her and her team.⁵ "The Broad Movement for Dignity and Justice (MADJ) denounced (...) that the coordinator of the community nucleus of the Tolupán tribe of Luquigüe, in the department of Yoro, Benedicto Hernández, is being harassed, threatened and intimidated."⁶

"Bureaucracy, negligence and an archaic system within the Ministry of Security and the Judiciary continue to make defenders of the territory vulnerable, even when they receive letters of release for the processes they faced under the auspices of the Public Prosecutor's Office. This is the case of the eight defenders of Guapinol, who after 914 days of arbitrary imprisonment and their subsequent release as a result of the annulment of the trial by the Constitutional Chamber, continue to be requested at National Police checkpoints."⁷

Five defenders from Reitoca faced a preliminary hearing after an appeals court revoked a provisional dismissal of the case. They are being criminalized for their opposition to a hydroelectric project by Progelsa on the Petacón River.⁸

1 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/09/12/oficina-derechos-humanos-de-la-onu-denuncia-ataques-a-al-menos-120-activistas-en-honduras/>

2 <https://criterio.hn/en-reunion-paralela-a-la-77-asamblea-de-la-onu-denuncian-persecucion-contra-defensores-en-honduras/>

3 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/09/21/ministra-de-dd-hh-se-reune-con-federico-villegas-en-ginebra-suiza/>

4 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/09/21/el-canciller-enrique-reina-sostuvo-una-reunion-con-eamon-gilmore-representante-especial-de-la-union-europea-para-derechos-humanos/>

5 <https://twitter.com/baraudawaguchu/status/1568309748163903495>

6 <https://criterio.hn/denuncian-amenazas-contra-integrante-de-tribu-tolupan-de-luquigue/>

7 <https://criterio.hn/aun-tras-su-liberacion-defensores-del-territorio-están-expuestos-a-ser-revictimizados-por-la-policia/>

8 <https://criterio.hn/poder-judicial-niega-amnistia-a-defensores-lencas-de-reitoca/>

Indigenous Peoples

"15 years after the issuance of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we demand that it be adopted as an Indigenous Law in Honduras."⁹ But while OFRANEH continues to wait for this, the Garífuna community in Punta Gorda, Roatán, recuperated a part of their ancestral land this month.¹⁰

"The persecution against the Lenca Indigenous Council of Nueva Palestina, municipality of San José in the department of La Paz, was shown this Saturday, September 24, when the National Police illegally detained the leader of this organization, Valentín Gonzales Aguilar."¹¹ OACNUDH sent a mission to the San Francisco de Locomapa Tolupán tribe. "The Office calls on the competent authorities to take urgent action to guarantee the life and safety of human rights defenders threatened in the area."¹¹

The Case of Berta Cáceres

"The Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) reiterated to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) that in order to achieve true justice, it is necessary to investigate the intellectual authors of the murder of Berta Cáceres and the cancellation of the illegal concession on the Gualcarque River."¹²

On September 27, COPINH denounced that the Gualcarque Fraud case remains suspended as the Supreme Court has not dealt yet with an amparo request (see last month).^{13 14}

LGBTQ

The first regional forum on justice without impunity for the LGBTQ+ community took place in Tegucigalpa this month.¹⁵

"In the mental health system in Honduras there are recurrent experiences of discrimination against LGTBIQ+ people, in which some professionals in this field qualify sexual orientation, gender identity and expression as abnormal and immoral deviations, so it is urgent to create an exclusive psychological care program for this vulnerable sector in Honduras".¹⁶

"The National Committee for the Prevention of Torture, Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (MNP-CONAPREV), through commissioner Melissa Escoto, denounced that security protocols are not being complied with for LGTBIQ+ persons in the country's prisons, explaining that there are no special spaces for this population and due to the existing homophobia they have suffered abuses ranging from physical aggressions to sexual violations."¹⁷

⁹ <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1568776126763507712>

¹⁰ <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1571116533140848643>

¹¹ <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1575245023301537809>

¹² <https://criterio.hn/copinh-reitera-a-cidh-necesidad-de-investigar-a-autores-intelectuales-del-crimen-contraberta-caceres/>

¹³ <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1574885413528936468>

¹⁴ <https://copinh.org/2022/09/comunicado-justicia-hondurena-sigue-dando-largas-al-caso-fraude-sobre-el-gualcarque/>

¹⁵ <https://criterio.hn/honduras-esta-obligada-a-investigar-con-etica-y-celeridad-las-muertes-violentas-de-la-poblacion-lgbtqi/>

¹⁶ <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/pag/index.php/articulos/denuncia/102-urge-creacion-de-programa-de-atencion-psicologica-exclusivo-para-personas-lgbtqi-en-honduras>

¹⁷ <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/09/12/conaprev-denuncia-violaciones-a-los-derechos-de-la-poblacion-lgbtqi-en-los-centros-penales/>

Honduras LGBTQ+ organizations called on the IACHR to intervene so that the country takes the necessary steps to allow same-sex marriage.¹⁸ "The Office of the Attorney General of the Republic (PGR) requested the National Congress to designate a person with decision-making power in order to initiate conversations with said institution that represents the State of Honduras, in order to achieve compliance with a recommendation of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) to make same-sex marriage, popularly known as gay or lesbian marriage, viable."¹⁹ But then congressional secretary Luz Angélica Smith reacted by stating that the wish by the PGR is not binding.²⁰ Human rights scholar Joaquín Mejía explained in ten points why same-sex marriage should be legal in Honduras.²¹

Freedom of Expression and Journalists

Proceso Digital reported on the ongoing task of depenalize so-called crimes of honor such as libel.²²

"Orlando Gómez, a social communicator, was verbally assaulted by the councilman of the Municipal Corporation of Choluteca, Cristóbal Rodríguez, for carrying out his journalistic work. In addition to the above, the journalist also received threats from two followers of the official, who approached him to warn him, "get out of here because we are going to hit you".²³

"For reporting that the municipal councilman of Roatan, Bay Islands, Octavio Rodas, was delinquent with the payment of municipal taxes, the social communicator and owner of the television channel, Roatan Hable Claro (RHC tv), Rigoberto Damas Torres, faces a criminal trial, accused of the crimes of slander and libel."²⁴

Violence against Women

Women's rights organizations propose the creation of "an Inter-institutional Commission on violent deaths of women and femicides composed of the Ministry of Security, Human Rights, National Police, Public Prosecutor's Office, National Commissioner for Human Rights and organized women, seek mechanisms to strengthen the attention in cases of missing women and girls in the country".²⁵

"The absolute criminalization of abortion is not in accordance with the Honduran Constitution and violates the country's international human rights obligations, said Marcia Aguiluz, a lawyer with the legal department of the international organization Women's Link Worldwide, today through the amicus curiae brief she filed with the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ)."²⁶

18 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/pag/index.php/articulos/monitoreo/112-por-primera-vez-la-comunidad-lgbtqi-hondurena-presento-peticiones-ante-la-cidh-sobre-matrimonio-entre-personas-del-mismo-sexo-para-que-revise-las-actuaciones-del-estado-que-lo-prohibe>

19 <https://proceso.hn/pgr-pide-al-congreso-que-designe-negociador-para-implementar-matrimonio-gay-como-lo-pide-la-cidh/>

20 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/09/29/correspondencia-de-la-pgr-no-es-vinculante-y-no-es-parte-de-la-agenda-legislativa-luz-angelica-smith/>

21 <https://criterio.hn/un-decalogo-sobre-el-matrimonio-igualitario-en-honduras/>

