



# *Another Month in Honduras...*

## Human Rights Monitor – September 2019

Four indigenous Garífuna defenders and two Tolupán defenders were murdered in September in Honduras. A protest to protect the National Park La Tigra and one of Tegucigalpa's main water sources was violently repressed throughout the month. UFECIC and the MACCIH presented their 13<sup>th</sup> corruption case involving JOH's social security scheme Bono 10 Mil and everyone is in anticipation of the imminent trial of JOH's brother Tony Hernández in New York. 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

COFADEH and others published a report on the situation of human rights and land defenders in the La Paz department.<sup>1</sup> An international human rights delegation organized by Mundubat spent a week in Honduras this month. "First, we express our concern about the violation of human rights of various kinds (which we will mention later), which is occurring in a certain political and economic context that is not favorable to the protection of fundamental rights but rather favors impunity. (...) Second, we have been able to verify through our field work, a growing concern for the violation of human rights related to social and economic dimensions, such as access to land and the enjoyment and protection of common goods/natural resources and the environment. (...) Third, we have been able to verify through our field work, a growing concern for the violation of human rights related to civil and political dimensions."<sup>2</sup>

### Assassinations

In total, four indigenous Garífuna women were murdered this month in Honduras. "The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) condemns the prevalence of murders and other forms of violence against Garifuna women in Honduras, due to their gender and ethno-racial origin. The IACHR calls on the Honduran State to implement comprehensive strategies to prevent these events, protect Garifuna women at risky situation and fulfill their obligation of due diligence to investigate, prosecute and punish those responsible, as well as offer integral reparation to all victims. According to information in the public domain, during the month of September four murders of Garifuna women have been reported. Mirna Teresa Suazo Martínez, president of an organization of the Community of Masca in Omoa, was murdered on September 8 by unidentified subjects; Gilma Cacho, and her daughter, Fiori Amaya, from the Garifuna municipality of Santa Rosa de Aguán in Colón, were murdered on September 6; and Nayda Reyez Jiménez, who was killed on September 7 in the community of Bajamar, Puerto Cortés. The Commission also warned with concern the murder of Belkis García, which occurred in January of this year. Her body would have been found with signs of sexual violence in the Garifuna Community of Sambo Creek in La Ceiba Atlántida."<sup>3</sup> In the case of Mirna<sup>4</sup>, IM-Defensoras sent out an alert<sup>5</sup> and OACNUDH demanded a swift and impartial investigation.<sup>6</sup>

At the end of September, more bad news piled on. The indigenous Tolupeño defender Milgen Idán Soto Ávila reported missing for a week was found murdered.<sup>7</sup> He had gone missing when he made his way from San Francisco Locomapa to a protest camp in defense of their land and forest.<sup>8</sup>

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1 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/informe-DEFENSORESTIERRA.pdf>

2 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Comunicado-prensa-Misi%C3%B3n-de-Observaci%C3%B3n-Honduras-sept.-2019.pdf>

3 [https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media\\_center/PReleases/2019/238.asp](https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2019/238.asp)

4 <https://ofraheh.wordpress.com/2019/09/08/repudiamos-asesinato-de-mirna-suazo-presidente-patronato-de-masca/>

5 <http://im-defensoras.org/2019/09/alertadefensoras-honduras-asesinan-a-mirna-teresa-suazo-lideresa-comunitaria-y-defensora-del-territorio-garifuna/>

6 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1171175989369626624>

7 <https://madj.org/index.php/2019/09/27/reportan-desaparicion-de-indigena-tolupan-integrante-del-movimiento-amplio-en-san-francisco-locomapa-yoro-honduras/>

8 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1177724846911959041>

OACNUDH "condemns the violent death after his disappearance on Monday from defender Tolupan Milgen Soto and stands in solidarity with his family, friends and the community".<sup>9</sup> "Nine cowardly murders between 2013 and February 2019 seemed to be an alarming, repudiable and insurmountable balance sheet of the historical conflict generated by businessmen and the Honduran institutionality in the indigenous Tolupán people. But the violent deaths of Armando Fúnez Medina, Ricardo Soto Fúnez, María Enriqueta Matute, Luis de los Reyes Marcía, Eracimo Vieda Ponce, Santos Matute, Fermín Romero, Juan Samael Matute and José Salomón Matute never caused the State of Honduras to act promptly and appropriately to avoid the continuation of the bloodbath so that a new victim was claimed: his name Milgen Idán Soto Ávila, 29 years old."<sup>10</sup> A week later, another indigenous Tolupán defender, Adolfo Redondo, was shot dead by unknown assailants.<sup>11 12</sup>

## Attacks, Criminalization and Harassment

Two years ago, Honduras saw widespread students protests and their violent repression and judicial persecution. Media coverage has decreased since then, but many of the students are still being criminalized. This month, a judge decided to open trial against 18 of them.<sup>13</sup> Human rights organizations denounced this as a grave judicial setback.<sup>14</sup>

In the aftermath of the coup d'état, social activist Emerson Geovany Martínez was detained and accused of terrorism and more. He was released after one day having suffered acts of torture. On September 10, ten years later, he was detained out of the blue and the police cited the arrest warrant from 2009.<sup>15</sup> He was charged with various alleged crimes (e.g. illicit association). Thanks to the accompaniment of COFADEH, he was freed this week and a judge dropped all the charges.<sup>16</sup>

IM-Defensoras sent out an alert denouncing the attacks against the HRDs Elizabeth Medina and Katherin Cruz. The two women were documenting the violent repression by state security forces against protesters in defense of the La Tigra National Park this month (see Repression sub-section). The police threw a tear gas bomb on purpose in front of Medina and accused her of being a "fake human rights defender of lazy people and Maras"; a colleague of her was threatened with a gun. Cruz, meanwhile, was illegally detained by the police.<sup>17</sup>

On September 23, HRD María Hernández from Playa Blanca on Zacate Grande was arrested. There was an arrest warrant emitted against her since November 2018. She and many others are being criminalized by the landowner Jorge Luís Cassis Leiva.<sup>18</sup> IM-Defensoras denounced the arrest.<sup>19</sup>

9 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1178045832635002880>

10 <https://madi.org/index.php/2019/09/30/quienes-son-los-asesinos-del-pueblo-tolupan/>

11 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/30/confirman-asesinato-de-otro-lider-tolupan-en-yoro/>

12 <https://progressive.org/dispatches/Honduran-indigenous-protesting-logging-killed-Krausch-191002/>

13 <http://www.hondurastierralibre.com/2019/09/honduras-dictan-auto-de-formal.html>

14 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/1220-retroceso-judicial-corte-de-apelaciones-arremete-contra-estudiantes-de-la-unah-y-defensores-de-ddhh>

15 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/reabren-criminalizaciones-politicas-del-2009/>

16 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/diez-anos-despues-emerson-revivio-una-pesadilla/>

17 <http://im-defensoras.org/2019/09/alertadefensoras-honduras-obstruccion-al-libre-ejercicio-de-defensa-de-ddhh-intimidacion-retencion-arbitraria-y-agresiones-contra-las-defensoras-elizabeth-medina-y-katherin-cruz/>

18 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/capturan-a-defensora-de-zacate-grande/>

19 <http://im-defensoras.org/2019/09/alertadefensoras-honduras-detencion-y-criminalizacion-contra-maria-concepcion-hernandez-defensora-del-territorio-integrante-de-adepeza/>

Giorgio Trucchi summarized the situation in Zacate Grande as "an infinite circle of criminalization".<sup>20</sup> Defensores en Línea was able to speak with María after her arrest. She expressed concern about her 8-year old son who was with her during the arrest.<sup>21</sup> A day later, her hearing took place and she was released with alternative measures to pre-trial detention, i.e. she has to sign a document at the court every two weeks, is not allowed to leave the country nor go the land in question. The trial will start on October 9.<sup>22</sup>

COFADEH presented to the IACHR the case of the campesino group 9 de Julio in Las Huertas, near San Pedro de Tutule, la Paz. They suffered 25 violent evictions in the last years.<sup>23</sup>

## Indigenous Peoples

On September 5, COPINH sent out an alert as once more a member of the Madrid family, Donato Madrid, destroyed part of the cultivation belonging to the members of the Río Blanco community. They alerted the police, but none came.<sup>24</sup> A few days later, community members in Río Blanco were attacked with stones and sticks.<sup>25</sup> On September 23, members of the Madrid Family stopped COPINH members threatening to burn their cars. COPINH was accompanying Mexican and US filmmakers.<sup>26</sup> Five hours later, COPINH informed that they were able to leave. They denounced that over 20 complaints against the Madrid Family have already been filed at the MP to no avail.<sup>27</sup> But less than a week later, there was another attack. "Rosalina Domínguez, community leader, approached Donato [Madrid] and told him to walk away and stop bothering those who worked, that was when Donato Madrid grabbed her by the collar of the shirt and tried to hit her with the machete on the neck, clearly trying to kill her. Rosalina managed to defend herself and a group from the community managed to get Donato off the premises where they were working."<sup>28</sup> <sup>29</sup> There is a general lack of protection by the protection mechanism for COPINH communities, especially the one in Río Blanco.<sup>30</sup> COPINH sent out another alert this month denouncing the arbitrary detention of members of the Colomoncagua community by soldiers.<sup>31</sup>

Nine criminalized Tolupanes HRDs fear being sent to pre-trial detention. "The lawyers of the Broad Movement for Dignity and Justice (MADJ), an organization that supports this struggle, have denounced that the process has been characterized by the bias of justice institutions in favor of the forest-exploiting company. The State of Honduras continues to feed its historical debt with this people, stripping it of its natural resources, denying its right to equal justice and even denying

20 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/zacate-grande-y-el-ciclo-infinito-de-criminalizacion-de-defensores-y-defensoras/>

21 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/maria-herandez-desconozco-por-que-me-detienen/>

22 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/23/continua-la-criminalizacion-de-los-defensores-de-la-tierra/>

23 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/cofadeh-pide-a-la-cidh-pronunciarse-sobre-desalojos-violentos-y-conoce-denuncia-del-caso-9-de-julio/>

24 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/116974267370768896>

25 <https://copinh.org/2019/09/alerta-rio-blanco/>

26 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1176231306071609350>

27 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1176303568892157952>

28 <https://copinh.org/2019/09/atentan-contra-la-vida-de-rosalina-de-rio-blanco/>

29 <http://im-defensoras.org/2019/09/alertadefensoras-honduras-atentado-contra-la-vida-de-rosalina-dominguez-lideresa-de-la-comunidad-de-rio-blanco-e-integrante-del-copinh/>

30 <http://www.pasosdeanjalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2573-un-foco-infeccioso-de-impunidad-amenaza-la-vida-de-indigenas-lencas-en-rio-blanco>

31 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1175570707763355649>

fundamental rights such as health and education, as well as its right to peace and a healthy environment."<sup>32</sup> The indigenous Tolupán from San Francisco Locomapa have been suffering a year-long criminalization campaign. In a third judicial process, nine of them appeared in a measures review hearing on September 13 where they feared pre-trial detention. But the hearing was suspended after their defense team had challenged the judge.<sup>33</sup> <sup>34</sup> CESPAD published the second part of an analysis on the general situation of the Tolupanes in Honduras (see last month for the first part).<sup>35</sup>

