

# *Another Month in Honduras...*

## Human Rights Monitor – November 2019

Five social and opposition leaders have been murdered since the conclusion of the Tony Hernández trial last month. Alone this month, an additional three journalists and social communicators were assassinated. At the same time, the imposition of extractive projects continues leading to more threats and forced displacement. In two cases, the people said no this month and declared their territory free of extractive projects. Both the national and international community are worried about the future of the MACCIH. Its mandate ends in just a few weeks and no one knows if it will be prolonged. 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

On November 6, a forum on the situation of HRDs in Honduras and the Inter-American Human Rights System took place in Tegucigalpa.<sup>1</sup> The main conclusion was that the JOH regime continues to fail to comply with the protection measures granted by the IACHR for HRDs.<sup>2</sup> The IACHR, meanwhile, published a press release together with OACNUDH expressing concern about the situation of HRDs in the region. "In Honduras, the murders and other acts of violence committed against defenders that occurred in the context of the demonstrations and strikes called by the health and education sector, which took place in different parts of the country in recent months, are of concern. According to the information gathered, state security forces would have used an excessive level in the use of force when deterring protests. Four people died from gunshot wounds, including a minor."<sup>3</sup>

## Women Human Rights Defenders

For the coming Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Honduras in 2020, PBI published a report on "Women defenders of land, territory and the environment".<sup>4</sup> ContraCorriente published an interview with Andrea Nuila, a member of the feminist collective Luchemos on the situation of violence in territorial conflicts, including drug trafficking, and how this intensifies violence against women.<sup>5</sup> CESPAD published an analysis on women human rights defenders and the construction of a new socio-environmental movement in Honduras.<sup>6</sup>

## Assassinations

Four students and two social leaders were murdered this month.<sup>7 8 9</sup> For more details, please see the section on JOH.

## Attacks, Criminalization and Harassment

The criminalization trial against campesino Carlos Giovanni Cáliz López from the Empresa Asociativa Campesina 9 de Julio was suspended for the second time.<sup>10</sup> Something similar happened in the case of criminalized students. Six of them have been suffering legal persecution since 2015

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1 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/incumplimiento-de-sentencias-internacionales-es-parte-de-la-impunidad-estatal/>

2 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/1285-estado-hondureno-incumple-con-sus-obligaciones-de-proteccion-defensores>

3 <https://oacnudh.hn/cidh-y-las-presencias-de-onu-derechos-humanos-reiteran-su-llamado-para-la-creacion-de-un-ambiente-propicio-y-seguro-para-quienes-defienden-los-derechos-humanos-en-la-region/>

4 [https://pbi-honduras.org/sites/pbi-honduras.org/files/file\\_attachments/PBI%20-%20Report%20UPR%20Honduras%202020\\_0.pdf](https://pbi-honduras.org/sites/pbi-honduras.org/files/file_attachments/PBI%20-%20Report%20UPR%20Honduras%202020_0.pdf)

5 <https://contracorriente.red/2019/11/16/ser-mujer-en-un-pais-controlado-por-el-narcotrafico-y-los-militares-entrevista-con-andrea-nuila-de-luchemos-hn/>

6 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/11/01/coyuntura-desde-los-territorios-mujeres-insurgentes-tejiendo-un-nuevo-movimiento-socio-ambiental-en-honduras/>

7 <https://madj.org/index.php/2019/11/04/editorial-las-tarantulas-nunca-se-han-ido/>

8 <https://criterio.hn/denuncian-ola-de-crimenes-tras-acusaciones-de-herandez-con-el-narcotrafico/>

9 <http://ciprodeh.org.hn/index.php/noticias-principales/483-mesa-de-derechos-humanos-preocupada-por-la-materializacion-de-atentados-y-actos-de-violencia-contralideres-sociales-estudiantiles-y-de-oposicion-politica>

10 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/por-segunda-vez-suspende-juicio-oral-y-publico-contracampesino-de-la-9-de-julio/>

and this month, another initial hearing in their case was postponed prolonging their legal battle.<sup>11</sup> The two human rights defenders Mirtha Gutiérrez and Angélica Álvarez together with another defender and a lawyer in the Guapinol case were harassed by the Military Police.<sup>12</sup> Campesinx belonging to MARCA denounced that there was a new armed group in the Bajo Aguán. Some 50 armed assailants forcefully entered the San Esteban farm this month.<sup>13</sup>