22 <https://proceso.hn/despenalizar-delitos-contr-el-honor-pone-a-prueba-discurso-politico/>

23 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/cl/index.php/portada-alertas/1537-andate-de-aqui-porque-te-vamos-a-pelar-le-dicen-al-periodista-orlando-gomez>

24 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/cl/index.php/alertas/procesos-legales/1539-juicio-por-difamacion-e-injurias-enfrenta-comunicador-por-informar-sobre-morosidad-en-pago-de-impuestos-de-regidor-en-roatan>

25 <https://criterio.hn/anuncian-comision-interinstitucional-para-frenar-la-desaparicion-de-mujeres-en-honduras/>

26 <https://criterio.hn/al-prohibir-aborto-honduras-incumple-obligaciones-internacionales-en-derechos-humanos-womens-link-worldwide/>

The Center for Women's Rights (CDM) registered 198 femicides so far this year.²⁷ On September 22, the femicide of nursing student Keyla Martínez went to trial. She was murdered inside a police station on February 6, 2021.²⁸ COFADEH denounced that the Ministry of Security continues to support the accused police agent.³⁰ Their defense even tried to distort the final report of the autopsy which had clearly shown that Keyla died due to asphyxiation.³¹ The responsible court also inspected the cell in which Keyla was murdered.³² On September 29, COFADEH denounced the trial could not conclude until the Supreme Court resolved the appeals filed against the reclassification of the crime of femicide to simple homicide.³³ During the trial, social movements gathered outside the court demanding justice for her.³⁴

Protection Mechanism

"The United Nations System in Honduras reiterates the need to strengthen the National Protection System for Human Rights Defenders. The United Nations System in Honduras expresses its concern about the difficult context faced by the National Protection Council and the General Directorate of the Protection System, as well as the context of the beneficiaries of protection. From January 1 to August 31, 2022, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OACNUDH) has documented at least 9 murders of human rights defenders and 2 journalists, which add up to a total of 96 cases of aggressions affecting 120 human rights defenders, 31 journalists and endangering the civic space of citizens."³⁵

Extractive Industries

Lucía Vijil Saybe published an analysis on "extractive corruption" for CESPAD.³⁶

OACNUDH and the EU invited to a forum on the Escazú Agreement³⁷ and how it could help in building environmental justice. So far, the Xiomara administration has not signed the agreement.³⁹ Criterio spoke with Berta Zúniga Cáceres, general coordinator of COPINH, about the significance of the agreement. "[T]his would guarantee reparations for those who have suffered from extractivist violence, access to justice and the demand for the respect of fundamental rights."⁴⁰ After the ongoing calls on the Honduran government to sign the Escazú Agreement, SERNA minister Lucky Medina stated: "We must take advantage of the conditions that exist on the part of this new government not only for the signing, but we must also talk about what will happen if we sign the Escazú Agreement today."⁴¹ The same Lucky Medina said this month that the Xiomara administration had not approved any new concessions since coming to power.⁴² At the end of the

²⁷ <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/09/22/honduras-registra-198-femicidios-en-lo-que-va-del-ano/>

²⁸ <https://www.mp.hn/publicaciones/inicia-juicio-contra-policia-acusado-por-crimen-de-keyla-patricia-martinez/>

²⁹ <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/en-tribunal-de-siguatepeque-inicia-juicio-contra-policia-acusado-de-asesinar-a-keyla-martinez-bajo-custodia-policia/>

³⁰ <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/secretaria-de-seguridad-sigue-apoyando-agente-policia-que-esta-siendo-juzgado-por-el-femicidio-de-keyla-martinez/>

³¹ <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/caso-keyla-perito-consultor-de-la-secretaria-de-seguridad-pretende-desvirtuar-examen-final-de-autopsia/>

³² <https://proceso.hn/tribunal-de-sentencia-inspecciona-celda-donde-murio-keyla-martinez/>

³³ <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/caso-keyla-familia-exige-a-la-csj-que-resuelva-los-amparos-pendientes-para-que-el-tribunal-de-sentencias-de-fallo-contra-policia-acusado-del-femicidio/>

³⁴ <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/keyla-no-se-suicidio-la-policia-la-mato-expresa-grupo-de-mujeres-que-exigen-justicia-en-las-afueras-del-tribunal-de-la-esperanza/>

³⁵ <https://honduras.un.org/es/199063-naciones-unidas-reitera-la-importancia-de-fortalecer-el-sistema-nacional-de-proteccion>

³⁶ <https://cespad.org.hn/la-corupcion-extractiva-y-su-importancia-en-el-debate-nacional/>

³⁷ <https://cespad.org.hn/analisis-semanal-acuerdo-de-escazu-en-honduras-un-pulso-de-fuerzas/>

³⁸ <https://cespad.org.hn/asi-avanza-la-firma-del-acuerdo-de-escazu-y-la-busqueda-por-justicia-ambiental/>

³⁹ <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1567637397256474625>

⁴⁰ <https://criterio.hn/acuerdo-de-escazu-garantizaria-reparacion-para-quienes-sufren-violencia-del-modelo-extractivista-bertha-zuniga/>

⁴¹ <https://criterio.hn/gobierno-de-xiomara-castro-esquiva-adhesion-de-acuerdo-de-escazu/>

⁴² <https://radioprogreso.hn/aplicacion-movil/en-honduras-no-se-han-otorgado-mas-concesiones-mineras-lucky-medina/>

month, after some recent statements by deputy foreign minister Gerardo Torres, OFRANEH expressed fear that the Escazú agreement would not be implemented any times soon. It seems that one of the main stumbling blocks is a mechanism for free, prior and informed consent.⁴³

FOSDEH and others published a socio-environmental conflict index. "Will conflicts be the most evident expression of the alteration of the claims of territorial, indigenous and Afro-Honduran movements against the State? Will it be intrinsic to any democratic regime, since it is the form taken by society's demands or disagreement with certain government measures or policies? The answer was to see social conflict as a multidimensional phenomenon, with implications in governance, security, taxation and others. If so, how to make a contribution that is useful to social movements, indigenous and Afro-descendant territorial peoples to understand, decide and act on the conflict?"⁴⁴

Hydroelectricity

MADJ wrote an open letter to Energy Minister Erick Tejada regarding two disputed hydroelectric projects, Jilamito and Los Planes, in the Atlántida department. They ask the following questions:

" Indicate the manner and date in which, the secretariat that you direct will proceed to the cancellation of the projects that are in the process of development and that are being promoted by HIDROCEP and INGELSA.

Review the operation of the projects already in operation and that any decision to be taken in relation to terminate or renegotiate contracts and that the principle of social justice established in the new law prevails.

