

# *Another Month in Honduras...*

## Human Rights Monitor – August 2019

After 20 months of national and international solidarity campaigns and public pressure, two political prisoners were finally released from pre-trial detention this month. At the same time, the attack on the human rights defenders in Guapinol took a turn to the worse with the assassination of one of them and the pre-trial detention of seven more. Then it was also the month new revelations were made in the US regarding drug trafficking links of JOH sparking new protests with an uncertain outcome. The good, the bad and the unknown are all close together in this country. Welcome to another month in Honduras.

In solidarity,

Daniel Langmeier

Honduras Forum Switzerland

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## Abbreviations

ASJ	Association for a More Just Society
ATIC	Technical Bureau for Criminal Investigation
BID	Inter-American Development Bank
CABEI	Central American Bank for Economic Integration
CDM	Center for Women's Rights
CIPRODEH	Center for Human Rights Research and Promotion
CMH	Medical Association Honduras
CNA	National Anti-Corruption Council
COFADEH	Committee of Families of the Detained-Disappeared in Honduras
COIPRODEN	Coordination of Private Institutions for Children's Rights
CONADEH	National Human Rights Commission
COPINH	Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras
FEPRODDHH	Special Public Prosecutor Unit for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Journalists, Social Communicators and Justice Operators
FOSDEH	Social Forum on the External Debt of Honduras
FOSDEH	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
UFECIC	Anti-Corruption Unit of the Attorney General's Office
UNAH	National Autonomous University of Honduras
ZEDE	Zone for Employment and Economic Development

## Human Rights and Their Defenders

This month, both the UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, Diego García-Sayán, and the UN Working Group on business and human rights traveled to Honduras. The former visited Honduras for a one-week evaluation.<sup>1 2</sup> The later stayed for 10 days to assess efforts to identify, prevent and address the adverse effects of business activities on human rights.<sup>3</sup> Meeting with the president of the Judicial Power, Diego García-Sayán said: "Too many people are threatened or have lost their lives in the exercise of law in Honduras, at the hands of networks of corruption and organized crime, and the vast majority of these crimes remain unpunished, which cannot be accepted at all in a State of law".<sup>4</sup> On the last day of his visit, he presented preliminary observations as well as some recommendations, e.g. on the ongoing challenge of judicial independence or on the controversial role of the Security and Defense Council.<sup>5</sup> García-Sayán also lauded the work of the MACCIH and UFECIC.<sup>6</sup> He will present his final report to the UN Human Rights Council in June 2020.<sup>7</sup>

On its last day in Honduras, the UN Working Group on Human Rights and Business visited Reitoca to meet with the Indigenous Lenca Council and hear about the imposition of a hydroelectric project.<sup>8</sup> At the end of their visit, they published a press release urging the Honduran government to act "to address the root causes of social conflicts, as well as the extreme distrust of the ability of state institutions to promote a fair and inclusive economy".<sup>9</sup> COPINH highlighted some of the main findings of the working group, e.g. the socialization of a project is not equal to a meaningful consultation.<sup>10 11 12 13</sup>

## Assassinations

Hours before the hearing against 7 of the totally 32 criminalized human rights defenders from Guapinol (see next month's monitor), one of them, Roberto Antonio Argueta, was murdered in Tocoa. The Municipal Committee in Defense of Commons and Public Goods and the Coalition against Impunity condemned the assassination and demanded an investigation.<sup>14</sup> OACNUDH lamented the murder and demands a swift and impartial investigation. They also highlighted the

1 <https://oacnudh.hn/experto-de-naciones-unidas-visita-honduras-para-evaluar-la-independencia-de-su-sistema-judicial/>

2 <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24891&LangID=E>

3 <https://oacnudh.hn/honduras-visita-de-expertos-de-la-onu-para-evaluar-el-respeto-de-los-derechos-humanos-por-parte-de-las-empresas/>

4 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/relator-de-la-onu-para-la-independencia-de-jueces-inicia-visita-a-honduras.html>

5 <https://www.ohchr.org/SP/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24910&LangID=S>

6 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/22/relator-de-la-onu-urge-adoptar-las-medidas-para-poner-fin-a-la-corrupcion-y-garantizar-la-independencia-judicial/>

7 <https://tiempo.hn/relator-de-la-onu-injerencia-politica-afecta-independencia-judicial-hondurena/>

8 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/28/dante-pesce-experto-de-la-onu-conoce-situacion-de-proyecto-extractivista-de-reitoca/>

9 <https://oacnudh.hn/honduras-el-gobierno-y-las-empresas-hondurenas-deben-garantizar-la-proteccion-de-los-derechos-de-las-personas-afectadas-por-los-proyectos-de-desarrollo-dicen-expertos-de-la-onu/>

10 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1166886182413692928>

11 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1166878659447316481>

12 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1166906315035168769>

13 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1166898261942263809>

14 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/1201-asesinado-a-balazos-uno-de-los-acusados-por-defender-el-rio-guapinol>

important work of HRDs in Honduras, especially in the Guapinol case.<sup>15</sup> The Observatory for the Protection of Defenders by the OMCT and FIDH launched an urgent call.<sup>16</sup>

## Attacks, Criminalization and Harassment

See Extractive Industries sub-section on the Guapinol case.

## Indigenous Peoples

OFRANEH denounced that a Garífuna man and his two children were attacked in Vallecito, Colón.<sup>17</sup> Garífuna communities in the coastal north of Honduras have suffered various attacks by state and non-state actors wanting their land.<sup>18</sup> <sup>19</sup> <sup>20</sup> OFRANEH sent out an alert as once again armed men threaten the Garífuna community of Vallecito. OFRANEH denounced that organized crime takes control of an area the Honduran state has given up decades ago.<sup>21</sup> National and international organizations followed up with their own alerts<sup>22</sup> <sup>23</sup> and even El Tiempo reported on it.<sup>24</sup> Protection International holds the JOH regime responsible of infringing the human rights of the Vallecito community.<sup>25</sup>

There was also an increase of attacks against indigenous Lenca communities in these last weeks.<sup>26</sup> And it did not stop in August. Men linked to the Madrid Family stopped some 20 women belonging to COPINH from reaching Río Blanco as part of a mission of solidarity.<sup>27</sup> ConexiHon published a short video on the harassment suffered by the indigenous Lenca community of Río Blanco.<sup>28</sup> In total, communities affiliated with COPINH suffered at least nine attacks in the last six weeks.<sup>29</sup> The UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights met with COPINH. COPINH denounced "the extractive policies that are tried to be imposed in the Lenca communities causing division, violence and serious environmental damage in the communities where these projects are installed".<sup>30</sup>

CESPAD reported on the situation of the indigenous Tolupán community of San Francisco de Locomapa in Yoro. "In Honduras there are 31 indigenous Tolupanes tribes: 25 are based in the department of Yoro and 6 in Francisco Morazán. The last estimate made through a census in 2012, establishes that there were about 30 thousand indigenous people in both departments. Each tribe has

15 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1166912656529395713>

16 <https://www.omct.org/es/human-rights-defenders/urgent-interventions/honduras/2019/08/d25489/>

17 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1158494295462227968>

18 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1160931055425269761>

19 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1160937586539606017>

20 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1160934704679399424>

21 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1161681588385718272>

22 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/08/15/alerta-hombres-fuertemente-armados-amenazan-comunidad-garifuna-de-vallecito/>

23 [http://act.grassrootsonline.org/p/dia/action4/common/public?action\\_KEY=26848](http://act.grassrootsonline.org/p/dia/action4/common/public?action_KEY=26848)

24 <https://tiempo.hn/colon-comunidad-garifuna-de-vallecito-amenazada-y-en-zozobra-por-hombres-armados/>

25 <https://twitter.com/Plimesoamerica/status/1161718072580988928>

26 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/se-agudizan-ataques-contra-comunidades-indigenas-lencas/>

27 [https://twitter.com/IM\\_Defensoras/status/116284502284635750](https://twitter.com/IM_Defensoras/status/116284502284635750)

28 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/tv/1191-entrevista-del-hostigamiento-contra-el-campamento-indigena-en-rio-blanco>

29 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1164328087200440320>

30 <https://copinh.org/2019/08/visita-onu-grupo-de-empresas-y-ddhh/>

a Governing Board, a structure composed of members of the tribe, to which the community has delegated the administration of its natural resources (rivers and forests). (...) Although they are tribal and ancestral, it is from the Governing Board that the internal division begins in the Tolupanes tribes. Strong denunciations of compromises made between the them, loggers and state authorities linked to the use of wood, dot the management of the Tolupán forest."<sup>31</sup>

But there was also some uplifting news. COPINH reported that the Lenca community La Jarcia had its land measured as a first step to receive community land titles. The community of La Jarcia has been living on this land and cultivating it for nine years, but in 2016 they were temporarily evicted and their cultures destroyed.<sup>32</sup>

## The Case of Berta Cáceres

41 months have passed since the assassination of Berta Cáceres<sup>33</sup> and nine months have passed since the material authors in the Berta Cáceres case were found guilty but there is still no sentence.<sup>34</sup> It is important for Berta's family and COPINH that they can still count on international solidarity. In a recent statement (see also Migration sub-section below) , US Senator Patrick Leahy also mentioned the case of Berta Cáceres. "Many of us also remember the emblematic case of Berta Cáceres, a courageous indigenous environmental activist who was repeatedly harassed and threatened and ultimately assassinated for opposing the illegal construction of a hydroelectric plant. After the police tried to cover up the crime, it was only thanks to international outrage that seven individuals, including an employee of the DESA hydroelectric company, a former security chief for the company who was an ex-U.S.-trained army lieutenant, another U.S.-trained special forces major, and a former special forces sergeant, were arrested and convicted. Yet more than three years after that horrific crime, none of them has been sentenced. The prosecution of an eighth individual, David Castillo, the former DESA president who was also a U.S.-trained former military intelligence officer, has been stalled for months. It is also widely believed that there are other co-conspirators who have not been charged."<sup>35</sup> Additionally, COPINH's general coordinator Berta Zúniga met with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers Diego García-Sayán to discuss the case of her mother.<sup>36 37</sup>

Back in April, the preliminary hearing against David Castillo Mejía, one of the intellectual authors in the Berta Cáceres case, was suspended because his defense presented an expert opinion trying to unlink him from the assassination. But this was neither the time and place in the legal procedure to present such a thing. Nevertheless, the judge allowed it. The MP then appealed this and the whole process came to a standstill. This month, an Appeals Court rejected the expert opinion criticizing

31 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/08/27/el-negocio-detras-de-la-explotacion-del-bosque-de-los-indigenas-tolupanes-en-honduras/>

32 <https://copinh.org/2019/08/la-jarcia-medicion-de-terreno/>

33 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1157327688203407364>

34 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1167086499386593281>

35 <https://www.leahy.senate.gov/press/statement-of-senator-patrick-leahy-on-the-situation-in-honduras>

36 <https://copinh.org/2019/08/nuestra-coordinadora-bertha-zuniga-se-reune-con-relator-onu/>

37 <https://www.lavanguardia.com/vida/20190820/464178261519/relator-onu-indaga-obstaculos-de-entorno-bertha-caceres-en-juicio-a-asesinos.html>

the judge for allowing it in the first place.<sup>38</sup> On August 30, a report was published by a group of expert human rights organizations that have been closely monitoring the Berta Cáceres case: “Violence, Corruption & Impunity in the Honduran Energy Industry: A Profile of Roberto David Castillo Mejia.”<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile in the US, “[t]he children of murdered Honduran activist Berta Cáceres have applied to a US federal court to subpoena bank records linked to a \$1.4m luxury house in Texas purchased by the alleged mastermind of the crime just months after the killing. (...) One of the executives identified in court was David Roberto Castillo Mejía, the CEO of Desa. In March 2018 Castillo was indicted as an “intellectual author”, who is alleged to have coordinated with, and provided funds to, the killers. He vehemently denies any involvement. Castillo, a US-trained former intelligence officer and former government employee, bought the luxury five-bedroom, five-bathroom detached home in Houston in November 2016, thanks to a \$400,000 down-payment and \$1.04m mortgage from the Hancock Whitney Bank in Mississippi, Louisiana. The application by Cáceres’ children to subpoena financial details held by the bank has been filed at the southern district court of Mississippi. The application is for foreign legal assistance, and seeks to uncover evidence for use in the Honduran murder trial against Castillo.”<sup>40</sup>

Some months ago, MACCIH presented the Gualcarque Fraud case investigating the corruption around the murder of Berta Cáceres. This month, an appeals court rejected to recognize COPINH as a victim in this case.<sup>41</sup> The same court decided to open trial against 14 of the imputed who were not accused of fraud in the previous hearing.<sup>42</sup> UFECIC welcomes the second decision but stays quiet on the first one.<sup>43</sup>

## LGBTQ

This month, the MP informed about an initial hearing in the case of the assassinated LGBTQ activist Walter Orlando Tróchez. He was murdered in the post-coup d'état repression in December 2009.<sup>44</sup> Also in August, human rights organizations held a public forum on the impacts of the coup d'état on the rights of the LGBTQ community and labor rights.<sup>45 46</sup>