On November 25, three HRDs from Zacate Grande, Abel Pérez, Santos Hernández and María Hernández, were arrested by the police.<sup>14</sup> IM-Defensoras sent out an alert. They were arrested when they voluntarily presented themselves to face a criminalizing trial for usurpation. María Hernández had her young daughter with her when she was arrested.<sup>15</sup> OACNUDH expressed concerns.<sup>16</sup> Three days later, the three defenders were already in front of a judge. Their criminalization was prolonged and they received alternative measures to imprisonment including signing in at the court on a regular basis.<sup>17</sup>

But there was also some rare good news. After six years of criminalization, six campesinos from the CNTC had the charges against them provisionally dismissed.<sup>18</sup> And in Tutule, La Paz, the campesino Carlos Geovanni Cáliz López had the charges dropped against him.<sup>19</sup>

## Indigenous Peoples

On November 3, Berta Zúniga, coordinator of COPINH, met with a group of German parliamentarians to discuss the respect of free, prior and informed consent and to demand the capture of the intellectual authors of the murder of Berta Cáceres.<sup>20</sup> The general coordinator of OFRANEH, Miriam Miranda, spoke with IM-Defensoras about the unbearable situation of the Garífuna people in Honduras. At least 16 Garífuna have been murdered so far this year.<sup>21</sup> OFRANEH published a press release demanding a stop of the killings.<sup>22</sup> Miriam Miranda also denounced new acts of harassment and intimidation against the Garífuna community in Vallecito.<sup>23</sup>

## The Case of Berta Cáceres

44 months without justice. 44 months ago, Berta Cáceres was murdered and the intellectual authors still benefit from impunity.<sup>24</sup> COPINH published a video of the recently published report on the, so

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11 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2623-mas-de-cuatro-anos-de-esperas-dilatorias-inexplicables-en-juicio-contr-la-unah-en-juzgado-de-lo-contencioso-administrativo>

12 <http://im-defensoras.org/2019/11/alertadefensoras-honduras-hostigamiento-policial-contr-las-defensoras-mirtha-gutierrez-y-angelica-alvarez-integrantes-de-proteccion-internacional/>

13 <https://criterio.hn/campesinos-denuncian-que-surge-nuevo-grupo-armado-en-el-aguan/>

14 <https://twitter.com/adepeza/status/1199171436889411585>

15 <http://im-defensoras.org/2019/11/alertaurgente-honduras-detencion-arbitraria-y-criminalizacion-de-maria-herandez-de-adepeza/>

16 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1199330547635499008>

17 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/medidas-sustitutivas-a-la-prision-dictan-a-defensores-de-zacate-grande/>

18 <http://madj.org/index.php/2019/11/07/sobreseimiento-para-seis-campesinos-en-el-norte-de-honduras/>

19 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/sobreseimiento-definitivo-para-integrante-de-la-base-campesina-9-de-julio/>

20 <https://copinh.org/2019/11/copinh-se-reune-con-parlamentarixs-alemanes/>

21 <http://im-defensoras.org/2019/11/miriam-miranda-nuestro-pueblo-enfrenta-un-plan-de-extermio/>

22 <https://ofraneh.wordpress.com/2019/11/05/basta-ya-de-asesinatos-contr-el-pueblo-garifuna/>

23 <https://twitter.com/baraudawaguchu/status/1196209866890784770>

24 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1190646579960713222>

far, only accused intellectual author of the murder of Berta Cáceres, David Castillo (see last month's monitor).<sup>25</sup> In the case of the material authors, the sentencing was announced for December 2 - over one year after their conviction.<sup>26</sup>

In a information bulletin, COPINH published an update on the Gualcarque Fraud Case and they linked to a investigation by a Dutch newspaper which found that the development bank FMO pays some 4.6 million Euros to its lawyers to defend FMO against the legal challenges by COPINH - multiple times more than they are willing to pay the community of Río Blanco in compensation for the violence and death that followed the Agua Zarca hydroelectric project.<sup>27</sup>

## LGBTQ

Trans woman and LGBTQ activist Alejandra Vega was brutally attacked in San Pedro Sula and had to be hospitalized in the intensive care unit. "The physical aggression was accompanied by verbal aggression in which the aggressor made explicit reference to her condition of gender and her activism as a [human rights] defender."<sup>28</sup> Balenciaga is the coordinator of the Feminist Trans Organization (AFET).<sup>29</sup> The Norwegian Refugee Council published a new report on "The impact of violence on LGBTI people in the North of Central America".<sup>30</sup> Nationalist congressman David Chávez Madison tweeted homophobic comments against the journalist Jeff Ernst who had been closely reporting on the Tony Hernández trial.<sup>31</sup>

