

Another Month in Honduras...

Human Rights Monitor – April 2020

Honduras lived through the second month under lockdown and under a state of exception due to the corona virus. The confirmed cases and the death toll grew; the number of protests due to lack of food or biosafety equipment for medical staff grew; the violent repression by state security forces grew; the amount of money from multilateral agencies flowing to Honduras grew; and the main thing growing from the side of the JOH regime were the headlines regarding corruption and irregular spending of the emergency funds. Add to that the newest drug trafficking investigation coming to light at the end of April once again involving JOH and it almost seems Honduras is back to normal. Welcome to another month in Honduras.

In solidarity,

Daniel Langmeier

Honduras Forum Switzerland

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Abbreviations..... | 3 |
| The COVID-19 Crisis..... | 4 |
| State Reaction..... | 5 |
| Health Sector..... | 7 |
| Human Rights..... | 9 |
| Corruption..... | 12 |
| Poverty..... | 17 |
| Economy..... | 19 |
| Forest Fires..... | 20 |
| Human Rights and Their Defenders..... | 21 |
| Assassinations..... | 21 |
| Lawyers..... | 21 |
| Attacks, Criminalization and Harassment..... | 21 |
| Indigenous Peoples..... | 22 |
| The Case of Berta Cáceres..... | 22 |
| LGBTQ..... | 23 |
| Freedom of Expression and Journalists..... | 24 |
| Violence against Women..... | 25 |
| Political Prisoners..... | 25 |
| Extractive Industries..... | 25 |
| Mining..... | 25 |
| Hydroelectricity..... | 26 |
| Corruption and Its Enemies..... | 26 |
| The Onslaught against the Anti-Corruption Bodies..... | 26 |
| State Security Forces..... | 27 |
| Repressions..... | 27 |
| Assassinations..... | 28 |
| Penitentiary System..... | 28 |
| International Community..... | 29 |
| US..... | 29 |
| Drug Trafficking..... | 30 |
| Tony Hernández..... | 30 |
| Varia..... | 31 |
| JOH..... | 31 |
| Penal Code..... | 31 |
| Migration..... | 32 |
| Electoral Reforms..... | 33 |
| And Light at the End of a Month..... | 34 |

Abbreviations

| | |
|-----------|--|
| ASJ | Association for a More Just Society |
| ATIC | Technical Bureau for Criminal Investigation |
| BID | Inter-American Development Bank |
| CABEI | Central American Bank for Economic Integration |
| CDM | Center for Women's Rights |
| CIPRODEH | Center for Human Rights Research and Promotion |
| CMH | Medical Association Honduras |
| CNA | National Anti-Corruption Council |
| COFADEH | Committee of Families of the Detained-Disappeared in Honduras |
| COIPRODEN | Coordination of Private Institutions for Children's Rights |
| CONADEH | National Human Rights Commission |
| COPINH | Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras |
| FEPRODDHH | Special Public Prosecutor Unit for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Journalists, Social Communicators and Justice Operators |
| FOSDEH | Social Forum on the External Debt of Honduras |
| FPIC | Free, Prior and Informed Consent |
| HRDs | Human Rights Defenders |
| IACHR | Inter-American Commission on Human Rights |
| IACtHR | Inter-American Court of Human Rights |
| ILO | International Labor Organization |
| ISHR | International Service for Human Rights |
| MACCIH | Support Mission against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras |
| MADJ | Broad Movement for Dignity and Justice |
| MP | Attorney General's Office |
| OACNUDH | UN Human Rights Office in Honduras |
| TSC | Supreme Audit Court |
| UFERCO | Special Prosecuting Unit against Corruption Networks |
| UNAH | National Autonomous University of Honduras |
| ZEDE | Zone for Employment and Economic Development |

The COVID-19 Crisis

In April, the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases rose from 172 to 807 and the number of deaths from 12 to 75.¹ In March, Honduras had a very low testing capacity of some 100 tests per day, far from the 2000-3000 needed. There was hope that through announced donations, this would improve this month.^{2 3} Sadly, this did not happen and only the last day of April, the capacity was increased to a bit over 200 tests per day. 2000-3000 per day would be recommended.⁴ Part of the explanation is that the donated test kits by the BCIE lacked the necessary reagents⁵ and the ones donated by South Korea had no extraction kits.⁶ On April 23, the BCIE announced to donate 182'000 extraction kits to Central American countries.⁷ But a bigger part for the low testing rate may be outright corruption (see corruption sub-section below).

Throughout the month, there were also doubts raised regarding the veracity of government numbers on COVID-19 cases and deaths. On April 13, when the JOH regime had reported 25 deaths, the director social security IHSS, Omar Janania, said that in San Pedro Sula alone, the number of deaths were 38. "We can confirm that within the Catarino Rivas unit 17 patients died, within the Covid-19 unit of Leonardo Martinez 16 patients died and within the Social Security unit five patients died".⁸ On April 21, "Dr. Carlos Umaña, President of the Association of Physicians of the Honduran Institute of Social Security (IHSS), says that there are more than 46 deaths in the country due to coronavirus. "We estimate that there are two thousand cases of COVID-19 and there are more deaths; about 30 more people have died in the wards because of COVID-19, which have not been reported by SINAGER," said Umaña. The doctor has questioned the strategies implemented by the government and assures that they should go to the neighborhoods and colonies, reach those infected instead of waiting for them to arrive at the laboratories."⁹

Another important question raised by the situation in Honduras is why it also affects young people that much. "However, in Honduras, according to [health expert Francisco] Somoza, "there are many young people who are sick, although they shouldn't be," that is, young people who are under 40 years of age and already suffer from heart problems, overweight, diabetes, asthma or even malnutrition, which makes them as vulnerable to Covid-19 as an older adult."¹⁰

1 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/especiales/coronavirus/1376651-528/casos-de-coronavirus-en-honduras-suben-a-804-y-75-muertos-hasta>

2 <https://criterio.hn/bcie-entregara-180000-kits-de-prueba-a-centro-america-para-detectar-covid-19/>

3 <https://tiempo.hn/honduras-bcie-dona-26-mil-pruebas-rapidas-covid-19/>

4 <https://confidencialhn.com/entre-dos-mil-y-tres-mil-pruebas-al-dia-se-deben-realizar-para-detectar-contagios-de-coronavirus/>

5 <https://confidencialhn.com/salud-advierte-que-los-reactivos-donados-a-centroamerica-por-el-bcie-no-son-pruebas-rapidas/>

6 <https://tiempo.hn/covid-19-250-mil-pruebas-no-pueden-utilizarse-incompletas/>

7 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/bcie-dona-182-000-kits-de-extraccion-para-detectar-covid-19-en-centroamerica.html>

8 <https://tiempo.hn/38-pacientes-han-muerto-en-salas-para-covid-19-en-sps-confirma-director-del-ihss/>

9 <https://radiohn.hn/carlos-umana-en-honduras-no-solo-han-fallecido-46-personas-por-covid-19-por-lo-menos-hay-30-muertos-mas/>

10 <https://tiempo.hn/covid-19-por-que-en-honduras-los-jovenes-mueren-medico-lo-explica/>

State Reaction

On April 2, Congress approved an additional \$2.5 billion in reaction to the Corona crisis.¹¹ Criterio later published the controversial bill called "Law to assist the productive sector and workers in the face of the effects of the pandemic caused by Covid-19".¹² Libre criticized that this allows the JOH regime to take on a \$2.5 billion loan without any strings attached on how to spend it. Libre made several proposals, 11 in total, such as suspending the payment of public services for three month or direct cash payments for the poorest family. The Nationalist-controlled Congress rejected them.¹³ The session in Congress took place without national nor international media presence.¹⁴ The same day, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) approved a \$59.2 million loan for Honduras.¹⁵ In total, the IDB made available nearly US\$1.7 billion in additional funding for 2020 to confront the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁶ USAID announced to spend \$8.9 million in Honduras in response to the corona-crisis.¹⁷ ¹⁸ And last but not least, the World Bank approved a \$119 million credit for Honduras.¹⁹ But JOH wanted more and requested support worth \$900 million from the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (BCIE).²⁰ ²¹ The BCIE later approved a contingency line of credit for \$200 million to strengthen the position and capacity of the Central Bank of Honduras.²² The World Bank approved an additional loan for Honduras²³ and last but not least, the (IDB is co-financing with \$700,000 a telehealth project that seeks to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus pandemic in Honduras and improve access to health in the country.²²

On April 6, JOH announced that starting that day, Hondurans must wear a mask when going outside.²³ He also nominated the current state secretary Lisandro Rosales as the special envoy for the corona-crisis.²⁴ Padre Melo, meanwhile, highlighted what would really be needed to confront the crisis. "We demand three things in this crisis: one, that the emergency is assumed by a competent team, which prioritizes hospitals and health personnel; two, a system of accountability, with independent institutions; three, that the emergency is not militarized, nor is the delivery of food politicized".²⁵ And Carlos Zelaya Herrera added: "Hernández has not yet convened a technical-scientific roundtable, without politicians, to address the crisis from all points of view, including transparency and proper management of funds to ensure that the teams get to where they are most needed."²⁵ By that point, the JOH regime had already spent 2.2 billion Lempiras without real oversight.²⁶ El Heraldo broke down the expenses. Only some 5% were spent by the Health

11 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3828-honduras-congreso-autoriza-endeudamiento-de-hasta-61-500-millones>

12 <https://criterio.hn/conozca-la-ley-aprobada-en-el-congreso-que-abre-camino-a-un-nuevo-y-millonario-endeudamiento/>

13 <https://criterio.hn/honduras-colapsada-congreso-autoriza-deuda-por-2-500-millones-para-ampliar-contrataciones-directas/>

14 <https://criterio.hn/congreso-nacional-sesionara-sin-presencia-de-medios-de-comunicacion/>

15 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/el-bid-presta-a-honduras-59-2-millones-dolares-para-reducir-pobreza-extrema.html>

16 <https://www.iadb.org/en/news/idb-approves-more-funding-central-america-and-dominican-republic-fight-covid-19>

17 <https://hn.usembassy.gov/es/embajada-eeuu-usaid-presenta-plan-apoyo-gobierno-honduras-virus-covid19/>

18 <https://twitter.com/Mdaguer017/status/1250943088584949766>

19 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/04/09/honduras-recibira-apoyo-por-us119-millones-del-banco-mundial-para-hacer-frente-a-la-covid-19-coronavirus-y-otras-emergencias>

20 <https://confidencialhn.com/bcie-afirma-que-solicitudes-del-ejecutivo-para-reactivar-economia-suman-900-millones-de-dolares/>

21 <https://confidencialhn.com/unos-250-millones-de-dolares-son-negociados-para-reactivar-areas-productivas-del-pais/>

22 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/el-bid-cofinancia-un-proyecto-de-telemedicina-para-mitigar-covid-19-en-honduras.html>

23 <https://confidencialhn.com/hernandez-conmina-a-la-ciudadania-a-portar-obligatoriamente-sus-mascarillas/>

24 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/presidente-hernandez-nombra-a-canciller-rosales-como-comisionado-especial-para-emergencia-del-covid-19.html>

25 <https://criterio.hn/alarma-por-manejo-oficial-de-la-emergencia-sanitaria-covid-19/>

Secretariat, 128.1 million Lempiras.²⁶ Ismael Zepeda from FOSDEH commented: "With those levels of purchase, one could colloquially say: Let the coronavirus come, we are ready. But unfortunately we don't even know where the purchases are. With this situation one thinks three things: either it is a lie or the supplies are in a private home or they were stolen".²⁷

On April 8, the JOH regime presented new measures a part from the mask obligation. The lockdown was prolonged to April 19 and an individual can only leave their house once a week to buy groceries. On Saturdays and Sundays, there will be a complete lockdown.²⁸ Congress at this point of the crisis had mostly just nodded through initiatives by the executive. But there was also criticism coming from the legislative bodies. "Congress to date has done absolutely nothing to make a real stand against this crisis, what was approved last Friday is not really useful. In order to be able to alleviate the social, humanitarian and economic crisis, it is not a benefit to water down taxes. For us, what is non-negotiable is a package of measures that prioritize people's lives, jobs and food and for that we have to make a package that covers the economic sector," responded Mr Calix. For her part, Doris Gutiérrez said that no matter how many laws are passed in response to the coronavirus crisis, it will be useless if the people don't know how the funds allocated to the crisis are invested if there is a law of secrets."²⁹ This last point is also reflected in many surveys. According to the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), 80% of Hondurans do not trust in their institutions.³⁰ Later, Congress nominated a virtual commission to follow-up on the corona-crisis. The commission consists of four Nationalists, but only one representative of all other parties.³¹