And lastly some good news. Congress started to discuss a bill on trans identity.<sup>47</sup>

38 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/1185-corte-de-apelaciones-rechaza-peritaje-de-la-defensa-de-david-castillo-por-procedimiento-irregular>

39 <http://www.soaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Violence-Corruption-Impunity-A-Profile-of-Roberto-David-Castillo.pdf>

40 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/31/berta-caceres-murder-trial-subpoena-david-castillo>

41 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1167237129895854082>

42 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/revocan-sobreseimiento-provisional-a-12-implicados-en-caso-gualcarque.html>

43 <https://twitter.com/UFECIC1/status/1167183571766927371>

44 <http://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/141-agosto2019/4635-en-audiencia-inicial-presunto-asesino-de-defensor-de-derechos-de-la-comunidad-lgtbi>

45 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/despues-del-golpe-de-estado-aumento-la-violencia-contra-la-comunidad-lgtbi/>

46 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/pasantia-renadett-participa-en-el-foro-sobre-impacto-del-golpe-de-estado-y-violacion-a-derechos-laborales-y-lgtbi/>

47 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/27/afinan-proyecto-de-ley-de-identidad-de-genero-para-las-personas-trans/>

## Freedom of Expression and Journalists

Another month, further attacks on journalists. ConexiHon published a short documentary on the attacks faced by Honduran journalists.<sup>48</sup> A DPI police agent aggressively stopped the journalist Wenceslao Canales from reporting on an incident and threatened with arrest. The same journalist had received threats last month after reporting on corruption at a local hospital in Tocoa.<sup>49</sup> Journalists and social communicators from Santa Rosa de Copán denounce the lack of access to public information by local state institutions.<sup>50</sup>

C-Libre organized a forum on freedom of expression with the presence of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression of the Inter-American Human Rights System, Edison Lanza.<sup>51 52</sup> During the forum, the problems with the new Penal Code were discussed (see also sub-section below on the Penal Code).<sup>53</sup>

## Assassinations

On August 31, the journalist Edgar Joel Aguilar was murdered in La Entrada, Copán. He was in a barbershop when unknown assailants entered and shot him. He is the third journalist murdered in 2019 after Leonardo Gabriel Hernández in March and Santiago “Santi” Carvajal in July.<sup>54</sup> In these last years, Aguilar had received threats on several occasions.<sup>55</sup> Danilo Morales, director of the Protection Mechanism, claimed that he had not been made aware of the threats he faced.<sup>56</sup> But according to Pasos de Animal Grande, Aguilar had denounced receiving threats and fearing for his security at the Bureau of Police Investigation (DPI) but he had received no answer.<sup>57</sup> OACNUDH profoundly lamented his murder.<sup>58</sup> They demanded a swift and impartial investigation and reminded the JOH regime that in its recent visit, the UN Working Group on Business & Human Rights (see above) found that impunity in cases of attacks against HRDs and journalist is the rule rather than the exception.<sup>59</sup>

## Violence against Women

CEM-H and others published a report on the impact of violence and insecurity on the lives of women.<sup>60</sup> In an additional article, María Virginia Díaz Méndez zooms in on violence against women

48 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/libertad-de-expresion/1192-honduras-prensa-bajo-ataque>

49 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1053-jefe-de-la-dpi-impide-cobertura-y-amenaza-a-periodista>

50 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2541-que-esconden-instituciones-estatales-en-copan-niegan-informacion-a-periodistas>

51 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2537-relator-especial-para-la-libertad-de-expresion-de-la-cidh-llego-a-honduras-preocupado-por-la-situacion-de-periodistas>

52 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/tv/1193-las-tendencias-de-la-regulacion-penal-que-criminaliza-la-libertad-de-expresion>

53 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/libertad-de-expresion/1194-violencia-estatal-criminalizacion-y-riesgos-del-nuevo-codigo-penal>

54 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1057-asesinado-el-tercer-periodista-de-2019-en-honduras>

55 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/08/31/asesinan-periodista-en-occidente-de-honduras-habia-denunciado-amenazas-a-muerte-y-no-lo-protegieron/>

56 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/08/31/director-del-mecanismo-de-proteccion-no-fuimos-informados-de-amenazas-a-muerte-contra-periodista-de-canal-6/>

57 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2554-dpi-sabia-que-lo-amenazaban-por-celular-y-no-investigo>

58 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1168593663942975488>

59 <https://tiempo.hn/oacnudh-pide-investigar-prontamente-asesinato-del-periodista-edgar-aguilar/>

60 <http://www.cemh.org.hn/informe-seguridad-humana/>

in the neighborhoods of Tegucigalpa.<sup>61</sup> Violence also takes a structural form. Radio Progreso reported on the feminization of poverty in Honduras as a result of a patriarchal culture.<sup>62</sup> Oxfam published a new report investigating the disproportionate effect of taxes on women in Guatemala, Honduras and the Dominican Republic.<sup>63</sup>

## Protection Mechanism

Reporteros de Investigación highlighted various problems regarding the situation of the police escort mandated by the protection mechanism to protect the journalist Jairo López. "The police escort of the journalist Jairo López has been persecuted, tortured, sent to dark cells and suffered a job transfer in retaliation for doing his job of protecting a facing death threats journalist."<sup>64</sup> They denounced the failure of the JOH regime to implement the approved security measures by the Protection Mechanism.<sup>65</sup> Pasos de Animal Grande spoke with OFRANEH's Miriam Miranda about the lack of protection for her and the Garífuna community by the Protection Mechanism.<sup>66</sup>

CESPAD published an empirical study of the effectiveness of the protection mechanism for HRDs taking Guapinol as the test case.<sup>67</sup>

## Political Prisoners

August began with a week long campaign in support of the political prisoners in Honduras. Family members and the Committee for the Liberation of the Political Prisoners met before the MP to start a solidarity fasting from 7am to 5pm, every day until Friday.<sup>68</sup> The same day, the political prisoners Raúl Alvarez, Edwin Espinal and Rommel Portillo announced that they would start a hunger strike.<sup>69</sup> On day two of the solidarity fasting with the political prisoners, more social and political leaders joined, for example members from Citizen Action against the Dictatorship and from the Convergence against the Reelection.<sup>70</sup> Human rights defender and former UNAH dean spoke of Honduras as a whole as another political prisoner whose democracy is imprisoned.<sup>71</sup> On day 4 of the solidarity fasting with the political prisoners, COPINH, CINPH and OFRANEH joined the protest outside the MP.<sup>72</sup>

In the midst of this, the news broke that in the case of Edwin and Raúl, a review hearing would take place the next day, giving their defense team only a minimum amount to prepare.<sup>73</sup> The judge

61 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/08/17/distrito-central-la-ciudad-mas-peligrosa-de-america-latina-para-las-mujeres/>

62 <https://wp.radioprogreso.net/cultura-patriarcal-hace-que-la-pobreza-tenga-rostro-de-mujer-en-honduras/>

63 <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/do-takes-influence-inequality-between-women-and-men>

64 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/08/12/peligro-y-tortura-sufre-escolta-policia-al-cumplir-con-proteccion-de-periodista-jairo-lopez/>

65 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/08/14/sigue-alto-riesgo-y-acoso-estatal-contr-periodista-ha-tenido-que-empenar-hasta-su-computadora/>

66 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2538-miriam-miranda-ante-las-amenazas-que-estoy-pasando-el-mecanismo-de-proteccion-no-ha-dicho-esta-boca-es-mia>

67 <http://cespad.org/hn/2019/08/21/en-el-caso-de-guapinol-y-san-pedro-funciona-el-mecanismo-de-proteccion-de-ddhh-salvaguada-la-vida-de-las-y-los-defensores-de-la-tierra-bosque-y-rios/>

68 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/inicia-ayuno-en-tegucigalpa-y-el-progreso-para-apoyar-huelga-de-hambre-de-los-presos-politicos/>

69 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/05/presos-politicos-de-honduras-se-declaran-en-huelga-de-hambre/>

70 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/en-segundo-dia-de-ayuno-accd-y-ccc-exigen-libertad-para-los-presos-politicos/>

71 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/honduras-es-un-pais-preso-politicamente-con-una-democracia-encarcelada-juan-almendares-bonilla/>

72 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/indigenas-y-negros-se-sumaron-al-ayuno-para-exigir-libertad-para-los-presos-politicos/>

73 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1159656621561303040>

decided that both Edwin and Raúl should be released and that they can await trial outside prison - after one year and eight months of pre-trial detention.<sup>74 75</sup> COPINH celebrated the decision and demanded the release of the two other political prisoners, Rommel Portillo and Gustavo Cáceres.<sup>76</sup> Human rights defender Karina Flores denounced that even though the organic impairment of Gustavo's brain as well as his cognitive impairment had been diagnosed, the JOH regime continues to deny him alternative measures to imprisonment.<sup>77</sup> Rommel was medically evaluated this month after three months in the La Tolva high-security prison. He is imprisoned, in this high-security prison, accused of having set tires on fire in front of the US embassy during a protest.<sup>78</sup>

Even though Edwin was released, his legal persecution continues. In a hearing on August 15, the MP presented 21 alleged pieces of evidence against him. His trial date was set to May 14-15, 2020.<sup>79</sup>

## Extractive Industries

The so-called Zones for Employment and Economic Development (ZEDEs) have been looming over Honduras and its people for years now. This month, René Osorio Canales claimed that the ZEDEs are delayed due to the "political crisis" in Honduras.<sup>80</sup>

The Assembly of Fighting Women of Honduras (Asamblea de Mujeres Luchadoras de Honduras) held a protest in front of the Supreme Court "denouncing the systematic looting of common lands and property, the criminalization of protest and the prosecution of defenders, the militarization of territories, racism and violence against women".<sup>81 82</sup> The protest was accompanied by the National Network of Defenders of Land and Territory (Renadett).<sup>83</sup>

And there was also some good news in August. Two more communities in La Paz declared themselves free of mining and hydroelectric projects.<sup>84</sup>

## Hydroelectricity

Popular protests around hydroelectric projects and plants in Honduras are widespread. In La Paz, Criterio spoke with Alfonso Martínez of the Environmental Indigenous Lenca Council of Honduras (CILAH). He denounced that Gladis Aurora López and other congresswo/men buy up concessions

74 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1159919892839059456>

75 <https://tiempo.hn/en-libertad-se-defenderan-jovenes-acusados-de-danar-el-hotel-marriot/>

76 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1159918074000285699>

77 <https://twitter.com/KarinaFloresHN/status/1165123598954237953>

78 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/rommel-baldemar-herrera-estar-recluido-en-una-carcel-de-maxima-seguridad-ha-sido-una-etapa-muy-fragil-de-mi-vida/>

79 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2532-ministerio-publico-empecinado-en-mantener-en-cautiverio-a-edwin-espinal>

80 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/por-crisis-politica-se-ha-retrasado-la-zede-dice-comisionado-rene-osorio-canales.html>

81 <https://nicaraguaymasespanol.blogspot.com/2019/08/asamblea-de-mujeres-luchadoras-de.html>

82 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/21/mujeres-de-honduras-denuncian-el-saqueo-y-la-militarizacion-de-sus-territorios/>

83 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/renadett-acompana-planton-de-la-asamblea-de-mujeres-luchadoras-de-honduras/>

84 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/municipios-de-la-paz-se-suman-a-declaratorias-de-zonas-libres-de-mineria-e-hidroelectricas/>

to then sell them to international investors.<sup>85</sup> Pasos de Animal Grande reported on protests by the indigenous Lenca community Chinda near El Tornillito, Santa Bárbara.<sup>86</sup>

## Mining

A trial will be opened against the head of the environment division at the Yoro mayoralty, Medardo Varela Bustillo, for illegally granting mining licenses in territory by the indigenous Tolupán tribe in San Francisco de Locomapa.<sup>87</sup> C-Libre denounced that the mining company Inversiones Zúniga García S. de R.L attempted to silence a local councilor and environmental defender in San Ignacio, Francisco Morazán.<sup>88</sup>

On August 5, Radio Progreso reported that the indigenous Tolupán in Yorito, Yoro successfully expelled a mining company.<sup>89</sup> But the victory was short-lived. A week later, the company aided by state security forces violently repressed the inhabitants of Yorito, Yoro. The indigenous Tolupanes had been protesting for over a year against the imposition of the mining. They rejected the project already in three town hall meetings, but the local authorities and the company pushed on.<sup>90</sup> COPA denounced the militarization of Yorito after the repression.<sup>91</sup> The mayor of Yorito, Margie Gonzales, received threats and according to her, the mining company CEAHSA has no permit.<sup>92</sup>