## Freedom of Expression and Journalists

This month on the International Day to Stop Impunity in Crimes against Journalists, OACNUDH published a press release highlighting the important work of journalists and social communicators and the difficult context for them in Honduras.<sup>32</sup> <sup>33</sup> One example are threats voiced against journalists. The journalist Milton Benítez received threats after investigating dealings of Grupo Atlántida.<sup>34</sup> Journalist César Obando denounced online harassment and military surveillance. Obando is the correspondent of Radio Progreso and Radio Globo.<sup>35</sup> Gustavo Andino, director of Maya TV, denounced that a critical program, "Blind Justice" was withdrawn from Facebook.<sup>36</sup>

Then there are also direct attacks. A journalist from MetroTV from Choluteca was attacked by state security forces when covering a protest in San José Canadá, Iztoqa regarding the access to drinking

25 <https://copinh.org/2019/11/video-presentacion-del-perfil-de-david-castillo/>

26 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1195051202167349249>

27 <https://copinh.org/2019/11/boletin-causa-berta-caceres-27-11-2019/>

28 <http://fm-defensoras.org/2019/11/alertadefensoras-honduras-delito-de-odio-y-brutal-agresion-fisica-contr-a-alejandra-vega-defensora-de-los-derechos-lgbt-en-san-pedro-sula/>

29 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2619-en-espera-de-justicia-por-ataque-recibido-se-encuentra-la-defensora-trans-alejandra-vega-balenciaga>

30 <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Protection%20Snapshot%206%20-%20English%20-%20September%202019.pdf>

31 <https://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1082-diputado-emite-comentarios-homofobicos-contr-a-periodista>

32 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1190720885897990145>

33 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3600-onu-pide-alto-a-crime-nos-y-persecucion-contr-a-periodistas-hondurenos>

34 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1075-amenazas-en-su-contr-a-denuncia-periodista-luego-de-ser-querellado-por-institucion-bancaria>

35 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1079-vigilancia-y-hostigamiento-desde-redes-sociales-denuncia-periodista-cesar-obando>

36 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1081-censuran-programa-en-red-social-por-abordar-temas-criticos-gubernamentales>

water.<sup>37</sup> The journalist César Obando Flores from Diario Colon.hn and Radio Progreso correspondent suffered an attempted kidnapping in Tocoa, Colón. Obando Flores is a beneficiary of special protective measures granted by the IACHR. He had previously suffered various acts of aggression and harassment by state security forces for his journalistic work.<sup>38</sup>

Human rights organizations demand an investigation by the Special Prosecutor's Office for HRDs, Journalists, Social Communicators and Justice Workers.<sup>39</sup> In other cases, protection is withdrawn again. ConfidencialHN denounced that the Protection Mechanism withdrew their protection from journalist Lidieth Díaz without credible arguments.<sup>40</sup> But worst of all, are the assassinations, and there were several ones this month.

## Assassinations

On November 1, journalist and host of the “Ecos de la Mosquitia” daily news program on Catholic radio broadcaster Kupia Kumi, Buenaventura Calderón, was murdered. The Committee to Protect Journalists demanded that the Honduran authorities conduct a swift and thorough investigation into his killing, determine if the attack was related to his reporting, and bring the perpetrators to justice.<sup>41</sup> Another social communicator, Johana Avarado, was murdered on November 21. He worked for Channel 45 in Catacamas, Olancho. "People close to the deceased, said that Johana was with other media outlets covering a story when unknown individuals and without saying a word took her life in full public view near the MP of Catacamas."<sup>42</sup> OACNUDH denounced her murder, demanded an investigation and better protection for journalists.<sup>43</sup> In less than a week, a second social communicator was murdered. José Arita was assassinated in Puerto Cortés. He lead a local TV program called "The Hour of Truth".<sup>44</sup> He was on the way home from presenting his program when he was murdered. In the program he had denounced the lack of transparency by the local mayor and he announced a coming program on the new Penal Code "which only benefits criminals".<sup>45</sup> The Inter-American Pres Society condemned the murder<sup>46</sup>, OACNUDH "profoundly laments the assassination"<sup>47</sup> and so did the IACHR Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression.<sup>48</sup>

Nine media workers, journalists and social communicators have already been assassinated this year in Honduras.<sup>49</sup> Reporteros de Investigación highlights the impunity in these cases, taking the

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37 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2606-periodista-de-metrotv-es-agredido-durante-trasmision-en-vivo-de-una-protesta-por-defensa-del-agua>

38 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2615-grave-riesgo-desconocidos-intentan-secuestrar-al-periodista-cesar-obando-en-el-aguan>