Establish the specific mechanism proposed by the Secretariat for the review of the rest of the concession contracts, existing in the department, which continue to harm the rights of the communities and the public interest."⁴⁵

MADJ later denounced the lack of a clear decision by the Xiomara administration to cancel hydroelectric concessions. ""Arguments and evidence to immediately cancel these electric concessions exist and in abundance, what is needed is a clear decision by the government to cancel them", said the general coordinator of the Broad Movement for Dignity and Justice (MADJ), Martin Fernández."⁴⁶ And even worse news in the Reitoca case. "The judicial persecution against water defenders in Reitoca, Francisco Morazán continues. This Tuesday, September 20, at the hearing for notification of the resolution, the provisional dismissal of five Lenca defenders of the Petacón River was revoked."⁴⁷

ZEDEs

"The Alternative for Community and Environmental Vindication of Honduras (ARCAH) filed a second complaint for treason against Hondurans who formed the Committee for the Adoption of

43 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1574464546617819136>

44 <https://fosdeh.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/fosdeh-2022-indice-conflictividad-final.pdf>

45 <https://madj.org/2022/09/13/1316/>

46 <https://criterio.hn/falta-decision-clara-del-gobierno-para-cancelar-concesiones-electricas-movimiento-amplio/>

47 <https://criterio.hn/pese-a-falta-de-pruebas-revocan-sobreseimiento-provisional-a-cinco-defensores-de-reitoca/>

Best Practices (CAMP), which regulated the unconstitutional and recently repealed Employment and Economic Development Zones (ZEDE). The complaint filed before the Public Prosecutor's Office is against Ricardo Rodolfo Maduro Joest, a businessman who served as president of the Republic for the National Party in the 2002-2006 period; and Octavio Rubén Sánchez Barrientos, who was former minister of staff in the government of Porfirio Lobo Sosa, according to Business Human Rights.⁴⁸ "ARCAH further denounced this the destruction of the forest of the Bay Islands through construction by ZEDE Próspera just a few meters from the coral reef."⁴⁹

On September 29, a US embassy representative met a delegation from the ZEDE Próspera which Honduran Foreign Minister Enrique Reina rightly criticizes. "Creating jobs and investment is important, but in clean legal frameworks. The Zedes are the biggest legal aberration that emerged from a narco-state that came to power with fraud. What is born contaminated does not generate a good image."^{50 51}

Corruption and Its Enemies

The legacy of the JOH regime is still widely felt, in a lot of cases it relates to corruption. "The National Emergency System 911 reported the interruption in its operations by the intermediary that provides the security camera surveillance system. The company Dynamic Corporation, partners of David Chavez, president of the National Party, refuses, according to the Government, to renegotiate the damaging contract which represents an expenditure of more than US\$ 1.8 million."⁵² El Tiempo later reported that the initial contract signed under the JOH regime was hidden by the same actors using the Secrecy Law.⁵³

The MP filed charges against the former Secretary of Risk Management and National Contingencies, Copeco, Gabriel Rubí, the former Vice Minister of Health, Nery Cerrato, the former administrator of Copeco, Cristian Santeli, and the legal representative in Honduras of the company DLX Enterprises LLC, Mirna Luz Romero. The case is linked to the bigger mobile hospital corruption case.⁵⁴ Both Gabriel Rubí⁵⁵ and Nery Cerrato⁵⁶ were allowed to await his corruption trial outside of prison. But at the end of the month, a court dismissed the charges against them.⁵⁷ The MP appealed the court ruling.⁵⁸ Related to this, it was made public that a former member of the Invest-H invention board received more than 1 million Lempiras while at the same time being absent from work due to medical reason.⁵⁹

PSH congresswoman Suyapa Figueroa called on her colleagues to have Congress audited to justify how more than 78 million Lempiras have been spent on travel and per diems.⁶⁰ Two former officials

48 <https://criterio.hn/por-su-participacion-en-zede-denuncian-por-traicion-a-la-patria-a-expresidente-ricardo-maduro/>

49 <https://criterio.hn/sin-permiso-de-operacion-y-sin-auditoria-ambiental-continua-construccion-en-prospera/>

50 <https://twitter.com/EnriqueReinaHN/status/1575664305009135617>

51 <https://proceso.hn/ministro-consejero-de-eeuu-se-reune-con-representantes-de-honduras-prospera/>

52 <https://criterio.hn/socios-de-david-chavez-se-aduenaron-de-operaciones-del-911/>

53 <https://tiempo.hn/contrato-del-911-protégido-ley-de-secretos/>

54 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/aplicacion-movil/rubi-y-cerrato-se-confabularon-para-defraudar-al-fisco-cna/>

55 <https://confidencial.hn.com/blog/2022/09/07/en-libertad-se-defendiera-gabriel-rubi-exministro-de-copeco-acusado-de-fraude-y-violacion-de-los-deberes-de-los-funcionarios/>

56 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/aplicacion-movil/gabriel-rubi-otra-vez-al-banquillo-de-los-acusados/>

57 <https://proceso.hn/sobreseido-el-exviceministro-de-salud-nery-cerrato/>

58 <https://www.mp.hn/publicaciones/con-recurso-de-apelacion-mp-buscara-revertir-sobreseimientos-con-los-que-se-favorecio-a-exfuncionarios-gabriel-rubi-y-nery-cerrato/>

59 <https://confidencial.hn.com/blog/2022/09/07/exinterventor-de-invest-h-cobro-mas-de-un-millon-de-lempiras-sin-trabajar/>

60 <https://confidencial.hn.com/blog/2022/09/09/suyapa-figueroa-el-cn-debe-someterse-a-una-auditoria-para-justiciar-el-gasto-de-78-millones-en-viajes-y-viaticos/>

from the Ministry of Health (SESAL) and two businessmen were arrested accused of corruption.⁶¹ Three more people are wanted in this case.⁶² The former Minister of Health from 2014-16, Yolani Batres, fled Honduras avoiding her arrest.⁶³

Jorge Aldana stopped a controversial infrastructure project in Tegucigalpa from his predecessor as mayor, the Trans-450. "But beyond saying "clean slate", analysts and former authorities of the Municipal Corporation, interviewed by Criterio.hn, agree that the time has come to raise awareness about the lack of prosecution of crime by the Public Prosecutor's Office, especially with regard to finding those responsible for this "monument to corruption".⁶⁴

"The Court of Appeals in corruption matters ordered the revocation of the substitutive measures replacing them with the preventive imprisonment of former officials of Inversión Estratégica de Honduras (Invest-H) for the case of the purchase of masks."⁶⁵

Mid-September, plans for the disappearance of the National Convergence Forum (Fonac) became public.⁶⁶ This then led to rumors that also the National Anti-Corruption Council (CNA) was to disappear. Congressional vice-president Hugo Noé Pino denounced this as a "perverse campaign".⁶⁷ It further needs to be said that Fonac was just reactivated two years ago under JOH and presided by one of his allies, Omar Rivera. So its function has been undermined from the start. The CNA is older and even though some criticize its role during the coup, it has sharpened up these last years. UFERCO's Luis Santos praised their anti-corruption work.⁶⁸ Given this, it is still worrisome that the CNA played along with the story of being under threat.⁶⁹ ⁷⁰ As it got even worse, when CNA director Gabriela Castellanos spoke of a "planned coup d'état against the fight against corruption" without any proof.⁷¹

Honduras Now then linked to additional information by Sandra Cuffe about history of the CNA. "The CNA explicitly presents itself as a civil society group. "We're not the government." It's not quite that clear-cut. The CNA was created by a law (07-2005) that gives it access to officials & mandates working with the gov't to implement a national anti-corruption strategy. The CNA is run by representatives from 12 groups. The main organization of the country's business and economic elite is among them, as are top evangelical and catholic reps, and a mish-mash of workers' and other groups, some with a long history of working with the state. The Honduran Council of Private Enterprise (COHEP) is part of the CNA. COHEP is the leading private sector organization in the country. It has dozens of member groups representing every kind of interest: maquilas, private security, banks, media, mining, energy, you name it. The CNA is so full of powerful business and political interests that it's almost hard to think of an institution worse positioned to do any kind of impartial investigation into corruption networks in #Honduras. Treat any uncritical news about it

61 <https://tiempo.hn/mp-fraude-en-salud-empresarios-capturados/>

62 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/09/14/cuatro-de-los-siete-detenido-en-red-de-corupcion-en-la-sesal-seran-presentados-a-audiencia-de-imputados/>