## Guapinol

At the end of August, seven (eight) criminalized human rights defenders from Guapinol were sent to pre-trial detention accused of illegal firearms carrying and illicit association.<sup>93 94</sup> The second one is a very common accusation used to criminalize HRDs, because the law stipulates that it leads to pre-trial detention.<sup>95</sup> According to Criterio, the protest against the mining company Inversiones Los Pinares in Guapinol has led to at least six deaths and dozens of criminalized members of the Municipal Committee for the Defense of Common Goods and Nature.<sup>96</sup> A curiosity of the accusation is that the list of accused includes a dead man, Antonio Martínez Ramos who died in April 2015.<sup>97</sup> This newest escalation took place just a week after the visit by the UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of magistrates and lawyers Diego García Sayán who voiced concerns regarding the use of judges with national jurisdiction to criminalize HRDs using the Guapinol case as an example.<sup>98</sup>

85 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/20/gladis-aurora-lopez-compra-las-concesiones-hidroelectricas-para-venderlas-a-las-transnacionales-video/>

86 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2535-vecinos-de-chinda-santa-barbara-protestan-por-construccion-de-represa-hidroelectrica>

87 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/141-agosto2019/4595-auto-de-formal-procesamiento-por-otorgamiento-ilegal-de-permisos-mineros-en-territorios-de-tribu-tolupan>

88 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1046-minera-pretende-silenciar-a-regidor-y-defensor-del-medio-ambiente>

89 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/poblacion-tolupan-de-yorito-expulsa-a-empresa-minera/>

90 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/policia-reprime-a-defensores-ambientales-en-yorito-yoro/>

91 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/copa-condena-represion-y-militarizacion-en-yorito/>

92 <https://tiempo.hn/alcaldesa-de-yorito-dice-que-el-dueno-de-ceahsa-no-tiene-permiso-para-explotar-mina/>

93 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/estado-insiste-en-acusaciones-contra-ambientalistas-defensores-del-rio-guapinol/>

94 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2543-carcel-por-ser-defensores-el-sistema-judicial-es-un-arma-contra-guapinol>

95 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1166117418047090689>

96 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/26/honduras-envian-a-prision-a-siete-ambientalistas-que-se-oponen-a-contaminacion-del-rio-guapinol/>

97 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/27/ministerio-publico-de-honduras-acusa-a-hombre-que-murio-en-el-2015/>

98 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2542-relator-especial-sobre-independencia-judicial-dijo-no-tener-informaciones-claras-y-completas-sobre-uso-de-jueces-nacionales-para-criminalizar-defensores>

A protest calling for their liberation was held outside the MP.<sup>99</sup> The Observatory for the Protection of Defenders by the OMCT and FIDH issued a press release condemning the use of criminal law to criminalize HRDs in Honduras.<sup>100</sup> Back in Guapinol, the priest Florentino Hernández who dared to stay on the side of the people in the South of Honduras is being persecuted by the Catholic Church.<sup>101</sup> The hearing itself was also accompanied by protests.<sup>102</sup>

The defense team of the HRDs challenged the nomination of the judge Carlos Irías de León and the audience was stalled in wait for a new judge.<sup>103</sup> A new judge was quickly found and his nomination causes great concern. He, Claudio Aguilar, is known to deal with cases involving the Military Police and that he sends defendants to pre-trial detention in the high-security prisons. Furthermore, the initial hearing now takes place at a military facility violating the principle of oral and public hearings, i.e. family members and social movements are limited in their capability to accompany the trial.<sup>104</sup> <sup>105</sup> C-Libre denounced that entry to journalists and lawyers was denied. ConexiHon published testimony by human rights defender and lawyer Omar Menjívar.<sup>106</sup> <sup>107</sup> According to him, the fact that a military judge heads the trial is unconstitutional. Outside of the military facility, a solidarity protest took place.<sup>108</sup> <sup>109</sup>

One HRDs from Guapinol, Arnold Javier Alemán Soriano, first was tried separately because he was accused of an additional crime going back to last fall. He was provisionally released after the hearing.<sup>110</sup> Afterwards, the hearing against the remaining HRDs should have taken place, but this time the mining company Inversiones Los Pinares challenged the judge. The Coalition against Impunity, meanwhile, filed constitutional challenged against the decree establishing the figure of national judges, misused to legally persecute HRDs.<sup>111</sup>

In total, 32 HRDs from Guapinol are criminalized and hours before the trial against the seven, one of the 32, Roberto Antonio Argueta, was murdered in Tocoa (see Assassination sub-section above).<sup>112</sup>

99 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/27/pobladores-de-guapinol-exigen-la-liberacion-inmediata-de-los-ambientalistas/>

100 <https://www.omct.org/es/human-rights-defenders/urgent-interventions/honduras/2019/08/d25488/>

101 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2544-partido-nacional-esta-atras-represion-ecclesial-y-uso-de-militares-y-policias-contr-el-padre-florentino>

102 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/inseguridad-juridica-genera-estado-contr-defensores-del-rio-guapinol/>

103 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/recusan-juez-que-conoceria-caso-de-criminalizados-por-la-defensa-de-guapinol/>

104 <https://twitter.com/cejil/status/1167480153032843264>

105 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/es-inconstitucional-que-un-juez-militar-conozca-el-caso-de-guapinol-denuncia-abogado-defensor/>

106 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/tv/1205-sin-acceso-y-sin-defensa-en-caso-guapinol-aqui-no-se-puede-grabar>

107 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/tv/1204-militares-bloquean-acceso-a-defensores-de-caso-guapinol>

108 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/caso-guapinol-justicia-militarizada-a-favor-de-los-grupos-de-poder/>

109 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2552-caso-guapinol-ministerio-publico-recusa-a-juez-que-dejo-en-libertad-definitiva-a-12-defensores>

110 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2548-estado-desconocio-convenios-internacionales-un-cuartel-militar-para-el-juicio-de-defensor-de-guapinol>

111 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/ci-presenta-recurso-de-inconstitucionalidad-contr-juzgados-de-jurisdiccion-nacional/>

112 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/1201-asesinado-a-balazos-uno-de-los-acusados-por-defender-el-rio-guapinol>

## Corruption and Its Enemies

OACNUDH held an event with the MACCIH on corruption and human rights.<sup>113</sup> <sup>114</sup> CESPAD published a report investigating the role of the public in fighting gran-scale corruption cases in Honduras.<sup>115</sup>

## The Onslaught against the Anti-Corruption Bodies

Civil society organizations demand clear rules for the evaluation of the MACCIH (see last month's monitor).<sup>116</sup> Canada supports the renewal of the MACCIH's contract.<sup>117</sup> The vice-director of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Günther Maihold, favors a continuation of the MACCIH in Honduras.<sup>118</sup> The MP published a press release praising the collaboration with the MACCIH and the MACCIH did the same thing in return.<sup>119</sup> <sup>120</sup> <sup>121</sup> The UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers Diego García-Sayán, who was in Honduras this month (see above), met with the ad-interim spokesperson of the MACCIH, Ana María Calderon.<sup>122</sup>

UFECIC is growing and seeking more than 40 new employees.<sup>123</sup> The Washington Post published a profile of the head of the MACCIH's Honduran counterpart UFECIC, public prosecutor Luis Santos. "Mr. Santos has filed charges against powerful congressmen, ex-ministers and a former first lady in Honduras. He has another 20 ongoing investigations that target members of current and past administrations, and involve about \$100 million in allegedly stolen government funds, he said. Honduras lawmakers have stymied some of those investigations and some legislators are now challenging the right of Mr. Santos and his team of nine prosecutors to continue their work under a special arrangement with the Organization of American States, which provides funding, foreign prosecutors and experts to assist with cases. They've argued the OAS mission, which is up for renewal in January, is unconstitutional because it infringes on Honduran sovereignty and undermines judicial independence."<sup>124</sup>

## Corruption around JOH

JOH being under pressure (see sub-section below), it did not help, that his wife Ana Rosalinda García Carías was in the news this month due to her links to the Pandora corruption case.<sup>125</sup> She claimed that she had distanced herself from the company linked to the Pandora case. The company

113 <https://oacnudh.hn/elementor-4166/>

114 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2531-concluyen-en-foro-el-golpe-de-estado-de-2009-fortalecio-estructuras-de-corrupcion-en-honduras>

115 <http://cespad.org.hn/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Corrupcion-WEB-1.pdf>

116 <http://elpulso.hn/exigen-reglas-claras-en-evaluacion-de-la-maccih/>

117 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/canada-apoya-renovacion-de-contrato-de-la-maccih.html>

118 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/maccih-debe-continuar-sugiere-instituto-politico-aleman.html>

119 [https://twitter.com/MP\\_Honduras/status/1159272628198301696](https://twitter.com/MP_Honduras/status/1159272628198301696)

120 <https://www.oas.org/es/sap/dsdme/maccih/new/docs/MCH-012.MACCIH-MANIFIESTA.pdf>

121 <https://tiempo.hn/maccih-ufecic-mp-un-socio-fundamental-elogia-a-fiscal-general/>

122 [https://twitter.com/OEA\\_MACCIH/status/1163153145977016328](https://twitter.com/OEA_MACCIH/status/1163153145977016328)

123 [https://twitter.com/OEA\\_MACCIH/status/1166091947737591808](https://twitter.com/OEA_MACCIH/status/1166091947737591808)

124 <https://www.wsj.com/articles/honduran-prosecutor-stalled-by-politicians-who-see-us-as-their-enemies-11565524801?redirect=amp#click=https://t.co/dMvwuUwDyT>

125 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/02/caso-pandora-empresa-ligada-a-primera-dama-recibio-l-1-5-millones/>

was founded in December 2005 by her, her friend and former Minister for Social Development Zoila Patricia Cruz Cerrato, and the husband of JOH's deceased sister Hilda Hernández, Jean Francois Marie de Peyrecave Fiallos.<sup>126</sup> ContraCorriente explained that in 2006, the year she claimed she disconnected with the company, García Carías founded two NGOs (FUNDEIH and FUNDEIMH) which are the main executor of the Vida Mejor social program of JOH, an important pillar of his presidency. Both NGOs are suspected of wrongdoing and when the MACCIH under his former head Juan Jiménez Mayor started to investigate them, this caused an internal crisis leading to Jiménez Mayor's resignation.<sup>127</sup>

Reporteros de Investigación reported that JOH's salary wasn't made public anymore starting after his illegal, fraudulent and violent reelection in January 2018. They found that in July 2019, JOH gained almost 140'000 Lempiras per month, 40'000 more than before the electoral fraud.<sup>128</sup>

## The Case against the Former First Lady Rosa Elena de Lobo

The MACCIH and UFECIC have their first sentence. The former first lady Rosa Elena Bonilla de Lobo was found guilty on eight counts of fraud and three counts of undue appropriation.<sup>129</sup> <sup>130</sup> The US Chargé d'Affaires tweeted that the MACCIH can continue to count with US support.<sup>131</sup> In the same case, her brother-in-law was acquitted.<sup>132</sup>

The CNA warns of seeing the sentence in the corruption case against the former first lady as a complete victory.<sup>133</sup> Charges for embezzlement of public money were dropped because the MP failed to prove that she was a public official.<sup>134</sup> MADJ commented it as follows: "Nothing more outrageous and impunity-inducing for a court to affirm that Rosa de Lobo cannot be considered as a public official despite the fact that, without discussion because it was a notorious fact, she assumed public functions, administered and squandered public funds, abused her status as a civil servant. This statement of the Court of Justice is a slap to the intelligence and dignity of the people. That statement is insane, uncritical and irrational."<sup>135</sup> Dana Frank, a professor at the University of California, Santa Cruz, came to a similar conclusion: "While it underscores the breadth of corruption, and the importance of continuing and strengthening the MACCIH, [former first lady Lobo's] conviction is token and largely for show ... to make it appear that corruption is being effectively addressed".<sup>136</sup>

<sup>126</sup> <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/02/primera-dama-de-honduras-dice-que-se-desligo-de-empresa-que-saqueo-al-estado/>

<sup>127</sup> <https://contracorriente.red/2019/08/02/los-expedientes-perdidos-de-la-primera-dama/>

<sup>128</sup> <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/08/21/joh-con-un-aumento-de-40000-lempiras-en-secreto-desde-su-reeleccion/>

<sup>129</sup> <https://twitter.com/PJdeHonduras/status/1163957687274659841>

<sup>130</sup> [https://twitter.com/OEA\\_MACCIH/status/1163961968476262406](https://twitter.com/OEA_MACCIH/status/1163961968476262406)

<sup>131</sup> <https://twitter.com/USAmbHonduras/status/1164017549249536002>

<sup>132</sup> <https://tiempo.hn/luego-de-18-meses-en-prision-absuelven-a-cunado-de-mi-rosa/>

<sup>133</sup> <https://tiempo.hn/cna-sobre-fallo-contrar-rosita-no-es-victoria-total-el-nuevo-codigo-penal-es-el-problema/>

<sup>134</sup> <http://elpulso.hn/es-o-no-es-funcionaria-publica-la-primera-dama/>

<sup>135</sup> <https://madj.org/index.php/2019/08/22/alborotada-y-desbordada-impunidad-de-los-corrupos-en-honduras/>