ConexiHon reported that some 20% of all concessions for mining and energy projects are in indigenous territories in Honduras.<sup>36</sup> La Prensa reported on corruption at the National Agrarian Institute leading to the distribution of protected land affecting indigenous communities.<sup>37</sup>

## FPIC

30 years ago, the International Labor Organization (ILO) approved the Convention 169 which since then has become an important judicial tool for the protection of the indigenous peoples worldwide. OFRANEH denounces that 30 years later, the JOH regime continues to undermine their right and it condemns the newest attempt by a severely lacking Consultation Bill.<sup>38</sup> The UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Victoria Tauli-Corpuz seems to agree also reacting to the recent declaration of the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights on Honduras (see last month's Monitor). She took up their preoccupation regarding the possible approval of a "deficient" Consultation Bill.<sup>39</sup> Both COPINH and OFRANEH warned about the bill violating the ILO Convention 169 by undermining the right of the indigenous peoples to decide over their land.<sup>40</sup> <sup>41</sup> According to OFRANEH, it violates the recommendations made by Tauli-Corpuz.<sup>42</sup> <sup>43</sup> <sup>44</sup> OFRANEH also accused the UNDP of "violating the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, by deliberately claiming that the socialization of the Consultation La - copied from the law of Peru - was a consultation".<sup>45</sup>

## The Case of Berta Cáceres

Last month, a report on Roberto David Castillo Mejía was published (see August' Monitor).<sup>46</sup> <sup>47</sup> At the beginning of September, COPINH presented the report in Honduras. According to Berta Zúniga,

32 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/09/13/alerta-en-riesgo-de-ir-a-prision-9-indigenas-tolupanes-defensores-del-bosque/>

33 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/57-pueblos-indigenas/1227-esta-semana-nombran-juez-del-caso-de-tolupanes-criminalizados-por-tercera-vez>

34 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/criminalizacion-y-amenazas-continuan-contra-pueblo-tolupan/>

35 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/09/13/las-montanas-o-la-muerte-el-drama-de-los-tolupanes-en-honduras/>

36 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/investigaciones/1212-137-concesiones-mineras-y-de-energia-invaden-territorios-indigenas-en-honduras>

37 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1319460-410/corrupcion-como-pinata-repartieron-reservas-tela-la-ceiba-honduras>

38 <https://ofraneh.wordpress.com/2019/09/13/30-anos-del-convenio-169-de-la-oit-y-la-destruccion-de-la-consulta-previa-a-manos-del-estado/>

39 <http://unsr.vtaulicorpuz.org/site/index.php/es/press-releases/299-honduras-gtedh>

40 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1171486260700962818>

41 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1171558330164285440>

42 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1172203399934296064>

43 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1172165272473612295>

44 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1172137281534201859>

45 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1173255301933481987>

46 <http://www.ghrc-usa.org/2019/08/davidcastilloreport/>

47 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1173721468657643527>

"[t]he report helps to reveal the criminal structure that has benefited from this concession to make a profit, a pattern that has been seen not only with Agua Zarca but with other energy projects in Honduras". The lawyer Víctor Fernández added: "The corrupt model of the Agua Zarca hydroelectric project is the model followed by the majority of extractive projects awarded after the 2009 coup".<sup>48 49 50 51</sup>

On September 12, the MP informed that the two police investigators Juan Carlos Cruz and Miguel Arcángel Rosales accused of tempering with evidence in the Berta Cáceres case successfully challenged their accusations. The MP believes that the court's decision was a mistake.<sup>52</sup> COPINH denounced that they were let go and demanded investigations into why they tampered with evidence, to the benefit of whom, maybe the same people now responsible for their freedom. They condemned it as just another act perpetuating impunity in the Berta Cáceres case.<sup>53</sup>

The initial hearing against David Castillo in the Berta Cáceres case was scheduled to continue on September 25. But without giving any reason, the defense team requested another rescheduling. The judge granted this and COPINH denounced it as "an arbitrary and irregular action" that will further delay the process.<sup>54</sup> Later the same day, the MP published a press release informing that they have proof linking Castillo to Geovanny Bustillo, who was found guilty of assassinating Berta. They have phone conversations and text messages in which they plan the murder and they also have proof that Castillo paid the hit-men 500'000 Lempiras.<sup>55</sup> Coincidence or not, also the same day, the MACCIH informed that a hearing would take place the same week in the Gualcarque Fraud corruption case.<sup>56</sup> The hearing of David Castillo was later postponed to October 10.<sup>57</sup>

Berta Zúniga met with US congresswomen who joined her demand for justice for Berta Cáceres.<sup>58 59</sup> A Catalan TV station aired the documentary "The Seeds of Berta" on Berta Cáceres and it can be watched online.<sup>60</sup>

## LGBTQ

The LGBT organization Cozumel Trans denounced a series of aggression and attacks against an inmate and threats by the Military Police against a HRD visiting the person. "The situation of persons deprived of liberty in Maximum Security and militarized Prisons is worrying overall risk

48 <https://copinh.org/2019/09/videos-foro-perfil-david-castillo/>

49 <https://copinh.org/2019/09/video-conferencia-de-prensa-04-09-2019/>

50 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1169297951941902336>

51 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1169345228412739588>

52 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/145-septiembre2019/4801-el-ministerio-publico-a-la-ciudadania-en-general-informa>

53 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1172305068776968192>

54 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1176663819088781312>

55 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/145-septiembre2019/4867-prueba-pericial-vincula-cruce-de-mensajes-entre-expresidente-de-desa-y-uno-de-los-condenados-por-crimen-de-berta-caceres>

56 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/117658889390500866>

57 <https://copinh.org/2019/09/video-suspenden-audiencia-contradavid-castillo/>

58 <https://twitter.com/Ilhan/status/1176961923264450563>

59 <https://twitter.com/AyannaPressley/status/1176998051933753344>

60 <https://www.ccma.cat/tv3/alacarta/latituds/les-llavors-de-berta-caceres/video/5912827/>



since the regulations in this area prohibit the military presence in the prison system".<sup>61</sup> Also in September, the deputy director of the National Penitentiary Institute (INP) suspended the conjugal visit for members of the LGBTQ community.<sup>62</sup>

## Freedom of Expression and Journalists

September started with the car of the social communicator Miguel Tróchez being set on fire in Santa Bárbara, Santa Bárbara. Previously, Tróchez had sought help from the police denouncing that he had been extorted.<sup>63</sup> He received death threats and was a victim of extortion.<sup>64</sup> A few days later, Marlon Zelaya denounced that at 1:00am two unknown persons set on fire his motorbike and destroyed the windows of his car. He believes the attack is linked to his reporting. It is the second attack against him this year.<sup>65</sup>

Reporteros de Investigación reported on the situation of journalists in Copán, where in the last years seven journalists had been murdered.<sup>66</sup> The last one, Joel Aguilar, was assassinated last month (see August' Monitor). His murder was also denounced by UNESCO.<sup>67</sup> But it is not just a regional problem. According to Pasos de Animal Grande, on average every five days, a Honduran journalist suffers an attack.<sup>68</sup> In total, they documented 54 cases of threats, attacks and criminalization against journalists so far this year.<sup>69</sup> Additionally, CONADEH has already documented 15 cases this year as a consequence of death threats.<sup>70</sup>

At the same time, the JOH regime further limits freedom of expression through the publication of a ministerial agreement (Nr. 0754-SE-2019). It consists of 33 articles, which highlight a series of prohibitions and sanctions for those who "utter insults against the image and honor of the authorities of the three State Powers as well as departmental and municipal authorities".<sup>71</sup> Additionally, his presidential minister Ebal Díaz legally persecutes the Radio Globo journalist Lidieth Díaz. He pressed charges against her for libel and defamation.<sup>72</sup> Fittingly, Pasos de Animal Grande reported on self-censorship by journalists and social communicators in Santa Bárbara in fear of threats and worse.<sup>73</sup> And if they continue to critically report, their air time is being cut.<sup>74</sup>

61 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/09/17/policia-militar-en-la-carcel-te-vamos-a-disparar-en-los-ojos/>

62 <https://confidencialhn.com/subjefe-penitenciario-recurre-a-la-homofobia-al-prohibir-visitas-conyugales-a-diversidad-sexual/>

63 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/01/extorsionan-e-incendian-vehiculo-a-comunicador-social-en-santa-barbara/>

64 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1060-amenazas-extorsion-y-quema-de-vehiculo-sufrio-comunicador-en-santa-barbara>

65 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3510-alerta-atentan-contra-otro-periodista-en-occidente-de-honduras>

66 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/09/03/7-periodistas-asesinados-en-zona-de-narcopolitica/>

67 <https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-director-general-urges-investigation-murder-broadcast-journalist-edgar-joel-aguilar>

68 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/monitoreo-de-compromisos-internacionales/item/2558-cada-5-dias-un-periodista-es-violentado-en-honduras>

69 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/monitoreo-de-compromisos-internacionales/item/2574-gases-lacrimogenos-contra-la-prensa-para-disuadir-cobertura>

70 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/numera-numero-de-periodistas-desplazados-por-amenazas-a-muerte/>

71 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1063-crean-reglamento-para-acallar-vozes-opositoras-este-15-de-septiembre>

72 <https://tiempo.hn/confirmado-ebal-diaz-querello-a-la-periodista-lidieth-diaz-por-difamacion-y-calumnias/>

73 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2569-periodistas-en-santa-barbara-se-autocensuran-en-algunos-temas-debido-a-la-inseguridad-del-pais>

74 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2575-no-seguir-linea-politica-es-la-principal-causa-de-cierre-de-espacios-en-tv-y-radio-en-santa-barbara>

On September 26, the journalist Thelma Mejía denounced an attack against journalist and Radio Progreso correspondent Sandra Maribel Sánchez.<sup>75</sup> Later, it was made public that it was an attempted kidnapping.<sup>76</sup> Sandra held a press conference the next day. "In her statements Sanchez said it was clear that the threats come from the Armed Forces and its repressive policy installed in the country. In addition, she held the government of Juan Orlando Hernández responsible for the violence and vulnerable situation in which the citizenry finds itself."<sup>77</sup> She showed strength during the press conference emphasizing that she won't leave the country and continues to do critical journalism.<sup>78</sup> OACNUDH expressed its solidarity and demands an exhaustive investigation.<sup>79</sup>

## Violence against Women

Ten years ago, Honduras prohibited the use of Emergency Contraceptive Pill. "As of 2014, Doctors Without Borders together with other organizations has participated in the working group for the approval of a comprehensive care protocol, dedicated to survivors of sexual violence in Honduras. Its approval is pending since October 2017 because the pills remain prohibited and they are an essential part of the protocol." ContraCorriente spoke with Rafael Contreras of Doctors Without Borders about the situation in Honduras.<sup>80</sup> At the end of September, women and feminist organizations took to the streets to demand respect for their right and to decide over their own bodies.<sup>81</sup>

"Berta Cáceres said that the Honduran dictatorship has different forms of domination and to strengthen itself has not only allied itself with the most predatory capitalism and racism, but also with the patriarchy that has relegated women to a subaltern position to men. (...) For this reason, feminism not only liberates women, but also men, and, in this sense, the latter have a fundamental responsibility in deconstructing the hegemonic model of patriarchal masculinity and moving towards alternative and egalitarian masculinity. The men of the social and progressive movements of the country have a greater responsibility because the authoritarianism of the regime cannot be denounced if we do not radically change our macho attitudes within our organizations, at work or at home."<sup>82</sup>

## Political Prisoners

"On August 9, the Honduran government released two political prisoners who had been in a military-run prison for the past year and a half for their participation in opposition protests. NACLA spoke with one of the prisoners and his partner about his experience and the ongoing resistance movement in Honduras."