39 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2618-fiscalia-de-proteccion-recibio-denuncia-sobre-intento-de-secuestro-y-amenazas-reiteradas-contr-el-comunicador-cesar-obando-flores>

40 <https://confidencialhn.com/quitan-proteccion-a-periodista-lidieth-diaz-sin-argumentos-creibles/>

41 <https://cpj.org/2019/11/radio-host-buenaventura-calderon-shot-dead-in-hond.php>

42 <https://tiempo.hn/matan-a-comunicadora-social-mientras-cubria-noticias-cerca-del-mp-de-catacamas/>

43 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1197704300509708288>

44 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/asesinan-a-comunicador-social-en-puerto-cortes.html>

45 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1085-al-salir-de-programa-asesinan-a-periodista-en-puerto-cortes>

46 <https://www.sipiapa.org/notas/1213626-la-sip-condena-asesinato-honduras>

47 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1199734924535836673>

48 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/libertad-de-expresion/1319-relatoria-especial-condena-asesinato-de-periodista-jose-arita-en-honduras-e-insta-a-investigar-relacion-con-su-actividad-periodistica>

49 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/2019-aumenta-lista-de-asesinatos-contr-periodistas-en-honduras/>

example of Gabriel Hernández.<sup>50</sup> In the yearly report of Reporters without Borders, Honduras is ranked 146 out of 180, a ranking worse than after the coup d'état. Of the 82 journalists murdered since 2001 (the majority since 2009), there have been arrests in only seven cases.<sup>51</sup>

## Violence against Women

CEM-H held National Forum on Access to Justice for Women and the Budget Dedicated to Women.<sup>52</sup> According to CDM, about 70% of all femicides in Honduras are committed by organized crime, the rest by current or former partners of the women. Over 90% of the cases remain in impunity.<sup>53</sup> Karol Bobadilla from the Forum of Women for Life, meanwhile, denounced that the JOH regime labels the majority of femicide cases as based in passionate or personal problems while the majority of cases is not even being investigated.<sup>54</sup> Women's rights and feminist organization challenged Attorney General Oscar Chinchilla on the use of the additional 50 million Lempiras approved to investigate femicides. So far, not a single investigator has not been appointed.<sup>55</sup>

ContraCorriente published an investigation into sexual violence inside civil society organizations in Honduras. They interview 4-8 representatives of 17 civil society organizations on the topic.<sup>56</sup> Pasos de Animal Grande denounced the lack of access for women suffering violence in the south of Honduras due to real and administratively closed doors at the MP and the courts.<sup>57</sup> OACNUDH welcomes the bill proposed by women's rights and feminist organizations for a an Intergral Law against Violence against Women.<sup>58</sup> The National Institute for Women (Inam) promoted a social pact between media outlets and civil society organizations for a human rights approach in covering violence against women.<sup>59</sup>

On November 25, Honduras commemorated the International Day to Eliminate Violence against Women. OACNUDH published a press release and its Secretary General addressed the world in a video message.<sup>60</sup> <sup>61</sup> Women's rights and feminist organizations held a protest rally.<sup>62</sup> <sup>63</sup> "In Honduras, this struggle becomes more important due to the extreme violence that every 18 hours kills a woman. All in the face of an aggressive State that guarantees impunity. The year has not finished yet but the statistics already count at least 270 women killed this year. In just one percent of the crimes the killer is known or an investigative process began."<sup>64</sup>

50 <https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2019/11/26/linea-mortal-seis-periodistas-asesinados-en-11-meses-en-honduras/>

51 <https://wp.radioprogreso.net/mas-de-80-periodistas-y-comunicadores-han-sido-asesinados-en-honduras/>

52 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2601-la-justicia-esta-muy-lejos-21-mil-denuncias-de-violencia-contra-las-mujeres-por-ano-en-honduras>

53 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/crimen-organizado-principal-responsable-de-asesinatos-de-mujeres-en-honduras.html>

54 <https://tiempo.hn/foro-mujeres-autoridades-femicidios-no-investigan-1/>

55 <https://radiohm.hn/colectivos-de-mujeres-en-que-ha-invertido-la-fiscalia-50-millones-asignados-para-investigar-femicidios/>

56 <https://contracorriente.red/2019/11/18/violencia-sexual-en-organizaciones-de-sociedad-civil-mas-alla-del-discurso>

57 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2620-mujeres-del-sur-de-honduras-encuentran-puertas-cerradas-para-el-acceso-a-la-justicia>