On April 10, the Executive Decree by which the JOH regime declared as a national priority the support to the food production sector and food agro-industry came into effect.³² It was met with criticism³³ Honduras' peasant farmers represented by their organizations, e.g. CNTC and La Vía Campesina explained in a press release that up to this point, it had been the responsibility of small and medium-sized farms to guarantee food sovereignty and this without state support. Rather than the executive decree, Congress should approve the the Emergency Act for the Reactivation of the Agricultural, Fish and Forest Sector to Fight Poverty.³⁴ "[S]mallholders who work the land and rely on their crops to feed their families are forced to leave their homes, but are not permitted to do so by government decrees. The National Union of Rural Workers (CNTC) explains that this implies a conflict. "The lands we farm are far away, and when we go out to work or harvest our crops we are stopped by roadblocks, where they force us to go home or even threaten us with arrest," explains Nora Ramírez, coordinator for the CNTC's El Progreso Regional Board".³⁴

26 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/especiales/coronavirus/1371100-528/coronavirus-honduras-presupuesto-2200-millones>

27 <https://criterio.hn/asi-se-gastaron-mas-de-l-2000-millones-para-contener-pandemia-segun-el-gobierno/>

28 <https://confidencialhn.com/emiten-nuevas-disposiciones-de-circulacion-durante-toque-de-queda-por-coronavirus/>

29 <http://elpulso.hn/legislar-con-transparencia-y-justicia-social-en-medio-del-covid-19/>

30 <http://elpulso.hn/falta-de-credibilidad-y-confianza-en-el-manejo-de-recursos-frente-al-covid-19/>

31 <https://tiempo.hn/congreso-nombra-comision-sesiones-virtuales-covid-19/>

32 <https://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/en-vigencia-decreto-que-declara-de-prioridad-nacional-apoyo-al-sector-productor-de-alimentos-y-agroindustria.html>

33 <https://criterio.hn/la-guerra-del-hambre-y-las-promesas-del-poder-en-honduras/>

34 <https://pbi-honduras.org/news/2020-04/smallholders%E2%80%99-lands-and-harvests-risk-due-covid>

On April 19, the lockdown measures were prolonged again for another week to April 26.³⁵ And one week later, it was further extended to May 5.³⁶

Health Sector

No one doubted the Honduran health system was not prepared for the corona crisis. This was further confirmed this month by the John Hopkins University. In a new index, it placed Honduras in the last places of countries that are not prepared for a health emergency.³⁷ "For Dr. Suyapa Figueroa, president of the Honduran Medical Association, the deterioration of the health system is not something recent, it has been happening gradually for 10 years, in which prevention programs have been stopped by the Ministry of Health, hospitals have been handed over to private networks and it has been unable to reduce deaths from the dengue epidemic that began in 2018."³⁸ So far this year, there have been almost 11'000 dengue cases, among them 1003 severe ones. "For the Deputy Minister of Health, Roberto Cosenza, the dengue epidemic must be fought by taking advantage of the absolute curfew that forces people to stay in their homes and eliminating mosquito breeding grounds".³⁹ 9 deaths have been confirmed, 20 deaths in total are suspected.³⁹

At the beginning of the month, Honduras commemorated doctor Denise Murillo who died at the end of March from COVID-19. Added to the consternation came the outrage that even though more than 10 billion Lempiras have been approved so far to attend the emergency, health workers still confront the virus without protective gear. "We have to put on a military uniform so that they understand that we are valuable, what do we have to do so that they understand that doctors are more or equally valuable than the military," said the president of the Honduran Medical Association (CMH), Suyapa Figueroa.⁴⁰ Figueroa further insisted on the need to reorganize most medical centers, including the Hospital Escuela, which has a capacity of 1,200 beds. "According to projections, there will be several thousand people who will require hospitalization and will need oxygen. The problem is that in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula we do not have care centers with these capacities, therefore the hospitals must be revised in their capacities to respond to the needs of the people," said Figueroa.⁴⁰

The Honduran Association of Resident Doctors (ASOHMER) gave the JOH regime 48 hours to distribute the safety supplies needed to prevent the spread of infection among health-care personnel and threatens to walk-out them from all emergency rooms if they do not comply.⁴¹ Instead of complying, the JOH regime tried to deceive the public. The CNA denounced the the JOH regime claimed to have handed out security gear to the medical staff at the Mario Catarino Rivas Hospital in San Pedro Sula. But the pictures used were not from them, the security gear were from donors organized by the recently formed civil society group Güiran.⁴² While more than welcome, it could

35 <https://radioprogreso.net/instante/gobierno-amplia-toque-de-queda-absoluto-por-una-semana-mas/>

36 <https://criterio.hn/honduras-confinamiento/>

37 <https://www.ghsindex.org/country/honduras/>

38 <http://elpulso.hn/costo-en-vidas-humanas-sera-producto-del-debilitamiento-del-rol-rector-de-salud/>

39 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/a-10-mil-756-ascienden-los-casos-y-nueve-fallecidos-por-dengue-en-honduras.html>

40 <https://radioprogreso.net/instante/toda-la-red-hospitalaria-debe-estar-disponible-para-casos-de-covid-19-cmh/>

41 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3824-urgente-medicos-dan-ultimatum-de-48-horas-al-gobierno-por-bioseguridad>

not compensate the lack of state attention. Therefore, throughout the month, health workers resigned.^{42 43}

On April 3, several members of the Coalition Against Impunity presented a collective appeal for protection to President Orlando Hernández Alvarado, Alba Consuelo Flores, Secretary of State for Health, and Gabriel Alfredo Rubí Paredes, Director of the Permanent Commission of Contingencies (COPECO), to guarantee the right to health and life of the Honduran population and the medical profession.⁴⁴ The Constitutional Court latter admitted the appeal. The Chamber gave the accused public officials two days to send the corresponding reports, and then to decide on the requested precautionary measure.⁴⁵ Radio Progreso rightly asked where all the money had gone which was meant for the health sector, some 20 billion Lempiras. They hope that the successful appeal would shed some light on this.⁴⁶

Part of a helpful response would be functional mechanical respirators. Already in mid-March, the JOH regime purchased a batch of over 140 mechanical respirators but by April 6, they had not been distributed by the national health system. Even once distributed, there will be problems. "Dr. Jorge Valle, a public health specialist and Dean of the UNAH School of Medicine, says that another factor that may be delaying the installation of mechanical ventilators is that they are not very useful for treating serious Covid-19 patients, another error in the way the emergency is being addressed in terms of care. But internist Ariel Figueroa told Radio Progreso that the training process takes years and that few professionals in the country are prepared for the job."⁴⁷ This prediction would become true soon. On April 28, La Prensa reported that most of the 140 mechanical ventilators are unused and in storage because they are not suitable for patients with COVID-19. Additionally, the other 740 ventilators acquired at a cash price by Invest-H would only be delivered in stages over the next eight months.⁴⁸

ContraCorriente spoke with the doctor Ligia Ramos about the failed reaction of the JOH regime to the crisis. "Ligia Ramos, assures that there is an under-registration, cases that are not entering the count, in addition the centralization of the PCR tests is affecting the access in different zones of the country. For Ramos, this emergency is not being handled by trained people, and COPECO wants to deceive us with its projections and data."⁴⁹ Another highlight of not listening to the medical experts was the purchase of seven mobile hospitals. They are planned to be set-up in June.⁵⁰ Together with the purchase of 740 mechanical fans and 250,000 PCR tests, the cost is \$62.8 million.⁵¹ The biggest part of this sum comes from the mobile hospitals and this money should have better been invested

42 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/al-menos-25-enfermeras-renuncian-en-plena-crisis-de-salud-en-san-pedro-sula.html>

43 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3832-honduras-19-doctores-se-retiran-de-hospital-por-falta-de-proteccion>

44 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2770-emergencia-covid-19-presentan-recurso-de-amparo-en-la-sala-de-lo-constitucional-para-que-se-garantice-la-vida-de-la-poblacion-y-del-gremio-medico>

45 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2774-emergencia-covid19-sala-de-lo-constitucional-admite-recursos-de-amparo-por-falta-de-insumos-en-hospitales-y-a-favor-de-la-poblacion-de-honduras>

46 <https://radioprogreso.hn/net/donde-están-los-millones-de-lempiras/>

47 <https://radioprogreso.hn/net/instante/aun-no-instalan-ventiladores-mecánicos/>

48 <https://www.laprensa.hn/especiales/coronavirus/1375818-410/un-fiasco-compra-de-140-ventiladores-mec%C3%A1nicos>

49 <https://contracorriente.red/2020/04/11/copeco-nos-quiere-enganar-entrevista-con-dra-ligia-ramos/>

50 <https://tiempo.hn/covid-19-honduras-compra-siete-hospitales-moviles-atender-pacientes/>

51 <https://confidencial.hn.com/sin-minimos-controles-investh-invertira-63-millones-de-dolares-en-hospitales-y-equipos-medicos/>

in improving existing, and lasting, medical structures in Honduras. But the JOH regime continued to show no openness to such criticism. Rather he presented himself as apt crisis manager, for example by announcing that Taiwán had donated 180'000 masks to Honduras.⁵² Hopefully, they are of better quality than the ones bought by COPECO. Congressman Dennis Castro Bobadilla denounced that latter ones are of bad quality. "They are made of paper and they paid more than 100 lempiras for each one of them".⁵³ Given the insufficiency of this response, the protests by medical staff did not stop.⁵⁴ Most protests continued to be for the lack of security equipment – and rightly so.⁵⁵ Of just one hospital in San Pedro Sula, 12 doctors and 17 nurses are quarantined, three among them are in intensive care units.⁵⁶ According to the National Association of Auxiliary Nurses of Honduras (ANEEAH), more than 100 nurses have been isolated for a possible corona contagion.⁵⁶ Another 15 have tested positive.⁵⁷

The failure that were the mobile hospitals was later shown in Villanueva, Cortés. A mobile hospital installed by COPECO there was found to be without energy, drinking water and sanitary services. Placed in one of the most affected areas of the country, Cortés, the hospital is abandoned even though it cost more than 5 million to set up.⁵⁸ The MP announced to investigate.⁵⁹ Throughout the month, the situation in the health care sector worsened. Criterio reported on the overburdened and collapsing hospitals in the north of Honduras, especially the hospitals Mario Catarino Rivas and Leonardo Martínez in San Pedro Sula.⁶⁰ Later, he Mario Catarino Rivas Hospital in San Pedro Sula had to report that their corona wing was full at its maximum capacity.⁶¹ According to the Health Secretary Alba Consuelo Flores, 25 percent of the medical personnel hired to attend to the emergency caused by the coronavirus pandemic later resigned for fear of being infected.⁶² To alleviate this difficult situation, a 20-person medical brigade from Cuba arrived in Honduras on April 19 together with 53 Honduran medical students who study there.⁶³

Human Rights

OACNUDH published "essential guidelines for incorporating a human rights perspective into the response to the COVID-19 pandemic"⁶⁴ 65 and the IACHR approved a new resolution "Pandemic and Human Rights".⁶⁴

April started with the arrest of ten community leaders and three journalists by the police in Santa Bárbara. The arrested journalists are Edward Fernández of TV Más Canal 26, Roger David Iraeta of

52 <https://twitter.com/JuanOrlandoH/status/1248301817781465088>

53 <http://www.radioamerica.hn/mascarilla-papel-copeco/>

54 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1371866-410/coronavirus-medicos-honduras-convocan-protesta-covid-19-equipo-bioseguridad>

55 <https://confidencialhn.com/medicos-y-enfermeras-protestan-por-falta-de-equipo-de-bioseguridad-en-san-pedro-sula/>

56 <https://confidencialhn.com/unas-100-enfermeras-en-aislamiento-por-sospecha-de-covid19-en-honduras/>

57 <https://confidencialhn.com/aneeah-reporta-el-contagio-de-unas-15-enfermeras-por-tener-contacto-con-pacientes-con-coronavirus/>

58 <http://www.radioamerica.hn/abandono-villanueva-hospital/>

59 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/155-abril2020/5725-mp-investiga-abandono-de-hospital-movil-en-villanueva-cortes-que-seria-para-atender-pacientes-con-covid-19>

60 <https://criterio.hn/colapsan-hospitales-de-la-zona-norte-de-honduras-por-covid-19/>

61 <https://confidencialhn.com/ya-no-hay-espacio-para-pacientes-en-la-sala-de-covid19-en-el-mario-catarino-rivas/>

62 <https://confidencialhn.com/renuncia-el-25-por-ciento-del-personal-medico-contratado-para-atender-emergencia-por-el-coronavirus/>

63 <https://radioprogreso.hn/av/llega-brigada-de-medicos-cubanos-a-honduras/>

64 <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2020/073.asp>

Canal 6 Internacional, and Onán Zaldivar of Patepluma Televisión HD canal 22. The police further confiscated their broadcasting equipment and the material recording the violent eviction of inhabitants wanting to buy groceries. According to COFADEH more than 800 people have been arrested so far since the state of exception has been established.⁶⁵ A day before, the journalist Lidieth Díaz had denounced that the police hindered her from going to her place of work at Radio Globo.⁶⁶

The Fund for Global Human Rights reported on how the police in Honduras abuses their "pandemic powers". "The Honduran government has responded to the spread of COVID-19 by imposing exceptional emergency measures, including a police-enforced curfew for the entire country until April 12 [which keeps being extended]. But in a country where embattled activists and advocates live in near-constant fear for their lives, the recent arrests of two human rights defender have many worried that state and local authorities will use COVID-19 as pretext to stamp out opposition to the country's scandal-ridden president."⁶⁷