63 <https://criterio.hn/funcionarios-corruptos-de-administracion-joh-continuan-huyendo-del-pais/>

64 <https://criterio.hn/trans-450-cancelado-e-impunidad-para-responsables-del-fraude/>

65 <https://proceso.hn/revocan-medidas-y-ordenan-prision-a-exfuncionarios-de-invest-h-por-compra-de-mascarillas/>

66 <https://criterio.hn/instancia-que-sustituya-al-fonac-debe-ser-previamente-consensuada-con-organizaciones-de-sociedad-civil/>

67 <https://proceso.hn/como-campana-perversa-atribuye-noe-pino-versiones-que-aseguran-que-el-cn-pretende-eliminar-al-cna/>

68 https://twitter.com/Luis_Santos_C/status/1574898003604905989

69 https://twitter.com/All_Things_HND/status/1574924756058767361

70 <https://elpulso.hn/2022/09/27/cna-dice-que-el-ejecutivo-quiere-intervenir-en-su-asamblea-con-mesas-ciudadanas/>

71 <https://proceso.hn/campana-de-desprestigio-al-cna-planifica-un-golpe-de-estado-a-la-lucha-contra-la-corupcion-gabriela-castellanos/>

with, well, a whole salt mine."⁷² This was from 2018. Honduras Now added that the CNA started to be more critical of the JOH regime, but only very late and when several U.S.-funded media and organizations began turning against the dictatorship.⁷³

On September 28, there was a confrontation between the head of Fonac and former JOH ally Omar Rivera and Secretary of the President Rudolfo Pastor. "From Fonac you fulfilled a role in which you collaborated with the previous regime (...) you were collaborating with a regime that by then was authoritarian and corrupt, whose criminal links were already known and widespread. You were collaborating with a narco-dictatorship".^{74 75}

CICIH

CESPAD published a report on where Honduras is at regarding the installation of a CICIH.⁷⁶ CESPAD also explained why an accelerated installation of a CICIH would need greater citizen participation.⁷⁷

At the beginning of September, COHEP joined the debate about the powers of an eventual CICIH (see last month). Their legal advisor Rafael Jerez stated that the MP must preserve the exercise of public criminal prosecution respecting the constitution. This aligns with recent statements by the Xiomara administration. Additionally, Jerez said that a CICIH must work as an "adhesive prosecutor" which would mean a reform to the new Penal Code, something that is already in the works.⁷⁸ But at the same time, it is unclear how fast this process goes.⁷⁹ Another obstacle for the CICIH is the legislative decree 116-2019, which needs to be repealed. "However, this controversial decree, which, among other things, allows deputies, municipal corporations, public and decentralized institutions, and NGOs to receive funds from the Executive Branch, violating the independence of powers and hindering the Public Prosecutor's Office to carry out requirements against these entities, has not been scheduled for repeal in the National Congress."⁸⁰

President Xiomara met with UN Secretary General António Guterres this month to discuss among other things the CICIH. They agreed that the process should be accelerated.⁸¹ "Alice H. Shackelford, resident coordinator of the United Nations (UN), said (..) that there are important advances in the process to install the International Commission against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (CICIH) but recognizes that it has been prolonged due to negotiations. In declarations to the radio network América Multimedios, the resident representative of the United Nations, referred that the expectation about the meeting held by the President of the Republic Xiomara Castro de Zelaya with the Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, was not intended to sign the memorandum of understanding, but to polish it. "I think the expectation was that first the secretary general could meet with the president; this was the most important expectation that has been achieved," she

⁷² <https://twitter.com/HondurasNow/status/1575135171967328257>

⁷³ <https://twitter.com/HondurasNow/status/1575135171967328257>

⁷⁴ <https://www.tunota.com/honduras-hoy/articulo/omar-rivera-fonac-rodolfo-pastor-estabas-colaborando-narcodictadura-2022-09-28>

⁷⁵ <https://twitter.com/HondurasNow/status/1575150912343085056>

⁷⁶ <https://cespad.org.hn/donde-estamos-con-la-cicih-rendicion-de-cuentas-y-mayor-participacion-ciudadana-factores-claves/>

⁷⁷ <https://cespad.org.hn/acelear-la-instalacion-de-la-cicih-solo-es-posible-con-mayor-participacion-de-la-sociedad-civil/>

⁷⁸ <https://proceso.hn/iniciativa-privada-a-favor-de-una-cicih-que-preserve-la-accion-penal-del-ministerio-publico/>

⁷⁹ <https://criterio.hn/crear-un-nuevo-codigo-penal-podria-atrasar-instalacion-de-la-cicih/>

⁸⁰ <https://criterio.hn/vigencia-del-decreto-116-2019-mantiene-en-duda-llegada-de-la-cicih-a-honduras/>

⁸¹ <https://criterio.hn/reunion-entre-xiomara-castro-y-antonio-guterres-representa-avance-con-miras-a-instalacion-de-la-cicih/>

stressed and added that there are still pending details "we understand that the commitment of the two parties is to continue the process to finalize the signing of the memorandum of understanding as soon as possible."⁸²

The International Crisis Group listed the installation of a CICIH as one of the ten key challenges for the UN in 2022-23. "An opportunity exists for the UN to help break entrenched lawlessness in Honduras. For years afflicted by corruption and impunity among its political and economic elites, Honduras has seen stubbornly high crime rates and recurrent unrest amid sluggish, unevenly distributed economic growth.[49] Indeed, its homicide rate is now the highest in northern Central America.[50] Together, these problems have contributed to significant displacement, helping push hundreds of thousands of Hondurans to undertake the dangerous journey north to the U.S. every year.[51] The election of President Xiomara Castro, who ran as a leftist reformer willing to work with multilateral institutions, may create an opening for the UN to help build an institution that can help meet these challenges. (...) As the two sides work through these issues, the UN Secretariat's objective should be to come to agreement with the Castro government on a commission that is recognized by Honduras' judicial system, enjoys political support, has the independence needed to take effective action against high-level graft and can build the state's ability to do the same over the long term. In pursuing these goals, the two sides could consider a consultative process for the appointment of high-level national and international staff, while agreeing that the commission would have the power to carry out independent probes. At the same time, they could curb the risk of excessive discretionary powers – either for international officials or national politicians – by establishing clear rules of case selection, grounded in the public harm caused by the crime in question."⁸³

The Onslaught against the Anti-Corruption Bodies

The JOH regime had put many obstacles in place for effectively fighting corruption. The Supreme Audit Court (TSC) denounced that they were still not allowed to hand over their reports to the MP due to decree 116-2019 and called for a meeting between the TSC, MP and Congress to resolve this.⁸⁴ Additionally, the repeal of the decree had also been called for by the UN in preparation of a possible CICIH.⁸⁵ On September 19, "[d]eputies of the National Congress urge the president of that branch of the State, Luis Redondo, to soon submit for discussion the repeal of decrees 57-2020 and 93-2021, two regulations that hinder the fight against corruption by the prosecutorial units of the Public Prosecutor's Office. Both decrees, considered harmful by deputies, prosecutors and representatives of civil society, were approved during the 2018-2022 legislative period, during which the Nationalist Mauricio Oliva served as president of Congress."⁸⁶

On September 21, President Xiomara met with the UN General Secretary Antonio Guterres and they agreed to speed up the installation of the CICIH.^{87 88}

⁸² <https://proceso.hn/representante-de-naciones-unidas-admite-que-proceso-para-instalar-cicih-se-prologo-en-honduras/>