58 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1200446894482370561>

59 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3636-firman-pacto-social-para-rescatar-dignidad-de-hondurenas-victimas-del-crimen>

60 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1199052129052348416>

61 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1199003018039119873>

62 <https://twitter.com/hondurasol/status/1199186414589505536>

63 Video: <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/35-mujeres/1306-exigen-frente-al-mnisiterio-publico-investigue-y-no-queden-en-la-impunidad-asesinatos-contra-las-mujeres>

64 <https://wp.radioprogreso.net/no-mas-mujeres-asesinadas-justicia/>



## Political Prisoners

On November 11, the public hearing in the case of the political prisoner Gustavo Cáceres<sup>65</sup> took place.<sup>66</sup> Three days later, the resolution was read. "This day in the courts of El Progreso, in the department of Yoro, a resolution was presented declaring the ABSOLUTION of Gustavo Cáceres, political prisoner of the narco-dictatorship in Honduras, accused of crimes he never committed and for which he was held in prison for 19 months after having been arrested during demonstrations against electoral fraud in Honduras in November 2017."<sup>67</sup>

The hearing in the case of the political prisoner Rommel Baldemar Herrera Portillo was postponed to December 2.<sup>68</sup> Defensores en Línea reported on the ongoing harassment and the threats against former political prisoners in Pimienta, Cortés, who had been arrested during the post-electoral repression but were let go in May 2018.<sup>69</sup> "In El Progreso, Yoro continues the judicial process against Jhony Salgado, unjustly accused of the crimes of illegal carrying of a commercial weapon and for improper use of police clothing during the general election crisis of 2017. His trial was rescheduled for 2020. His family and organizations demand his definitive freedom."<sup>70</sup>

Karen Spring published an update on the situation of political prisoner Edwin Espinal three months after his release from prison. "Every week, Edwin goes to the courthouse to sign a ledger that is supposed to show to the Honduran judiciary that he has not left the country and that he is still present to face the charges against him. His court date is set for May 14 and 15, 2020. As for myself, I continue my work supporting the other political prisoner cases. Within the first 6 months following the 2017 electoral crisis, all were released except five including Edwin. Now, only one political prisoner remains in jail; over 170 people still face charges and are forced to sign regularly at courthouses around the country. I am also doing human rights work related to the criminalization of people awaiting trial. Some are being harassed continuously by Honduran military and police."<sup>71</sup>

## Extractive Industries

Last month, after national and international pressure, the criminalized environmental defenders from Guapinol were finally transferred from the maximum-security prison to the prison in Olanchito. Soon afterwards, the judge also announced a revision of the measures imposed on the seven environmental defenders.<sup>72</sup> And in other hopeful news, trial will be opened against the former SERNA vice-minister Norman Gilberto Ochoa Henríquez for irregularly handing out the environmental license for the hydroelectric project La Ensenada in La Ceiba, Atlántida in 2010

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65 <https://wp.radioprogreso.net/ministerio-publico-se-ensana-contra-presos-politico-gustavo-caceres/>

66 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/el-14-de-noviembre-se-conocera-fallo-en-el-caso-del-presos-politico-gustavo-caceres/>

67 <https://madj.org/index.php/2019/11/14/absuelto-gustavo-caceres-presos-politico-de-la-narcodictadura-de-honduras/>

68 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/suspenden-audiencia-de-procedimiento-abreviado-porque-el-mp-aun-no-tiene-una-resolucion/>

69 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/continua-hostigamiento-vigilancia-y-amenaza-contra-criminalizados-de-pimienta/>

70 <https://wp.radioprogreso.net/en-libertad-presos-politico-gustavo-caceres/>

71 <http://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2019/11/21/an-update-from-karen-spring-published-in-the-springwater-news-in-simcoe-county-canada>

72 <https://wp.radioprogreso.net/no-hay-razones-juridicas-para-privar-de-libertad-a-defensores-del-rio-guapinol/>

negatively affecting the Garífuna communities Sambo Creek and Corinto.<sup>73</sup> But at the same time, the mining company MINOSA in Azacualpa, La Unión, Copán, started the exhumation of a cemetery again to extend their mining activities.<sup>74</sup>