On April 3, COFADEH published an important report on "The Human Rights Crisis during the COVID-19 Pandemic". They documented 1115 arrests, 32 attacks against HRDs, 16 violent evictions, 20'000 suspended workers and more abuse.⁶⁸ ⁶⁹ By April 9, Proceso Digital reported that more than 6000 people had been detained.⁷⁰ In just one weekend in April, at least 610 people were arrested.⁷¹ COFADEH also wrote an open letter to UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders Michel Forst. "The letter was sent on Friday, April 3, 17 days after the suspension of constitutional guarantees decreed by Executive Decree PCM 021-2020 and ordered by the illegitimate government of Juan Orlando Hernandez. During this period, 45 defenders have been victims of acts of aggression in retaliation for their work and 7 journalists have been attacked, detained, their equipment confiscated and their television material erased."⁷¹ OACNUDH representative Isabel Albaladejo met with COFADEH's Bertha Oliva and highlighted the "historic work" of Bertha and COFADEH "in the defense and promotion of human rights in Honduras and in the search for truth, memory and justice".⁷¹ Another human rights report was later published by the Human Rights Board: "Critical state of the nation in times of COVID-19". They denounced the approach by the JOH regime as "reactive, militaristic, individualistic" and that is lacks the special attention needed by vulnerable groups. As civil society in general, they also demand the creation of a inter-institutional committee led by the Medical Association of Honduras (CMH).⁷²

A group of social movements and human rights organizations published their third press release during this corona-crisis once more demanding a larger role for the Medical Association Honduras (CMH) and a social auditing of all the additional funds controlled by the JOH regime. They further

65 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/policia-captura-10-lideres-comunitarios-y-tres-periodistas-en-santa-barbara/>

66 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1135-periodista-denuncia-retencion-policial-mientras-se-trasladaba-a-radioemisora>

67 <https://globalhumanrights.org/blogs/honduran-activists-mobilize-to-support-detained-defenders/>

68 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/INFORME-COFADEH-DDHH-Y-COVID-19-1.pdf>

69 English: <http://defensoresenlinea.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/INFORME-COVID-19-INGLES.pdf>

70 <https://proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/mas-de-6-000-detenido-en-honduras-por-incumplir-toque-de-queda-por-covid-19.html>

71 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1251307070420209665>

72 <https://criterio.hn/mesa-de-derechos-humanos-denuncia-desconfianza-incertidumbre-y-descontento-social-por-acciones-del-gobierno-ante-el-covid-19/>

demand the de-militarization of the emergency response and freedom for the political prisoners.⁷³ Over the month, they published three more joint press releases, voicing similar demands which the JOH regime continued to ignore.⁷⁴ ⁷⁵ "We call on all voices to firmly ratify our fundamental denunciation: this regime has converted the resources destined to confront the pandemic and the hunger of the people into a piñata that is distributed among the members of the team and the sycophants who surround Juan Orlando Hernández. We call for the rejection of this regime that uses the illness and hunger of the people to consolidate and perpetuate its dictatorial, corrupt and criminal project."⁷⁴ Pasos de Animal Grande denounced the complete closure of civic space, especially for HRDs to monitor the situation.⁷⁴ "[D]efenders of territory, environment and human rights are the groups that suffer the most abuses in the Republic of Honduras during the state of emergency".⁷⁴

In mid-April, the new International Forum on Human Rights in Honduras presented itself to the public. It consists of over 30 national and international human rights organizations and its aim is "to monitor and make visible the country's situation at the international level, generate joint analyses and actions, based on international standards, and guarantee compliance with the human rights of the entire population". Regarding the current situation, they expressed concern that "the health emergency, combined with a precarious health system, weak institutions, the lack of water supply and privatization, and serious problems of corruption, militarization and exploitation of natural resources are deepening the risks faced by the Honduran population. In this sense, we denounce that the responses of the State of Honduras to the crisis, both by action and omission, including the suspension of constitutional guarantees, have made possible new violations of human rights".⁷⁵

On April 23, the human rights situation in Honduras further worsened. People protesting in Metalías near Tela, Atlántida, against the politization of the food distribution by the JOH regime were brutally repressed and for the first time during the corona crisis, state security forces used live bullets hurting at least two protesters.⁷⁶ "During the protest, members of the military police responded with tear gas and gunfire, leaving two gunshot victims: 20-year-old Rommel Josué Reyes Cruz and 26-year-old Francisco Javier Manueles Aguilar. The community has been in quarantine for more than a month and they are strongly denouncing that the government is against them and that what they say on their radio and television stations turns out to be lies, since the reality of the people is very different from what Juan Orlando describes. "The people are dying of hunger," says one of those attacked. Even in adversity, the government, in collusion with members of the municipality of the area and the military police, continues to trample on the rights of the Honduran population. In addition to the violent eviction, five people belonging to the Environmentalist Movement for Dignity and Justice (MADJ) were arrested. Their names are Roberto Ferrera, Alex Velásquez, Lorenzo, Luis Turcios, Marcos Galdámez and Cristián Eliazar Bizuela, who are being held at the police post in Tela. The residents are concerned that reprisals will be taken against the

⁷³ <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1246183364350148608>

⁷⁴ <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2772-la-cuarentena-por-covid19-es-aprovechada-para-acciones-contra-personas-defensoras-de-los-territorios>

⁷⁵ <https://www.cejil.org/es/foro-internacional-monitoreara-situacion-derechos-humanos-honduras-marco-emergencia-covid-19>

comrades, as they have done on other occasions when they go out to defend their natural commons."⁷⁶

A day later, a police agent attacked the community leader Derlin Roberto Corea Cabrera in Zacate Grande. The police agent, in civilian clothes, drove to the community on a bike but without any face mask as is mandated in Honduras. As part of community self-protection, the local people set up a checkpoint to stop people from entering when they don't comply. When stopped, the police agent attacked them hitting Derlin with his helmet on the head, kicked him in the back and shot three times without hitting him.⁷⁷

Corruption

In the March monitor, various acts of corruption were highlighted. Accordingly, this month began with calls for more public oversight. COPINH demanded transparency in the use of the funds recently approved by the IMF for Honduras (see last month).⁷⁸ FOSDEH called for a multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral commission to accompany the execution of the funds.⁷⁹ Among the biggest headlines made last month were regarding the problems with the Honduras Solidarity program.⁸⁰ "The big problem that can be found with the municipalities is that they do not have a structure that allows them to make a transparent distribution. So what they do is take lists from their political party and that's it. Besides, a bag with 500 Lempiras of food is not going to be enough to be able to face this crisis that is getting worse and worse," said the former councilor of the Central District, Cárleton Dávila.⁸¹ On April 10, an army colonel was separated from the Armed Forces, apparently because he criticized the politicization of the food delivery, i.e. the Honduras Solidarity program.⁸² The army disputed this and claims he would be reassigned.⁸³ The JOH regime claimed to have handed out food and supplies to 588'105 people at this point, without delivering any proof.⁸⁴ Later, ContraCorriente reported that "every day there are more complaints about the products distributed and the budget, in its two models of execution, is not clear even to the authorities of the National Convergence Forum (FONAC), the institution entrusted by the government with the monitoring of the project. El Progreso, Yoro, is one of the municipalities benefiting from a government transfer of 8,460,000 lempiras, which according to the central government should represent a total of 16,920 rations, for the same number of households. According to the municipality's data, that figure covers just under 15 percent of the population in the municipality. The people have taken to the streets in desperate protest against hunger, and the government

76 <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/04/23/alerta-heridos-de-bala-ciudadanos-que-demanda-alimentos-en-tiempos-de-covid-19/>

77 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/policia-ataca-a-dirigente-comunal-en-zacate-grande/>

78 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1245380420486795267>

79 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/instante/piden-veeduria-eficiente-a-millonarios-fondos-para-emergencia-del-covid-19/>

80 <https://contracorriente.red/2020/04/11/bolsas-de-promesas-para-la-pandemia-en-honduras/>

81 <https://contracorriente.red/2020/04/03/la-bolsa-solidaria-de-20-y-la-deuda-millonaria-del-estado-ante-pandemia-covid-19/>

82 <https://tiempo.hn/ffaa-separan-a-coronel-por-denunciar-politizacion-de-entrega-de-alimentos/>

83 <https://tiempo.hn/ffaa-coronel-roosevelt-herandez-pasara-a-otro-cargo/>

84 <https://twitter.com/ABueso/status/1248820552376164352>

response has been repression with tear gas."⁸⁵ By the end of the month, the JOH regime even claimed to have served almost 2.4 million people.⁸⁶

Some problems with the irregular purchases became so obvious, that even media outlets close to the JOH regime started reporting on it. El Heraldo cited Odir Fernández, head of the Investigation, Analysis and Monitoring of Cases Unit of the CNA saying that Copeco's purchases are not in line with the needs of Honduras.⁸⁷ FOSDEH also focused on the role of COPECO. "It is not explained how the Standing Committee on Contingencies [COPECO] has acquired some items at prices out of order in relation to the in-store quotations," said Alejandro Kafatti, a member of FOSDEH. As an example he cited that overpriced purchases were made in the midst of the health emergency, referring to the 10 coffee percolators on which 40,000 lempiras were spent, despite the fact that their real cost per unit on the market is 1,450 lempiras."⁸⁸ At this moment, the Secretary of Finance, Rocío Tábora, said that 2'195 million Lempiras had been spent. "The Sefin transparency portal shows that 1,769.5 million lempiras were allocated to the purchase of goods, 5.2 million lempiras to construction, another 65 million lempiras to the hiring of personnel and 355.3 million lempiras invested in the purchase of food and, supposedly, assistance for the most vulnerable citizens."⁸⁸ Four days later, this sum has risen to 2'787 million Lempiras.⁸⁹ The Secretary of Finance presented itself as a prodigy of transparency following international standards. CNA reacted immediately saying that it does not even comply with the minimum transparency and accountability standards established by law. "The law indicates that the information must be complete, truthful, timely and adequate. With what Sefin presents, it is impossible to identify specific characteristics of the items purchased, because there is no documentary support that provides the elements of your purchase."⁹⁰

C-Libre denounced that medical staff at a hospital in Danlí was forced to sign a non-disclosure agreement. "To prevent staff from providing information and denouncing government corruption due to the lack of supplies in hospitals, the Honduran government, through the Ministry of Health, intends to implement the muzzle law in health care centers."⁹¹ Criticism is generally not welcomed by the JOH regime. The Honduran government's Commissioner for COVID 19, Lisandro Rosales, reacted by referring disparagingly to journalists as "bitter people".⁹² But they continued to to their important work and ConfidencialHN highlighted more irregularities in the spending by the JOH regime.⁹³

One special problem is the purchase of overvalued supplies. The newest case concern mask worth 45 Lempiras but bought for 190 Lempiras. Or the purchase of two mobile hospitals bought for half

85 <https://contracorriente.red/2020/04/18/desesperacion-y-hambre-un-polvorin-se-calienta-en-emergencia-por-covid19/>

86 <https://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/gobierno-ha-entregado-alimentos-a-mas-de-dos-millones-de-hondurenos-mediante-honduras-solidaria.html>

87 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/especiales/coronavirus/1371896-528/emergencia-del-covid-19-sectores-no-entienden-compras-de-mesas-televisores-y-percoladoras>

88 <https://tiempo.hn/rocio-tabora-se-han-ejecutado-12195-millones-para-combatir-al-covid-19/>

89 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/honduras-ya-gasto-1-2-mil-787-millones-por-emergencia-de-covid-revela-finanzas.html>

90 <https://twitter.com/cnahonduras/status/1251331573833699328>

91 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1143-obligan-a-firmar-confidencialidad-en-hospital-de-zona-oriental-hondurena>

92 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1142-comisionado-para-covid-19-ataca-a-periodistas-diciendo-amargados-que-ni-colegiados-estan>

93 <https://confidencialhn.com/ejecutivo-de-joh-adultero-precios-de-mascarillas-y-enseres-para-atender-pandemia/>

the price by the government in El Salvador.⁹⁴ Radio Progreso documented further irregularities benefiting Honduras' pharmaceutical industry. They benefit from tax exemptions for the privilege of selling antibacterial gel to the JOH regime, benefiting twice.⁹⁵ This was the first occasion, when the JOH regime seemed not to be able to continue ignoring this. But all it did was suspending a lower ranking COPECO administrator and some employees.⁹⁶ Shortly afterwards, the MP announced to investigate the purchases by COPECO.⁹⁷ The TSC also announced to investigate nine mayor for allegedly misusing funds meant for addressing the crisis.⁹⁸ But at the same time, C-Libre reported that both the TSC and the Institute for Access to Public Information (IAIP) had suspended their work on March 16.⁹⁸ On April 21, a higher ranking scapegoat was needed for the JOH regime and COPECO's director itself was fired, Gabriel Alfredo Rubí Paredes.^{98 99} He then returned to his position as a Nationalist congressman.¹⁰⁰ And there is a more general problem, stated as follows by Luis Zelaya, President of Liberal Party: "Having the TSC, FONAC or [U.S.-funded NGO Association for a More Just Society] ASJ to audit funds, does not give the public any confidence".¹⁰¹