75 [https://twitter.com/thelma\\_mejia/status/1177423766290391041](https://twitter.com/thelma_mejia/status/1177423766290391041)

76 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/26/intentan-secuestrar-a-la-periodista-sandra-marybel-sanchez/>

77 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/radio-progreso-denuncia-intento-de-secuestro-contr-periodista-sandra-maribel-sanchez/>

78 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/27/no-me-voy-del-pais-y-seguire-haciendo-periodismo-critico-sandra-marybel-sanchez/>

79 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1177604667024580608>

80 <https://contracorriente.red/2019/09/12/en-tres-anos-medicos-sin-fronteras-ha-atendido-2048-sobrevivientes-de-violencia-sexual-sin-acceso-a-la-pae/>

81 <https://hch.tv/2019/09/28/el-movimiento-feminista-protesta-exigiendo-se-respeten-sus-derechos-respetos-sexuales-y-productivos/>

82 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/la-lucha-por-la-democracia-es-la-lucha-contr-el-patriarcado/>

In a second interview, Edwin speaks about the condition in the maximum-security prison La Tolva - in the same prison, the 7 HRDs from Guapinol are currently held (see above).

<https://nacla.org/news/2019/09/05/political-prisoners-honduras-protests>

<https://wp.radioprogreso.net/la-tolva-carcel-para-presos-politicos-y-ambientales-en-honduras-entrevista/>

## Extractive Industries

CEJIL published a press release demanding a stop to the extractive policies of the JOH regime and that it guarantees the human rights of the people suffering from these policies. CEJIL is linking up this demand with the recent recommendations made by the UN Working Group on Human Rights and Business (see last month's monitor).<sup>83</sup>

The remainder of the month showed that this demand was not followed up. Next to two currently prominent cases (Guapinol – see below – and La Tigra – see Repression sub-section) there are various additional problematic extractive industries project covered this month: the hydroelectric dam Patuca<sup>84</sup>, the solar energy plant Los Prados<sup>85</sup>, deforestation of the El Merendón mountain range<sup>86</sup>, and the opposition against a hydroelectric plant in Reitoca where inhabitants denounced a new attack against them, someone poisoned their water source with herbicide.<sup>87</sup>

## Mining

In an town hall meeting, the people of Yorito, Yoro declared their community free of mining. The JOH regime had forced four concessions on the community and for about a year, the inhabitants of Yorito have been protesting against a mining project by CEASA.<sup>88</sup>

## Guapinol

These last months were very difficult for the local human rights defenders from Guapinol. In total, 30 HRDs are being criminalized. The charges against 12 of them were dropped in a previous hearing, but there is still an appeal by the MP pending. 10 are still awaiting hearings and one of them, Roberto Antonio Argueta, was murdered last month<sup>89</sup> (see August's Monitor). In September, the trial against seven of them continued.

Pasos de Animal Grande denounced that the two witnesses presented by the MP in the Guapinol case wound up in major contradictions and there was a clear attempt to present the HRDs as a criminal structure. In one case, a witness said that he was held up by the HRDs who were masked

83 <https://www.cejil.org/es/honduras-debe-frenar-politica-extractivista-y-garantizar-derechos-humanos-poblaciones-riesgo>

84 <https://contracorriente.red/2019/09/05/la-tragicomedia-electrica-de-honduras/>

85 <https://contracorriente.red/2019/09/18/sol-de-sobra-y-falta-de-energia-por-corrupcion/>

86 <https://wp.radioprogreso.net/imparable-deforestacion-del-merendon/>

87 <https://tiempo.hn/agua-envenenada-comunidad-sabanetas-150-personas/>

88 <https://wp.radioprogreso.net/yorito-nuevo-municipio-libre-de-mineria/>

89 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2556-prision-para-defensores-de-guapinol-decreta-jueza-en-audiencia-inicial>

and heavily armed, at the same time he was able to identify all of them with name and surname even though he is not even from Guapinol.<sup>90</sup> Ignoring such contradictions, the judge decided on pre-trial detention and the seven HRDs were sent back to prison.<sup>91 92</sup> By sending them back, the National Penitentiary Institute (INP) disobeyed a judicial order to transfer the criminalized HRDs from Guapinol to the prison in Olanchito, Yoro. Instead, the INP sent them to the maximum-security prison La Tolva in Morocelí, El Paraíso.<sup>93</sup> OACNUDH<sup>94</sup> expressed concern and a group of German parliamentarians<sup>95</sup> wrote a letter to the Honduran Attorney General Oscar Chinchilla. Radio Progreso reported that upon the call of an alleged Colonel, the seven HRDs were transferred from Olanchito to the La Tolva prison without even their shirts on.<sup>96</sup> CONADEH announced an investigation.<sup>97</sup>

On September 11, family members of the imprisoned HRDs from Guapinol traveled to Morocelí, El Paraíso to visit their loved ones.<sup>98</sup> Back home, inhabitants occupied the access to the mining project.<sup>99</sup> A day later, the Municipal Committee for the Defense of Commons and Public Goods accompanied by national human rights organizations held a press conference.<sup>100</sup> They denounce that the HRDs have suffered torture and cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment<sup>101</sup> and they reiterated their demand that the criminalized defenders are transferred to the prison in Olanchito, Yoro.<sup>102</sup>

More than 200 national, regional and international human rights organizations condemned in a joint press release the criminalization of HRDs from Guapinol.<sup>103</sup> CESPAD published an analysis on the strategies used by the mining company to criminalize the defenders.<sup>104</sup> As the day passed, the HRDs continued to be held in prison. The JOH regime has failed so far to resolve two Habeas Corpora in favor of them.<sup>105</sup>

## Corruption and Its Enemies

The MP's anti-corruption body UFECIC celebrated its two-year anniversary this month.<sup>106</sup> On this occasion, they presented a new corruption case together with the MACCIH (see further down).

90 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2555-mp-erratico-con-testigos-que-se-contradicen-para-criminalizar-defensores-de-guapinol>

91 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/01/dictan-prision-preventiva-a-ambientalistas-de-guapinol-los-remiten-a-carcel-de-tamara/>

92 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/141-agosto2019/4740-fiscalia-regional-del-bajo-aguan-a-tamara-ocho-personas-por-privacion-injusta-de-la-libertad-e-incendio-agravado>

93 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/desobedeciendo-orden-judicial-inp-traslada-a-defensores-de-guapinol-para-carcel-de-maxima-tortura/>

94 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1170096003019673601>

95 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1169854413759860737>

96 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/arbitrariamente-envian-a-carcel-de-maxima-seguridad-defensores-del-rio-guapinol/>

97 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2561-un-coronel-lo-ordeno-defensores-de-guapinol-están-en-rpoa-intima-en-la-tolva>

98 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/familiares-se-reencuentran-con-defensores-del-rio-guapinol-criminalizados-en-carcel-de-maxima-seguridad/>

99 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/11/pobladores-de-tocoa-se-toman-acceso-a-proyecto-minero/>

100 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/11/pobladores-de-tocoa-se-toman-acceso-a-proyecto-minero/>

101 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/bertha-oliva-aqui-se-acaba-la-vida-si-no-hacemos-lo-que-tenemos-que-hacer/>

102 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/exigen-traslado-inmediato-de-defensores-del-rio-guapinol-a-centro-penal-de-olanchito-yoro/>

103 <https://www.cejil.org/es/mas-200-organizaciones-nacionales-regionales-e-internacionales-condenamos-criminalizacion-defensores>

104 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/09/17/coyuntura-desde-los-territorios-que-estrategias-utiliza-la-empresa-minera-para-criminalizar-a-las-y-los-defensores-del-agua-en-guapinol-y-san-pedro/>

105 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2570-27-dias-llevar-en-prision-defensores-de-guapinol>

106 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/145-septiembre2019/4748-ufecic-cumple-dos-anos-de-arduo-trabajo-y-excelentes-resultados-en-combate-frontal-contrala-corrupcion>

Additionally, the National Anti-Corruption Council (CNA) claimed that UFECIC is investigating the president of Congress, Mauricio Oliva, for corruption.<sup>107</sup>

A former president of the Lawyers' Association of Honduras (CAH) and six others were sentenced for corruption. While welcoming this, Criterio denounces that at the same time a similar crime at the Pension Institute for Journalists remains unpunished.<sup>108</sup> There have been problems at the IPP for years, but only Criterio seems to cover it.<sup>109</sup> This month, the head of the, rather corporate, Journalist Association of Honduras (CPH), Dagoberto Rodríguez, attacked Libre congresswo/men and PINU congresswoman Doris Gutiérrez because they dared to oppose a decree granting impunity to the directorate of the IPP.<sup>110</sup> On September 28, the directorate of the CPH demanded the expulsion of two retired journalists for daring to demand more transparency in the IPP case.<sup>111</sup>

September also brought forward further corruption cases and irregularities. A Nationalist mayor, Teonela Paisano Wood, was detained with 280'000 Lempiras on her.<sup>112</sup> Congress once more violated parliamentary procedures by approving a multi-million dollar debt for ENEE and by allowing San Pedro Sula to take up more debt.<sup>113</sup> The MP presented arrest warrants against the head of the Agriculture and Livestock Secretariat (SAG), Mauricio Guevara, and the speaker of the National Party, Fernando Anduray Díaz, both for environmental crimes.<sup>114</sup> A Honduran judge decided that the state only had to return 10% of the goods seized from the Rosenthal family, i.e. the state keeps goods and properties worth some \$900 million.<sup>115</sup>

## The Onslaught against the Anti-Corruption Bodies

Chargé d'affaires Colleen Hoey met with the Attorney General Óscar Chinchilla and highlighted the important work of the MACCIH.<sup>116</sup> So did the Canadian ambassador<sup>117</sup> and the EU<sup>118</sup>. The MACCIH, additionally, received a US delegation from the Center for Democracy in the Americas (CDA).<sup>119</sup> MACCIH's speaker Ana María Calderón participated in a forum on "Money Laundering and its Links with Corruption Investigations". There she said: "Yes, there is institutional weakness, we find ourselves in a difficult context where international collaboration is needed."<sup>120</sup> Pinu congresswoman Doris Gutierrez handed over a letter to Luis Almargo in representation of the