⁸³ <https://www.crisisgroup.org/b8-united-states/ten-challenges-un-2022-2023>

⁸⁴ <https://proceso.hn/tsc-dice-a-redondo-que-no-puede-entregar-documentacion-al-mp-porque-sigue-vigente-decreto-116-2019-que-lo-prohibe/>

⁸⁵ <https://criterio.hn/en-el-congreso-nadie-habla-de-la-derogacion-del-decreto-116-2019/>

⁸⁶ <https://criterio.hn/diputados-exigen-derogacion-de-decretos-que-impiden-la-lucha-contra-la-corrupcion/>

⁸⁷ <https://criterio.hn/reunion-entre-xiomara-castro-y-antonio-guterres-representa-avance-con-miras-a-instalacion-de-la-cicih/>

⁸⁸ <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/readout/2022-09-21/readout-of-the-secretary-general%E2%80%99s-meeting-he-ms-iris-xiomara-castro-sarmiento-president-of-the-republic-of-honduras>

Congress

A judge dismissed the charges against 14 people, among them 5 former and current Nationalist members of Congress, in the so-called Corruption Network case. It involved the theft of some 20 million Lempiras through the use of NGOs.⁸⁹ UFERCO challenged the decision.^{90 91}

IHSS

An appeals court dictated to open trial against the former Nationalist congressman Reynaldo Ekónomo linked to the IHSS corruption case.^{92 93}

de Lobo

The former first lady Rosa Elena Bonilla de Lobo was sentenced anew in her corruption re-trial, she now faces 14 years in prison instead of 58 years after the initial trial.^{94 95} Her defense announced to appeal the ruling.⁹⁶

State Security Forces

Two police aspirants died during training which caused a controversy. "The death of two aspiring police officers is shrouded in mystery after official versions from the institution contrasted with others who claim that they were subjected to inhumane conditions during physical training exercises over the weekend."⁹⁷ The Human Rights Board demanded an urgent, impartial, transparent and exhaustive investigation.⁹⁸ Just a day later, the director of the National Police Academy (Anapo) was suspended.⁹⁹ But the situation remained unclear at the end of the month. ContraCorriente summarized the situation as follows: "Three young people died [a third had died a week after the first two] and 31 were hospitalized during the training of aspiring auxiliary officers at the National Police Academy (Anapo). For now, a definitive version of what happened is not known, nor have the autopsies of the deceased been revealed. However, relatives of those affected and experts assure that there was excessive force in the training."¹⁰⁰ CONADEH announced to bring the death of the police aspirants to the Inter-American Human Rights System.¹⁰¹

Repressions

The CNTC sent out an alert on September 15 denouncing a violent eviction by armed police against a campesino community in Atlantida.¹⁰²

⁸⁹ <https://criterio.hn/ultima-resolucion-judicial-que-favorece-a-diputados-y-exdiputados-corruptos-desnuda-nuevamente-la-impunidad/>

⁹⁰ <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/09/02/uferco-apelara-resolucion-judicial-que-ordena-archivar-caso-y-sobreseer-a-implicados-en-operaciones-fraudulentas-entre-ongs-y-cn/>

⁹¹ https://twitter.com/Luis_Santos/status/1565533619241848832

⁹² https://twitter.com/MP_Honduras/status/1572010136000135175

⁹³ <https://tiempo.hn/auto-de-formal-procesamiento-exdiputado-ekonomo/>

⁹⁴ <https://www.mp.hn/publicaciones/mas-de-14-anos-de-reclusion-para-ex-primera-dama/>

⁹⁵ <https://criterio.hn/por-desvio-de-fondos-condenan-a-14-anos-de-prision-a-exprimera-dama-de-honduras/>

⁹⁶ <https://tiempo.hn/defensa-de-rosa-de-lobo-recuso-de-casacion/>

⁹⁷ <https://proceso.hn/nueva-polemica-policial-tras-muerte-de-dos-aspirantes-en-entrenamiento/>

⁹⁸ <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/pag/index.php/articulos/denuncia/105-en-muerte-de-cadetes-mesa-de-ddhh-demanda-investigacion-exhaustiva-profunda-y-transparente-investigacion-para-deducion-de-responsabilidades>

⁹⁹ <https://elpulso.hn/2022/09/12/policia-descarta-intoxicacion-en-muertes-de-aspirantes-suspende-a-jefe-de-anapo/>

¹⁰⁰ <https://contracorriente.red/2022/09/21/apologia-a-la-crueldad-y-secretismo-son-el-centro-de-la-tragedia-ocurrida-en-la-anapo/>

¹⁰¹ <https://criterio.hn/presentaran-denuncia-internacional-contra-el-estado-de-honduras-por-muerte-de-aspirantes-policiales/>

¹⁰² <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1570624542984515585>

Penitentiary System

In an effort to tackle the overpopulation in Honduras' prisons, the Xiomara administration has so far granted amnesty to 1700 inmates. ""We now have 1,700 inmates in the pre-release process, and each month a group will be released. These people have already served their sentences and were forgotten by private and public lawyers, unfortunately".¹⁰³

Four prison guards were sent to pre-trial detention held responsible for facilitating the escape of an inmate.¹⁰⁴

Militarization

Criterio reported on the role of the Armed Forces under the Xiomara administration and how recent statements can be interpreted as an attempt to whitewash their previous problematic role. "Joaquín Mejía, a doctor in human rights, commented to Criterio.hn that the government should be reminded of what renowned Honduran analyst Víctor Meza said: "The military is the worst nightmare for democracy in Honduras".¹⁰⁵

International Community

President Xiomara spoke at the UN General Assembly.¹⁰⁶ "Not only am I the first woman to have the honor of leading our Central American nation, but I also represented the first democratically elected government after 13 years of dictatorship, the 2009 coup d'état, fraught with cruel murders and death squads, two electoral frauds, a pandemic and two hurricanes, it is impossible to understand the Honduran people and the large caravans of migrants without recognizing this context of cruel suffering that we have had to go through. But electoral democracy is not enough to obtain the material and spiritual well-being of our people. Thirteen years of dictatorship under the tutelage of the international community led the country to multiply its public debt by six times and reach a poverty rate of 74 percent, the highest rate in the history of Honduras."¹⁰⁷ Additionally, "President Xiomara Castro pledged before the 77th General Assembly of the United Nations to "build an alternative and profoundly sovereign economic model", as well as to de-privatize public services such as water, health, electricity and internet."¹⁰⁸

Honduras and the BCIE signed an agreement on the mitigation of energy and fuel prices.¹⁰⁹ On September 26, the BCIE held a press conference. Its president Dante Mossi announced that the bank had approved \$450 million in loans this year for Honduras to fight losses in the energy system and to counteract high fuel and energy prices.¹¹⁰ "The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) announced Wednesday the approval of a US\$195 million loan to Honduras to strengthen

¹⁰³ <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/09/07/unos-1700-presos-comunes-se-liberaran-bajo-las-garantias-procesales-de-la-amnistia/>

¹⁰⁴ <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/09/13/detencion-judicial-para-cuatro-agentes-penitenciarios-que-tenaban-cuando-se-fugo-acusada-de-planificar-asesinato-de-una-mujer-en-intibuca/>

¹⁰⁵ <https://criterio.hn/gobierno-de-xiomara-castro-busca-limpiar-imagen-de-los-militares/>

¹⁰⁶ <https://criterio.hn/desafiante-discurso-de-xiomara-castro-en-la-onu/>

¹⁰⁷ <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/09/20/queremos-vivir-en-paz-no-sigan-tratando-de-desestabilizar-honduras-o-escoger-con-quienes-debemos-relacionarnos-presidenta-xiomara-castro-en-77a-asamblea-de-la-onu/>