<sup>136</sup> <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/brief/honduras-anti-graft-body-secures-historic-conviction-former-first-lady/>

Later, El Heraldo reported how the new Penal Code would reduce the possible duration of the sentence of the former first lady Rosa Elena Bonilla de Lobo for corruption.<sup>137</sup> UFECIC requested a 77-year prison sentence for the former first lady Rosa Elena Bonilla de Lobo and 64-year for her accomplice Saul Escobar.<sup>138</sup>

## Astropharma Case

The same month the the Honduran judicial system convicted the former first lady (see above), it acquitted the Gutiérrez family in the Astropharma corruption case. "This ruling, according to the criminal lawyer, Omar Menjivar, highlights the technical and probative weaknesses of the MP and that induces the courts to issue favorable sentences as happened with those linked to the Astropharma case. Those deficiencies of the MP, the well-known litigant exposes, causes prosecutors to lose their judgments and be unable to fight high-profile corruption cases."<sup>139</sup> Civil society organizations also denounced the acquittal.<sup>140</sup> The MP challenged the acquittal.<sup>141</sup>

Radio Progreso summarized the different outcomes in the two cases as follows: "This week we witnessed the resolution of two trials with two different results. The first was the Astropharma case, which accused Lena Gutierrez, her father, her husband, her brother and 9 others. The second was the case (...) against Rosa Elena de Lobo, her private secretary and brother-in-law Mauricio Mora, detained since February 2018. (..) The question that comes to mind is why where there two different resolutions to two cases with obvious signs of corruption? There are at least two explanations: in the case of Lena Gutierrez and her honorable family, it seems that the decision was more a political one than a legal one. The political decision was expressed in the technical deficiencies of the MP by not doing the criminal investigation required to show irrefutable evidence of acts of corruption. That is, there was a crime, but there was no criminal investigation (...) [In the other case] things were different, the case was investigated by the Special Fiscal Unit Against Impunity and Corruption. The UFECIC did its job, showed scientific evidence of the crimes that were committed. That is, there was a crime and there was a criminal investigation and independence in the UFECIC investigation, so that the court had no other way but to issue a conviction."<sup>142</sup>

## The Petty Cash Accounts of the Brother Case

The head of UFECIC Luis Santos questioned the decision by the judge to drop charges against two former state officials in the corruption case Caja Chica del Hermano, Wilfredo Cerrato and the brother of Pepe Lobo, Jorge Lobo (see last month's monitor).<sup>143</sup>

137 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1312188-466/con-el-nuevo-c%C3%B3digo-penal-se-reduce-pena-de-rosa-elena-de>

138 <https://twitter.com/UFECIC.1/status/1166477633460330497>

139 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3487-no-hubo-pastillas-de-harina-libres-los-gutierrez-junto-a-14-enjuiciados>

140 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/20/padre-melo-insta-a-vendedoras-de-baleadas-a-producir-pastillas-de-harina/>

141 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/141-agosto2019/4682-ministerio-publico-presentara-recurso-de-casacion-tras-conocer-fallo-judicial-a-favor-de-imputados-en-caso-denominado-astropharma>

142 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/dos-decisiones-una-estructura-criminal/>

143 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/ufecic-cuestiona-determinacion-judicial-en-el-caso-caja-chica-del-hermano.html>

## Impunity Pact

In the first so-called Impunity Pact, the Nationalist congresswoman Sara Medina evaded a trial by paying 20'000 Lempiras and a deal with the PGR. This month, a judge challenged this deal and the trial will continue.<sup>144</sup>

## IHSS Corruption Case

An appeals court confirmed the opening of the trial against the former IHSS director Mario Zelaya for embezzlement. At the same time, they dropped four charges of abuse of authority.<sup>145</sup> The charges against the businessman Roberto Bandes Atuán in the same case were completely dropped.<sup>146</sup> Later in August, the MP succeeded in getting the goods and companies of Jesús Wilfredo Cerna Ordóñez and Nancy Johana Bertetty Gary seized, linked to the IHSS corruption case.<sup>147</sup>

## State Security Forces

The former police official René Darío Méndez was found guilty of sexually abusing a woman.<sup>148</sup> The MP arrested an active police agent accused of homicide.<sup>149</sup> According to DIDADPOL, 256 members of the police force have been purged so far this year.<sup>150</sup> At the same time, Didadpol opened discharge hearings against 96 TIGRES agents for their protests some weeks ago against state violence (see former monitor).<sup>151</sup>

## Assassinations

A former DPI agent was sentenced to 11 years for attempted homicide<sup>152</sup> and an active police agent was found guilty of homicide.<sup>153</sup>

## Repression

On August 13, the police had opened fire on campesino protesters blocking the highway in San Juan Pueblo. “Four men were injured, one very seriously with a chest wound- a few days later it was being reported among the population that one man had died.”<sup>154</sup> OACNUDH expressed concern

144 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/13/desestiman-arreglo-de-diputada-sara-medina-con-la-pgr/>

145 <https://tiempo.hn/caso-ihss-corte-quita-cuatro-delitos-a-mario-zelaya-y-sobresee-a-roberto-bandes/>

146 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/corte-de-apelaciones-dicta-sobreseimiento-para-empresario-acusado-en-mega fraude-al-ihss.html>

147 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/141-agosto2019/4693-mp-logra-nueva-sentencia-de-comiso-sobre-bienes-de-origen-ilicito-ligados-al-desfalco-del-ihss>

148 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/141-agosto2019/4597-sentencia-condenatoria-para-ex-oficial-de-policia-por-el-delito-de-violacion>

149 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/a-256-policias-asciende-la-depuracion-de-policias-este-ano.html>

150 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/abren-expedientes-a-96-agentes-especiales-que-participaron-en-huelga-de-fusiles-caidos.html>

151 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/abren-expedientes-a-96-agentes-especiales-que-participaron-en-huelga-de-fusiles-caidos.html>

152 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/141-agosto2019/4676-en-tamara-cumplira-11-anos-de-prision-exagente-de-la-dpi-por-intento-de-homicidio-y-atentado>

153 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/141-agosto2019/4694-condenan-a-policia-activo-por-homicidio-en-perjuicio-de-militar>

154 <http://hondurasresists.blogspot.com/2019/08/a-moment-in-honduras-celebrations-and.html>

about this violent eviction.<sup>155</sup> Some days later, various human rights organizations presented a habeas corpus for the San Juan Pueblo community which since then had been heavily militarized.<sup>156</sup>

## Penitentiary System

Two inmates at the youth detention center were able to escape.<sup>157</sup>

## Militarization

Defensores en Línea denounced that soldiers and police agents illegally raided the house of an 86-year old. When he denounced this at the MP, the public prosecutor changed his testimony and put as the main perpetrators the police agents, omitting, against the protest of the victim, the soldiers.<sup>158 159</sup>

## International Community

Taiwan announced to donate \$2 million to the JOH regime to combat dengue.<sup>160</sup> JOH also met with the Taiwanese Minister of Defense, Yen Teh-fa.<sup>161</sup> Honduras and the Central-American Bank for Economic Integration (BCIE) signed a \$63 million loan agreement for the establishment of the new identity card.<sup>162</sup> Part of the money comes from the EU.<sup>163</sup> The external public and private debt rose by another \$358 million to over \$9 billion. In the first six months of 2019, the JOH regime received disbursements worth \$830 million from multilateral organizations and \$75.8 millions in debts from multilateral lenders.<sup>164</sup>

Also this month, the Mexican foreign minister presented new details on Mexico's development plan for the Norther Triangle. Projects in Honduras will be implemented in the Central District, San Pedro Sula, La Ceiba, El Progreso and Choluteca.<sup>165</sup> JOH then traveled to Mexico for a follow-up meeting.<sup>166</sup>

ContraCorriente published an exhaustive investigation comprised of several articles on the influence of the evangelical movement in Honduras and the region.<sup>167</sup>

155 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1162468936467845120>

156 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/20/desmilitarizacion-y-retiro-de-agentes-policiales-de-san-juan-pueblo-atlantida-exigen-organizaciones-de-derechos-humanos/>

157 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/lester-ramirez-senala-que-ley-especial-contiene-varias-inconsistencias.html>

158 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/%e9%bb%bfpolicia-militar-allana-casa-de-ancianos-y-el-mp-omite-denuncia-completa/>

159 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/15/brutalidad-agentes-de-la-dpi-ingresan-a-la-fuerza-a-vivienda-en-colonia-el-pedregal/>

160 <http://copeco.gob.hn/Ayuda-de-Taiwan>

161 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/presidente-herandez-recibe-al-ministro-de-defensa-de-taiwan.html>

162 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/finanzas-y-bcie-firman-convenio-por-63-millones-para-proyecto-de-identificacion-nacional.html>

163 <https://tiempo.hn/bcie-y-union-europea-destinan-70-9-millones-proceso-nueva-identidad-1/>

164 <https://tiempo.hn/bch-3587-millones-aumento-deuda-publica-externa-privada-de-honduras/>

165 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/14/canciller-de-mexico-detalla-plan-de-migracion-y-desarrollo-para-centroamerica/>

166 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/presidente-herandez-de-visita-en-mexico-para-adquirir-ideas-e-impulsar-produccion-agricola.html>

167 <https://contracorriente.red/2019/08/12/transnacionales-de-la-fe/>

## US

The US has a new Chargé d'Affaires in Honduras, Colleen A. Hoey.<sup>168</sup> She replaced Lawrence J. Gumbiner who had the position ad-interim for some weeks.<sup>169</sup> A US congressional delegation traveled to Honduras this month, more on this in a separate sub-section below.

## EU

"The Federal Republic of Germany contributed €1 million (US\$1.1 million) to the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), supporting emergency food assistance to more than 16.000 families severely affected by the drought in the Dry Corridor of Honduras".<sup>170</sup> Germany also signed a 10 million Euros contract with the National System for Protected Areas in Honduras (SINAPH).<sup>171</sup>

## Drug Trafficking

Honduras once more appeared on a US black list of drug transit and production countries.<sup>172 173</sup> InSight Crime reported on the link between illegal timber and drug trafficking. "Illegal timber and drug trafficking are closely linked in northeastern Honduras, a major cocaine corridor in this region. There, criminal groups have savvily combined these two businesses to maximize their illicit profits."<sup>174</sup>

The Honduran drug trafficker Hector Emilia Fernández Rosa, Don H, was sentenced to life in prison in the US.<sup>175</sup> Fittingly, shortly afterwards, CESPAD published an analysis by Tomas Andino Mencía on the role of US courts in trying Honduran drug traffickers and its links to an imperial strategy. He concludes: "The leaking and dissemination of court documents from the United States are part of the political instruments used by the empire and, in turn, the government in office to manipulate political actors based on the interests of US foreign policy and the country's elite. Hopes that something good can be expected from these colonial mechanisms are misplaced, because even if they do lead to immediate justice, in the long term they are depriving Hondurans of developing our own means of doing justice, undermining our sovereignty as a people. The corrupt, fraudulent, narco criminals and others must be judged and paid in our country through a reliable and expeditious justice system, which we do not yet have, but for which we must fight."<sup>176</sup>

On August 6, the MP praised itself for the successful trial against the two material authors of the assassination of the public prosecutor Orlan Arturo Chávez in 2013. One of the two men is a former police agent. The presumed intellectual author is a police official who faces trial in the US for drug

168 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/asume-nueva-encargada-de-negocios-de-la-embajada-de-eeuu-en-honduras.html>

169 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/gumbiner-agradece-colaboracion-de-hondurenos-en-su-corto-tiempo-al-frente-de-la-embajada-de-eeuu.html>

170 <https://www1.wfp.org/news/germany-contributes-eu1-million-support-families-dry-corridor-honduras>

171 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1314576-410/alemania-aporte-conservacion-areas-protégidas-honduras-banco-aleman-desarrollo>

172 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/09/ee-uu-incluye-a-honduras-en-lista-negra-de-paises-de-transito-y-produccion-de-drogas/>

173 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1308805-466/honduras-en-lista-de-22-paises-m%C3%A1s-involucrados-en-narcotr%C3%A1fico>

174 <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/how-drug-traffickers-became-masters-of-honduras-forests/>

175 <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/former-honduran-drug-trafficker-sentenced-life-prison-distributing-over-150-tons>

176 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/08/02/los-juicios-de-new-york-y-la-estrategia-imperial-para-honduras/>

trafficking.<sup>177</sup> In another case involving a public prosecutor, the former head of police José Francisco Murillo López negated on national television that he was mentioned in US court documents in regards to the murder of anti-drug czar Julián Arístides González Irías.<sup>178</sup> The Pro-Honduras Network immediately showed that this was a lie.<sup>179</sup> The accused drug trafficker Matta Ballesteros is held in the US. This month, he successfully brought his case to the IACHR. His family demands that he is transferred to Honduras.<sup>180</sup>

## Tony Hernández

The separation between the Tony Hernández case and his president brother is getting more and more difficult and the main focus on this can be found below in the sub-section on JOH.