107 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/ufecic-investiga-a-mauricio-oliva-por-corrupcion-segun-cna.html>

108 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/06/condenan-por-desfalco-en-ente-de-pension-de-abogados-mientras-en-el-de-periodistas-continua-impunidad/>

109 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/27/dirigentes-de-periodistas-se-escudan-en-libertad-de-expresion-para-evadir-justicia/>

110 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/27/presidente-del-cph-declara-enemigos-a-bancada-de-libre-y-a-diputada-doris-gutierrez/>

111 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/28/cph-amenaza-con-expulsar-a-periodistas-que-piden-transparencia-en-ente-de-pensiones/>

112 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/16/detienen-alcaldesa-nacionalista-de-brus-laguna-con-280-mil-lempiras/>

113 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/18/congreso-movil-oficialismo-impone-aprobacion-de-millonarios-contratos-para-deuda-de-la-enee-y-alcaldia-sampedrana/>

114 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/26/mp-presenta-requerimiento-contra-ministro-de-la-sag-y-fernando-anduray-por-delitos-ambientales/>

115 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3544-gobierno-se-queda-con-90-por-ciento-de-bienes-de-los-rosenthal>

116 <https://twitter.com/usembassyhn/status/1171892063413112833>

117 <https://twitter.com/JKHillCDA/status/117286190044733441>

118 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/ue-ve-avances-contra-corrupcion-en-honduras-y-pide-extender-mandato-de-maccih.html>

119 [https://twitter.com/OEA\\_MACCIH/status/1171728089707159554](https://twitter.com/OEA_MACCIH/status/1171728089707159554)

120 [https://twitter.com/OEA\\_MACCIH/status/1172148348196937735](https://twitter.com/OEA_MACCIH/status/1172148348196937735)

Parliamentarian Front in Defense of the MACCIH. They demand the renewal of MACCIH's contract and transparency and participation in its evaluation.<sup>121</sup>

## Corruption around JOH

65% of Hondurans say that the government is the most corrupt institution, this is 15% more than in 2017.<sup>122</sup> Also this month, in a raid by the MP and UFECIC, Carol Alvarado, a close friend of JOH's wife Ana Rosalinda García Carías, was targeted.<sup>123</sup> And ConfidencialHN reported on how money stolen in the Pandora corruption case was transferred to the controversial political strategist JJ Rendón who advised JOH's presidential election.<sup>124</sup>

## Corruption on Wheels

The MACCIH and UFECIC presented their 13th corruption case, "Corruption on Wheels".<sup>125</sup> It concerns the embezzlement of public funds through Banadesa - the funds were supposed to go to the controversial social program Bono 10 mil.<sup>126</sup> Analysts have raised for a long time the problem with this social program and that it is being used by the JOH regime as a political tool. Seven former public officials are accused of having stolen at least 11.4 million Lempiras between June 2013 and May 2014. Four of them were detained on the first day, then immediately received alternative measures to pre-trial detention and were let go.<sup>127</sup>

## The Narcopolítica Case

In the Narcopolítica corruption case, the Nationalist politician and former official in the Lobo administration, Miguel Pastor, was acquitted of various crimes but he was sent to pre-trial detention for money laundering and bribery.<sup>128</sup>

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

The former first lady Rosa Elena Bonilla de Lobo was sentenced to 58 years in prison and the payment of a 1.27 million Lempiras penalty. Saúl Escobar, meanwhile, got 48 years in prison.<sup>129 130</sup>

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121 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/17/coalicion-ciudadana-pide-a-almagro-ampliar-vigencia-de-la-maccih/>

122 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3537-mas-del-60-de-hondurenos-cree-que-joh-es-corrupto>

123 <https://confidencialhn.com/cierran-cerco-a-joh-allan-y-aseguran-casa-a-cuadro-de-confianza-de-ana-garcia/>

124 <https://confidencialhn.com/dinero-de-pandora-fue-utilizado-para-pagar-servicios-a-controvertido-estratega-jj-rendon/>

125 [https://twitter.com/OEA\\_MACCIH/status/1176581548881170434](https://twitter.com/OEA_MACCIH/status/1176581548881170434)

126 <https://tiempo.hn/maccih-usaron-banadesa-para-drenar-fondos-bono-10-mil-funaso-capital-semilla1/>

127 <https://tiempo.hn/en-libertad-se-defenderan-implicados-en-caso-corrupcion-sobre-ruedas/>

128 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/20/justicia-hondurena-se-comienza-a-acomodar-a-favor-de-miguel-pastor/>

129 <https://twitter.com/PJdeHonduras/status/1169360209837535233>

130 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/04/exprimera-dama-de-honduras-condenada-a-58-anos-de-reclusion/>

## The Petty Cash Accounts of the Brother Case

UFECIC challenged the decision to have the charges against the two main suspects in the Caja Chica del Hermano corruption case dismissed, one of them being the brother of Pepe Lobo.<sup>131</sup>

## IHSS Corruption Case

The former IHSS director Mario Zelaya faces another corruption trial. This month, a preliminary hearing took place in which he was accused of eight instances of corruption.<sup>132</sup> A week later, trial was opened against him.<sup>133</sup> Then, there was also a evidentiary hearing against 14 former board members.<sup>134</sup>

## Astropharma

The MP highlighted irregularities in the Astropharma corruption trial against a powerful Nationalist family (see also last month's monitor).<sup>135</sup> Apparently unsuccessful, they went to Twitter. "For the second time, the #MP asks the Court for a complete copy of the judgment and the record of the trial hearing of the ASTROPHARMA case, since, unbelievably, these have not been delivered. We are waiting to receive them, an essential element, to file the appeal".<sup>136</sup>

## Pandora Corruption Case

The MACCIH and UFECIC request the definitive seizure of goods and properties bought by the accused in the Pandora Corruption case allegedly with state funds.<sup>137</sup> Reporteros de Investigación announced that they obtained documents showing that the Pandora corruption case expanded to Panama.<sup>138</sup> ConfidencialHN reported on how money stolen in the Pandora corruption case was transferred to the controversial political strategist JJ Rendón who advised JOH's presidential election.<sup>139</sup> On September 24, three accused in the Pandora corruption case handed themselves in.<sup>140</sup>

## State Security Forces

Symptomatic of the last months, the JOH regime bought a new police tow-truck to counter occupations by protesters.<sup>141</sup> FOSDEH demanded an exhaustive auditing of the security tax (tasa de

131 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/ufecic-presenta-amparo-en-sala-constitucional-en-caso-caja-chica-del-hermano.html>

132 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/145-septiembre2019/4796-mp-formalizara-acusacion-contrario-mario-zelaya-por-ocho-deltos-de-corrupcion-en-el-ihss>

133 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/145-septiembre2019/4828-se-emite-auto-de-apertura-a-juicio-en-contrario-mario-zelaya-acusado-de-ocho-deltos-de-corrupcion-en-el-ihss>

134 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/145-septiembre2019/4818-mp-propondra-pruebas-contrario-exdirectivos-del-ihss-acusados-por-trasferencia-irregular-de-mas-de-600-millones-de-lempiras>

135 [https://twitter.com/MP\\_Honduras/status/1175141757597683712](https://twitter.com/MP_Honduras/status/1175141757597683712)

136 [https://twitter.com/MP\\_Honduras/status/1176250874802450433](https://twitter.com/MP_Honduras/status/1176250874802450433)

137 <https://www.oas.org/es/sap/dsdme/macchi/new/docs/MCH-015.MACCIH-y-UFECIC-solicitan-privacion-definitiva-de-nuevos-bienes-de-origen-ilicito-en-Caso-Pandora.pdf>

138 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/09/04/red-transnacional-pandora-panama/>

139 <https://confidencialhn.com/dinero-de-pandora-fue-utilizado-para-pagar-servicios-a-controvertido-estratega-ij-rendon/>

140 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3540-hoy-tres-pandoros-se-entregan-a-justicia-hondurena>

141 <https://radiohm.hn/policia-nacional-adquiere-camion-remolcador-para-liberar-vias-durante-manifestaciones/>

seguridad).<sup>142</sup> After the creation of a border police in El Salvador, Honduran foreign minister Lisandro Rosales said that Honduras would not create such a unit for Honduras but it thinks about increasing the number of police agents already stationed in border regions.<sup>143</sup>

A military police official was arrested presumed guilty of sharing information with Maras.<sup>144</sup> Another problematic case involving state security forces goes back over a year. In June 2018, Sherill Yubissa Hernández Mancía, a departmental head of ATIC, died. Her death was presented ever since as a suicide by the ATIC. Women's rights organizations and especially the former head of forensic medicine Julissa Villanueva disputed this narrative. This month, the MP claimed that their investigation concluded that it was a suicide.<sup>145</sup> Villanueva denounced this as a new attempt to cover up the truth.<sup>146</sup>

## Post-Electoral Human Rights Violations

Some months ago, special forces laid down their work in protest against the ordered repression of the Honduran people. The Bureau of Disciplinary Police Matters (Didadpol) announced that discharge hearings would be held against 92 agents.<sup>147</sup> This violated an agreement between the then protesting special forces and CONADEH.<sup>148</sup>

## Repressions

In a IACHR session, Honduran human rights organization and social movements denounced "the repression, violence and criminalizing policy implemented by the State of Honduras to deter, disintegrate and completely eliminate social protest in the country. According to the information presented by the organizations, government actions have left nine people killed, 88 injured and more than 200 people criminalized so far in 2019."<sup>149</sup> C-Libre focused on the role of the police, an institution that came to serve only the interests' of the regime.<sup>150</sup> The south in and around Choluteca has especially been targeted by repression. ContraCorriente launched a new series on the situation in Honduras southern departments starting with "The Southern Bastion in Flames", Choluteca.<sup>151</sup>

Nevertheless, State security forces violently continued to repress protesters on several occasions this month (see also JOH sub-section under Varia). A new case developed around a housing project<sup>152</sup> in the core area of the La Tigra National Park in El Hatillo, north of Tegucigalpa.<sup>153</sup> The inhabitants feared that the project would destroy an important water source of the capital. CESPAD

142 <https://confidencialhn.com/fosdeh-exige-una-exhaustiva-auditoria-a-los-fondos-de-la-tasa-de-seguridad/>

143 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/honduras-recuerda-autonomia-para-aumentar-sus-policias-en-fronteras.html>

144 <https://tiempo.hn/capturan-teniente-de-la-pmop-por-presuntamente-facilitar-informacion-a-mareros/>

145 <https://tiempo.hn/ministerio-publico-concluye-que-la-jefa-de-la-atic-se-suicido/>

146 <https://tiempo.hn/julissa-villanueva-mp-sigue-ocultando-asesinos-sheril-atic/>

147 <https://confidencialhn.com/anuncian-audiencias-de-descargo-contras-92-agentes-por-la-rebelion-policial/>