¹⁰⁸ <https://proceso.hn/honduras-se-esta-construyendo-bajo-una-vision-de-refundacion-humanista-presidenta-xiomara-castro-en-onu/>

¹⁰⁹ <https://proceso.hn/el-bcie-y-honduras-acuerdan-subsidio-para-energia-y-laboratorio-de-moleculas/>

¹¹⁰ <https://proceso.hn/el-bcie-aprueba-450-millones-de-dolares-a-honduras-en-los-ultimos-meses/>

accountability and increase public transparency."¹¹¹ There was also both a meeting between a delegation of the Xiomara administration and the IMF, among other things, on the elimination of tax exemptions¹¹², and between the delegation and the congressional Budget Commission.¹¹³

"The Undersecretary of Security, Julissa Villanueva, held a meeting with the Ambassador of Japan, Nakara Jun, in which they discussed the Kyoto Declaration on Promoting Crime Prevention, Criminal Justice and the Rule of Law: towards the fulfillment of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development."¹¹⁴

US

Judy Ancel reported for Labor Notes on the labor struggle at the construction site of the US embassy which has been going on for over two months.¹¹⁵ Criterio reported that labor representatives wanted to meet with the Labor Ministry but the later refused to receive their complaint.¹¹⁶ At the end of September, Adrienne Pine published an important update.¹¹⁷

At the beginning of the month, Honduran newspapers reported that "[t]he United States certified that the government of President Xiomara Castro has made significant progress in the fight against corruption, the promotion of transparency and respect for human rights".¹¹⁸

"The Minister of Defense, José Manuel Zelaya, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces, José Jorge Fortín, and the Honduran Ambassador to Washington, Javier Bú, met at the Pentagon with Daniel P. Erikson, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Western Hemisphere Affairs at the United States (US) Department of Defense, to discuss bilateral issues."¹¹⁹

There are some hopeful signs that Honduras may access the US Millennium Challenge Fund again. Under the JOH-regime, access was denied due to poor human rights and anti-corruption performance.^{120 121}

A the end of month, US-Honduran relations became a bit more strained again after a meeting between US ambassador Laura F. Dogu with presidential designate Salvador Nasralla which she wrongly called vice-president.¹²² Nasralla and Zelaya had been in a public dispute for weeks.^{123 124} Then, a embassy representative also met with a delegation from the ZEDE Próspera (see above). Foreign Minister first called the US out on it and then doubled down by denouncing "interference in domestic political matters".^{125 126 127}

¹¹¹ <https://proceso.hn/bid-aprueba-195-millones-de-dolares-a-honduras-para-aumentar-la-transparencia/>
¹¹² <https://criterio.hn/fmi-y-gobierno-de-xiomara-castro-deben-apuntar-a-un-acuerdo-con-nueva-formula/>
¹¹³ <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/09/29/fmi-y-diputados-se-reunen-para-abordar-la-posibilidad-de-llegar-a-un-acuerdo-con-el-pais/>
¹¹⁴ <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/09/29/embajador-de-japon-y-subsecretaria-de-seguridad-muestran-interes-de-apoyar-a-honduras-en-prevencion-del-delito/>
¹¹⁵ <https://labornotes.org/blogs/2022/09/workers-building-new-us-embassy-honduras-strike-over-severed-fingers-illegal-contracts>
¹¹⁶ <https://criterio.hn/denuncian-a-secretaria-del-trabajo-por-ignorar-reclamos-contr-constructora-de-nueva-embajada-de-ee-uu/>
¹¹⁷ <https://twitter.com/adriennepine/status/1575111074432487424>
¹¹⁸ <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/estados-unidos-certifica-honduras-combate-contr-corruccion-EG9877644>
¹¹⁹ <https://proceso.hn/ministro-de-defensa-y-jefe-de-las-ffaa-se-reunen-con-el-subsecretario-de-defensa-de-eeuu/>
¹²⁰ <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/09/21/honduras-sostiene-reuniones-para-ser-elegible-nuevamente-a-la-cuenta-del-milenio/>
¹²¹ <https://ellibertador.hn/2022/09/21/honduras-reingresara-a-cuenta-del-milenio-en-2023-segun-economista/>
¹²² <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/platicamos-no-se-mira-intencion-cambiar-rumbo-honduras-salvador-nasralla-reunion-embajadora-laura-dogu-NA10323295>
¹²³ <https://elpulso.hn/2022/09/25/continua-la-controversia-entre-nasralla-y-zelaya-por-fondos-del-estado-y-funciones-en-el-gobierno/>
¹²⁴ <https://tiempo.hn/piden-a-mel-y-nasralla-deponer-armas-tras-tiradera/>
¹²⁵ <https://twitter.com/EnriqueReinaHN/status/1575830078054875136>
¹²⁶ <https://elpulso.hn/2022/09/30/canciller-solicita-a-embajadora-dogu-no-realizar-acciones-de-injerencia/>
¹²⁷ <https://criterio.hn/relaciones-diplomaticas-entre-eeuu-y-honduras-se-resquebrajan/>

EU

At the beginning of the month, the EU–Honduras voluntary partnership agreement (VPA) on forest law enforcement, governance and trade (FLEGT) came into force. “This trade agreement aims to provide a legally binding framework that ensures that all timber and relevant timber products imported from Honduras to the EU are legally sourced. It also aims to strengthen the enforcement of forest law, governance, accountability and transparency in Honduras.”^{128 129} Mid-September, the Director of the National Institute of Forest Conservation and Development, Protected Areas and Wildlife, Luis Soliz, and the Ambassador of the European Union in Honduras, Jaume Segura, signed the first memorandum of understanding of the Joint Implementation Committee (JIC) of the VPA-FLEGT.¹³⁰

"Honduras advocated (..) for climate justice in a forum held in Tegucigalpa, in which the European Union (EU) reaffirmed its commitment to cooperate with the Central American country against global warming. The climate crisis is "a threat that does not stop" and a "huge daily challenge" that requires "constant adaptation", stressed the Honduran Minister of Environment, Lucky Medina, at the opening of the second round of dialogue between Honduras and the EU for cooperation on climate issues."¹³¹

"Foreign Minister Eduardo Enrique Reina and his Austrian counterpart, Alexander Schallenberg, signed the Memorandum of Understanding "The Mechanism for Political Consultations between Honduras and Austria" which will allow, in the coming months, the establishment of meetings to address issues of human resources, clean energy, health, nuclear technology for development, and human rights."¹³²

Drug Trafficking

According to the authorities, so far this year, 8 times more coca plants were destroyed by state security forces than in all 2021.¹³³ But Honduras continues to be listed by the US as a main drug transit and production countries.¹³⁴

"The documents in the case of the former chief of the National Police, Juan Carlos "El Tigre" Bonilla will remain protected and his next hearing was scheduled for January 10, 2023. This was made known to EL HERALDO through the document of the Court of the Southern District of New York that was published this Wednesday and was signed by Judge Kevin Castel."¹³⁵

A judge granted the extradition of accused drug trafficker Michael Derringer Powery to the US.¹³⁶

128 https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/news-and-events/news/eu-honduras-agreement-reduce-illegal-timber-logging-and-associated-trade-enters-force-2022-09-01_en

129 <https://ellibertador.hn/2022/09/01/historico-honduras-primer-pais-en-firmar-acuerdo-contrata-la-legal/>

130 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/09/13/honduras-y-la-union-europea-firman-primer-acta-del-comite-de-aplicacion/>