A part from COPECO, Invest-H also played a problematic role. "One example of the irregularities is that this week a purchase order for 88 million lempiras (3.5 million dollars) was announced, executed by Inversiones Estratégicas de Honduras (Invest-H) to acquire biosecurity equipment from Access Telecom. Access Telecom is a company located in the United States with main business in selling cell phones and electronic accessories. In the public document of this purchase order, the name of Arturo Osmond Maduro Zelaya, 50-years old and nephew of the former president Ricardo Maduro, is listed. However, Marco Bográn, director of Invest-H, later assured that it had been a mistake to place him as a contact on the purchase order since "he has no responsibility and is not part of the company. This investigation reveals that Arturo Maduro has been linked to the company Access Telecom, which, according to complaints from national businessmen, has overestimated the price of biosafety equipment by up to 100%."¹⁰² Additionally, the CNA denounced that some companies were set-up in express speed in preparation of selling overpriced goods to the JOH regime.¹⁰³ As in the case above, this involved public officials, their children and friends.¹⁰⁴ Invest-H's director, Marco Bográn, continued to make negative headlines. He first claimed to have bought the mobile hospitals (see Health Sector sub-section above) from Turkey. The Turkish embassy denied that any company from that country had sold mobile hospitals to the Honduran government.¹⁰⁵ Bográn then said that he bought them through a US company which produced them

94 <https://radioprogressohn.net/instante/sobrevaloracion-en-precio-de-mascarillas-inicio-de-lo-que-podria-ser-el-acto-de-corrupcion-record-en-honduras/>

95 <https://radioprogressohn.net/noticias-nacionales/gobierno-pagara-48-millones-de-lempiras-a-industria-farmaceutica-por-gel-antibacterial/>

96 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3849-honduras-suspenden-ejecutivos-de-copeco-por-dudosas-compras-para-atender-virus>

97 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/autor-login/155-abril2020/5701-ministerio-publico-investiga-compras-de-emergencia-en-copeco>

98 <https://radioprogressohn.net/instante/fuera-gabriel-rubi-de-copeco/>

99 <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/04/26/analisis-que-hay-detras-de-la-destitucion-de-rubi/>

100 <https://confidencialhn.com/gabriel-rubi-se-reintegra-al-congreso-nacional-como-diputado-por-yoro/>

101 <https://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/que-el-tsc-asj-y-fonac-auditen-fondos-publicos-sigue-sin-generar-confianza-segun-luis-zelaya.html>

102 <https://contracorriente.red/2020/04/19/los-afortunados-en-la-crisis/>

103 <https://twitter.com/radionoticias/hn/status/1252443000569036800>

104 <https://tiempo.hn/cna-hay-funcionarios-publicos-involucrados-sobrevaloracion-insumos/>

105 <https://criterio.hn/turquia-desmiente-compra-de-hospitales-moviles-por-parte-de-honduras/>

in Turkey.¹⁰⁶ This explanation did not satisfy ConfidencialHN which highlighted more irregularities in how Invest-H operates.¹⁰⁷ It does not help the situation of Bográn, that he is among the highest paid officials in the JOH regime earning over 230'000 Lempiras per month.¹⁰⁸ Libre Congressman Jorge Cáliz said regarding Bográn: "Marcos Bográn has committed disgusting acts of corruption".¹⁰⁹ But he may not have to worry too much, as the president of the TSC, the body responsible for investigating Invest-H, has a personal connection to him.¹¹⁰ The president of the TSC, José Juan Pineda, has a son, José Alejandro Pineda, whose wife, Cinthya Bográn, is the sister of Marcos Bográn.¹¹⁰ You cannot make this up.

The crisis was also used to further promote impunity in Honduras. The CNA sent out an alert expressing concern that those who control justice in Honduras seek to free those involved in the corruption case involving the former first lady.¹¹¹ And the army also wanted to profit. Radio Progreso denounced that the Armed Forces bought ventilators with public funds for the Military Hospital. "With this type of purchase, the doubts about the management of these budgets, which are currently the most ostentatious of the Juan Orlando Hernández administration, leave more doubts, mistrust and indignation in the Honduran citizenry."¹¹² A week later, Radio Progreso denounced that official documents have shown that the Armed Forces used part of the emergency fund to equip their Military Hospital. "For the lawyer and doctor in Human Rights, Joaquín Mejía, this is part of a series of contradictions regarding the rights and guarantees that the Constitution of the Republic grants to its citizens. Mejía affirms that it contradicts the right to citizen equality. It also shows that in Honduras the military not only enjoys economic, labor and judicial benefits, but also medical ones. The lawyer regrets that the people must pay through their taxes to support a center which, when they go to it, they charge for it like any private clinic. Mejía says that at a time like the present, since this center is of a public nature, consideration should be given to making it available to the Honduran people who are now suffering in the flesh from the collapse of the hospital as a result of the historical abandonment of the health system."¹¹³ Radio Progreso also covered irregularities at the El Tórax Hospital.¹¹³ Reporteros de Investigación uncovered various irregularities in the 5.6 million Lempiras purchase of tents from a company with links to the Colombian military.¹¹³ The TSC found deficiencies and inconsistencies in at least 17 purchase checks linked to the management of public funds for the health emergency by Covid-19 by COPECO. The checks are worth over 16.5 million Lempiras.¹¹⁴

On April 17, the CNA presented the report "Corruption in Times of COVID-19 - Part 1". Only looking at the purchase of protective gear, they found an almost 3.7 million Lempiras gap between

106 <https://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/director-de-invest-h-reitera-que-hospitales-moviles-fueron-adquiridos-a-traves-de-empresa-estadounidense.html>

107 <https://confidencialhn.com/turquia-reitera-que-investh-no-compro-hospitales-moviles-a-su-gobierno-o-empresas-de-esa-nacion/>

108 <https://confidencialhn.com/planillazo-investh-paga-durante-crisis-sanitaria-jugosos-sueldos-a-sus-empleados-y-activistas/>

109 <https://tiempo.hn/jorge-calix-corrupcion-marcos-bogran-invest-h/>

110 <http://chulusatur.com/noticias/hijo-del-presidente-del-tribunal-superior-de-cuentas-es-proveedor-del-estado-desde-el-2018/>

111 <https://twitter.com/cnahonduras/status/1246924662556286977>

112 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/portada/con-presupuesto-publico-ff-aa-compra-ventiladores-mecanicos-para-hospital-militar/>

113 <https://www.reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2020/04/15/gobierno-de-honduras-mintio-sobre-compra-de-hospitales-moviles-para-coronavirus/>

114 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/instante/tsc-senala-deficiencias-en-compras-de-copeco/>

what the JOH claimed to have spent and what the goods are worth.¹¹⁵ At the end of the month, they presented a second report highlighting how Invest-H authorized the purchase of goods overvalued by 57.5 million Lempiras.¹¹⁶ The head of Invest-H, Marco Bográn, reacted by threatening to sue both CNA's director Gabriela Castellanos and the head of investigation Odir Fernández.¹¹⁶ Later it was made public that four Invest-H employees enjoyed a luxury quarantine worth over 100'000 Lempiras in a hotel in Tegucigalpa.¹¹⁷

ConfidencialHN and Radio Globo reported that their investigations “confirm that loot of over 80 billion lempiras is being distributed among pro-regime businessmen and nationalist activists”.¹¹⁸ The 80 billion Lempiras, \$3.25 billion, was the total amount allocated to address the crisis by mid-April. Even if not all of it will be stolen, calculations by Criterio emphasized the possible scope for corruption. “If we imagine for a moment that the percentage of misappropriation of these resources reached the 10% or 12.5% estimated by some specialists, we would be talking about EIGHT THOUSAND TO TEN THOUSAND MILLION LEMPIRAS that would be stolen by those who are in charge of fighting the epidemic, which would be added to the calculations of annual losses due to corruption that amount to 65 billion (equal to 12. 5% of GDP, according to CNA/2020), which sets off all the alarms and should alert the entire political party system that they will have to assume the direct consequences in the near future; civil society organizations that monitor government performance; to the international organizations that grant loans to face the epidemic, knowing that a large part of them will end up in the private hands of those who are currently in charge of the government; and, finally, to that citizenry that is deceived, manipulated and despised by cynical politicians who take advantage of their needs to obtain their vote in the elections and then betray it again and again from the three branches of government and from the municipal governments.”¹¹⁹

CESPAD published an important analysis on the meaning of the Impunity Pact on the corruption happening during the current crisis. “Continuing with the previous reasoning, a critical point at this juncture is that the crimes of corruption that may be committed by public officials involved in the management of the crisis and in the execution of funds, cannot be judged and punished by the justice system, since they are protected by the Impunity Pact built in the context that concluded with the expulsion of the MACCIH from the country in January of this year.”¹²⁰ Someone surviving the departure of the MACCIH is Luis Santos, head of the Special Prosecutor Unit Against Corruption (UFERCO). He denounced the TSC for the lack of concrete investigations sufficient to charge corrupt officials.¹²¹ And better late than never, Libre and the Liberal Party warned that they will not support more funds to attend to the emergency of the COVID-19 pandemic if more civil organizations are not included in the monitoring.¹²² On April 25, there was also criticism coming from religious actors. The Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras (ICLH) condemned the acts of

115 <https://www.cna.hn/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Corrupcion-en-los-tiempos-del-covid-1.pdf>

116 <https://confidencialhn.com/director-de-investh-amenaza-con-demandar-a-cupula-del-cna-por-informar-sobre-compras-amanadas/>

117 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/1972-honduras-facturas-por-confinamiento-revelan-lujos-invest-h>

118 <https://confidencialhn.com/responsables-de-controlar-pandemia-clonan-pagina-para-simular-masiva-compra-de-insumos-en-ee-uu/>

119 <https://criterio.hn/epidemia-emergencia-y-corupcion/>

120 <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/04/17/analisis-de-como-el-pacto-de-impunidad-de-la-epoca-maccih-blindara-a-los-corruptos-en-tiempos-covid-19/>

121 <https://twitter.com/hondurasol/status/1253427427285458951>

122 <https://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/bancadas-de-libre-y-partido-liberal-anuncian-que-no-apoyaran-mas-fondos-para-emergencia-del-covid-19.html>

corruption of the JOH regime.¹²³ Meanwhile in La Ceiba, the Bishop Miguel Lenihan and Víctor Cámara of the Social Pastoral denounced the politicization of the disputed Honduras Solidarity program (see above).¹²³

All this corruption highlighted here has real life consequences, especially in the health sector. "In short, the shortcomings of the health system and weaknesses in government capacity to deal with the pandemic have been exposed by doctors and health workers. This is compounded by corruption, a phenomenon rooted in the country, especially in health sector procurement and public works. One need only recall emblematic cases of corruption such as the looting of Social Security, which led to the movement of the indignant."¹²⁴ In a second analysis, CESPAD uses a human rights lens to analyze corruption in the country. "In conclusion, it is important to see the costs of corruption beyond the economic issue in order to dimension the human rights crisis and its negative impact on the excluded sectors of Honduran society. The current human rights crisis is the product of a whole system in which corruption is an important part, but not the definitive one, since the current one moves through the different political fields that we have investigated and problematized in this analysis."¹²⁵ One reaction to all of this was the withdrawal of the Chamber of Commerce and Industries of Cortés (CCIC) from a working group set-up by the JOH to address the crisis for the lack of "clear and strong signals to fight corruption".¹²⁶

Poverty

C-Libre documented 83 protests by citizens demanding food and supplies between March 23 and April 12.¹²⁷ By April 17, CESPAD had documented 128 protests of this type. "In the context of the current crisis generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, a series of citizen protests are taking place in the country from four fronts: medical personnel demanding biosecurity equipment in the country's health care centers, people who were dismissed from their jobs outside the law, citizens who oppose the installation of shelters to house people suspected and infected by the virus, and ordinary citizens in neighborhoods, colonies and hamlets demanding access to food, water and sanitary security for their families."¹²⁸

Radio Progreso denounced the reluctance of the JOH regime to lower energy prices.¹²⁹ At least there was a promise that energy would not be cut anymore during the crisis for people behind their electricity bills.¹³⁰ Later, it was also announced that phone, internet and TV services also would not be cut off during the crisis.¹³¹ But is not clear if these were just empty promises. At the end of the

¹²³ <https://criterio.hn/sacerdotes-de-la-ceiba-denuncia-politizacion-en-entrega-de-alimentos/>

¹²⁴ <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/04/28/analisis-honduras-corupcion-y-pandemia-una-convivencia-devastadora/>

¹²⁵ <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/04/28/reporte-semanal-covid-19-y-la-crisis-de-los-derechos-humanos-en-honduras/>