148 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/09/23/traslados-y-acoso-contras-comando-cobra-cupula-policial-mintio-e-ignora-al-conadeh/>

149 <https://www.cejil.org/es/cidh-organizaciones-denuncian-represion-brutal-y-sistemica-protistas-honduras>

150 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3542-policia-institucion-al-servicio-de-casa-presidencial-c-libre>

151 <https://contracorriente.red/2019/09/17/la-llama-de-bastion-del-sur/>

152 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3504-la-tigra-investigacion-de-el-libertador-que-estremecio-a-la-prensa-hondurena>

153 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/02/policia-reprime-a-pobladores-que-exigen-la-cancelacion-de-proyecto-habitacional-en-la-tigra/>



published an alert <sup>154</sup> The protests continued throughout the month and spread. <sup>155</sup> <sup>156</sup> Again and again, state security forces violently repressed them. <sup>157</sup> Defensores en Línea denounced that live bullets were fired against protesters. <sup>158</sup>

OACNUDH insisted that the Honduran authorities respect the right to free expression and the right to peaceful assembly. They expressed their concern regarding the excessive use of force and the use of live bullets. <sup>159</sup> The Bureau for Police Disciplinary Matters (Didapol) announced to investigate. <sup>160</sup> Shortly afterwards, the investors of the housing project announced to suspend it, but not cancel it. <sup>161</sup> The head of MiAmbiente, the Energy, Natural Resources, Environment and Mining Ministry, José Galdámez, claimed that the project has all the permits and the environmental license. <sup>162</sup> Tegucigalpa's mayor Nasry Asfura seemed to agree saying that it would not be canceled and that it had all the required permits. Environmental defenders and local inhabitants challenged this assertion. <sup>163</sup>

Reporteros de Investigación discovered more irregularities regarding this and four further projects in La Tigra going back to 2010. <sup>164</sup> ConfidencialHN also found that the controversial housing project suffered from corruption. <sup>165</sup> <sup>166</sup> The communities surrounding La Tigra called for a popular assembly on September 17. <sup>167</sup> There was also a protest took in Tegucigalpa <sup>168</sup> and the inhabitants of El Hatillo announced new occupations if there would not be a popular consultation. <sup>169</sup> Another protest took place the day before the popular assembly. It was violently repressed and state security forces used live bullets. <sup>170</sup> OACNUDH expressed concern. <sup>171</sup> In a meeting with the mayoralty and the MiAmbiente Secretariat, the protesters did not come to an agreement. <sup>172</sup> CESPAD published an analysis of the situation around the National Park La Tigra starting in the 1980s and ending in today's protests. <sup>173</sup>

154 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/09/03/alerta-lujosa-residencial-destruira-importante-fuente-de-agua-de-tegucigalpa/>

155 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/09/en-diversas-tomas-pobladores-protestan-contra-proyecto-habitacional-de-la-tigra/>

156 <https://contracorriente.red/2019/09/11/el-poder-y-la-lucha-por-el-agua-en-la-tigra/>

157 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3514-indignante-policia-hondurena-reprime-salvajemente-a-defensores-de-la-tigra>

158 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/policia-dispara-contra-defensores-del-agua-en-tegucigalpa/>

159 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1171191432255868934>

160 <https://confidencialhn.com/anuncian-investigacion-a-policias-que-dispararon-contra-los-defensores-de-la-tigra/>

161 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/09/anuncian-la-suspension-pero-no-la-cancelacion-del-proyecto-habitacional-de-la-tigra/>

162 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/mientras-este-en-miambiente-no-se-autorizara-ningun-proyecto-que-afecte-nucleo-de-la-tigra-asegura-ministro.html>

163 <http://elpulso.hn/no-se-cancelara-el-proyecto-bosques-de-santa-maria-aseguran-autoridades/>

164 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/09/13/cinco-permisos-de-construccion-en-la-tigra/>

165 <https://confidencialhn.com/proyecto-habitacional-en-la-tigra-no-solo-implica-delitos-ambientales-tambien-hay-corrupcion/>

166 <https://confidencialhn.com/exsecretario-de-recursos-naturales-mando-a-secretividad-dictámenes-de-licencias-ambientales-para-favorecer-a-poderosos/>

167 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/12/comision-pro-defensa-de-las-comunidades-de-la-tigra-convocan-a-asamblea-con-todas-las-comunidades/>

168 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/tegucigalpa/1318630-466/marchan-contra-pol%C3%A9mico-proyecto-habitacional-en-la-tigra>

169 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/pobladores-de-el-hatillo-amenazan-con-nuevas-tomas-si-municipalidad-se-niega-a-un-cabildo-abierto.html>

170 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/17/tras-reunion-con-alcalde-capitalino-policia-reprime-con-bala-y-bombas-lacrimogenas-a-defensores-de-la-tigra/>

171 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1174131285041790978>

172 <http://elpulso.hn/sin-acuerdo-autoridades-y-pobladores-que-defienden-la-tigra/>

173 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/09/27/coyuntura-desde-los-territorios-el-parque-nacional-la-tigra-bajo-el-asedio-empresarial-y-el-ascenso-de-la-lucha-territorial/>

## Assassinations

Honduras' security forces showed their dark side again this month. An active army member was found guilty of being accomplice to a double homicide.<sup>174</sup> A former preventive police agent was found guilty of homicide.<sup>175</sup> A patrol car by the Armed Forces crashed into a woman in Cofradía, Cortés. She died and her son, who was with her, denounced that the patrol car first tried to drive away again.<sup>176</sup> HCH uploaded a video by its reporter of the death which raises a lot of question regarding the military patrol.<sup>177</sup> During a police stop, a young woman was shot in the head by a police agent. She fights for her life. Due to the outcry on social media, the police emitted a press release confirming that a young woman was shot, but not giving any details about who shot. Rather, they reflect saying that the driver of the car was drunk.<sup>178</sup> El Pulso challenged Omar Rivera, member of the purging committee and the Society for a More Just Society (ASJ), who presented this as an isolated case.<sup>179</sup>

On September 19, the MP arrested a young member of the Armed Forces accusing him of the murder of the 17-year old Eblin Noel Corea Maradiaga in the beginning of the year. It took place during the protests by the Platform for the Defense of Education and Healthcare.<sup>180</sup> The accused was later sent to pre-trial detention.<sup>181</sup> OACNUDH welcomes his arrest and demands more investigations and prosecution of human rights violations.<sup>182</sup> Amnesty International sees this only as a first step and writes: "It is essential that the authorities determine the responsibility of the commanders who led the operation that resulted in the death of this young man and that they investigate all other cases of repression at the hands of the Honduran security forces".<sup>183</sup>

## Penitentiary System

September began with the murder of an inmate in the Támara prison.<sup>184</sup> More bad news for the Honduran prison authorities came shortly afterwards. A tunnel was found near the so-called maximum security prison El Pozo.<sup>185</sup> <sup>186</sup> By the end of the month, another inmate was found dead in the Támara prison.<sup>187</sup> The National Penitentiary Institute (INP) claimed that it was suicide.<sup>188</sup> In general, its deputy director does not want to hear about human rights violations in Honduras'

174 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/145-septiembre2019/4752-fedcv-y-atic-logran-condena-contra-sargento-del-ejercito-por-doble-asesinato-y-vinculado-al-sicariato>

175 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/145-septiembre2019/4821-sentencia-condenatoria-contra-ex-policia-preventivo>

176 <https://tiempo.hn/femina-muere-arrollada-por-una-patrulla-militar/>

177 <https://hch.tv/2019/09/07/mujer-muere-atropellada-por-patrulla-militar-en-cofradia-cortes/>

178 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/22/policia-hiere-de-gravedad-a-adolescente-durante-operativo/>

179 <http://elpulso.hn/disparar-primero-y-preguntar-despues-hechos-aislados/>

180 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/145-septiembre2019/4844-mp-captura-a-militar-activo-acusado-del-asesinato-de-un-menor-de-edad-tras-protestas-en-yarumela-la-paz>

181 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/145-septiembre2019/4848-detencion-judicial-para-militar-acusado-del-asesinato-de-menor-de-17-anos-durante-manifestaciones-en-yarumela>

182 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1174897011377823744>

183 <https://www.amnesty.org/es/latest/news/2019/09/honduras-detencion-de-militar-justicia-por-muerte-de-joven/>

184 <https://confidencialhn.com/ultiman-a-privado-de-libertad-en-la-penitenciaria-nacional-de-tamara/>

185 <https://tiempo.hn/descubren-tunel-en-santa-barbara-que-conectaria-con-el-pozo/>

186 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/sucesos/1318588-466/al-menos-tres-kil%C3%B3metros-de-profundidad-mide-t%C3%B3nel-hacia-el-pozo-i>

187 <https://hch.tv/2019/09/21/sin-vida-hallan-a-reo-presos-por-extorsion-en-la-carcel-de-tamara/>

188 <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/recluso-se-suicida-en-el-interior-de-la-penitenciaria-nacional-de-tamara.html>

prisons.<sup>189</sup> The National Committee on the Prevention of Torture, Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment (CONAPREV) does not agree. It participated at an international forum in Mexico where they denounced the situation of the Honduran penitentiary system.<sup>190</sup>

## Militarization

The head of the Armed Forces René Orlando Ponce Fonseca took up voting by the state security forces again – he has pushed this for some time now.<sup>191</sup>

## International Community

September started with Honduras holding a ceremony marking the opening of its trade office in Jerusalem.<sup>192</sup> The Israeli prime minister and JOH announced that the opening would be followed by the opening of a Honduran embassy.<sup>193</sup> In his visit to Israel, JOH also went to see the construction of the maritime ship "General José Trinidad Cabañas", a \$56 million purchase by the Honduran navy.<sup>194</sup> <sup>195</sup> Shortly afterwards, El Heraldo reported that Honduras would receive Israeli aid.<sup>196</sup>

There were further international meetings by the JOH regime this month. A Russian delegation made a lightning visit to Honduras.<sup>197</sup> The Secretary of the Development and Social Inclusion Secretariat (Sedis) met with the German Secretary for Economic Cooperation and Development.<sup>198</sup> A Honduran delegation met with the World Bank in Washington DC.<sup>199</sup> At the end of the month, JOH arrived in New York yesterday for the UN summit, where tried to get access to the Green Climate Fund.<sup>200</sup>

## US

Two different media outlets reported that the US would build four military barracks at the José Enrique Soto Cano in Palmerola, Comayagua worth \$21 million.<sup>201</sup> <sup>202</sup> The US is also building a new embassy, which led Proceso Digital to write that "[t]he US is getting stronger in Honduras".<sup>203</sup>

189 <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/np-asegura-que-no-se-les-violenta-derechos-a-privados-en-modulos-de-maxima-seguridad.html>

190 <https://tiempo.hn/conaprev-en-mexico-honduras-no-respeto-derechos-de-detenidos-ni-reos/>

191 <https://tiempo.hn/rene-ponce-fonseca-sufragio-ffaa-importante-para-la-democracia/>