131 <https://proceso.hn/honduras-aboga-por-justicia-climatica-y-ue-reitera-compromiso-de-cooperacion/>

132 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/09/07/honduras-firma-memorandum-de-entendimiento-con-austria/>

133 <https://proceso.hn/en-790-crece-la-erradicacion-de-coca-este-ano-en-honduras/>

134 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2022/09/15/memorandum-on-presidential-determination-on-major-drug-transit-or-major-illicit-drug-producing-countries-for-fiscal-year-2023/>

135 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/juez-kevin-castel-aprueba-orden-proteccion-documentos-juan-carlos-el-tigre-bonilla-XK9950990>

136 <https://proceso.hn/conceden-extradicion-de-michael-derringer-powery-a-eeuu-por-narcotrafico/>

JOH

JOH has been extradited for a while, but back in Honduras, the authorities still have not started to seize his properties...until this month, when 15 horses were seized.¹³⁷

On September 13, Univision reported: "The legal defense team of former Honduran president Juan Orlando Hernandez appears to be unraveling after one attorney left the case and two other assistants also stopped collaborating with the lead attorney in New York, Raymond Colon, sources told Univision. Two key co-defendants also appear poised to plead guilty and possibly testify against him, according to court documents."¹³⁸ At the end of the month, JOH's hearing was postponed to October 27.¹³⁹ JOH also received less support than expected by his defense and they did not even request a bail for him.¹⁴⁰ "The New York federal judge in the drug trafficking case involving former Honduran president Juan Orlando Hernandez drug case has ordered the trial to be delayed by more than three months until April 2023 due to complications over the handling of classified documents."¹⁴¹

At the end of the month, El Libertador reported that JOH's brother Tony Hernández, himself imprisoned in the US, will testify during JOH's trial.¹⁴²

Varia

Heavy Rains

Honduras was hit by heavy rains this month. By September 25, over 24'000 Hondurans had been affected and at least 13 people had died.¹⁴³ In response to the heavy rainfalls, the central government will transfer 200 million Lempiras to the municipalities to attend the emergency situation.¹⁴⁴ By the end of the month, COPECO reported over 67'000 people affected.¹⁴⁵

National Defense and Security Council (CNDS)

The National Defense and Security Council (CNDS) met for the first time under the Xiomara administration on September 1.¹⁴⁶ During the meeting, they appointed the new director and deputy director of the National Directorate of Investigation and Intelligence, Commissioners Raúl Mejía and Ángel Josué Luque, respectively.¹⁴⁷ At the same time, the discussions about the reform of the CNDS Law continued (see last month.¹⁴⁸ ¹⁴⁹ Radio Progreso published an important analysis of Leticia Salomón on the National Defense and Security Council (CNDS). "Apparently, a draft bill on a matter of the Executive power inserted in the effort to dismantle the scaffolding of

137 <https://ellibertador.hn/2022/09/08/oabi-subastara-15-caballitos-de-joh-cuando-termina-incautacion/>
138 <https://www.univision.com/univision-news/latin-america/former-honduran-president-hernandez-facing-uphill-battle-in-court>
139 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/posponen-27-octubre-audiencia-juan-orlando-hernandez-narcotrafico-ny-GC10128925>
140 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/solicitud-fianza-joh-no-presentada-comunidad-apoyaba-se-retiro-LJ10199736>
141 <https://www.univision.com/univision-news/united-states/drug-trial-of-juan-orlando-hernandez-postponed-until-april-2023>
142 <https://ellibertador.hn/2022/09/29/confirmado-tony-sera-testigo-en-juicio-de-joh/>
143 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/impacto-lluvias-dejan-mas-24-mil-afectados-honduras-KB10220497>
144 <https://elpulso.hn/2022/09/27/ejecutivo-habilita-200-millones-de-lempiras-a-la-amhon-para-atender-emergencias/>
145 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/aumento-municipios-afectados-emergencia-lluvias-honduras-KL10288534>
146 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/todos-integrantes-cnndc-atendieron-llamado-xiomara-castro-NI9846483>
147 <https://proceso.hn/con-presencia-de-mel-se-reune-el-cnndc-y-nombran-titulares-de-direccion-de-inteligencia/>
148 <https://criterio.hn/nueva-ley-consejo-de-defensa-y-seguridad-considerada-un-avance-democratico-que-requiere-enmiendas/>
149 <https://contracorriente.red/2022/09/09/promesa-de-democracia-en-juego-honduras-debate-ley-para-consejo-de-defensa-y-seguridad/>

authoritarianism and impunity set up by the previous government, should not have suffered the inconveniences faced by the famous Defense and Security Law sent by the Executive power for consideration and approval in the National Congress. The law was trapped in a network of questions, some valid and others absurd, which have to do with a regrettable lack of democratic political culture in our political actors, which implies ignorance of defense and security issues, and of essential values such as pluralism, tolerance and respect for those who are and think differently."¹⁵⁰

September 15

Honduras commemorated the 201st independence day on September 15.¹⁵¹ President Xiomara said in her speech: "'Independence is an unfinished process, a dream of the people that still maintains the momentum of those of us who believe in justice and the Republic," said President Castro who called on the Honduran people to build a world that does not destroy nature and where equality of human beings is possible in conditions of dignity and freedom."¹⁵² Similar to previous years, since the coup d'état, there were two marches. "[O]ne in which the high schools, the police and the military paraded, commemorating 201 years of independence from the reign of Spain, and another of the sympathizers of the Liberty and Refoundation Party (Libre), the unions and some deputies and public officials who advocate for the refoundation promised by President Xiomara Castro in her 2021 election campaign."¹⁵³ "And if there is another message to rescue from September 15, 2022, let it be the massive presence of the population in all cities around a refoundational approach. Honduras cannot continue with the same jowls. With the same opinionated opposition with no soul and no ideas. It is the time of women and youth, of diversities. It is time to change the era."¹⁵⁴

Migration

Social movements and NGOs called on the US government to grant Temporary Protection Status (TPS) to people from El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Guatemala.¹⁵⁵ On September 19, during her trip to New York, president Xiomara met with US government representatives on the TPS.¹⁵⁶

"The various causes that force Hondurans to migrate and seek new paths in the United States do not stop. Far from this social phenomenon diminishing, it is increasing every day, being a proof of this the asylum requests that are channeled in Mexico. The Mexican Commission for Refugee Aid (Comar) registered between January and August 2022 20,235 asylum requests from Hondurans out of a total of 77,786. Hondurans represent the highest number of requests with 26% of a list of more than ten countries, followed by Cubans with 12,898, Haiti with 10,392 and Venezuela with 8,282

¹⁵⁰ <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/leticia-salomon/y-sigue-la-ley-del-consejo-de-defensa-y-seguridad-atrapada-entre-cinicos-confundidos-novatos-y-serviles/>

¹⁵¹ <https://confidencial.hn.com/blog/2022/09/15/al-grito-de-viva-la-independencia-mandataria-xiomara-castro-inaugura-celebracion-del-201-aniversario-de-independencia/>

¹⁵² <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/aplicacion-movil/la-independencia-es-un-proceso-inconcluso-presidenta-xiomara-castro/>

¹⁵³ <https://criterio.hn/el-desfile-de-libre-y-las-fiestas-civicas-refundacionales/>

¹⁵⁴ <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/los-mensajes-del-15-de-septiembre/>

¹⁵⁵ <https://www.lawg.org/wp-content/uploads/TPS-NGO-Letter-September-2022-1.pdf>