¹²⁶ <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/1971-honduras-industriales-se-aislan-del-gobierno-por-corupcion-en-operacion-covid>

¹²⁷ <https://criterio.hn/al-menos-83-protestas-por-demanda-de-alimentos-se-han-registrado-en-honduras/>

¹²⁸ <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/04/20/analisis-en-el-contexto-covid-19-que-factores-explican-las-protestas-de-la-poblacion-excluida-que-demanda-alimentos-en-honduras/>

¹²⁹ <https://radioprogreso.hn/instante/gobierno-no-quiere-bajar-tarifas-de-la-energia/>

¹³⁰ <https://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/gobierno-suspende-cortes-de-energia-por-emergencia-sanitaria-por-covid-19.html>

¹³¹ <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3841-honduras-tigo-y-claro-garantizan-servicio-pagado-y-gratuito-plan-basico>

month, a group of small business owner in the north of Honduras started a hunger strike demanding that electricity bills would not have to be paid for the duration of the crisis.¹³²

On April 13, MADJ and other human rights organizations presented an appeal in favor of about 15 thousand children and adolescents living on the street.¹³³ José Guadalupe Ruela, director of Casa Alianza, denounced that children, adolescents, older adults and even entire families can be found sleeping on the sidewalks of the capital.¹³³

The Network of Paid Domestic Workers of Honduras, denounced that domestic workers are prone to be infected by the COVID-19 virus, so it demanded from the JOH regime to include them in solidarity aid programs, since many have lost their jobs due to the global emergency.¹³⁴ Later in April, they filed a collective appeal for protection before the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court demanding the protection of the right to health and the right to life.¹³⁵

According to the World Bank, remittances will drop by 20% this year worldwide.¹³⁶ In Honduras, this effect is already seen and suffered. Just in one month between March 13 and April 17, \$230 million less in remittances were sent to Honduras, 43% less than usual.¹³⁷ CESPAD published an analysis on the corona crisis and inequality. "Inequality does not appear naturally; it is a social and political construct. As has been repeatedly stated, Honduras is one of the most unequal countries in Latin America, which is in turn the most unequal region in the world. But this statement has concrete empirical references: 64.7% of the population live in poverty, which means 5,776,400 (almost six million) people. Among them, 41.7% live in extreme poverty, which is equivalent to 3,725,048 (almost four million) people; 38.5% of the population survives on one US dollar or less per day, which is equivalent to 3,432,746 (three and a half million) people. More than 800,000 children and young people are unable to study and work[4]. Beyond these statistical figures, there are faces of people looking for work, looking for survival. The COVID-19 pandemic settled on the rubble left behind by the long and deep night of neoliberalism. The situation of the Honduran health system is far below the standards of the World Health Organization (WHO). Honduras has 9.5 hospital beds per 10,000 inhabitants, with a coverage of 0.4 hospitals per 100,000 inhabitants and it is estimated that there are 10.1 doctors per 10,000 inhabitants. None of the 18 departments has the minimum indicator established by international standards, which is 25 physicians per 10,000 inhabitants. In the case of nurses, it is even lower. It is 2 per 10,000 inhabitants and 8 nursing assistants per 10,000 inhabitants. The WHO recommends 50 nurses per 10,000 inhabitants [5]. (...) Education is one of the sectors hard hit by the COVID-19, in an education system that has been characterized by inequality and exclusion. By 2019, approximately 900,000 (almost one million) children between the ages of 3 and 17 were out of the education system. Inequality is not only economic and social, it is also technological. "Only 16.6% of Hondurans have access to the Internet

132 <https://radioprogreso.net/instante/inician-huelga-de-hambre-pequenos-empresarios-del-norte/>

133 <http://www.radioamerica.hn/en-aceras-duermen-familias-desalojadas-de-apartamentos-por-falta-de-pago-durante-crisis-por-covid-19/>

134 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2796-mientras-gobierno-las-tiene-excluidas-covid-19-grave-amenaza-para-las-trabajadoras-domesticas>

135 <https://criterio.hn/trabajadoras-domesticas-de-honduras-exigen-protocolo-de-bioseguridad-por-coronavirus/>

136 <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-04-22/world-bank-sees-record-20-drop-in-remittances-due-to-pandemic?sref=EROITBzT>

137 <https://confidencialhn.com/unos-230-millones-de-dolares-ha-dejado-de-percibir-honduras-en-remesas-a-causa-del-coronavirus/>

at home, and only 12.8% access this service from a computer and 87.2% from a mobile phone or cell phone"[10]. In this context of inequality, what are the possibilities of facing educational challenges from a quarantine situation in the context of COVID-19? The possibilities are nil or almost nil. Or in any case, it means continuing to reproduce a poor education for the poor."¹³⁸

Economy

Already in March, tens of thousands of Hondurans were laid off. Criterio reported that these already problematic lay-offs by the maquiladora industry had an additional negative effect. In-country migration where people go back to their home towns helping to spread the virus.¹³⁹ The mass lay-offs also led to protests, especially in Choloma¹⁴⁰, where people took to the streets because they lack food.^{139 140} On various occasions, these protests were violently repressed. On one occasion, Military Police agents hit people and shot in the air.¹⁴¹ Throughout the month, Defensores en Línea reported on the various protests.¹⁴¹

On April 6, the JOH regime announced new relief measures called "Temporary Relief Mechanisms to Address the Economic Impact".¹⁴² A day later, the president of the BCIE Dante Mossi announced new projects for Honduras to confront the crisis.¹⁴² JOH tweeted: "Today the BCH has taken important steps to stimulate the economy by eliminating mandatory investments that retained liquidity. In 22 days the short-term liquidity of the banking system has increased from L8.8 billion to L30.6 billion, tripling resources to boost our economy."¹⁴² The vice president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Tegucigalpa (CCIT), Daniel Fortín, said that the tax relief measures established by the JOH did not benefit small and medium-sized companies as was claimed by JOH.¹⁴²

FOSDEH estimated that some 250'000 could be lost due to the crisis.¹⁴³ To stop the worst from happening, FOSDEH published an analysis on how to confront the crisis focusing on fiscal policy.¹⁴⁴ According to the president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Cortés (CCIC), Pedro Barquero, the private sector loses some 1.4 billion Lempiras per day.¹⁴⁵ The CCIC also published a press release with recommendations, one of them asks for "a rethinking of the 2020 general budget to redirect resources to areas such as health and education".¹⁴⁶ The Honduran Bank for Production and Housing (Banhprovi), meanwhile, announced to dispose of a total of 800 million Lempiras available for micro, small and medium enterprises.¹⁴⁶ But by April 11, already some 50'000 people had been fired¹⁴⁷ and by April 22, the Labor Secretary reported that at least 120'000

138 <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/04/24/analisis-en-honduras-la-pandemia-covid19-profundiza-la-desigualdad-social-y-es-campo-de-exterminio-para-los-sectores-mas-vulnerables/>

139 <https://tiempo.hn/protestan-carretera-que-va-hacia-ticamaya-por-falta-de-alimentos/>

140 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3839-urgente-empleados-de-maquila-protestan-en-choloma-por-cobros-impagables>

141 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/covid-19-no-paran-las-protestas-exigiendo-alimentos/>

142 <https://confidencialhn.com/ccit-indica-que-alivio-fiscal-no-beneficia-a-las-pymes-como-lo-asegura-el-ejecutivo/>

143 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/portada/proyectan-250-mil-personas-desempleadas-a-finales-de-2020/>

144 <https://www.fosdeh.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Propuestas-econo-covid19-II-parte.pdf>

145 <https://confidencialhn.com/un-total-de-mil-400-millones-diarios-pierde-empresa-privada-por-falta-de-actividad-economica/>

146 <https://tiempo.hn/banhprovi-dispone-800-millones-asistencia-crediticia-mipymes/>

147 <https://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/alrededor-de-50-mil-trabajadores-han-sido-despedidos-durante-el-confinamiento-segun-cuth.html>

people had lost their work.¹⁴⁸ 98% of the small and medium-sized hotels and hostels in Honduras are closed and the few that are open employ less staff.¹⁴⁹ "Fifteen percent of Mipymes [micro, small and medium-sized businesses] have already closed operations in bankruptcy, 28 percent believe they only have one month to live, 39 percent almost two months, and 10 percent said they would be closing between 3 to 6 months if the aid does not arrive or the quarantine is prolonged beyond normal".¹⁴⁹

Karen Spring and Judy Ancel highlighted the effects on labor rights of the corona crisis in Honduras. "Since mid-March hundreds of thousands of workers in these towns have been laid off as clothing manufacturers Hanes, Gildan, and Fruit of the Loom and auto parts maker Empire Electronics, among others, announced two- to four-month shutdowns. A few maquilas are calling some workers back to make medical equipment. In some unionized factories, workers got two weeks' pay as severance. Other workers got their accumulated vacation pay and nothing more. Maria Luisa Regalado is the director of CODEMUH, the Honduran Women's Collective, an organization that focuses on the occupational diseases of women maquila workers. She summed up what she'd heard from workers: "We're scared to lose our jobs...but we feel impotent. Those of us who are renters don't know how we'll pay the rent. There's a lot that's unknown. We don't know what's going to happen with our lives.""¹⁵⁰

Forest Fires

A part from Corona, Honduras has also suffered from various forest fires this year, some 500 up to the end of April.¹⁵¹ 19 of which took place in the La Tigra National Park. "3 fires per day have been started in recent days despite the confinement of the population due to the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in Honduras. The authorities are not responding to reports of the fires because they are dealing with the pandemic, or at least that is the excuse, explains Jorge Luis Palma, technical director of the Friends of La Tigra Foundation (Amitigra)."¹⁵² The Río Blanco community was also affected by a fire. COPINH sent out an alert.¹⁵² "The COVID-19 or coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated the many problems faced by different sectors of Honduran society and specifically those with scarce resources. One of these factors, and arguably the most important, is the scarcity of drinking water in some cities of the country, with the Central District being the most affected. (...) According to statistics from the Honduran Fire Department, fires have been reduced by 70 percent this year, but the Central District is the most affected with 95 major fires."¹⁵³ The MP informed about their ongoing investigation into the fires.¹⁵⁴

148 <https://confidencialhn.com/unos-120-mil-trabajadores-han-sido-suspendidos-en-honduras-por-efecto-del-coronavirus/>

149 <https://www.alainet.org/es/articulo/206229>

150 <https://labornotes.org/2020/04/corona-capitalism-honduras>

151 <https://confidencialhn.com/unos-500-incendios-forestales-con-30-mil-areas-perdidas-registra-honduras-en-lo-que-va-de-2020/>

152 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1253772239490646018>

153 <http://elpulso.hn/la-poca-agua-en-la-capital-podria-durar-hasta-junio/>

154 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/155-abril2020/5705-fiscalia-del-medio-ambiente-continua-investigaciones-por-incendios-forestales>

Human Rights and Their Defenders

A joint report published by the International Labor Rights Forum, Fair World Project, and the International Union of Food Workers (IUF) Latin America Regional Secretariat, with support from 3F International, was published this month revealing long-term, ongoing human and labor rights violations on Fyffes' melon plantations in Honduras. The report, *Fyffes Farms Exposed: The Fight for Justice in the Honduran Melon Fields*, calls on the company to take responsibility to remedy injustices at their farms and commit to a legally-binding, enforceable agreement to uphold workers' rights.¹⁵⁵

Assassinations

On April 2, human rights defender Iris Argentina Álvarez was murdered by private security guards hired by the sugar company Empresa Azucarera La Grecia. The incident occurred during a violent and illegal eviction in the sector of Los Chanchos, municipality of Marcovia, Choluteca. "Community witnesses say police were still in the area when the attackers opened fire on several families with many children. The police did nothing to stop the violence that ended the defender's life and left two other people injured, including a minor."¹⁵⁶ OACNUDH condemned her murder.¹⁵⁷ On April 8, two employees of the security company faced court.¹⁵⁸ They were formally charged homicide and have to await trial in prison.¹⁵⁹

Lawyers

On April 12, the 30-year old lawyer, David Argueta, was murdered in San Pedro Sula. The unknown assailants entered his house and shot him.¹⁶⁰

Attacks, Criminalization and Harassment

This month the world celebrated Earth Day and there were many calls in support of human rights and indigenous defenders.¹⁶¹ COPINH called on Honduras to recognize the essential work of HRDs and defenders of land and territory, and to stop repressing and criminalizing them.¹⁶² On this occasion, there was also a call to liberate the political prisoners from Guapinol (see also Extractive Industries sub-section).¹⁶³ It says a lot about the situation of HRDs in Honduras, that on Earth Day, the environmental and indigenous land defender Rosario Vasquez was arrested by security forces acting in interests of former Nationalist Congresswoman Gladis Aurora Lopez, whose family owns a dam project that Vasquez and others oppose.¹⁶³

155 <https://indd.adobe.com/view/92bfa5cc-92c8-4289-917e-2957fe098448>

156 <http://im-defensoras.org/2020/04/defensora-es-asesinada-por-agentes-de-seguridad-en-violento-ilegal-desalojo/>