192 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/03/apertura-de-oficina-comercial-de-honduras-en-jerusalem-no-se-realizo-en-la-oficina-comercial-real/>

193 <http://elpulso.hn/honduras-abrio-oficina-en-jerusalem-y-se-prepara-a-abrir-una-embajada/>

194 <https://tiempo.hn/israel-entregara-honduras-nave-maritima-ametralladoras-canonas/>

195 <https://confidencialhn.com/mientras-hondurenos-mueren-por-falta-de-medicinas-joh-se-compra-un-buque-por-mil-250-millones/>

196 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1316655-466/israel-favorecera-a-honduras-con-donaciones-y-asistencia>

197 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3508-exclusiva-seguridad-rusa-hace-visita-relampago-al-gobierno-de-honduras>

198 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3518-titular-de-sedis-se-reune-con-secretario-de-desarrollo-de-alemania>

199 <http://elpulso.hn/delegacion-del-gobierno-presenta-avances-de-pais-ante-banco-mundial/>

200 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/10/gobierno-corrupto-de-honduras-pide-apoyo-para-acceder-al-fondo-verde-para-el-clima/>

201 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/05/ee-uu-confirma-construccion-de-cuarteles-militares-en-palmerola/>

202 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/eeuu-mantiene-inversion-de-21-millones-para-construccion-de-cuarteles-en-base-aerea-de-soto-cano.html>

203 <http://www.proceso.hn/portadas/10-portada/eeuu-se-hace-mas-fuerte-en-honduras.html>

The US chargé d'affaires met with the Honduran foreign minister Lisandro Rosales.<sup>204 205 206</sup> Rosales also met with the State Department's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs.<sup>207</sup> The main topic of all these meetings was migration (see Migration sub-section below for more details).

At the same time, US congresswo/men continued to criticize the official US position.<sup>208</sup> "Last month, U.S. Representatives Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Raul M. Grijalva (D-AZ) and Andy Levin (D-MI) sent a letter to U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Acting Secretary of Labor Patrick Pizzella. Fifty-five Members of Congress expressed their deep concern regarding the Government of Honduras' continued violation of Chapter 16 (the labor chapter) of the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) and the subsequent Honduras Monitoring and Action Plan (MAP). The letter calls for the U.S. government to send a strong message to the Government of Honduras that the United States takes trade agreement enforcement seriously and expects the Government of Honduras to ensure that the right to freedom of association and to collectively bargain is respected generally and in compliance with Honduras' obligations to the United States under CAFTA."<sup>209</sup> This month, a representative of the US Labor Department is currently in Honduras to participate in a tripartite meeting with the government, business and labor representatives.<sup>210</sup>

In the US, the Honduran ambassador to the US, María Dolores Agüero Lara, met Trump in the White House to present her credentials.<sup>211</sup> And back in Honduras, the US Chargé d'Affaires continued to offer photo-ops to JOH and his wife.<sup>212</sup> She also met with the MACCIH and UFECIC as well as the Attorney General.<sup>213</sup> At the end of September, US Congressman Peter Welch visited Honduras.<sup>214</sup>

## EU

Two important documents were published this month on the EU and human rights defenders in Honduras. The first by Amnesty International: "The European Union (EU) and its member states are falling short on their commitment to support and protect human rights defenders (HRDs) who are facing mounting deadly threats and attacks, a new Amnesty International report out today shows. The report 'Defending Defenders? An Assessment of EU Action on HRDs' reveals that EU support can and does offer vital protection to HRDs worldwide, but it is too often silent on human rights abuses in certain countries, leaving human rights defenders in serious danger."<sup>215</sup> The second by the

204 <https://twitter.com/usembassyhn/status/1171191216874184706>

205 <https://twitter.com/usembassyhn/status/1171570284396208129>

206 <https://twitter.com/usembassyhn/status/1171581668047630339>

207 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/honduras-y-eeuu-a-punto-de-firmar-acuerdo-tercer-pais-seguro.html>

208 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/11/norma-torres-llama-narcotraficante-a-joh-y-cuestiona-por-que-trump-quiere-convertir-a-honduras-en-tercer-pais-seguro/>

209 <https://schakowsky.house.gov/press-releases/schakowsky-grijalva-levin-lead-letter-calling-on-honduras-to-halt-labor-violations/>

210 <https://twitter.com/usembassyhn/status/1174128029695696897>

211 <https://twitter.com/usembassyhn/status/1174087058572369920>

212 <https://twitter.com/usembassyhn/status/1174866762921385984>

213 <https://twitter.com/usembassyhn/status/1174456755620909064>

214 <https://twitter.com/usembassyhn/status/1178463226973052928>

215 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/09/eu-must-do-more-to-counter-mounting-global-attacks-on-human-rights-defenders/>

EU-LAT Network "Recommendations to the EU and its Member States for the protection of human rights defenders in Latin America".<sup>216</sup>

The same month, the president of the Central Committee of the National Party (CCPN), Reinaldo Sánchez, was in Brussels visiting the EU headquarters. He presented an official request that the EU would send observers to the primary election of the National Party.<sup>217</sup>

## Drug Trafficking

The trial of Ramón Matta Waldurraga for drug trafficking in the US has been postponed to October.<sup>218</sup>

## Tony Hernández

In preparation of the trial against Tony Hernández on October 2, this month the public prosecutor requested that 14 testimonies against him would be admitted to court.<sup>219</sup> Additionally, the last preliminary hearing took place this month.<sup>220</sup> "Prosecutors responded by ensuring that they will demonstrate during the trial through concrete evidence that Tony Hernández and his brother (Juan Orlando Hernández) used political power to provide protection to several of Tony's drug trafficking partners in exchange for money to finance their political campaigns (...) As the trial approaches, things get more complicated for Tony; if he continues to plead not guilty, he could face up to two life sentences for the charges he is accused of. The only way he has left to reduce his years in prison is to plead guilty before October 2 and begin to collaborate with US justice, providing information that help prosecutors build cases against other co-conspirators."<sup>221</sup> At the same time, ConfidencialHN reported that properties by Tony Hernández are sold in Honduras in expectation of them being confiscated.<sup>222</sup>

On September 30, Univision published another important article on the case, JOH and "the mountains of Honduras where drug traffickers ruled". "This week, Gracias will find itself at the center of a high-profile drug trial in New York against Juan Antonio 'Tony' Hernandez, member of one the leading local families and brother of Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez. It's an open secret that drug traffickers seized control in recent years of this mountainous region of tropical pine forests. But the trial threatens to lift the veil over their alleged illicit activities, much like the mist that covers the pine-covered slopes."<sup>223</sup>

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216 [https://eulatnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Policy\\_Brief\\_A4\\_ENGLISH\\_pliego.pdf](https://eulatnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Policy_Brief_A4_ENGLISH_pliego.pdf)

217 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/partido-nacional-solicita-a-eu-enviar-mision-de-observacion-para-sus-elecciones-internas.html>

218 <https://tiempo.hn/fiscalia-new-york-sentencia-ramon-matta-waldurraga/>

219 <https://confidencialhn.com/pediran-admision-de-14-testimonios-que-hundiran-en-la-carcel-a-tony-hernandez/>

220 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1318667-410/eeuu-termin%C3%B3-etapa-previa-al-juicio-contr-a-tony-hern%C3%A1ndez>

221 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/14/tony-hernandez-a-las-puertas-de-una-cadena-perpetua/>

222 <https://confidencialhn.com/85579-2/>

223 <https://www.univision.com/univision-news/latin-america/open-secret-the-mountains-of-honduras-where-drug-traffickers-ruled>

## Varia

### JOH

In August, after months of protests and his brother in US custody for drug trafficking, the situation of the JOH regime turned even worse as he was mentioned as a co-conspirator in his brother's case. Nevertheless, while the US Judicial Power seems to be interested in JOH, the Trump administration continues to praise him and signed several migration deals with him the regime this month. The US embassy praised the JOH regime a "committed and productive partner".<sup>224</sup> But this still begs the question for how long the US can keep up that double play. InSight Crime summarized the situation as follows: "For years, President Hernández was able to make allies in Washington believe that he was confronting some of Honduras' most pressing problems head-on, including corruption, insecurity and organized crime. Over time, however, the mounting criminal allegations against him have knocked down this facade, calling into question how much of a "strategic partner" Hernández really is in the fight against organized crime."<sup>225</sup>

On September 4, another relative of JOH, his cousin and former police officer Mauricio Hernández Pineda, was indicted in the US for drug trafficking. "Manhattan U.S. Attorney Geoffrey S. Berman said: "Today's charges against a high-ranking former Honduran National Police officer are disturbing. Honduras has long been a corridor for drug traffickers to ship their drugs to the United States from South America. As alleged, Mauricio Hernandez Pineda betrayed his obligations as a police officer to uphold his country's laws and prevent trafficking through his country, and instead facilitated the shipments of tons of cocaine that eventually made its way to the U.S. Hernandez Pineda will soon have to answer for his alleged crimes in a U.S. court."<sup>226</sup> Hernández Pineda was purged from the police force last year - or as they presented it, let go for reasons of restructuring - but he was not investigated for drug trafficking in Honduras.<sup>227</sup> Tony Hernández' lawyer claimed that Mauricio Hernández Pineda is not his cousin.<sup>228</sup> At the same time, member of the Purging Committee, Carlos Hernández, tried to explain why Mauricio Hernández Pineda had not been accused for illicit activities.<sup>229</sup> This situation led the former president Pepe Lobo, once more, to launch an attack on his successor JOH. "Sooner or later Juan Orlando Hernández" will pay for the damage he has done to the country.<sup>230</sup>

Interestingly, JOH may himself be at the start of his own undoing by allowing extraditions of Hondurans in the first place. "As his final extradition orders were being read and signed, a drug trafficker known as "El Negro" Lobo paced in his small holding cell. He was minutes away from becoming the first Honduran citizen legally extradited to the United States in over a century. The

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224 <https://twitter.com/usembassyhn/status/1171914274450608133>

225 <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/criminal-allegations-unravel-honduras-president-crime-fighting-facade/>

226 <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/former-honduran-national-police-officer-charged-conspiring-import-cocaine-united-states>

227 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/04/policia-de-honduras-depuro-a-policia-primo-del-gobernante-pero-nunca-lo-investigó-por-narcotráfico/>

228 <https://tiempo.hn/niegan-conexion-familiar-entre-tony-y-expolicia-mauricio-herandez/>

229 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/en-honduras-no-se-tuvo-pruebas-para-incriminar-a-expolicia-mauricio-herandez-acusado-en-eeuu.html>