¹⁵⁶ <https://confidencial.hn.com/blog/2022/09/20/presidenta-xiomara-castro-se-reune-con-comunidad-migrante-y-director-de-la-fao-en-nueva-york/>

requests." ¹⁵⁷ Over 80'000 Cuban and Venezuelans have tried to cross Honduras this year on their way to the US. ¹⁵⁸

Economy

After 26 months straight of inflation, prices in Honduras for the first time decreased again, by 0.03%. ¹⁵⁹

Children's Rights

Over 250'000 children work in Honduras among them 140'000 in dangerous work situation. ¹⁶⁰ At the same time, Honduran children still do not enjoy a widespread right to education. "The fact that Honduran children do not enjoy the full right to education is a reality that is worsening due to a wide range of factors, from poverty, crime, violence, insecurity, lack of opportunities, poor quality education, exclusion in the opening of careers, agree specialists in the field of education." ¹⁶¹ So, it is no surprise that many try to flee from Honduras. But a majority of them is being deported back to Honduras. "The executive director of the Coordinating Network of Private Institutions for Children, Adolescents, Youth and their Rights (COIPRODEN), Wilmer Vásquez who informed Criterio.hn that there are approximately 12,528 children who have been deported so far this year, surpassing last year's figures which closed with 12,194 which means that there is an increase of 60%. Vasquez added that since 2014 to date more than 100,000 children have been deported to the country. "To us it calls our attention that according to the origin 8,015 Honduran children were deported from the United States, 4,091 from Mexico and 123 from Guatemala so far this year, the most worrying thing for us is that 3,433 of all these children were traveling alone". ¹⁶²

Drinking Water

"At least 92 of the 298 municipalities in Honduras have privatized the drinking water service through a scheme in which banks of the national financial system and transnational companies have become the main administrative managers." ¹⁶³

Poverty

Oxfam published a report on how the climate crisis worsens the situation of hunger in Central America. ¹⁶⁴

"Honduras received 5,746.1 million dollars from its nationals abroad during the first 8 months of 2022, an increase of 20.8% over the same period of 2021, informed the Central Bank (BCH)". ¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁷ <https://criterio.hn/honduras-encabeza-peticiones-de-refugio-en-mexico/>

¹⁵⁸ <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/09/27/mas-de-84000-cubanos-y-venezolanos-han-ingresado-a-honduras-en-2022/>

¹⁵⁹ <https://elpulso.hn/2022/09/03/bch-senala-que-la-inflacion-en-agosto-de-2022-fue-negativa-luego-de-26-meses-de-alzas/>

¹⁶⁰ <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/09/06/mas-de-250-mil-ninos-se-dedican-al-trabajo-infantil-en-honduras/>

¹⁶¹ <https://criterio.hn/ninez-excluida-desercion-escolar-en-honduras-causada-por-la-pobreza-y-falta-de-oportunidades/>

¹⁶² <https://criterio.hn/ninas-y-ninos-hondurenos-son-victimas-de-multiples-delitos-en-la-ruta-migratoria/>

¹⁶³ <https://criterio.hn/denuncian-que-92-municipios-de-honduras-han-privatizado-el-agua-potable-a-traves-de-la-banca/>

¹⁶⁴ <https://criterio.hn/aumenta-el-hambre-en-el-corredor-seco-de-centroamerica-oxfam/>

¹⁶⁵ <https://proceso.hn/el-envio-de-remesas-a-honduras-crece-20-8-los-primeros-8-meses-de-2022/>

Supreme Court Elections

Criterio portrayed all 14 representatives of the Nomination Board of the Supreme Court election (see last month).¹⁶⁶ CESPAD took a closer look at the role of civil oversight during the selection process.¹⁶⁷ "The Minister of Transparency, Edmundo Orellana Mercado asked this Monday to review all the appointments of magistrates and judges made by the current authorities of the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ). He stated that many of the officials who were appointed by the current CSJ "suddenly do not have the proper merits for them and should be reviewed to be relocated to put them where they really should be".¹⁶⁸

On September 19, lawyer Mario Urquía and representative of the Bar Association of Honduras (CAH) was elected the president of the Nomination Board for the Supreme Court election.^{169 170} On September 29, COHEP was chosen, by four votes against three, to take up the Technical Secretariat at the Nomination Board for the selection of the Supreme Court judges. Radio Progreso writes about "a questionable vote".^{171 172}

2023 Budget

The Council of Ministers approved the new budget for 2023. In comparison to 2022, the budget is 8% higher, 32 billion Lempiras, for a total of 392 billion Lempiras.¹⁷³ According to the Minister of Economic Development, the increase is less than the projected inflation.¹⁷⁴ The exact increase of the new budget became a point of debate because the Xiomara administration had initially already increased the 2022 budget it had inherited from the JOH regime.¹⁷⁵ On September 14, the budget was presented to Congress.¹⁷⁶ Congressional president Luis Redondo also discussed the budget with the leaders of the different political parties.¹⁷⁷

The Finance Minister Rixi Moncada, meanwhile, explained the low execution rate of the current budget. "Of course there is a low execution in the first nine months and it is due first to the need to restructure the whole model of taking out public resources without control," she said. "The second thing is everything related to the trusts, and the third thing is the whole process of transparently setting the route, mechanisms and the areas where investments will be made," Moncada explained.¹⁷⁸

166 <https://criterio.hn/quienes-son-los-integrantes-de-la-junta-nominadora-de-la-corte/>

167 <https://cespad.org.hn/analisis-semanal-la-veeduria-ciudadana-una-gran-oportunidad-en-el-proceso-de-eleccion-de-la-corte-suprema-de-justicia-en-honduras/>

168 <https://proceso.hn/ministro-de-transparencia-pide-revisar-todos-los-nombramientos-hechos-por-la-actual-csj/>

169 <https://proceso.hn/mario-urquia-presidira-la-junta-nominadora/>

170 <https://criterio.hn/cah-y-centrales-obreras-a-la-cabeza-de-la-junta-nominadora/>

171 <https://radioprogreso.hn/portada/en-cuestionada-votacion-secretaria-tecnica-de-la-junta-nominadora-es-designada-al-cohep/>

172 <https://criterio.hn/con-polemica-la-secretaria-tecnica-de-la-junta-nominadora-recayo-en-el-cohep/>

173 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/09/13/en-consejo-de-ministros-aprueban-presupuesto-2022-2023-con-un-aumento-de-1-32-mil-millones/>

174 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/09/13/incremento-en-el-presupuesto-es-menor-a-la-inflacion-proyectada-asegura-ministro-de-desarrollo-economico/>

175 <https://proceso.hn/alerta-y-preocupacion-por-presupuesto-de-1-392-mil-millones-para-2023/>

176 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/09/15/congreso-nacional-recibio-anteproyecto-del-presupuesto-general-2023-orientado-a-la-inversion/>

177 <https://proceso.hn/presidente-del-congreso-se-reune-con-jefes-de-bancadas-para-darles-a-conocer-el-presupuesto-general-2023/>

178 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2022/09/20/sefin-expone-razones-de-la-baja-ejecucion-presupuestaria/>

And Light at the End of a Month

The Garífuna community in Punta Gorda, Roatán, recuperated a part of their ancestral land this month.^{179 180 181}

179 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1571116533140848643>

180 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1574165507841957891>

181 <https://criterio.hn/punta-gorda-ejemplo-de-ausencia-de-proteccion-juridica-a-garifunas-en-honduras-ofraneh/>

Another Month at the Honduras Forum Switzerland

Past Activities:

-

Upcoming Activities:

-

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