On November 5, the revision hearing in the Guapinol case was supposed to take place.<sup>75</sup> OACNUDH had already announced that it would accompany the hearing, when it was suspended.<sup>76</sup> A common occurrence in Honduras to prolong the criminalization of HRDs, but this time, the hearing was taken up again a day later. The judge denied the request to allow the environmental defenders to await trial in freedom. "The lawyer Omar Menjivar, a member of the defense team, indicates that Judge Vallecillo argued that there is a possibility that environmentalists will be sentenced to a serious penalty, which would encourage the accused to escape, and they also could join again the organization to which they belong. "That is an arbitrariness on the part of the judge, the defendants in this case do not belong to a criminal organization, she herself ruled this out when she declared a final dismissal for the crime of unlawful association, now she contradicts herself," says lawyer Omar Menjivar."<sup>77</sup> OACNUDH expressed concern that the National Jurisdiction Judge Lisseth Vallecillo refused to grant conditional release.<sup>78</sup> The defense announced to challenge this decision<sup>79</sup> and they presented a Habeas Corpus.<sup>80</sup> CEJIL denounced that international observers were not allowed to attend the hearing.<sup>81 82</sup>

Further south, in a public town hall meeting, 97% of the present people of Namasigüe, Choluteca, said no to mining and large-scale solar energy projects. Out of the 15'000 people from the community, almost 12'000 voted.<sup>83</sup> ConexiHon interviewed three defenders involved.<sup>84 85 86</sup> Shortly afterwards, it became public that there would also be a town hall meeting in Tocoa, Colón concerning among other projects the Guapinol case.<sup>87 88</sup> On November 29, the inhabitants of Tocoa declared their territory free of mining. No less than 33 mining concessions have been handed out in this area, giving rise to conflicts best, and most worrisome, exemplified in the case of Guapinol.<sup>89</sup> OACNUDH accompanied the process as an observer.<sup>90</sup>

73 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/autor-login/146-octubre2019/5049-admiten-prueba-del-mp-y-senalacion-juicio-contr-ex-vice-ministro-de-serma>

74 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/11/04/alerta-en-azacualpa-aura-minerals-continua-exhumando-cementerio-en-busca-de-mas-oro/>

75 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/no-existen-meritos-para-que-los-defensores-de-guapinol-est-en-la-carcel/>

76 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1191748622989348864>

77 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/jueza-niega-libertad-a-defensores-del-rio-guapinol/>

78 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1192462998050365443>

79 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/niegan-medidas-distintas-a-la-prision-a-los-defensores-del-agua-y-de-la-vida-de-guapinol/>

80 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/tv/1283-equipo-legal-en-el-caso-guapinol-y-el-comite-municipal-de-defensa-de-bienes-comunes-y-publicos-presenta-recurso-de-habeas-corpus-en-favor-de-los-siete-defensores-criminalizados-por-la-defensa-del-agua-y-la-vida>

81 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1192130806241726464>

82 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2605-no-permitio-presencia-de-defensores-en-audiencia-jueza-obstinada-en-mantener-en-prision-a-defensores-de-guapinol>

83 <https://criterio.hn/97-de-la-poblacion-de-namasigue-dice-no-a-la-mineria-y-fotovoltaicas/>

84 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/mirada-al-sur/1304-la-defensora-del-territorio-maria-pastrana-denuncia-los-problemas-sociales-que-han-sufrido-en-las-comunidades-de-costa-azul-y-alrededores-por-la-instalacion-de-las-plantas-fotovoltaicas-en-el-municipio-de-namasiguee-choluteca>

85 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/mirada-al-sur/1302-leonardo-amador-presidente-del-patronato-de-la-comunidad-de-los-prados-explica-sobre-el-proceso-de-auto-consulta-municipal-en-namasiguee-choluteca>

86 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/tv/1303-el-padre-luis-alberto-rios-explica-la-importante-necesidad-de-declarar-el-municipio-de-namasiguee-libre-de-proyectos-extractivos-y-fotovoltaicos-por-los-problemas-ambientales-y-de-salud-que-dejan-en-la-poblacion>

87 <https://www.diariocolon.com/mi-municipio/tocoenos-pediran-en-cabildo-abierto-expulsion-de-minera/>

88 <https://www.diariocolon.com/mi-municipio/inseguridad-y-terror-viven-pobladores-de-guapinol-a-pocos-dias-de-cabildo-abierto-en-tocoa/>

89 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/tocoa-se-declara-libre-de-mineria-en-medio-del-repudio-a-sus-autoridades-municipales/>