230 <https://tiempo.hn/pepe-lobo-tarde-o-temprano-joh-pagara-lo-hecho-1/>

extradition, on May 8, 2014, was about to change the course of drug trafficking history in Honduras, and not just for Lobo and his fellow traffickers sent after him. (...) More extraditions followed. Hernández said that since he's been president, more than 40 traffickers had been sent to face justice in the United States or turned themselves in to authorities in third countries. (...) But as extraditions accelerated there were indications that Hernández was getting nervous. He feared that his brother, Tony, could become the subject of a US extradition request. According to court documents released in his brother's case, Hernández told close associates that he "was considering eliminating extradition" for that reason. (...) In the end, US prosecutors didn't even need to make an extradition request for either. On November 23 of last year, DEA agents arrested Tony when he landed at Miami International Airport. Ardón turned himself in to authorities in February after negotiating with US prosecutors and DEA agents. When Tony Hernández goes to court in October, Ardón will likely be on the stand. "Why was it that Juan Orlando set this machine in motion?" asked the embassy official. "I don't really have a good answer." What is clear is that extradition may be President Hernandez's undoing.<sup>231</sup>

InSight Crime followed up with another article on JOH's drug trafficking ties. "The fall of the Valles has reconfigured criminal dynamics in western Honduras, a remote mountainous region bordering El Salvador and Guatemala that counts the departments of Copán, Santa Bárbara, Ocotepeque and Lempira, and has traditionally served as a route for all types of contraband, including drugs. It is also where President Juan Orlando Hernández and his brother Tony, who was accused this past year in a New York court of being a key link between politicians and organized crime in Honduras, got their start in national politics. The Hernández brothers were born in Gracias, a colonial city in the department of Lempira. Both represented Lempira as congressmen."<sup>232</sup> In the midst of this and this month, Honduras celebrates its 198th "independence" day. Some days before, ConfidencialHN denounced attempts by the JOH regime to silence critical voices during the upcoming September 15 marches.<sup>233</sup> Shortly afterwards, JOH ally and key role in the electoral frauds in Honduras as the president of the TSE, David Matamoros Batson was awarded the position of commissioner at the National Telecommunication Commission (Conatel), i.e. he now regulates media outlets.<sup>234</sup>

Then September 15 arrived. Since the coup d'état in 2009, there always have been two marches - an official one controlled by the JOH regime and one by Honduras' social movements. The Alignment against Continuity ones more convoked a march "to demand again the end of the dictatorship by organized crime".<sup>235</sup> The alternative march was heavily repressed from the start, even when the protest was still gathering people.<sup>236 237</sup> A part from Tegucigalpa, Criterio and El Tiempo also reported on repression in San Pedro Sula and Choluteca.<sup>238</sup> There were also reports of protests signs

231 <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/how-his-extradition-policy-exposed-honduras-president/>

232 <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/wild-west-honduras-home-to-narcos-politicians/>

233 <https://confidencialhn.com/el-regimen-castigara-con-dureza-a-docentes-y-alumnos-que-griten-fuera-joh-durante-desfiles/>

234 <https://tiempo.hn/david-matamoros-batson-nombrado-como-nuevo-comisionado-conatel/>

235 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/con-carias-marchan-con-morazan-vamos-a-batallar/>

236 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/15/regimen-de-honduras-conmemora-fiestas-patrias-con-salvaje-represion-contra-protesta-ciudadana/>

237 <https://tiempo.hn/la-policia-nacional-lanza-gas-lacrimogeno-a-la-marcha-de-libre/>

238 <https://tiempo.hn/policia-gasea-y-cierra-el-paso-a-hondurenos-opositores-que-marchaban-en-sps/>

in the official state march protesting against the narco-dictatorship.<sup>239</sup> Radio Progreso reflected of the significance of sovereignty in a Central American context. "We must understand the construction of sovereignty from a new model of development and well-being, based on dignified relationships, harmony and respect between human beings and with mother nature. When we have built a new fabric of social and political coexistence, nature will provide human beings with everything necessary for the dignified reproduction of life, while human beings reach a dignified level and worthy of respect that produces what they need to live based on full respect for human rights and the rights of nature."<sup>240</sup>

At the end of the month, JOH traveled to New York where presented himself as a victim of persecution.<sup>241</sup> He claimed that NGOs are trying to destabilize his government.<sup>242</sup> Radio Progreso, meanwhile, reminded everyone about an important fact. "The dictatorial regime of Juan Orlando Hernández is not limited to his person, it is any structure that needs to be dismantled in order to begin a transition stage that will lead us to a new democratic process. But this requires the articulated and mobilized commitment of a critical and active citizenship that does not continue to expect that the uncertain winds of the North wear down the supporting foundation of the Honduran dictatorship."<sup>243</sup>

September ended with an outlook on the beginning trial of Tony Hernández on October 2. The New York Time reported on this focusing on the "looming presence" of JOH. "When a former Honduran congressman goes on trial next week in Manhattan, charged with conspiring to import cocaine into the United States, his older brother will be absent from the courtroom but will loom large over the case. That older brother, Juan Orlando Hernández, is the president of Honduras, and an ally of President Trump on immigration and security, which are Washington's top priorities in the region. But even as President Hernández agreed on Wednesday to a deal that will allow the United States to force some migrants to seek asylum in Honduras — a cornerstone in Mr. Trump's plan to curb migration — federal prosecutors were preparing to present evidence that the Honduran president was a member of the drug trafficking conspiracy his brother was charged in."<sup>244</sup>

## Public Sector

While more general protests against the JOH regime have been going on for months, the protests by the Platform for the Defense of Education and Healthcare had decreased a bit in the last two months. On September 11, they called for new protests as a response to the harassment and repression at the workplace suffered by their members.<sup>245</sup> In the south, teachers in Choluteca accompanied by the platform demanded the cancellation of an intervention body in the local education sector. They denounced abusive behavior as well as favoritism towards Nationalist

239 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/15/las-imagenes-de-la-represion-y-el-rechazo-popular-a-las-fiestas-del-15-de-septiembre/>

240 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/soberania-derechos-humanos-y-de-la-naturaleza/>

241 <https://radiohm.hn/presidente-herandez-denuncia-ser-victima-de-persecucion/>

242 <https://tiempo.hn/ongs-y-politicos-sin-escrupulos-boicotean-su-gobierno-segun-joh/>

243 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/radiografia-de-una-dictadura/>

244 <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/26/world/americas/honduras-drug-trafficking-trial.html>

245 <http://elpulso.hn/33142-2/>



activists.<sup>246</sup> According to Colprosumah, 70% of the physical education infrastructure is on the brink of collapse.<sup>247</sup> The education system is also affected by the water crisis. El Pulso reported that 75% of all Honduran schools are without drinking water.<sup>248</sup> Last but not least, some 70'000 children did not enroll in any school. The number of enrolled children has increased until 2014, but since 2015, it is on a decline.<sup>249</sup>

## Poverty

In mid-September, there was a large blackout in Honduras.<sup>250</sup> This temporary situation is for many Hondurans still a daily reality. According to the Central-American Bank for Economic Integration (BCIE), some 30% of Hondurans still lack access to electricity.<sup>251</sup> The same month, Radio HRN reported that child labor has increased in Honduras.<sup>252</sup> For Honduras' poor, not much hopes come from the new budget. FOSDEH called it "new wines in old wineskins".<sup>253</sup> The Central American Institute for Fiscal Studies (Icefi) also voiced concerns regarding "inconsistencies in tax collection, as well as a continued fall in social spending items, contrasting with the serious living conditions suffered by the majorities of this country".<sup>254</sup>

## Penal Code

August ended with surprising statements by the president of Congress, Mauricio Oliva, that the Penal Code would be reformed, i.e. get rid of the articles criminalizing free speech (see last month's Monitor). This month, The National Anti-Corruption Council (CNA) warned that Congress would not make the promised changes.<sup>255</sup> Given the ongoing controversy, 35 civil society organizations wrote a joint letter to Congress demanding that the new Penal Code does not come into force this November.<sup>256</sup> The business lobby COHEP once more voiced preoccupation and demanded reforms before it would come into force.<sup>257</sup> And even the president of the Supreme Court Rolando Argueta voiced concern.<sup>258</sup>

Then, the Nationalist congressman Mario Pérez, announced that Congress would modify the Penal Code, but it would still come into force in November.<sup>259</sup> While the announced decriminalization of crimes against honor was welcomed, the derogation of criminal responsibility for legal entities

246 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/docentes-de-choluteca-están-exigiendo-se-cancele-junta-interventora/>

247 <http://elpulso.hn/el-70-por-ciento-de-la-infraestructura-del-sistema-educativo-publico-nacional-esta-colapsada/>

248 <http://elpulso.hn/posible-crisis-sanitaria-por-falta-de-agua-en-centros-escolares/>

249 <http://elpulso.hn/por-que-el-sistema-educativo-no-es-atractivo-para-los-padres-de-familia/>

250 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1319298-466/apagon-energia-honduras-nicaragua>

251 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/un-30-de-hondureños-no-cuenta-con-servicio-de-electricidad-según-presidente-del-bcie.html>

252 <https://radiohm.hn/total-indefensión-en-cien-mil-aumenta-el-número-de-niños-explotados-laboralmente/>

253 <http://www.fosdeh.com/2019/09/primeras-observaciones-del-fosdeh-al-presupuesto-general-de-la-republica-de-honduras-para-el-año-2020/>

254 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/26/subestimados-ingresos-y-recortes-en-gasto-social-marcan-el-presupuesto-de-honduras-para-2020-icefi/>

255 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/congreso-no-cambiará-temas-fundamentales-en-el-nuevo-código-penal-advierte-el-cna.html>

256 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/06/35-organizaciones-piden-al-congreso-nacional-que-el-código-penal-no-entre-en-vigencia/>

257 <https://tiempo.hn/cohep-nuevo-código-penal-no-se-acerca-a-la-realidad-de-honduras/>

258 <https://tiempo.hn/rolando-argueta-preocupante-nuevo-código-penal-rebaje-penas-delitos-graves/>

259 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/congreso-hará-reformas-al-nuevo-código-penal-pero-mantiene-su-entrada-en-vigencia-para-noviembre.html>

raised questions.<sup>260</sup> According to the CNA, the new Penal Code would also limit the extradition of Honduran citizens to the US.<sup>261</sup> Shortly afterwards, Congress' vice-president Antonio Rivera Callejas claimed that the entrance into force could be postponed for 3-4 months.<sup>262</sup>

Also this month, the Network of Journalists and Social Communicators of Santa Bárbara held a public forum on the grave consequences of the new Penal Code on journalism in Honduras. "Several social communicators express their concern that the Penal Code goes against freedom of expression and will restrict their rights as communicators, will limit the approach of issues such as corruption, violation of human rights, illegal activities from powerful actors, and restrict the access to information. The most worried are those who investigate, who do independent journalism, work in alternative media and who do not represent the interests of politicians, since according to them they will be persecuted and even imprisoned for their work."<sup>263</sup> CEDOH held a forum on "The New Penal Code and the Current Situation in Honduras".<sup>264</sup>