At the beginning of August, ConfidencialHN reported on new court files which had shown that JOH's brother Tony Hernández was implicated in the murder of two drug traffickers in 2011 and 2013.<sup>181</sup> Later on, this was picked up by more media outlets offering additional details.<sup>182</sup> El Herald published an article focusing on the links between the drug trafficker and former mayor of El Paraíso, Copán, Alexander Ardón<sup>183</sup>, and Tony Hernández.<sup>184 185</sup>

In the US, the judge of the Tony Hernández case declared testimonies and other evidence as secrets fearing that they could be leaked to Honduras.<sup>186</sup> August ended with the revelation that Tony Hernández also trafficked arms for the Sinaloa cartel and the FARC which means that if found guilty, his sentence could be even higher than previously expected.<sup>187</sup>

## Varia

### Social Unrest

Protests by the Platform in the Defense of Education and Healthcare continued this month.<sup>188</sup> Once more, they were accompanied by student protests, who suffered great repression.<sup>189 190</sup> On August 5, the National Association of Auxiliary Health Workers (ANEEAH) announced strike actions.<sup>191</sup> University teacher and social leader Sergio Rivera denounced having been followed for several

177 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/141-agosto2019/4598-gracias-a-investigacion-de-atic-y-fedcy-se-logra-condena-contras-asesinos-del-fiscal-orlan-arturo-chavez>

178 <https://tiempo.hn/exdirector-dnic-mismos-mataron-zar-antidrogas-asesinaron-alfredo-landaverde/>

179 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/15/francisco-murillo-lopez-si-esta-senalado-en-asesinato-de-julian-aristides-gonzalez/>

180 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/08/23/matta-ballesteros-podria-ser-trasladado-a-carcel-de-honduras-su-pleito-judicial-avanza-en-la-cidh/>

181 <https://confidencialhn.com/vinculan-a-tony-herandez-con-muerte-de-narcos-hondurenos/>

182 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/03/tony-herandez-involucrado-en-asesinatos-a-narcotraficantes-en-copan-y-colon/>

183 <https://tiempo.hn/alexander-ardon-el-narcopolitico-que-gobierno-en-copan-durante-mas-de-una-decada/>

184 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1307291-466/fiscal%C3%ADa-de-nueva-york-tony-hern%C3%A1ndez-marcaba-coca%C3%ADna-en-lempira>

185 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1307298-466/tony-herandez-alquilo-helicoptero-a-alexander-ardon-mover-droga>

186 <https://confidencialhn.com/admiten-peticion-de-fiscalia-de-nueva-york-para-mandar-a-reserva-investigaciones-contr-tony/>

187 <https://confidencialhn.com/fiscalia-de-nueva-york-confirma-que-tony-vendio-armas-al-cartel-de-sinaloa-y-las-farc-a-cambio-de-cocaina/>

188 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/miembros-de-la-plataforma-protestan-en-colon.html>

189 <https://tiempo.hn/vuelve-el-gas-estudiantes-unah-vs-protestan-policia-reprime/>

190 <https://tiempo.hn/protesta-y-quema-de-llantas-frente-a-la-unah-en-tegucigalpa/>

191 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/asociacion-de-enfermeros-amenaza-con-huelga-para-el-proximo-lunes-a-nivel-nacional.html>

days by a private university guard.<sup>192</sup> The president of a dentists union was impeded to go to his work at a military clinic for belonging to the platform.<sup>193</sup>

Last month, the body of the assassinated 17-year old Eblin Noel Corea Maradiaga was exhumed. This month, his family members of the demand transparency.<sup>194</sup> Later, ConfidencialHN reported that the death of the young Eblin Noel Corea by bullets of state security forces had been confirmed.<sup>195</sup>

The main focus from the protests has shifted in the recent months from the education and healthcare sector to the JOH regime. This month, this shift was especially evident and the main coverage of the protests in this monitor are in the sub-section below.

## JOH

Symptomatically for the recent months as well as the month ahead, August started with a portrait of JOH by The Economist as a president losing power. "Juan Orlando Hernández, Honduras's president since 2014, was thought to be the region's political genius, endowed with a preternatural talent for keeping and wielding power. (...) A Gallup poll in May found that 86% of Hondurans believe that the country is on the wrong track, up from 60% in 2017. Mr Hernández's net approval rating dropped from +31 to -17. The left-wing opposition, which lost the election in 2017, remains convinced that it was stolen. More worrying for the president, his own centre-right National Party (PN) is turning against him. In past elections it has defeated a divided opposition by staying united, says Raúl Pineda Alvarado, a former PN congressman. Now the PN itself is split. Many PN politicians think Mr Hernández is betraying them. MACCIH is locking up its members, including the wife of Mr Hernández's predecessor, Porfirio Lobo. Business people, once friendly to Mr Hernández, grumble about slowing growth, corruption and rising taxes. Middle-class Hondurans pay twice for basic services, through taxes and again by spending money on health and security because the state's provision is so bad, says Pedro Barquera, the head of the chamber of commerce in the state of Cortés. The attorney-general has accused the army top brass, who are among Mr Hernández's staunchest allies, of refusing to co-operate with his investigation into the shooting of protesters after the election. That has enraged the generals, who expected the president to protect them as they have protected him."<sup>196</sup>

The day of The Economist article, JOH's situation turned even worse. US court documents identified JOH "as a co-conspirator in a drug trafficking and money laundering case against his brother. Prosecutors say \$1.5 million in drug proceeds was used to help elect him in 2013. (...) Based on the information contained in the documents, Cooperating Witness – 3 appears to be Alexander Ardon, a former National Party mayor of El Paraiso, near the border with Guatemala. Ardon, who was known for having installed a helipad on top of city hall and being flanked by

192 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/alerta-el-lider-magisterial-sergio-rivera-denuncia-nueva-vigilancia-de-parte-de-seguridad-privada-en-la-unah/>

193 <https://tiempo.hn/video-por-ser-plataforma-impiden-a-medico-laborar-clinica-de-militares-12/>

194 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/familia-de-eblin-corea-exige-transparencia-en-resultados-de-exhumacion/>

195 <https://confidencialhn.com/afirman-que-eblin-corea-fue-asesinado-por-bala-militar-en-protestas-en-la-paz12/>

196 <https://www.economist.com/the-americas/2019/08/03/the-humbling-of-hondurass-president-juan-orlando-hernandez>

armed guards, was indicted by U.S. prosecutors in January.<sup>197</sup> The US press also reported on these newest revelations. "A 49-page document filed in New York's southern district on Friday refers to Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández as a co-conspirator who worked with his brother, Juan Antonio "Tony" Hernández, and former President Porfirio Lobo "to use drug trafficking to help assert power and control in Honduras." It says that the president and his predecessor "relied on drug proceeds" to fund political campaigns and cites "evidence of high-level political corruption."<sup>198 199</sup>

JOH held a press conference negating everything.<sup>200</sup> He was accompanied on stage by the Security Minister, his deputy, the Defense Minister, the Foreign Secretary and high police and military officials.<sup>201</sup> At the same time, a new social media campaign was launched demanding his resignation, #RenunciaYa.<sup>202</sup> The president of the Liberal Party, Luis Zelaya, wondered what else has to happen until JOH resigns.<sup>203</sup> Libre called for protest marches and the Platform for the Defense of Education and Healthcare announced to remain in the streets until JOH's resignation.<sup>204</sup>

205

Seemingly oblivious to this – or rather well aware of this - US chargé d'affaires tweeted: "Today I met with the President of #Honduras @JuanOrlandoH to reaffirm the collaboration and cooperation between the US and Honduras on issues of bilateral importance, including irregular migration, the fight against corruption, economic development, regional security, extraditions and dismantling of transnational criminal networks."<sup>206 207</sup> The same day, InSight Crime published an article called "Will Drug Conspiracy Allegations End US Support for Honduras President?"<sup>208</sup>

On August 5, the Liberal Party held a press conference demanding his resignation and they also demanded a stop of international support to the JOH regime.<sup>209</sup> Salvador Nasralla clarified that not JOH's resignation, but rather his arrest must be demanded.<sup>210</sup> Manuel Zelaya stated that JOH wrongly assumed the US will always have his back. The statement above by the chargé d'affaires may give JOH right, but at least from the US judiciary, there is mounting pressure.<sup>211</sup> JOH reacted to all this by calling Nasralla and the two Zelayas "spokespersons of drug traffickers".<sup>212</sup>

197 <https://www.univision.com/univision-news/latin-america/president-of-honduras-implicated-in-1-5-million-drug-money-conspiracy-by-new-york-prosecutor>

198 [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the\\_americas/honduran-president-accused-in-ny-of-drug-conspiracy/2019/08/03/4f4afbc0-b61c-11e9-acc8-1d847bacca73\\_story.html?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.2548ee8830aa](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/honduran-president-accused-in-ny-of-drug-conspiracy/2019/08/03/4f4afbc0-b61c-11e9-acc8-1d847bacca73_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.2548ee8830aa)

199 <https://www.thestar.com/news/world/americas/2019/08/03/honduran-president-accused-in-ny-of-drug-conspiracy.html>

200 <https://tiempo.hn/casa-presidencial-acusaciones-contra-presidente-falsas/>

201 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/no-desmayara-lucha-contra-el-narco-dice-herandez-y-anuncia-nuevo-paquete-de-leyes-en-seguridad.html>

202 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/03/hondurenos-arrancan-campana-en-redes-sociales-pidiendo-salida-de-joh/>

203 <https://tiempo.hn/luis-zelaya-que-mas-pasar-renuncie-joh/>

204 <https://tiempo.hn/mel-zelaya-libre-calles-renuncia-joh/>

205 <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/plataforma-de-salud-llama-a-movilizarse-hasta-que-salga-del-poder-el-presidente-herandez.html>

206 <https://twitter.com/USAmbHonduras/status/1158519821895684096>

207 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1307661-466/estados-unidos-reafirma-apoyo-contra-corrupci%C3%B3n-en-honduras>

208 <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/will-drug-conspiracy-allegations-end-us-support-for-honduras-president/>

209 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/05/partido-liberal-exige-la-salida-inmediata-de-juan-herandez/>

210 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/05/no-es-la-renuncia-es-la-captura-de-joh-la-que-se-esta-pidiendo/>

211 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/05/el-error-de-joh-es-haber-creido-que-ee-uu-le-iba-a-cubrir-la-espalda-video/>

212 <https://tiempo.hn/joh-nasralla-mel-y-luis-zelaya-deben-renunciar-a-ser-voceros-de-delincuentes/>

The next day, Hondurans took to the streets demanding the resignation of JOH.<sup>213</sup> The Platform for the Defense of Education and Healthcare additionally demanded his impeachment.<sup>214</sup> The protest march ended in a two-hour long repression by state security forces using tear gas.<sup>215</sup> A human rights defender also reported on attacks by private security forces from Congress. There were also protests in other cities, equally repressed by the regime. COFADEH reported various injured protesters.<sup>216</sup> A cameraman from Channel 11 was attacked by police agents.<sup>217</sup> OACNUDH once more felt pressed to urge the JOH regime to respect the right to protest.<sup>218</sup>

Univision, i.e. Jeff Ernst, went on to focus on JOH. In a second article in a week, he picked up the Pandora case. "A vast corruption scheme in Honduras involving the embezzlement of public funds through shell nonprofits and a secretive slush fund controlled by the presidency, is linked to dozens of nonprofits and at least 176 politicians, according to court documents and sources familiar with a wide-ranging investigation by anti-corruption prosecutors. Official documents and court records reviewed by Univision connect the politicians to a corrupt network of at least 53 nonprofits which received more than \$70 million over the last decade, the majority of which evidence suggests was funneled to politicians and campaigns to influence elections and important votes. (...) A pair of nonprofits linked directly to the family of President Juan Orlando Hernández are among those under investigation by anti-corruption prosecutors. The majority of the funds involved in the alleged corruption schemes investigated by Univision were authorized by Hernández's office, according to correspondence between legislators and the presidency."<sup>219</sup> There is also more news on the drug trafficking front of the JOH regime. Radio Progreso uncovered that the newly nominated foreign minister Lisandro Rosales had links to drug traffickers now extradited to the US. "A report issued by the Intelligence of the Naval Force, on April 12, 2010, reports to the authorities of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a series of meetings between Fabio Lobo, Porfirio Lobo, Javier Rivera Maradiaga, Tony Hernández and Lisandro Rosales, who discussed issues related to business, legal aspects, military and police security, operation and functioning of aeronautical radars."<sup>220</sup>

Reporteros de Investigación, meanwhile, published the most important excerpts from the testimonies involving JOH.<sup>221</sup> Criterio criticized that CONADEH tried to downgrade the importance of the accusations made against JOH.<sup>222</sup> At the same time, CONADEH demands an official investigation by the MP and MACCIH into the accusations coming from the US.<sup>223</sup> Wilfredo Méndez demanded that also the accusations by the former police commissioner Ramón Sabillón, made in 2016 against JOH, should be investigated.<sup>224</sup> JOH reacted to all this by hiring a new