157 <https://oacnudh.hn/oacnudh-condena-la-muerte-de-la-defensora-iris-argentina-alvarez-chavez-e-insta-a-una-investigacion-pronta-y-exhaustiva-de-los-hechos/>

158 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/mirada-al-sur/1498-iris-argentina-alvarez-campesina-hondurena-asesinada-por-lucha-de-tierra-en-el-sur>

159 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/dictan-prision-preventiva-contr-dos-personas-por-suponerlas-responsables-del-homicidio-de-defensora-de-la-y-tierra/>

160 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/acribillan-a-abogado-en-el-interior-de-su-casa-en-sps.html>

161 <https://twitter.com/trocaire/status/1252921788784431104?s=20>

162 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1253039876787798017>

163 <https://twitter.com/hondurasol/status/1253079467238387712>

It can only be hoped that someone pays attention to the words of OACNUDH. It highlighted once again the importance of ensuring that defenders are able to carry out their work in a safe and supportive environment, most importantly in the current health and humanitarian emergency context. The UN-body expressed concern regarding the harassment and public threats against HRDs, especially against Bertha Oliva and Padre Melo, demanding effective protective measures.¹⁶⁴

Indigenous Peoples

The Garífuna community has seen a steep rise in attacks these last months and it seems to continue even during the corona-crisis. The attacks are especially directed at the Garífuna community Masca. On April 4, Juan Manuel Mena Dolmo was attacked while fumigating cars against COVID-19. He is the nephew of Amada Lopez, who had been attacked in December 2019.¹⁶⁵ OFRANEH also denounced a further increase in racism and xenophobia by the authorities as part of the response to the crisis.¹⁶⁶

MADJ sent out a dire warning. "In Honduras, indigenous peoples live in inhumane conditions due to state abandonment and the excessive plundering of their natural assets, and now with the arrival of the covid19 their situation has worsened. (...) The measures imposed by the government of Honduras to prevent the spread of the covid19 have been, in concrete terms, a kind of death sentence for the indigenous peoples since their classist and elitist nature does not fit the socio-economic realities of these populations in the country that has more than 65% of its total population living in poverty, according to World Bank figure.¹⁶⁷ At the end of the month, MAD celebrated an important victory. The Court of Administrative Litigation of San Pedro Sula admitted the appeal filed on behalf of the Tolupán People of San Francisco de Locomapa, Yoro, who are victims of discrimination in the delivery of food in the context of the corona crisis. The court gives the authorities 24 hours "to immediately restore to these families their right to food".¹⁶⁸

ContraCorriente published an important in-depth article including various video-interviews on the situation of the Tolupán people in Honduras called "Death and Oblivion in the Tolupan forest". "The Tolupan San Francisco de Locomapa Tribe, in Yoro, Honduras, has suffered murders, judicial harassment and attacks due to its opposition to the power generation projects in the territory where they have always lived, but which is now in dispute. In the past 20 years, 40 Tolupan indigenous were murdered, a population that faces its own extermination."¹⁶⁹

The Case of Berta Cáceres

April started with an alert by COPINH. "The Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras COPINH denounces the possibility that two of the murderers convicted

164 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1254099397849354241>

165 <https://twitter.com/baraudawaguchu/status/1246244057111814146>

166 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1247668695377346561>

167 <https://madj.org/index.php/2020/04/07/pueblo-tolupan-en-honduras-a-punto-de-morir-de-hambre/>

168 <https://madj.org/index.php/2020/04/29/abastecer-de-alimentos-en-24-horas-a-tribu-tolupana-ordena-juzgado-por-amparo/>

169 <https://contracorriente.red/2020/04/20/muerte-y-olvido-en-el-bosque-tol/?lang=en>

of the death of Berta Cáceres will be released from prison as part of the health emergency. According to information received by our organization, enormous efforts are being made to ensure that Sergio Rodríguez Orellana and Douglas Bustillo, workers of the Atala Zablah family, who were sentenced to 30 years in prison for the murder, are released for alleged medical reasons in the midst of the crisis by Covid-19. And also more benefits or even the release of David Castillo, one of the intellectual authors of the crime."¹⁷⁰ This possibility was met with widespread condemnation.¹⁷¹ US Congressman Jim McGovern tweeted: "Governments must both guarantee prisoners' right to health and protect their societies from those who have committed grave crimes. #Honduras must not use the #coronavirus as an excuse to free the men who murdered Berta Cáceres. #JusticeForBerta".¹⁷² InSight Crime also picked this up listing Sergio Rodríguez Orellana and Douglas Bustillo among "the most notorious detainees seeking coronavirus clemency".¹⁷²

There was also news this month regarding the Agua Zarca project. Four years after the murder of Berta Cáceres, the Central-American Bank for Economic Integration (BCIE) finally withdrew from the Agua Zarca project.¹⁷³ COPINH denounced: "They are leaving a trail of blood and death to Rio Blanco. We demand that international banks be held responsible for financing these murderous projects. We demand the immediate cancellation of the illegal concession on the sacred Gualcarque River, which promotes the plundering and violation of the human rights of indigenous peoples."¹⁷⁴ The BCIE did not just withdraw its money and leave the project starved of funding, rather it sold its parts to a "Swiss consortium". This implies that there remains the possibility that the threat of the construction of such an unconsulted project remains with other actors and other names.¹⁷⁵ COPINH demanded transparency regarding the conditions of withdrawal.¹⁷⁶

LGBTQ

On the day of visibility of the transgender community, which is commemorated on March 31 each year, Honduras shows that the right to justice, health and work, are still a challenge for the entire community of sexual diversity. "Donny Reyes, director of the LGTB organization Arcoiris said that in this emergency due to Covid-19, trans women report assaults and sexual harassment by police. On the other hand, he denounced that this population does not receive the aid that the government announced for the most vulnerable people, in some cases they are taken to the elderly and the disabled, "but they are a forgotten population and very vulnerable to being violated in this situation".¹⁷⁷ There was also Lesbian Visibility Day this month. On this occasion, Criterio portrayed several lesbians in Honduras. "On April 26, there was no lack of campaigns, poems, and hugs for those who are close to them during the confinement. But lesbian visibility is not a day, it is not a

¹⁷⁰ <https://copinh.org/2020/04/asesinos-de-berta-serian-dejados-en-libertad-en-medio-de-crisis-esen/>

¹⁷¹ <https://cejil.org/es/cejil-autoridades-hondurenas-deben-abstenerse-liberar-responsables-asesinato-berta-caceres>

¹⁷² <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/coronavirus-clemency-latin-america/>

¹⁷³ <https://www.bcie.org/novedades/noticias/articulo/el-bcie-oficializa-la-desvinculacion-definitiva-del-proyecto-agua-zarca/>

¹⁷⁴ <https://copinh.org/2020/04/bcie-retira-su-inversion-del-proyecto-hidroelectrico-agua-zarca/>

¹⁷⁵ <https://copinh.org/2020/04/copinh-desvinculacion-bcie-agua-zarca/>

¹⁷⁶ <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1252640370241998848>

¹⁷⁷ <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2761-mujeres-trans-siguen-siendo-las-victimas-mas-frecuentes-de-abusos-a-sus-derechos-en-honduras>

commemorative date that begins when the bells indicate midnight and run 24 hours and ends the next day. Every day lesbian women must go out and confront a fundamentalist state that does not recognize diversity and increases inequalities."¹⁷⁸

OACNUDH warned that the LGBTQ+ community suffers from a lack of access to health services and that they suffer discrimination when attending health centers.¹⁷⁹ They also published a manual on how to respond to the corona crisis with the LGBTQ+ community in one's mind.¹⁸⁰ Criterio reported on the situation of trans women during the lockdown.¹⁸¹ The IACHR "called on States to guarantee the rights of equality and non-discrimination of LGBTI people in the care and support measures adopted, in particular to ensure their access to health services and social care programmed from a comprehensive human security perspective".¹⁸¹

Freedom of Expression and Journalists

The corona crisis should be challenge enough for journalists, but the situation in Honduras further worsens their working conditions. April started with the arrest of ten community leaders and three journalists by the police in Santa Bárbara. The arrested journalists are Edward Fernández of TV Más Canal 26, Roger David Iraeta of Canal 6 Internacional, and Onán Zaldivar of Patepluma Televisión HD canal 22. The police further confiscated their broadcasting equipment and the material recording the violent eviction of inhabitants wanting to buy groceries. According to COFADEH more than 800 people have been arrested so far since the state of exception has been established.¹⁸² A day before, the journalist Lidieth Díaz had denounced that the police hindered her from going to her place of work at Radio Globo.¹⁸³

Throughout the month, C-Libre sent out various alerts. Journalist Selvin Euceda received death threats.¹⁸⁴ The cameraman of Channel 6 International, Javier Lopez, was attacked by members of the Management of Public Order and the Municipal Police of the Central District.¹⁸⁵ Two journalists from Noticiero "Hoy Mismo" were attacked by members of the National Police in Comayagüela.¹⁸⁵ The director of Criterio, the journalist Emy Padilla, denounced that they have been victims of smear campaigns as a consequence of their informative work.¹⁸⁶ The host of the program El Perro Amarillo, Milton Benitez, denounced that there is an alleged conspiracy "between bankers, a former president of the Republic and government politicians", to assassinate him.¹⁸⁶ Criterio journalist Nancy Paola Cruz has suffered sexual harassment by phone calls and text messages.¹⁸⁶ There has been a general increase in attacks against Criterio staff.¹⁸⁷

¹⁷⁸ <https://criterio.hn/lesbiandad-los-relatos-de-mujeres-lesbianas-que-visibilizan-la-realidad-que-viven-en-honduras/>

¹⁷⁹ <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1249785857931911171>

¹⁸⁰ <https://oacnudh.hn/covid-19-y-los-derechos-humanos-de-las-personas-lgbti/>

¹⁸¹ <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2807-la-cidh-llama-a-los-estados-a-garantizar-los-derechos-de-las-personas-lgbti-en-la-respuesta-a-la-pandemia-del-covid-19>

¹⁸² <http://defensoresonlinea.com/policia-captura-10-lideres-comunitarios-y-tres-periodistas-en-santa-barbara/>

¹⁸³ <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1135-periodista-denuncia-retencion-policial-mientras-se-trasladaba-a-radioemisora>

¹⁸⁴ <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1140-periodista-es-amenazado-de-muerte-al-sur-del-pais>

¹⁸⁵ <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1151-policia-nacional-agrede-a-periodistas-de-television-en-tegucigalpa>

¹⁸⁶ <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1159-periodista-denuncia-llamadas-y-mensaje-con-ofrecimientos-sexuales>

¹⁸⁷ <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/libertad-de-expresion/1527-en-escalada-ataques-contra-criterio-hn>

No surprise that in the newest yearly report by Reporters without Borders, the World Press Freedom Index, Honduras's rank further deteriorated.¹⁸⁸ It is now on position 148, worse than after the coup d'état in 2009.¹⁸⁹ Journalists and social communicators reacted to this situation by holding a sit-in outside the Secretariat of Security building demanding respect. "It is a call to the National Police and the Military Forces not to attack us because we are doing our job. This is not just a job for them, but also for the Honduran population. We report so that they don't go out into the streets."¹⁹⁰

In a joint press release, the IACHR and its Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression (RELE), expressed their concern about the violations of freedom of expression and restrictions on the right to information as a result of the measures established by the States of the region in response to the pandemic.¹⁹¹

Violence against Women

Women's and feminist organizations warned of the serious situation of violence against women during the COVID-19 emergency, "a period in which the figures shot up alarmingly, adding up to more than 7,000 reports of domestic and intra-family violence, reported by the National Emergency System-SNE 911, in the month of March 2020 alone, of which 4,245 occurred in the first half of this month, that is, at the beginning of the curfew".¹⁹² Cristina Alvarado, from the Movement of Women for Peace Visitación Padilla, denounced that the lockdown in the homes was established without taking into account the situation of women.¹⁹² The MP, meanwhile, said that they had attended more than 300 complaints of domestic violence so far during the lockdown.¹⁹³

Political Prisoners

COFADEH sent a note to Joel Hernández, IACHR Rapporteur for Honduras, regarding the serious risks faced by political prisoners and environmental rights defenders, who are held in different penal centers in the country (see also the sub-section just below).¹⁹⁴

Extractive Industries

Mining

The Guapinol case is still one of the most prominent mining case in Honduras and it is especially worrisome that even international pressure so far failed to free the imprisoned defenders. This month, 21 EU-Parliamentarians called for their immediate release,¹⁹⁵ as did US congresswoman Jan

188 <https://criterio.hn/honduras-retrocede-en-libertad-de-expresion/>

189 <https://rsf.org/en/honduras>

190 <http://elpulso.hn/periodistas-hondurenos-exigen-que-se-respete-derecho-a-informar/>

191 <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/expresion/showarticle.asp?artID=1173&IID=2>

192 <http://elpulso.hn/aumenta-violencia-contra-la-mujer-a-causa-del-confinamiento-por-covid-19>

193 <https://tiempo.hn/cuarentena-mp-mas-de-300-denuncias-violencia-domestica/>

194 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/alerta-por-condicion-de-presos-politicos/>

195 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1246846332230303749>

Schakowsky^{196 197}. They have been locked-up illegally for more than 225 days.¹⁹⁸ There had been several Habeas Corpora presented in their favor. This month, COFADEH presented a request for the immediate resolution of the corrective Habeas Corpus presented to verify their conditions of detention.¹⁹⁸ After a visit to the Olanchito Penal Center in Yoro, where they are held, the National Prevention Mechanism-Honduras, MNP-CONAPREV, stated that they are held in a "reduced space, with limitations in cleaning materials, a poorly ventilated home and in a condition of overcrowding, and therefore recommended that the judicial authorities urgently review the precautionary measure of preventive detention for one that is less harmful in the context of the emergency".¹⁹⁸

On April 24, the San Alonso Rodríguez Foundation (FSAR), ERIC-SJ and CEJIL went with the case to the IACHR. They requested precautionary measures "to protect the life and integrity of the eight water defenders from the Guapinol and San Pedro rivers, who have been deprived of their liberty for more than eight months. This request is due the existence of an imminent risk of irreparable damage to the rights to life, health and integrity of the defenders, by virtue of the conditions of preventive detention in which they are held, which have been exacerbated in the context of the prison crisis that Honduras is experiencing and the COVID-19 pandemic that is currently affecting humanity."¹⁹⁹

Hydroelectricity

ContraCorriente published an investigation into the company Castor Energy and its intentions to install a hydroelectric project on the Güince River in San Francisco de Ojuera. Castor Energy was among the companies denounced by Berta Cáceres and COPINH and the MP opened an investigation into it.²⁰⁰

Corruption and Its Enemies

See the Corruption sub-chapter in the COVID-19 section above.