## Electoral Reforms

Congress elected the representatives of the new electoral bodies, the Electoral Justice Tribunal (TJE) and the National Electoral Council (CNE). Before the process started, ContraCorriente published a critical article of the process focusing on the role of Oracle whose contract is highly beneficial for the company and was approved during the congressional insurrection by Libre.<sup>265</sup> The Liberal Party, meanwhile, denounced a rigged process and they withdrew their candidates.<sup>266</sup> But the party itself was divided on this, and at least one representatives stayed in the process.<sup>267</sup> Radio Progreso reported on the ongoing internal disputes in the different parties regarding their own nominations. "For his part, the former magistrate of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE), Augusto Aguilar, says that politicians have given an example of how this type of process should not occur, because in the end, the evaluation process has not been respected, making it clear that it was utterly useless."<sup>268</sup> The Social Citizen Platform for Honduras denounced that this process did not guarantee at all clean elections and that it did not take account of the expectations of the Honduran people.<sup>269</sup>

On September 9, the selection process started. Out of the 97 initial candidates, 45 were selected by a multi-party committee of Congress to present themselves in public hearings.<sup>270</sup> After the election, political opposition was split about the outcome, Libre seemed satisfied that their representatives

<sup>260</sup> <https://tiempo.hn/codigo-penal-cohep-logra-eliminen-la-figura-penal-personas-juridicas/>

<sup>261</sup> <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/nuevo-codigo-penal-limitara-extradiciones-y-ahora-capos-buscaran-pagar-penas-en-honduras-segun-cna.html>

<sup>262</sup> <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/vacatio-legis-de-nuevo-codigo-penal-se-puede-ampliar-en-tres-o-cuatro-meses-segun-vicepresidente-del-cn.html>

<sup>263</sup> <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2560-red-de-periodistas-y-comunicadores-sociales-de-santa-barbara-rechaza-atentado-a-la-libertad-de-expresion-en-nuevo-codigo-penal>

<sup>264</sup> <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/12/permitir-que-nuevo-codigo-penal-entre-en-vigencia-seria-temerario-cedoh/>

<sup>265</sup> <https://contracorriente.red/2019/09/02/congreso-nacional-que-contrato-ilegalmente-a-empresa-oracle-elegira-a-autoridades-electorales/>

<sup>266</sup> <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/02/partido-liberal-se-retira-del-proceso-de-seleccion-de-representantes-de-organos-electorales/>

<sup>267</sup> <https://confidencialhn.com/no-obedecere-a-luis-interventor-liberal-del-rnp-no-se-retirara-de-audiencias-a-cargos-electorales/>

<sup>268</sup> <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/conflictos-internos-de-partidos-impiden-eleccion-de-nuevos-representantes-electorales/>

<sup>269</sup> <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/05/proceso-de-eleccion-de-nuevos-organos-electorales-no-garantizan-elecciones-limpias/>

<sup>270</sup> <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1314572-410/congreso-publica-lista-45-aspirantes-cargos-cne-tje-rnp->

were chosen, Pinu criticized the electoral process as fraudulent.<sup>271 272</sup> Libre's position maybe is best summarized in a previous article by NACLA. "Honduran democracy, some would say, is already doomed to failure. But recognizing that doesn't prevent people like Lenín Laínez, a 24-year-old representative for the LIBRE party, from believing that the best—and the only—way to fight the regime is by working through the corrupted system itself. Laínez is one of LIBRE's two diputados for the Intibucá department—the other is Bertha Zúniga Cáceres, daughter of the murdered environmentalist. He is also the youngest member of Honduras's National Congress, and speaks glowingly of the electoral reform. He holds faith that the peaceful route of elections and electoral reform can oust JOH. But that faith seems overwhelmed by bitterness over the depth of government corruption. It's the reason, he says, so many have taken to the streets in often, volcanic displays of anger."<sup>273</sup> At the same time, Manuel Zelaya also demanded more thorough electoral reforms.<sup>274</sup> Former Attorney General Edmundo Orellano agreed and did not mince words. According to him, without real electoral reforms, the next elections may open the gates to hell in Honduras.<sup>275</sup> Salvador Nasralla, meanwhile, denounced that with the current situation, the National Party has guarantee for another electoral fraud in their favor.<sup>276</sup>

## Migration

The main topic regarding migration this months where the discussions about a safe third country agreement between Honduras and the US. Consequently, Mariana Zaragoza from the Ibero-American University of Mexico, told Radio Progreso in an interview at the beginning of September that Mexico and the Central-American countries have given in to the interest of the Trump administration in matters of migration.<sup>277</sup> Shortly afterwards, it became public that the JOH regime agreed in a recent meeting in the US with Acting Secretary of Homeland Security Kevin McAleenan for Honduras to become a safe third country for Cuban and Nicaraguan refugees.<sup>278</sup> Initially, the foreign minister Rosales denied it.<sup>279</sup> Later, in an interview with Reuters, he confirmed it.<sup>280</sup>

On September 13, "a U.S. delegation led by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Deputy Under Secretary James McCament, joined by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Hugo Rodriguez, and a Honduran delegation led by Minister of Foreign Affairs Lisandro Rosales, as well as Minister of Security Julian Pacheco and Minister of Labor Carlos Madero, completed a series of productive meetings in Washington, D.C. on a broad range of topics related to border security, irregular migration, combating migrant smuggling and transnational

271 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/fuerzas-politicas-se-reparten-cargos-electorales/>

272 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/10/tras-acuerdo-de-tres-partidos-se-eligen-nuevas-autoridades-electorales/>

273 <https://nacla.org/news/2019/09/05/flame-opposition-honduras>

274 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/eleccion-de-autoridades-electorales-es-un-paso-importante-pero-faltan-reformas-mel-zelaya.html>

275 <https://tiempo.hn/edmundoo-orellano-sin-reformas-electorales-estaremos-puertas-del-infierno-1/>

276 <http://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/iudpas-demanda-al-cn-profundizar-en-las-reformas-electorales.html>

277 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/gobiernos-ceden-a-la-voluntad-de-trump-y-dan-la-espalda-a-los-migrantes/>

278 <https://criterio.hn/2019/09/09/honduras-acepta-ser-tercer-pais-seguro-para-cubanos-y-nicaraguenses/>

279 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/canciller-lisandro-rosales-descarta-a-honduras-como-tercer-pais-seguro-de-eeuu.html>

280 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-immigration-honduras/u-s-seeking-to-make-cuban-asylum-seekers-stay-in-honduras-minister-idUSKBN1W22W4>

criminal organizations, and expanding avenues for legal migration."<sup>281</sup> The same day, the ad-interim director of ICE, Matthew Albence, met with the first lady Ana García de Hernández at a Honduran care center for returning migrants.<sup>282</sup>

The Norwegian Refugee Council criticized the US migration policies which negate asylum and support to Central Americans.<sup>283</sup> Shortly afterwards, they published the portrait of a Honduran refugee "kidnapped, deported, displaced and reunited with his family".<sup>284</sup> "The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) conducted a working visit to the United States' southern border on August 19–23, 2019. The visit sought to observe the situation of human rights, concerning conditions of reception at the border; access to asylum and international protection procedures; conditions of detention for migrants and the practices associated with such detention; migration and asylum procedures; and due process guarantees and judicial protection. All these conditions were to be evaluated with an emphasis on the principles of family unity and best interest of the child."<sup>285</sup>

The speculation about a third safe country agreement continued for a while, but on September 25, an agreement that sounded very much like a safe third country agreement was signed, even though they changed the name.<sup>286</sup> It was immediately met with criticism. "The Trump administration signed an agreement Wednesday that could require immigrants coming to America through Honduras to seek asylum there, regardless of whether they're seeking help from the United States under international torture agreements or the asylum system. The administration signed a similar agreement with El Salvador on Friday and another with Guatemala in July. Neither has gone into effect yet. Together, the three countries are the source of most migrants crossing the southern border. The terms of Wednesday's agreement, which are not yet public, allow the US to send migrants back to Honduras, in addition to El Salvador and Guatemala, if they did not seek asylum or other protections in those countries first, according to a senior Department of Homeland Security official. It remains unclear why Honduran officials agreed to the deal, which was signed as Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández faces prosecution in the US for allegedly accepting campaign contributions from drug traffickers."<sup>287</sup> "Asylum seekers are fleeing lethal conditions in these very countries. Potentially forcing them back to regions unprepared to keep them safe is more than cruel: it's perverse."<sup>288</sup> "[E]xperts describe the plan as a recipe for disaster".<sup>289</sup> Just a day later, the US and Honduras signed three additional agreements on migration.<sup>290 291</sup>

281 <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2019/09/13/joint-statement-between-us-government-and-government-honduras>

282 <https://hn.usembassy.gov/es/palabras-director-interino-ice-matthew-albence-primera-dama-ana-garcia-de-hermandez-centro-atencion-migrante-retornado/>

283 <http://www.nrc.org.co/2019/09/23/estados-unidos-no-enfrenta-la-profunda-crisis-de-su-propio-vecindario/>

284 <http://www.nrc.org.co/2019/09/24/secuestrado-deportado-desplazado-y-reunificado/>

285 <https://reliefweb.int/report/united-states-america/iachr-conducted-visit-united-states-southern-border>

286 <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2019/09/25/joint-statement-between-us-government-and-government-honduras>

287 <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2019/9/25/20883831/trump-asylum-honduras-agreement>

288 <https://www.wola.org/2019/09/honduras-asylum-deal-trump/>

289 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/27/honduras-central-america-asylum-seekers-us-guatemala-el-salvador>

290 <http://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/eeuu-y-honduras-suscriben-tres-acuerdos-mas-en-materia-migratoria.html>

291 <https://twitter.com/DHSMcAleenan/status/1177722930576416772>

Over 85'000 Hondurans have been deported this year.<sup>292</sup> Mexico alone has deported 18'000 Honduran children.<sup>293</sup> In 2018, 3526 Honduran students canceled their university registration to flee Honduras instead.<sup>294</sup> And the UNHCR asked Honduras for the approval of a bill to protect those displaced by violence.<sup>295</sup>

## And Light at the End of a Month

The Committee for the Defense of the Commons and Public Goods will be awarded this year's Letelier-Moffitt Human Rights Award. The committee plays an active role in the local protest against a mining project in Guapinol for which dozens of HRDs have been criminalized and 8 are held in a high-security prison in pre-trial detention.<sup>296 297</sup>

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292 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/minisitios/hondurenosenelmundo/1322385-471/m%C3%A1s-de-85000-hondure%C3%B1os-fueron-deportados-de-m%C3%A9xico-y-eeuu-en-2019>

293 <https://tiempo.hn/2019-mexico-deporta-al-menos-18000-ninos-hondurenos-hasta-la-fecha/>

294 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/migrantes/1230-mas-de-3mil-estudiantes-cancelaron-su-matricula-por-migrar-en-2018>

295 <http://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/acnur-honduras-requiere-aprobar-ley-para-protger-desplazados-por-violencia.html>

296 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/el-premio-letelier-moffitt-sera-otorgado-a-defensores-del-agua-y-la-vida-de-tocoa/>

297 <https://ips-dc.org/about/letelier-moffitt-human-rights-awards/>



### **Another Month at the Honduras Forum Switzerland**

Past Activities:

-

Upcoming Activities:

- The Honduras Forum Switzerland will participate in the second encounter of the European Honduras Solidarity Network in Madrid in October

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