213 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/06/en-gigantesca-protesta-hondurenos-exigen-la-salida-de-hernandez-por-vinculos-con-el-narco/>

214 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/juicio-politico-contra-cc-4-exige-plataforma-popular/>

215 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/06/vea-el-reportaje-grafico-de-la-movilizacion-de-este-6-de-agosto/>

216 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/variados-heridos-deja-represion-policia-en-movilizacion-en-el-centro-de-tegucigalpa/>

217 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1308004-410/polic%C3%ADa-agrede-camarografo-canal-11-protesta-unah-vs->

218 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1158819946199232519>

219 <https://www.univision.com/univision-news/latin-america/exclusive-a-pandoras-box-of-corruption-in-honduras>

220 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/informe-de-inteligencia-militar-revela-reuniones-de-actual-canciller-lisandro-rosales-y-pepe-lobo-con-narcotraficantes-extraditados/>

221 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/08/06/7456/>

222 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/06/conadeh-entra-al-juego-de-la-manipulacion-de-joh-sobre-narcotrafico/>

223 <https://tiempo.hn/conadeh-pide-al-mp-maccih-investigar-alusiones-politicos-tribunal-neoyorquino/>

224 <https://tiempo.hn/wilfredo-mendez-denuncias-del-general-sabillon-contra-el-presidente-deben-investigarse/>

company to represent him, Mishcon de Reya LLP.<sup>225</sup> Maybe they will also advise his social-media strategy or as ContraCorriente called it: "the manipulation by a unpopular president on social media"<sup>226</sup>. The Liberal Party challenges JOH on his choice of defense, a "luxurious English law firm" and they demand that he takes care to pay it with his own money.<sup>227</sup>

Given the ongoing protests, the manipulation seemed to have its limits. At the same time, repression was also going strong and the international press started to cover it.<sup>228 229</sup> The Honduras Solidarity Network denounced three injured students at least one by bullets, in Tegucigalpa.<sup>230</sup> In San Pedro Sula, the police threw tear gas into buses transporting university students.<sup>231 232</sup> UNAH dean Francisco Herrera called it "a barbaric act".<sup>233</sup> COPINH denounced a hunt by state security forces of protesting youths in Esperanza, Intibucá.<sup>234</sup> C-Libre released two alerts, one on the attack against a Channel 11 cameraman, another one the repression in general.<sup>235 236</sup> Juan Carlos Castillo was covering the protests when police agents attacked him.<sup>237</sup> OACNUDH "energetically condemned" the attacks against journalists and social communicators as well as the disproportionate actions taken against the protesting students. OACNUDH sent out a note of solidarity with the students.<sup>238</sup> A group of EU Parliamentarians wrote to the EU's parting Foreign Minister Federica Mogherini demanding a suspension of the collaboration with the JOH regime and the investigation of the accusations against JOH.<sup>239</sup>

The Coalition against Impunity published a press release condemning the violent repression by the JOH regime.<sup>240</sup> They also demanded the international community to speak up regarding the situation in Honduras.<sup>241</sup> In a second press release, university teachers condemned the recent attacks on students as part of the widespread repression of the protests against the JOH regime.<sup>242</sup> Radio Progreso, meanwhile, listed eight reasons why JOH has to go. "First. He must leave because he has been identified by a prosecutor of a US court to have conspired with drug traffickers to become president of the National Congress and President of the Republic. (...) Second. He must leave because he violated the Constitution of the Republic when he was re-elected (...) Third. JOH fraudulently won the 2017 elections. (...) Fourth. JOH is primarily responsible for at least 43 people killed in demonstrations against the electoral fraud, and in addition [he is responsible] of human

225 <https://confidencialhn.com/joh-contrata-lujoso-bufete-que-lo-representaria-en-ee-uu-por-narco-y-lo-ayudaria-a-huir-de-honduras/>

226 <https://contracorriente.red/2019/08/06/la-manipulacion-de-un-presidente-impopular-en-redes-sociales/>

227 <https://tiempo.hn/indican-a-joh-como-pagar-al-prestigioso-bufete-que-lo-defendio-ante-univision/>

228 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/07/honduras-protesters-president-juan-orlando-herandez-riot-police>

229 Video: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-latin-america-49268565/honduras-protest-we-want-this-narco-dictator-out-of-presidency>

230 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1159205859441823744>

231 <https://tiempo.hn/video-uso-bombas-lacrimogena-provoca-incendio-unah/>

232 Video: <https://twitter.com/GildateleSUR/status/1159070340984836096>

233 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/rector-califica-como-acto-de-barbarie-abuso-policial-contr-universitarios.html>

234 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/115929485274729477>

235 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1050-policias-atacan-a-camarografo-de-canal-11>

236 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1049-reprimen-protestas-opositoras-herandez-mientras-resguardan-movilizaciones-oficialistas>

237 <http://www.conexion.hn/index.php/libertad-de-expresion/1182-me-daban-patadas-punetazos-me-tomaron-del-cuello-camarografo-narra-agresion-policial>

238 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1159163439165706242>

239 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/07/eurodiputados-piden-cancelar-ayuda-a-honduras-e-investigar-acusaciones-contr-joh/>

240 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/del-discurso-maniqueista-de-buenos-y-malos-a-la-represion-brutal/>

241 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/08/piden-a-comunidad-internacional-no-guardar-silencio-sobre-lo-que-sucede-en-honduras/>

242 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/claustro-de-profesores-de-la-unah-vs-condenan-acto-criminal-contr-estudiantes-universitarios/>

rights violations. (...) Fifth. JOH must leave because he and the main members of the National Party are accused of looting public institutions (...) Sixth. JOH is primarily responsible for illegally commercializing natural assets and for privatizing public services. (...) Seventh. Citizens are tired of JOH. (...) Eighth. He must leave because his wife Ana Rosalinda García was indicated by the Maccih and the Ufecih to have participated in the looting of around 280 million lempiras from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock."<sup>243</sup>

In the coming days, OACNUDH accompanied the protest reminding the JOH regime to respect the freedom to protest.<sup>244 245</sup> This seemed to help for one day. Pasos de Animal Grande, meanwhile, offered an overview of the state repression suffered by journalists and social communicators covering the latest protests.<sup>246</sup> Just at this time, a US congressional delegation came to Honduras (see sub-section below). Manuel Zelaya addressed US Speaker of Congress Nancy Pelosi who traveled as part of the Congressional delegation. "Mrs. Pelosi if you came to join the people to get rid of the dictatorship, welcome, if not, return home".<sup>247</sup> Padre Melo wrote an open letter to Pelosi. "You arrive in Honduras, a country devastated by public policies promoted by governments that throughout history have had the full support of the governments of the United States". He then went on to challenge her "to be the person who defies the Trump administration, preventing resources from being allocated for the Armed Forces and for the security of Honduras, or on the contrary, to be an accomplice of that repressive administration".<sup>248</sup>

Also with the US delegation present, protests continued.<sup>249</sup> They included marches and occupation of highways in different parts of the country.<sup>250</sup> Padre Melo accompanied a protest in Baracoa, Cortés. He denounced that he was followed by the Armed Forces in an unmarked car and that they took pictures of him.<sup>251</sup> Coincidence that this took place just after writing the above letter to the US delegation?

Then on August 12, something interesting happened. The JOH regime published a press release announcing that JOH and some cabinet members traveled to Washington DC the day before to participate at a meeting by the IACHR.<sup>252 253</sup> Social media went wild after this announcement as there is no official meeting announced on the IACHR homepage, i.e. the meeting in question would take place in Argentina and not the US. Some link the visit to the newest revelations of JOH's link to drug trafficking.<sup>254</sup> The Pro Honduras Network challenged the JOH regime regarding the real reasons for its US visit.<sup>255</sup> Rumors further spread when the president of the Supreme Court, Rolando

243 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/ochto-razones-para-sacar-a-joh/>

244 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1159953306027999233>

245 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3470-indignacion-miles-de-hondurenos-en-todo-el-pais-exigen-hoy-renuncia-de-joh>

246 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2529-entre-bombas-lacrimogenas-y-sangre-la-libertad-de-expresion-esta-bajo-ataque-en-honduras>

247 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/09/senora-pelosi-si-usted-viene-a-unirse-al-pueblo-para-sacar-la-dictadura-bienvenida-si-no-regrese-a-su-casa-mel-zelaya/>

248 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/carta-publica-sra-nancy-pelosi-y-su-comitiva-de-representantes-de-la-camara-baja-congreso-de-los-estados-unidos-de-america/>

249 <https://tiempo.hn/libre-junto-plataforma-de-lucha-defensa-salud-y-educacion-marcharon-exigiendo-salida-joh/>

250 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/nueva-jornada-de-protestas-y-represion-vive-honduras/>

251 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/director-de-radio-progreso-y-el-eric-sj-denuncia-persecucion-de-fuerzas-armadas/>

252 [https://twitter.com/Presidencia\\_HN/status/1161012233603899393?s=20](https://twitter.com/Presidencia_HN/status/1161012233603899393?s=20)

253 <https://tiempo.hn/joh-viaja-a-washington-cancilleria-dice-que-fue-a-reunion-en-la-oea/>

254 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/12/casa-presidencial-confirma-misterioso-viaje-de-herandez-a-washington/>

255 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/12/pro-honduras-network-desmiente-reunion-de-joh-con-oea-cicad-en-washington/>

Argueta Pérez, announced that they had received a new request for an extradition.<sup>256</sup> The next day, theories about the real reasons for JOH's stay in the US continued to spread. Criterio reported that various cars with official government license plates parked outside of the hotel JOH stays in and that he had hour-long meetings with them.<sup>257</sup> He also met with the Secretary General of the OAS, Luis Almagro.<sup>258</sup> <sup>259</sup> Human rights lawyer and former public prosecutor Omar Menjivar denounced that just as pressure grew against JOH in Honduras, Almagro offered him support by allowing a visit between JOH and him, giving JOH much needed international credibility.<sup>260</sup> JOH, meanwhile, felt pressured to claim that he is not facing criminal charges in the US.<sup>261</sup> JOH's US visit was accompanied by a critical Foreign Policy article. "Conditions under Hernández are increasingly dire. Nearly two-thirds of Hondurans live in poverty, while a third live in extreme poverty, according to Honduras' National Institute of Statistics. Murder rates are among the highest in the world, and each year, Hondurans pay an estimated \$200 million total in extortion fees to gangs. Meanwhile, over the past decade, education spending has dropped from 32.9 percent of the government's budget in 2010 to 19.9 percent this year, while health spending has dropped from 14.3 percent to less than 10 percent. The U.S. Embassy in Honduras' site says, "support staff facilities and necessary equipment and supplies are not up to U.S. standards anywhere in Honduras." In fact, protesters say the government's cuts to medical facilities are to blame for the size of the dengue outbreak. And since Hernández's first term in office began in 2014, he has also increased military spending and sent forces, including the U.S.-trained TIGRES unit, to target human rights defenders, while modifying the penal code to increase punishment for anti-government opponents. Rampant corruption has exacerbated dire conditions to the breaking point, sending thousands of people out of the country."<sup>262</sup>

Back in Honduras, the director of the Commerce and Industry Chamber of Cortés (CCC) tweeted that JOH was doing a lot of harm to Honduras and that he should step aside.<sup>263</sup> The head of the National Industrialists Association (Andi), Santos Gabino Carvajal, told ConfidencialHN that 90% of Hondurans want JOH gone.<sup>264</sup> JOH's assessor Marvin Ponce went on the offensive speaking of a conspiracy by corrupt business elites to get rid of JOH.<sup>265</sup> A few days later, the presidential advisor Ebal Díaz claimed that the business lobby in San Pedro Sula was financing the protests against JOH.<sup>266</sup>

In the last week of August, the XVII Tuxtla Honduras summit took place over four days in San Pedro Sula. The main headlines made by the summit were not the agreements made or the topics

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256 <https://tiempo.hn/presidente-csj-revela-nuevo-requerimiento-extradicion/>

257 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/13/joh-no-se-reunio-con-el-cicad-como-dijo-casa-de-gobierno-de-honduras/>

258 <https://tiempo.hn/sobre-viaje-de-joh-gobierno-fomenta-cultura-de-la-desinformacion-asegura-analista/>

259 <https://tiempo.hn/con-fotos-y-a-traves-de-twitter-informan-de-citas-de-joh-y-primera-dama/>

260 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/08/16/luis-almagro-y-el-narco/>

261 <https://tiempo.hn/joh-en-washington-no-hay-acusaciones-formales-son-alegaciones-de-un-narco/>

262 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/08/13/honduran-protestors-have-little-cause-for-hope/>

263 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3477-industria-hondurena-exige-a-joh-hacerse-a-un-lado>

264 <https://confidencialhn.com/representante-de-la-andi-asegura-que-el-90-por-ciento-de-los-hondurenos-claman-la-salida-de-joh/>