The Onslaught against the Anti-Corruption Bodies

Reporteros de Investigación published their important findings into the alleged suicide of the police escort of the MACCIH. In May 2017, a young police agent dispatched to protect the employees at the MACCIH died during his shift. The circumstances were very suspicious but the MP and the JOH regime wanted to present it as a suicide. An investigation by Reporteros de Investigación now shows that the scientific evidence does not hold up to this theory and that the Deputy Attorney General Daniel Sibrián helped to cover this up. It is likely that the police agent was murdered as a sign of intimidation against the MACCIH as just two days before, they presented the Impunity Pact

¹⁹⁶ <https://twitter.com/janschakowsky/status/1253015848249430017>

¹⁹⁷ <http://defensoresenlinea.com/jan-schakowsky-el-poder-judicial-de-honduras-tiene-en-sus-manos-la-libertad-de-los-defensores-de-guapinol/>

¹⁹⁸ <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2791-caso-defensores-de-guapino-conaprev-recomienda-a-las-autoridades-judiciales-cambiar-la-prision-preventiva-por-una-medida-menos-lesiva>

¹⁹⁹ <https://www.cejil.org/es/guapinol-solicitan-medidas-cautelares-cidh-protoger-vida-e-integridad-defensores-del-agua>

²⁰⁰ <https://contracorriente.red/2020/04/01/castor-energy-la-continuidad-del-asesinato-de-berta-caceres/>

case which itself was linked to a case of corrupt congresswo/men.

<https://www.reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2020/04/03/sin-indicios-cientificos-de-suicidio-de-escolta-policial-de-la-maccih/>

In the midst of the health emergency, the Honduran justice system has requested the immediate release of the former councilman of the disappeared Council of the Judiciary and the Judicial Career, Teodoro Bonilla Euceda. He had been sentenced to six years in prison in 2017 for influence peddling.

ConfidencialHN writes that he already has been released last week. They write of abuse of authority by the prison authorities.

<https://criterio.hn/teodoro-bonilla-a-las-puertas-de-la-libertad-en-medio-de-la-pandemia/>

<https://confidencialhn.com/sale-en-libertad-el-cuestionado-exconcejal-de-la-judicatura-teodoro-bonilla/>

<https://confidencialhn.com/denuncian-abuso-de-autoridad-del-instituto-penitenciario-en-caso-de-exconcejal-teodoro-bonilla/>

This Saturday, the former councilman of the disappeared Council of the Judiciary and the Judicial Career, Teodoro Bonilla Euceda, will be released from prison, even though he had been sentenced to six years in in 2017 for influence peddling (see also e-mail two days ago).

<https://confidencialhn.com/exconcejal-teodoro-bonilla-saldra-del-presidio-el-proximo-sabado/>

The head of of anti-corruption body UFERCO, Luis Santos, accuses Honduras of double talk regarding corruption. "On the one hand, it ensures that the fight against corruption is strengthened, and on the other hand, it not only puts obstacles in the way, it tries to avoid as much as possible that the investigations achieve their purpose, so that the networks operating behind each case are not known."

<https://twitter.com/LuisSan16779987/status/1253986788059885573>

State Security Forces

Repressions

Honduras' state and security forces attacked journalists on various occasions this month (see Freedom of Expression sub-section). El Tiempo published a video of state security agents, police and military, repeatedly hitting a drunk man they stopped in his car.²⁰¹ Repression took also place

²⁰¹ <https://tiempo.hn/militares-someten-y-golpean-a-supuesto-ebrio-en-santa-barbara/>

against people demanding food and water. On one occasion, Military Police agents hit people and shot in the air.²⁰²

Assassinations

There was another death of a citizen at the hand of the Military Police this month.²⁰³ Two Military Police agents shot dead a young man, Marvin Alvarado, in the community El Paraíso near Omoa, Cortés. They also brutally attacked his two brothers, all three of them were on their way back home from selling bread.²⁰³ Family members demanded justice at his funeral.²⁰⁴ El Tiempo reported that ATIC investigates the case.²⁰⁵ "OACNUDH notes with concern the increase in allegations of excessive use of force by law enforcement officials in the context of curfew enforcement operations and other state of emergency provisions. In an incident that occurred on 24 April in the community of El Paraíso, in Omoa, Cortés, two men were wounded with firearms during a control operation carried out by officers of the Military Police of Public Order, and one of them died the following day in hospital."²⁰⁵

Penitentiary System

On April 7, the Inter-Institutional Sub-Commission on Criminal Justice of Honduras announced that more than 200 prisoners would be placed in pre-release as a response to the corona-crisis.²⁰⁶ On April 12, 52 inmates were released.²⁰⁷ The same day, the directors of both the Támara prison and the prison in La Ceiba were removed, both members of the Armed Forces, but the JOH regime presented it as a normal rotation.²⁰⁷ On April 13, relatives of prisoners demanded a pardon for at least 400 inmates who suffer from chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and coronary and respiratory diseases.²⁰⁸ The next day, the President of the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ), Rolando Argueta, informed that 569 prisoners had been pre-released so far.²⁰⁸

OACNUDH published an important second statement on the corona crisis and prisons. While it favors de-congesting overpopulated prisons, these measures "should not lead to impunity for persons convicted in many countries of serious human rights violations, crimes against humanity, genocide or war crimes".²⁰⁹

On April 28, a first inmate was found to have died from COVID-19, causing alarm in the so-called maximum security prison El Pozo in Santa Bárbara.²¹⁰ The president of the Association of Relatives of Detainees, Delma Ordóñez, asked that all prisoners be isolated.²¹⁰ At least 90 inmates

202 <https://tiempo.hn/pmop-golpea-pobladores-que-protestaban-por-comida-en-choloma/>

203 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/agentes-de-la-pmop-asesina-a-joven-en-el-paraiso-omoa>

204 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/con-pancartas-y-exigiendo-justicia-llegan-familiares-al-sepelio-del-joven-que-fue-asesinado-por-la-pmop/>

205 <https://oacnudh.hn/oacnudh-llama-a-que-las-autoridades-investiguen-denuncias-de-uso-excesivo-de-la-fuerza-y-tomen-medidas-para-prevenir-su-repeticion/>

206 <https://www.laprensa.hn/sucesos/1370768-410/presos-honduras-coronavirus-covid-tamara-el-progreso-centro-penitenciario>

207 <https://www.laprensa.hn/sucesos/1371835-410/centro-penitenciario-nacional-centro-penal-la-ceiba-tamara-instituto-nacional-penitenciario>

208 <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/04/14/monitoreo-del-covid19-en-honduras-14-de-abril-del-2020/>

209 <https://oacnudh.hn/covid-19-no-hay-excusa-para-la-impunidad-de-los-condenados-por-crmenes-de-lesa-humanidad-experto-de-la-onu-en-justicia-transicional/>

210 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/familiares-de-reos-piden-aislar-a-reclusos-y-evitar-muertes-masivas.html>

had contact with the inmate.²¹¹ Shortly afterwards, a court now has ordered the closure of the prison.²¹²

International Community

The World Bank published a short report on their contribution to the, controversial, social program Vida Mejor by the JOH regime. "The World Bank, through the International Development Association (IDA), provided credits totaling US\$ 72.72 million. The original Social Protection Project, approved on June 29, 2010, was financed by IDA credit in the amount of US\$ 35.82 million. That project received two additional credits from IDA: the first for US\$ 11.9 million, approved on August 8, 2013; and the second for US\$ 25 million, approved on March 31, 2015." They announced a new \$30 Million support for the program. "In November 2019, the IDA-financed Social Protection Integration Project in the amount of US\$ 30 million became effective. This new project aims to unify rural and urban components of the conditional cash transfer program and to standardize the procedures, rules, and delivery systems of the national conditional cash transfer program."²¹³

US

On April 13, the Trump administration announced "additional targeted U.S. foreign assistance for El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras" focused on reducing migration.²¹⁴ Three days later, the US embassy published a press release announcing the reactivation of \$71 million in foreign aid to Honduras. This was part of the bargaining chip to force Honduras to sign the "safe third country" agreement (see Migration sub-section below).²¹⁴ Criterio denounced that the US continues to support a government known for corruption and drug trafficking.²¹⁵ The US is also active through SOUTHCOM in Honduras. "The U.S. Embassy in Honduras continues to provide support to the Honduran people in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of these efforts, our Office of Security Cooperation made significant donations through the U.S. Southern Command's Humanitarian Assistance Program (SOUTHCOM)."²¹⁵ At the end of April, they donated a second batch of personal protection equipment to be distributed among the first response personnel working to combat the health emergency by COVID19 in Honduras.²¹⁶

211 <https://confidencialhn.com/al-menos-unas-90-personas-estuvieron-en-contacto-con-reo-muerto-por-coronavirus-en-el-pozo/>

212 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1376242-466/para-evitar-contagios-de-covid-19-ordenan-cerrar-el-pozo-en-ilama>

213 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2020/04/28/providing-conditional-cash-transfers-to-improve-access-to-health-services-and-education-for-honduras-extreme-poor>

214 <https://hn.usembassy.gov/es/estados-unidos-ha-reactivado-71-millones-fondos-asistencia-honduras/>

215 <http://elpulso.hn/estados-unidos-apoya-con-insumos-contrala-pandemia-del-covid-19/>

216 <https://www.laprensa.hn/especiales/coronavirus/1375962-410/comando-sur-estados-unidos-equipo-proteccion-personal-coronavirus-honduras>

Drug Trafficking

Tony Hernández

There was a short relief from only COVID-19 news at the end of April for one day and almost a back to normal: drug trafficking and its links to JOH occupied the headlines once more. The impetus came from the US Department of Justice, i.e. the U.S. Attorney's Office in New York, when they charged the former chief of the Honduran police, Juan Carlos Bonilla Valladares, with drug trafficking and weapons offenses. "Juan Carlos "El Tigre" Bonilla Valladares, the former chief of the Honduran National Police, allegedly abused his positions in Honduran law enforcement to flout the law and play a key role in a violent international drug trafficking conspiracy. As alleged, on behalf of convicted former Honduran congressman Tony Hernandez and his brother the president, Bonilla Valladares oversaw the transshipment of multi-ton loads of cocaine bound for the U.S., used machine guns and other weaponry to accomplish that, and participated in extreme violence, including the murder of a rival trafficker, to further the conspiracy."²¹⁷

Aqui Abajo offered helpful background information. "For years, Bonilla has been the subject of controversy and faced public accusations of extrajudicial killings, torture, ties to drug cartels and organized criminal groups operating inside the National police, and corruption. His indictment for drug trafficking in the U.S. is only the tip of the iceberg."²¹⁸ It was also picked up by the international press with the Guardian focusing on the links to JOH. "Prosecutors also allege that Bonilla was entrusted with "special assignments, including murder" by President Hernández – who is identified as a co-conspirator – and his brother, Tony."²¹⁹