90 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1200611800833613825>

At the end of the month, the MP conducted the Operation Arcane investigating companies of heavy machinery, mining and sale of petroleum products for drug trafficking links.<sup>91</sup> Aqui Abajo published a great overview of the operation and highlighted an important mining case affected by it. "Today, November 25, 2019, the Honduran Public Prosecutor's Office and the Military Police carried out eight raids of houses located in the northern and western departments of Cortés and Copan. During these raids, 7 individually owned businesses, 20 real-estate properties, 13 limited companies, and 320 vehicles were inspected and many were apprehended by authorities. (...) INCOBE, the company named in the Prosecutor's communiqué, is a heavy machinery and transportation company that holds one of the largest contracts with Aura Minerals, a mining company legally incorporated in the U.S. and Canada. Aura Minerals currently operates the San Andres mine in La Unión in the western department of Copan. (...) Not only is Aura Minerals' heavy machinery contractor INCOBE linked to drug trafficking but the security company, Servicios Especiales de Seguridad (SESER) that Aura Minerals contracts to provide security to the San Andres mine, has also been linked to illicit activities." SESER former assistant manager José Javier Benítez Rosa was even named in the Tony Hernández trial. Aqui Abajo concludes its article with an important observation. "These raids attempt to give the impression that the Public Prosecutor's Office is finally prosecuting money laundering activities and drug traffickers. However, many in Honduras believe that these actions are not only 'too little, too late' but that they are also another "state-sponsored drug trafficking" strategy to eliminate or neutralize figures that have key information, money laundering ties or business links to President Juan Orlando Hernandez, who fears extradition to the U.S. himself."<sup>92</sup> A day later, the MP informed that several of the accused would be held in pre-trial detention.<sup>93</sup>

## Corruption and Its Enemies

Libre denounced corruption in various energy projects.<sup>94</sup> A judge decided to open trial against Nationalist leader and former RNP secretary Fernando Anduray for illegal deforestation.<sup>95</sup> Criterio reported on illegal activities by the mayoralty of Tegucigalpa and a subsidiary of an Ecuadorian company which was paid 238 million Lempiras to clean water pipes.<sup>96</sup> On November 28, the MP arrested the mayor of Choloma on corruption charges.<sup>97</sup> The Supreme Court opened trial against the current head of the Agriculture and Livestock Secretariat (SAG), Mauricio Guevara Pinto, and emitted alternative measures to imprisonment - but he can still remain in office.<sup>98</sup>

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91 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/148-noviembre2019/5157-operacion-arcano-aseguran-empresas-de-maquinaria-pesada-mineria-y-venta-de-derivados-del-petroleo-por-estar-vinculadas-a-crimen-organizado>

92 <http://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2019/11/25/north-american-mining-company-aura-minerals-linked-to-drug-trafficking-in-honduras>

93 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/148-noviembre2019/5186-mp-logra-auto-de-formal-procesamiento-contrasena-lados-de-la-operacion-arcano-cuyas-empresas-de-maquinaria-pesada-mineria-y-venta-de-derivados-del-petroleo-estarian-ligadas-a-crimen-organizado-2>

94 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/varias-empresas-de-maletin-tienen-contratos-de-energia-que-no-aprobara-el-cn-revela-diputado-sarmiento.html>

95 <https://confidencialhn.com/formalizan-causa-penal-contrasena-lados-de-la-operacion-arcano-cuyas-empresas-de-maquinaria-pesada-mineria-y-venta-de-derivados-del-petroleo-estarian-ligadas-a-crimen-organizado-2>

96 <https://criterio.hn/sale-a-la-luz-contrato-que-evidencia-proceso-de-privatizacion-del-agua-en-la-capital/>

97 <https://criterio.hn/capturan-por-supuesta-corrupcion-a-alcalde-choloma/>

98 <https://tiempo.hn/juez-decide-procesar-ministro-sag-sin-suspension-del-cargo/>

## The Onslaught against the Anti-Corruption Bodies

As November began, the fate of the MACCIH was still unclear and even at the end of the month, there were still more questions than answers. The Parliamentary Front in Support of the MACCIH expressed fear that the JOH regime would be willing to assume the political cost of not renewing MACCIH's contract.<sup>99</sup> At the same time, more and more business actors called for a renewal, e.g. the Commerce and Industry Chamber of Cortés.<sup>100</sup> There were also continuous calls from civil society groups and the international community.<sup>101 102</sup>

Some two months ago, the OAS announced to evaluate the work of the MACCIH. This caused some concern as another excuse to postpone the renewal of the MACCIH agreement. After the announcement nothing happened until November 13, when the Secretary General of the OAS, Luis Almagro, announced that they just installed an evaluation body which would present its result in 25 days or sooner.<sup>103</sup> Journalist Jeff Ernst raised some important questions. "An evaluation is positive, but this invites many questions. Will the evaluation be done by objective observers? How is it possible to complete a comprehensive eval in 25 days? Why wait till the last minute?"<sup>104</sup> According to JOH, the MACCIH's fate would depend on the evaluation.<sup>105</sup> Some of his allies, e.g. the evangelical priest and member of the purging committee, Alberto Solórzano, made unreassuring comments.<sup>106</sup>