265 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/empresarios-corruptos-integran-conspiracion-para-sacar-a-herandez-del-poder-marvin-ponce.html>

266 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3484-ebal-diaz-asegura-que-empresarios-en-cortes-financian-protestas>

discussed, but the fact that none of the head of states invited showed up, even though some had previously confirmed their assistance.<sup>267</sup> <sup>268</sup> This news was even picked up by France 24.<sup>269</sup> Former attorney general Edmundo Orellana Mercado saw this as further proof of the isolation of the JOH regime.<sup>270</sup>

Augustus ended with the public prosecutor in New York publishing a list with 16 Honduran politicians and public officials including JOH which are seen as possible accomplices of JOH's brother Tony Hernández. 8 of them have already been accused of even sentenced for drug trafficking.<sup>271</sup> JOH's presidential adviser Ebal Díaz tries to undermine the significance of the list.<sup>272</sup> Jeff Ernst published another article for Univision on the Tony Hernández trials and the links to JOH. "Alleged drug trafficker, Tony Hernandez, goes on trial October 2. But all eyes will be on his brother, Honduran president, Juan Orlando Hernandez, who prosecutors have identified as an alleged 'Co-Conspirator' in the case. (...) Drug trafficking conspiracy charges have a five-year statute of limitations that runs from the end date of the conspiracy. In this case, the end date appears to fall in either 2016 or 2017, based on the evidence presented by prosecutors thus far. That would mean that prosecutors would have to present charges against any co-conspirators by some time in 2022 at the latest. Hernandez's current term ends January 2022. If upon the culmination of the Tony Hernandez trial prosecutors feel they have enough evidence to implicate President Hernandez beyond a reasonable doubt, three potential scenarios that could play out, according to former Southern District prosecutors. First, if the prosecutors believe they have time on their side, they could simply wait until the president leaves office to present charges, meanwhile targeting other co-conspirators. Second, they could present the indictment and attempt to extradite the president. In this event the president would not be protected by diplomatic immunity, but sovereignty and other diplomatic considerations could be an issue. Third, due to the obvious difficulty of extraditing a sitting head of a foreign state, prosecutors could also choose to file the indictment under seal within the five-year time frame and wait until the president leaves office, whether that comes in 2022 or beyond. Even then, President Hernandez would still enjoy immunity from arrest under Honduran law as a member of the Central American parliament for another five years, as is customary for outgoing heads of state in the region."<sup>273</sup>

InSight Crime also picked up the recent developments in Honduras. "The former mayor who may bring down Honduras President Juan Orlando Hernández first appears on page eight of what can only be described as one of the most jaw-dropping condemnations of a political party ever produced by the US Justice Department. (...) Amilcar Alexander Ardón Soriano, himself a rising member of the National Party, was running for re-election as mayor of El Paraíso, Copán, a small town along the border with Guatemala and a key trafficking corridor. It was from there that he'd gone from

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267 <https://tiempo.hn/xvii-cumbre-tuxtla-honduras-finaliza-con-acuerdos-politicos-y-sociales/>

268 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/24/hermanez-se-queda-solo-en-la-cumbre-de-tuxtla/>

269 <https://www.france24.com/es/20190824-presidentes-evitan-cumbre-de-honduras-por-descr%C3%A9dito-de-gobierno-anfitri%C3%B3n-seg%C3%BA-analistas>

270 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/24/hermanez-se-debilita-cada-vez-mas-edmundo-orellana-mercado/>

271 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/28/fiscalia-de-nueva-york-presenta-lista-de-politicos-y-funcionarios-hondurenos-complices-y-socios-de-tony-hermanez/>

272 <https://tiempo.hn/ebal-diaz-llama-camino-correcto-a-denominacion-cc-5/>

273 <https://www.univision.com/univision-news/latin-america/from-president-to-co-conspirator-honduras-awaits-outcome-of-new-york-drug-trial>

cattle rustler to milk farmer to drug capo, serving as a bridge between Colombian and Mexican traffickers. (...) During the meeting in 2008, Tony had a proposal for the mayor: give money to the National Party campaign for his brother, who was running for re-election in Congress, and the then-candidate for president, Porfirio Lobo. In return, Tony would provide protection for Ardón and his trafficking network, which was referred to as the “Alex Cartel” and the “AA Cartel,” and name his relatives to a high-level post in the government. (...) In November 2009, Lobo won 1,213,695 votes, 56 percent, and with them the presidency. Hernández got 49,653 votes, or nearly half the votes cast in his state of Lempira, and was re-elected as a congressman. And Ardón got 8,480, or 94.7 percent, of the votes to be re-elected mayor. Following the election, Juan Orlando Hernández allegedly met with Ardón again and asked him to help bribe other congressmen, so he could become elected president of the legislative body. Ardón did, the DOJ says, and Hernández was elected president of the congress, setting the stage for his eventual run for the presidency. (...) The relationship with Tony deepened further. Ardón asked Tony to kill a nosy police official; Tony had the police official transferred. Ardón later requested he help him murder a rival who was blocking their route into Guatemala; Tony talked to a “high-ranking member of the Honduran National Police” who had the rival monitored and assassinated, the DOJ document says. In 2013, Ardón returned the favor by having a drug trafficking ally arrange the murder of a trafficker in custody, and whom Tony suspected could be a liability. In 2013, worried Ardón was becoming a liability himself, then-presidential candidate Juan Orlando Hernández told Ardón not to run for mayor again. By then, the United States had pressured Honduras into re-establishing extradition with the United States as a means of going after drug traffickers, and Hernández warned Ardón he could no longer protect him if he remained a public figure. Ardón agreed and retired from politics. He also provided Hernández’s campaign with \$1.5 million in drug proceeds, the DOJ says, “including by paying cash bribes to other officials and providing gifts and favors to local politicians.”<sup>274</sup>

It is not clear, how the situation will continue. Radio Progreso presented four strategies used by the JOH regime to prolong its stay in power. "First strategy. Undermine the documents from the New York prosecutor's office. JOH and his team refined and socialized a speech to argue that they represent a revenge against him by the drug traffickers extradited, that there is a conspiracy of the narcos to assault the presidential palace and he accuses the opposition of being linked to organized crime. (...) Second strategy. Create an environment of rumors to fuel uncertainty. It seems that his media strategists have worked hard to launch lies and fake photographs with which many unsuspecting people become demobilized. (...) Third strategy. Spread fear and terror to the new cycle of protests, to create a fictional environment of normalcy. (...) This already led to new attacked journalists and various injured by bullet wounds. Fourth strategy. Bring the opposition onto the electoral ground. (...) We are in the throes of the dictatorship, the life that remains is dependent on the ability to articulate the energy of all social sectors and demand the end of the JOH regime in one voice. Let's not lose any more time."<sup>275</sup>

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274 <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/how-ex-mayor-could-bring-down-honduras-president/>

275 <https://wp.radioprogreso.net/cuatro-estrategias-en-la-agonia-de-la-dictadura/>

## US Congressional Delegation to Honduras

A US congressional delegation headed by Speaker Nancy Pelosi traveled to Honduras this month.<sup>276</sup> They held several meetings, but not with JOH.<sup>277</sup> They were welcomed by the new Foreign Secretary Lisandro Rosales, the same person recently highlighted in the drug trafficking case linked to Fabio Lobo.<sup>278</sup> According to El Libertador, Rosales tried to paint an overly rosy picture of Honduras.<sup>279</sup>

Congressman Jim McGovern tweeted that "I told the Honduran officials how deeply troubled I am by the culture of corruption and human rights abuses surrounding Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández."<sup>280</sup> COPINH wrote an open letter to the 13 congresswo/men, starting the letter as follows: "Start doing the right thing: a Honduras without weapons, a Honduras without war, a Honduras without JOH."<sup>281</sup> COPINH's General Coordinator Berta Zúniga also met with the delegation and highlighted the importance to approve the Berta Cáceres Bill.<sup>282</sup> <sup>283</sup> On this occasion, Congressman Jim McGovern denounced that "Berta's family & @COPINHHonduras continue to be threatened and attacked for their search for justice and their environmental, land rights and human rights work. We stand with Berta's family and all the brave indigenous and human rights defenders in #Honduras!"<sup>284</sup>

The delegation also met with the MP<sup>285</sup> as well as the MACCIH<sup>286</sup> reconfirming US support for their work. Criterio reported that the delegation was made aware about the insufficient investigations into the JOH regime, i.e. JOH himself.<sup>287</sup> After the US congressional delegation ended its regional visit, the House Foreign Affairs Committee tweeted: "In Honduras, it's essential that the work of @OEA\_MACCIH continue when its mandate expires. While I don't object to an independent evaluation of MACCIH, such an assessment cannot be used as an excuse to end/weaken the org. #MACCIH has strong bipartisan backing in our congress."<sup>288</sup> Pinu congresswoman Doris Gutiérrez is not hopeful that the visit would change much. According to her, JOH won't give up his power. She also called for a united political opposition - manifested not only in calls for unity, but practical behavior in Congress.<sup>289</sup>

276 <https://twitter.com/USAmbHonduras/status/1160362726469885954>

277 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3472-nancy-pelosi-no-se-reunio-con-gobernante-de-honduras>

278 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/informe-de-inteligencia-militar-revela-reuniones-de-actual-canciller-lisandro-rosales-y-pepe-lobo-con-narcotraficantes-extraditados/>

279 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3473-canciller-hondureno-quiso-enganar-a-congresistas-de-ee-uu>

280 <https://twitter.com/RepMcGovern/status/116024622332059649>

281 <https://copinh.org/2019/08/carta-abierta-a-nancy-pelosi-y-congresistas-de-eeuu-open-letter/>

282 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1160312995685326848>

283 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1160255370071330816>

284 <https://twitter.com/RepMcGovern/status/1160262386575663104>

285 [https://twitter.com/MP\\_Honduras/status/1160364691295756288](https://twitter.com/MP_Honduras/status/1160364691295756288)

286 [https://twitter.com/OEA\\_MACCIH/status/1160328954961715207](https://twitter.com/OEA_MACCIH/status/1160328954961715207)

287 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/10/congresistas-de-ee-uu-prometen-monitorear-denuncias-de-corrupcion-y-narcotrafico-contra-hermandez/>

288 <https://twitter.com/HouseForeign/status/1160719825200660480>

289 <https://tiempo.hn/doris-gutierrez-visita-congresistas-eeuu-superficial/>

## Migration

On August 1, US Senator Patrick Leahy published a press release on the situation in Honduras to highlight the inhumanity of US migration policy. "Anyone who follows the situation in Honduras, as I and many Vermonters do, cannot help but be disappointed and concerned by what is happening there. I won't take the time to discuss in detail the lengthy litany of circumstances that have resulted in the deep social and political divisions, the rampant corruption, violence and insecurity, the prevalence of threats and assassinations by gangs, the dysfunctional justice system, and the sense of desperation and hopelessness that so many Hondurans are feeling. But I do want to mention several that should concern every senator."<sup>290</sup> In the Senate, Leahy also denounced that "Chairman Graham just broke FOUR committee rules in order to advance Pres. Trump's bill<sup>[291]</sup> to lock up immigrant children INDEFINITELY. Rules every Republican voted for 6 months ago. Rules I always respected as chairman". He then went on to rip up the bill.<sup>292</sup> In Honduras, Radio Progreso denounced how migrants serve as pawns for the interventionist US foreign policy. "In recent days we have seen, with great shame, how the rulers of Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Mexico have bowed their heads and obeyed the orders of the empire by making decisions that will make them more vulnerable and contradict the reality each of these impoverished nations face and that far from stopping migration, this will force more people to leave in search of opportunities because in the end the roots that cause forced migration and internal displacement are not being addressed."<sup>293</sup>

In the first seven months of 2019, some 65'000 Hondurans have been deported, mostly from Mexico and the US.<sup>294</sup> According to Proceso Digital, there were even 70'153 deportations.<sup>295</sup> By mid-August, the number has risen to 77'834 deportations, higher than the total of the last four years (individually).<sup>296</sup> At the same time, 12'000 Honduran migrants have so far been returned to Mexico this year under the program "Staying in Mexico".<sup>297</sup> According to the human rights defender Miroslava Cerpas, more than 17'000 minors have been deported so far this year back to Honduras.<sup>298</sup> Some 20% of deported Honduran children show signs of anxiety and post-traumatic stress.<sup>299</sup> In a joint effort, The Associated Press and PBS investigated the situation of migrant children separated from their families in the US. More than 3000 children were affected in the last years. "A review of 38 legal claims obtained by The Associated Press — some of which have never been made public — shows taxpayers could be on the hook for more than \$200 million in damages from parents who said their children were harmed while in government custody. (...) The allegations of abuse and assaults in foster care raise fresh questions about the government's efforts to place

290 <https://www.leahy.senate.gov/press/statement-of-senator-patrick-leahy-on-the-situation-in-honduras>

291 <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/116/s1494/text>

292 <https://twitter.com/SenatorLeahy/status/1156978453851320321>

293 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/los-migrantes-monedas-de-cambio/>