For many Hondurans, the role played by Bonilla was cold news. "In response to the accusation against Juan Carlos "El Tigre" Bonilla, the former commissioner of the National Police, María Luisa Borjas, regretted that this type of accusation came from a foreign court. She also said that these accusations come late and that "it is a pity that a foreign court is doing justice in our country. She also recalled that in 2002 she investigated "El Tigre" Bonilla and the case was sent to court with all the evidence. She added that the judge who heard the case issued the arrest warrant and issued the prison warrants. However, according to Borjas, he was released because of an out-of-court settlement. He explained that the agreement was between the then president of the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ), Vilma Morales, and the then minister of security, Oscar Alvarez. Similarly, referring to Alvarez, she added that he received a luxury vehicle full of dollars from El Chapo Guzman."²²⁰ Regarding Alvarez, Bonilla himself, who claims his innocence, said that Arturo Corrales, had asked him to make a delivery of confiscated weapons, an order that the ex-policeman refused.²²¹

217 <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/former-chief-honduran-national-police-charged-drug-trafficking-and-weapons-offenses>

218 <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2020/4/30/us-indictment-of-el-tigre-bonilla-just-the-tip-of-the-impunity-iceberg>

219 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/30/former-police-chief-of-honduras-accused-of-trafficking-drugs-to-us>

220 <https://tiempo.hn/maria-luisa-borjas-bonilla-califico-como-psicopata/>

221 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/1974-arturo-corrales-exigio-devolucion-de-armas-decomisadas-afirma-tigre>

Meanwhile in the Tony Hernández case, the sentencing was postponed again, this time to June 29. He once more changed his defense team.²²²

Varia

JOH

The JOH regime has been known for boosting its presence on social media. This month, Twitter removed 3,104 fake accounts created from a single IP range in Honduras by a staffer on the government's behalf to retweet the president's account.^{223 224} It is highly likely that such accounts are also used to tone down the ongoing epidemic of violence in Honduras. The yearly report by UNAH's violence center published this month confirmed what was known for a while, that the homicide rate last year had risen again. It was higher than in 2017 and 2018.²²⁵ Even during the current corona crisis and the lockdown, the daily number of homicide remains high.^{226 227}

JOH is getting a lot of air time during the corona crisis. "For 47 days, more than 70 radio and television stations broadcast official information in the context of the health crisis caused by the Covid-19 in Honduras. (...) In 2013, the National Congress approved Decree 86-2013, which includes the Law on the Voluntary Program for the Rescue, Promotion and Development of the Communications Sector, better known as the "Exchange Law". The special regulation allows media owners to exchange their debts concerning the payment of taxes and public services for government advertising."²²⁸

Penal Code

The disputed and controversial Penal Code is planned to come into force this May. While some forgot about this in the midst of the corona-crisis, the CNA called out to Congress to treat their citizen's initiative presented last December which calls for the Penal Code to not come into force (see previous monitor).^{229 230} They also made an important link between the corruption occurring during the current crisis and the Penal Code. Corruption can take the form of abuse of authority which currently means 3-6 years in prison. With the new Penal Code, it would only lead to disqualification from office.²³¹ Illicit enrichment is currently punishable by 5 to 15 years' imprisonment, while in the

222 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1372735-466/postergan-lectura-de-sentencia-de-tony-hern%C3%A1ndez-para-el-29-de-junio>

223 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-twitter-accounts-idUSKBN21K1SK>

224 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3826-twitter-denuncia-a-joh-y-elimina-3-000-cuentas-falsas>

225 <https://twitter.com/jeffgernst/status/1249787896325947394>

226 <http://elpulso.hn/ni-con-toque-de-queda-se-reducen-muertes-violentas-en-honduras/>

227 <https://tiempo.hn/ov-unah-jovenes-menoresv30-anos-mueren-a-violencia/>

228 <https://criterio.hn/gobierno-de-honduras-se-extralimita-con-cadenas-de-radio-y-television/>

229 <https://twitter.com/cnahonduras/status/1247312493774503936>

230 <http://elpulso.hn/ni-iniciativa-ciudadana-del-cna-y-covid-19-detienen-entrada-en-vigencia-del-codigo-penal/>

231 <https://twitter.com/cnahonduras/status/1253039562227621894>

new Penal Code it was reduced from 4 to 6 years.²³² Radio Progreso further emphasized this. "The new Penal Code, which will come into force on May 10, would leave the irregularities committed in the emergency purchases made by the Permanent Commission of Contingencies, Copeco, in impunity. This is what Melissa Elvir, director of the Democracy Without Borders Foundation, said on Radio Progreso. "Overvaluation and illicit enrichment, with the entry into force of the new Penal Code, could become simple administrative issues," said Elvir."²³³

In the words of C-Libre director Amada Ponce, the Penal Code "constitutes a serious risk that violates the right to freedom of expression by making social movements and especially journalists highly vulnerable".²³⁴ Furthermore, Article 307 of the new Penal Code could serve as a legal weapon to criminalize dissident voices".²³⁵ But there is also criticism from economic actors. The Chamber of Commerce and Industries of Cortés (CCIC) held a discussion together with the CNA, FOSDEH and the Medical Association of Honduras on the problems with the new Penal Code.²³⁶ "With the penalties, this Penal Code will benefit a small population that are the officials who have been singled out for corruption. It comes to harm human rights and the rule of law," argued the director of the CNA, Gabriela Castellanos.²³⁷

At the end of the month, the Coalition against Impunity started a campaign with the aim to ask from Congress to expand the *vacatio legis* of the new Penal Code. "The organizations consider it unacceptable that at a time when all state actions have or should be focused on combating the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Congress should enable the entry into force of these criminal regulations that have been poorly socialized with the citizenry and without the justice workers having been sufficiently trained."²³⁸

Migration

The US Department of Homeland Security published the controversial "safe third country" agreement with Honduras.²³⁹ Refugees International's Senior U.S. Advocate Yael Schacher denounced: "Now that the asylum cooperative agreement between the United States and Honduras has been published, the United States can begin sending non-Honduran asylum seekers to Honduras to seek refuge there. This would be illegal and inhumane at any time because Honduras is incredibly dangerous and lacks a functioning asylum system. In the midst of a global pandemic, with Honduras on lockdown and under a state of emergency, it is absolutely unconscionable."²⁴⁰ ContracCorriente spoke with Jorge Peraza, head of mission of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala and with Melissa Vega, head of press

232 <https://twitter.com/cnahonduras/status/1253692999948816387>

233 <https://radioprogreso.hn/instante/nuevo-codigo-penal-favorecera-a-implicados-en-compras-irregulares/>

234 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/libertad-de-expresion/1514-oportunamente-peligroso-10-de-mayo-entra-en-vigencia-del-nuevo-codigo-penal>

235 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/investigaciones/1519-de-manifestantes-a-propagadores-de-epidemias-nuevo-codigo-penal-mas-letal-que-el-covid-19>

236 <https://twitter.com/CCICHN/status/1254803524577300481>

237 <http://elpulso.hn/nuevo-codigo-penal-perjudica-derechos-humanos-y-estado-de-derecho/>

238 <https://criterio.hn/emprenden-campana-de-firmas-para-exigir-al-cn-a-ampliacion-de-la-vacatio-legis-para-el-nuevo-codigo-penal/>

239 https://s3.amazonaws.com/public-inspection.federalregister.gov/2020-09322.pdf?utm_campaign=pi+subscription+mailing+list&utm_source=federalregister.gov&utm_medium=email

for the IOM office in Guatemala, about the difficulties that these agreements may represent and the continuation of the flow of deportees, even in the midst of the pandemic.²⁴⁰

Throughout the month, flights with deported Honduras landed in the country.²⁴¹ Reuters reported that even unaccompanied children were sent back. "U.S. immigration officials have rapidly deported nearly 400 migrant children intercepted at the U.S.-Mexico border in the past two weeks under new rules billed as seeking to limit the spread of the novel coronavirus in the United States, according to government data seen by Reuters. (...) Around 120 of the minors, who arrived at the U.S.-Mexico border without a parent or legal guardian, were quickly sent on planes back to Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, according to data from March 27 to April 2. It was not clear whether the remainder of the children intercepted at the border were pushed back to Mexico or returned to their home countries during the preceding week."²⁴² One one week this month, more than 500 Hondurans were deported.²⁴³ On April 23, another 130 Hondurans were deported from Mexico.²⁴⁴ UN human rights offices in the region, meanwhile, published a joint press release expressing their concern about the situation of deported migrants.²⁴⁵

There are also migrants from other countries who got stranded in Honduras. "Without biosecurity materials, without money, in inhumane conditions and waiting to be attended to by the National Institute of Migration, there are more than 80 migrants of various nationalities in the department of Choluteca, in southern Honduras."²⁴⁶ "According to data recorded by the National Human Rights Platform (PNDDHH), more than 300 migrants have been traced at this time, however, they warn that many of them are still unknown but that the figure could double the current number of people moving along the southern border and are mostly from Nicaragua, Cuba, Haiti and Africa."²⁴⁶

Electoral Reforms

After the elections in 2013, there were many much-needed reform proposals, but they did not materialize in the coming years. The same took place after the electoral fraud in 2017. Now, in 2020 and with a primary at the door, there is still a lack of profound electoral reforms. This month, Kelvin Aguirre, councilman of the National Electoral Council (CNE), warned that Congress had suspended the electoral reforms required to hold the elections.²⁴⁷

For background information, both CESPAD and FOSDEH²⁴⁸ published new pieces of analysis on the need for electoral reforms in times of corona. "During this period of significant change, the decisions and responses of the state that have been (and will be) made will, to a large extent, determine not only the social and economic, but also the political outcomes of the country. From

240 <https://contracorriente.red/2020/04/30/oim-nos-estamos-preparando-para-que-se-mantenga-un-flujo-sostenido-de-retornados/>

241 <http://elpulso.hn/pese-a-pandemia-de-covid-19-siguen-llegando-hondurenos-deportados/>

242 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-usa-deportations/u-s-deports-400-migrant-children-under-new-coronavirus-rules-idUSKBN21P354>

243 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/en-medio-de-crisis-mundial-suman-18-mil-59-las-deportaciones-a-honduras.html>

244 <https://confidencialhn.com/unos-130-hondurenos-deportados-de-mexico-que-arriban-este-jueves-a-tegucigalpa/>

245 <https://oacnudh.hn/preocupa-la-extrema-vulnerabilidad-de-las-personas-en-movilidad-ante-la-pandemia-por-covid-19-onu-derechos-humanos/>

246 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/mirada-al-sur/1523-migrantes-violentados-por-autoridades-en-medio-de-emergencia-nacional>

247 <https://criterio.hn/en-manos-del-congreso-nacional-esta-la-convocatoria-a-elecciones-kelvin-aguirre/>

248 <http://www.fosdeh.com/2020/04/del-confinamiento-a-reformas-electorales-y-elecciones/>

this point of view, the political panorama is not encouraging, since in the framework of this crisis the advances in political electoral reform, which prior to the health crisis were outlined as being of limited scope, compared to the needs for democratic advancement of the Honduran political system, have been blocked. We cannot ignore the fact that this crisis will affect the political electoral reform itself, and the future of Honduran democracy, which is suffering from a flaw of origin that keeps it in permanent crisis."²⁴⁹

"Since the 2017 post-electoral crisis, the State has invested significant public resources in electoral and constitutional political reforms in an effort to re-establish the collapsed Honduran electoral institutions. The constitution of the National Electoral Council (CNE) and the Electoral Justice Tribunal (TJE) are examples of this effort. (...) In this moment of crisis, the political elites are obliged to make available what has been done and invested in the political-electoral area in order to ensure a truly transparent and legitimate political process for Honduran society. (...) There are, perhaps, two scenarios that arise in the face of the dilemma that can be foreseen from the future of the primary elections. (i) One scenario is "Option B", practiced in the 1985 elections, which consists of holding the primary and general elections simultaneously. The risk of this option is that it could represent logistical and administrative chaos, although it is perhaps the only way to ensure that the 2021 general election is not postponed. It is estimated that more than 15 political parties will participate in the next general election contest. (ii) Another scenario is the postponement of the primary elections to the general elections in 2022. Although this is an extreme scenario, various contingencies must be considered, from, for example, a delay, due to the current emergency, in the purging and updating of the electoral census by the National Registry of Persons (RNP); to, in the absence of effective control of the spread of the coronavirus, a resurgence of the pandemic."²⁵⁰

And Light at the End of a Month

The social movement from Zacate Grande ADEPZA commemorated its 20th anniversary this month.²⁵¹

²⁴⁹ <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/04/22/analisis-en-tiempos-del-covid19-el-estado-actual-de-las-reformas-electorales-y-los-riesgos-para-las-elecciones-2021/>

²⁵⁰ <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/04/10/analisis-sobre-el-impacto-politico-del-covid-19-en-honduras/>

²⁵¹ <https://twitter.com/adepza/status/1250147755114332163>

Another Month at the Honduras Forum Switzerland

Past Activities:

-

Upcoming Activities:

-

Subscribe to this monthly report: foro_honduras_suiza@riseup.net

Subscribe to our daily press overview: daniellm@bluewin.ch

Become a member: info@honduras-forum.ch

Support our work: IBAN: CH54 0900 0000 8003 3036 3

<http://honduras-forum.ch/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Honduras-Forum-Schweiz-753337355053820/>