294 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/cerca-de-65-mil-hondurenos-han-retornado-de-la-ruta-migratoria/>

295 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/mas-de-70-000-hondurenos-deportados-este-ano-un-55-4-mas-que-en-2018.html>

296 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/deportados-honduras-ya-supera-cifras-de-cierre-de-ultimos-cuatro-anos.html>

297 <http://www.proceso.hn/portadas/10-portada/eeuu-ha-retornado-a-mexico-a-12-mil-hondurenos-solicitantes-de-asilo.html>

298 <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/mas-de-17-mil-menores-migrantes-han-sido-retornados-a-honduras.html>

299 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/cerca-de-un-20-de-la-ninez-migrante-retornada-al-pais-presenta-trastornos-de-ansiedad.html>

younger children with families in lieu of larger shelters and packed detention facilities."<sup>300</sup> Also this month, the Migration Policy Institute published a report on Central American immigrants in the US.<sup>301</sup> Honduras is among the ten countries with the highest number of asylum seekers in the world, 42'500 asylum requests were made by Hondurans in 2018.<sup>302</sup>

Climate change has been named on many occasions as a driver of Central American migration, especially looking towards the future. Nina Lakhani explains that this situation is further exacerbated by an extractive development model. "Sea levels are rising around the world, but in this region another local factor is helping speed up coastal degradation: swathes of mangrove forests have been destroyed to make way for industrial shrimp farms which have proliferated even inside protected reserves."<sup>303</sup> Radio Progreso highlights further problems with this economic model. "In the last two decades, migrants have become one of the most profitable businesses in the world, especially on the routes of Mesoamerica to the United States. Experts and non-experts recognize that the current migration is the expression of the failure of the neoliberal model that has concentrated wealth and widely distributed misery. Every year between 200'000 and 400'000 Central Americans cross Mexico fleeing hunger and violence from the Northern Triangle, however, the operators of neoliberalism instead of reviewing the causes, have turned the suffering into a business that fills the pockets of local, multinational entrepreneurs and even serves as cannon fodder to define electoral agendas. (...) But the business of the most impoverished does not seem to have limits. Transporting migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean represents a business of 7,000 million dollars a year. The detention service for undocumented migrants in the US It is in private hands and represents a business of 3 billion dollars a year."<sup>304</sup>

On August 20, the IACHR published a report on internally displaced people in the Northern Triangle countries.<sup>305</sup> According to Pasos de Animal Grande, the IACHR "recognizes a practice of forced evictions that lead to internal displacement to the detriment of indigenous and peasant communities, with a devastating impact on the rights of these groups. It has also identified that due to situations of discrimination, women, girls, adolescents and LGTBI population suffer a differentiated impact".<sup>306</sup> At the end of the month, COFADEH commemorated the International Day of Forced Disappearance.<sup>307</sup> <sup>308</sup> On this occasion, the UN published a press release reminding the States of their responsibility to search for forcefully disappeared migrants and to investigate their cases.<sup>309</sup>

300 <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/migrant-kids-split-border-harmed-foster-care/> a

301 <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/central-american-immigrants-united-states>

302 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/22/honduras-el-octavo-pais-a-nivel-mundial-con-mas-solicitudes-de-asilo/>

303 <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/jul/31/honduras-community-coastal-towns-rising-sea-le>

304 <https://wp.radioprogreso.net/un-negocio-llamado-migrantes/>

305 <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2019/204.asp>

306 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2539-informe-de-la-cidh-organizaciones-criminales-son-la-causa-principal-del-desplazamiento-forzoso>

307 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/dia-nacional-del-detenido-desaparecido-fotos/>

308 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/pronunciamiento-el-estado-debe-saldar-la-deuda-historica-con-los-detenidos-desaparecidos/>

309 <https://oacnudh.hn/los-estados-deben-actuar-ante-las-desapariciones-de-migrantes-dicen-expertos-de-la-onu/>

Once more, JOH traveled to the US this month to discuss migration issues.<sup>310</sup> Around the same time, a 29-year old Honduran migrant as well as a mother and her three year-old died trying to cross Río Bravo to reach the US.<sup>311</sup> By the end of the month, it was announced that Temporary Protection Status (TPS) for some 44'000 Hondurans in the US would be prolonged.<sup>312</sup>

## Penal Code

August began with a publication on the Penal Code by the Association of Judges for Democracy (AJD). “The purpose of AJD is to develop a systematic study of the great dogmatic lines of the new Penal Code, to read its progressivity or regressivity in what corresponds to the theory of crime, to assess in a general way the criminal types that are developed in the code and, in particular, the behaviors that may be of greatest concern for the validity of human rights.”<sup>313</sup> The same, the Journalists Association of Honduras (CPH) met with representatives of the National Party demanding the elimination of six articles of the new Penal Code for violating the freedom of expression and the press.<sup>314</sup> Shortly afterwards, the Articulation 611, a platform of Honduran human rights organizations formed to critically accompany the elaboration of the Penal Code, held a press conference. They denounce that the new Penal Code would further support the criminalization of human rights defenders.<sup>315316</sup>

A surprise statement came from the business lobby COHEP. They demanded that the new Penal Code would not come into force in November.<sup>317</sup> But even they were not able to convince the JOH regime. Congress' president Mauricio Oliva announced that it would come into force as planned.<sup>318</sup> A few days later, a new attempt was made by the MACCIH. They delivered a technical analysis of the new Penal Code to Congress. In it, they called for a prolongation "vacatio legis" (the time before it comes into force) to have further discussions, but as well as to further reform it and harmonize it with international conventions.<sup>319</sup> Coincidence or not, the same day, Mauricio Oliva then announced that they would derogate all articles regarding crimes against honor, i.e. articles possibly criminalizing the work of journalists.<sup>320</sup> Later that day, the president of the Supreme Court suggested that the new Penal Code only comes into force at the end of 2020.<sup>321</sup>

310 <https://tiempo.hn/interino-eeuu-y-joh-acuerdan-mejorar-seguridad-abordar-migracion/>

311 <https://tiempo.hn/continuan-muertes-por-ahogamiento-de-hondurenos-en-el-rio-bravo/>

312 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/minisitios/hondurenosenelmundo/1314652-471/estados-unidos-confirma-continuidad-indefinida-del-tps-a-hondure%C3%B1os>

313 <https://juecesporlademocracia.org/estudio-sistematico-del-proyecto-de-nuevo-codigo-penal-de-honduras/>

314 <http://elpulso.hn/colegio-de-periodistas-pide-eliminar-6-articulos-del-nuevo-codigo-penal/>

315 <https://www.facebook.com/ClibreHonduras/videos/2666002980336891/>

316 <https://www.cejil.org/es/cejil-nuevo-codigo-penal-honduras-facilitaria-criminalizacion-defensa-derechos-humanos>

317 <https://tiempo.hn/cohep-al-cn-pide-no-entre-en-vigencia-nuevo-codigo-penal/>

318 <https://confidencialhn.com/oliva-garantiza-transparencia-en-reformas-electorales-codigo-penal-entrara-en-noviembre-sostiene/>

319 <https://www.oas.org/fpdb/press/AnalisisJuridicoDelNuevoCodigoPenalMACCIH.pdf>

320 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1314332-410/congreso-nacional-eliminara-delitos-injuria-calumnia-nuevo-codigo-penal-honduras->

321 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1314332-410/congreso-nacional-eliminara-delitos-injuria-calumnia-nuevo-codigo-penal-honduras->

## Electoral Reforms

The main topic this month was the procedure to nominate and selective the representatives of the new electoral bodies. The National Party, Liberal Party and Libre started to work on a transitory bill for this process.<sup>322</sup> The Citizens Convergence and organized UNAH students presented their own proposal for electoral reforms including for example a two-round presidential election.<sup>323</sup> The Association for a More Just Society (ASJ) also published a proposal.<sup>324</sup> On August 13, Congress created a congressional committee on the topic.<sup>325</sup> At that moment, Libre ended its 91-day congressional insurrection (see also last month's monitor).<sup>326</sup>

As the only party, PINU opposed the law as just another typical distribution of positions between the political parties.<sup>327</sup> But there was also some more general criticism coming from Libre representatives. Congressman Rafael Sarmiento voiced concern that with the creation of the Electoral Justice Tribunal (TJE), the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court would be weakened in electoral matters.<sup>328</sup> A former TSE magistrate denounced that the electoral bodies could still be very easily infiltrated by organized crime.<sup>329</sup> The head of investigation at the National Anti-Corruption Council (CNA) stated that at the end of the election process for the new electoral bodies, it would be more of the same.<sup>330</sup>

On August 20, La Gaceta published the special law for the selection and nomination of the electoral authorities.<sup>331</sup> Shortly afterwards, it became public that Mauricio Oliva, Congress' president, would head the responsible commission for electing the representatives of the two new electoral bodies and the RNP.<sup>332</sup> One of many problems with that decision was that just the day before, he had announced his presidential run in the next elections.<sup>333</sup> Radio Progreso critically commented: "Two years remain for the primary elections, and the political parties put the accelerator to impose the electoral issue on the country's agenda, although there are other more important and decisive interests for the life of Honduras. During the current week, the ruling party carried out two electoral movements: the first, launching of a candidacy disguised as a conversation by the president of the National Congress, Mauricio Oliva, who, clearly, showed interest in competing for the ownership of the Executive Power. The second is the open campaign, to promote and approve the advancement of the primary elections, for November 2020, that is to say in a year and two months. According to the current electoral law, the primary and general elections are held the same year, one in March and the other in November."<sup>334</sup>

322 <http://elpulso.hn/eleccion-de-nuevas-autoridades-electorales-sera-exclusiva-del-congreso/>

323 <http://elpulso.hn/convergencia-ciudadana-y-estudiantes-de-la-unah-presentan-propuesta-de-reformas-electorales/>

324 <http://elpulso.hn/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Propuesta-de-Ley-de-Seleccio%CC%81n-Eleccio%CC%81n-Funcionamiento-Electoral.pdf>

325 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/13/nombra-comision-legislativa-para-integrar-organos-electorales/>

326 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/13/libre-pone-fin-a-insurreccion-legislativa/>

327 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/ley-para-eleccion-de-representantes-electorales-culminara-repartiendo-cargos-valoran-diputados/>

328 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/con-creacion-del-tje-se-limitan-funciones-a-sala-de-lo-constitucional-segun-diputado.html>

329 <https://tiempo.hn/exmagistrado-asegura-que-tse-aun-facil-de-filtrar-crimen-organizado/>

330 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/al-final-quedan-las-mismas-personas-dice-odir-fernandez-sobre-eleccion-de-nuevos-cargos-electorales.html>

331 <https://tiempo.hn/publicada-en-la-gaceta-ley-especial-electorales-armaron-cupulas-pn-libre-pl/>

332 <https://tiempo.hn/presidente-cn-conforma-comision-para-nombrar-autoridades-electorales-y-del-rnp/>

333 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3494-ahora-si-mauricio-oliva-lanza-precandidatura-presidencial>

334 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/nacionalistas-proponen-adelantar-elecciones-primarias-sin-reformas-electorales-profundas/>

## Poverty

"For the fifth consecutive year, erratic and extreme weather patterns of drought and prolonged rainfall have decimated corn and bean crops in the Dry Corridor of Central America. The destruction of crops means hunger for peasant farmers who struggle daily to feed their families. More than 2 million people in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua have been affected, and 1.4 million need urgent help."<sup>335</sup> As a response, the World Food Program says it's planning to nearly quadruple the number of people that the U.N. agency helps in four central American countries affected by drought. The WFP aims to provide food assistance to 700,000 people in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua — up from 160,000 helped already this year.<sup>336</sup>

Another source of support, are the ever growing amount of remittances sent from abroad.<sup>337</sup> Radio Progreso even calls Honduras, "the country of remittances" - but remittances also have a dark side to them. "Remittances are the result of an economic model that failed, and a political system that long ago stopped responding to the interests of the population, of a political caste that enriched itself at the expense of doing business with the State, leaving abandonment and social inequality."<sup>338</sup>

## And Light at the End of a Month

Radio Progreso presents a successful community energy project in Plan Grande, near Santa Fe, Colón. "Contrary to the large hydroelectric projects that have caused serious social and environmental crises in Honduras, the Plan Grande dam has united the community and is an example of sustainable energy generation."<sup>339</sup>

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335 <https://criterio.hn/2019/08/11/el-clima-se-llevo-sus-cosechas-y-ahora-pasan-hambre/>

336 <https://apnews.com/d91bd9124aff407391d60c4949b16750>

337 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/honduras-capto-entre-enero-y-junio-3-mil-millones-en-remesas-11-2-mas-que-2018.html>

338 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/honduras-el-pais-de-las-remesas/>

339 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/plan-grande-la-pequena-hidroelectrica-que-cambio-la-vida-de-una-comunidad-en-honduras/>



**Another Month at the Honduras Forum Switzerland**

Past Activities:

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Upcoming Activities:

-

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