CESPAD conducted a survey in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula about the perception of corruption and the role of the MACCIH. "The results of the survey show citizens who considers corruption to be high and which has flooded all areas of political and institutional life in Honduras. (...) But it is in this "apocalyptic scenario of corruption and impunity", measured with other variables that are described in the report in detail, that citizens value the MACCIH and support its continuity. After 4 years of work, the MACCIH is widely known to Honduran citizens. Only 14% of the population has not heard of the MACCIH (...) However, the Special Fiscal Unit Against Impunity for Corruption (UFECIC), the national counterpart of the MACCIH, is barely known by 31% of the population".<sup>107</sup> In another report, CESPAD further highlighted the work of the MACCIH and UFECIC, the presented corruption cases and the challenges they face.<sup>108</sup> They also compared the public support for the fight against corruption in 2015 during the Torch Marches and today, faced by a possible exit of the MACCIH. "This brief review of two surveys shows that the MACCIH enjoys a majority of social support today. Its current support reveals that the consolidated anti-corruption fight in 2015 remains alive in spite of the fact that the movements that supported it have diminished and that their flags no longer fly high as in the past. Their reduced opposition shows that the

99 <https://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/gobierno-esta-dispuesto-a-asumir-costo-politico-de-no-renovar-a-la-maccih-segun-frente-parlamentario.html>

100 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/la-no-renovacion-del-convenio-de-la-maccih-traeria-un-enorme-retroceso-jorge-faraj.html>

101 <https://twitter.com/WHAAsstSecty/status/1194716488646696961>

102 <https://twitter.com/HouseForeign/status/1194998562767167490>

103 [https://www.oas.org/es/centro\\_noticias/comunicado\\_prensa.asp?sCodigo=C-102/19](https://www.oas.org/es/centro_noticias/comunicado_prensa.asp?sCodigo=C-102/19)

104 <https://twitter.com/jeffernst/status/1194796786180866048>

105 <https://confidencialhn.com/hernandez-asegura-que-dependera-de-evaluacion-para-que-continue-la-maccih-en-honduras/>

106 <https://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/la-maccih-no-puede-estar-siempre-hay-que-tener-dignidad-dice-pastor-alberto-solorzano.html>

107 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/11/14/en-medio-de-una-percepcion-apocaliptica-de-la-corrupcion-las-y-los-hondurenos-le-apuestan-a-la-continuidad-de-la-maccih/>

108 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/11/17/la-ufecic-maccih-en-el-combate-de-la-corrupcion-e-impunidad-en-honduras/>

MACCIH, despite its limitations and adversities derived from a threatening and castrating context for the then anti-corruption struggle, has not impeded the significant progress achieved which has raised the confidence of the citizens in its work."<sup>109</sup>

By November 26, the US raised its voice a bit. Michael G. Kozak, Acting Assistant Secretary for U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, tweeted: "The government of #Honduras has taken no action to renew the mandate of @OEA\_MACCIH, which plays a vital role in combating corruption and improving governance in Honduras."<sup>110</sup> The US House Foreign Affairs Committee responded: "Chairman @RepEliotEngel: Democrats and Republicans in Congress could not agree more. Long past time for a clean extension of @OEA\_MACCIH mandate."<sup>111</sup>

The head of UFECIC, Javier Santos, denounced that two important corruption cases presented by the MACCIH and UFECIC, Pandora and the Open Arch, had been in a state of appeal for over a year - longer than the Penal Code allows.<sup>112</sup> El Pulso, meanwhile, published a helpful article giving an overview of some of the obstacles put in the way of the MACCIH by the JOH regime.<sup>113</sup>

## Impunity Pacts

Almost every month we see new attempts by powerful Honduran actors to shield themselves from corruption investigations. These attempts are summarized here under the header Impunity Pacts. The newest attempt by Congress in October was challenged this month by the MP with a constitutional challenge.<sup>114</sup> Shortly afterwards, Criterio denounced that Congress, in opposition to Libre, Pinu and part of the Liberal Party, just approved another impunity pact shielding corrupt officials from investigations by the MACCIH's Honduran counterpart UFECIC.<sup>115</sup> The CNA denounced that it encourages crime and limits the investigation of congresswo/men.<sup>116</sup> The head of the TSC, meanwhile, claimed that the reform to its organic law will improve the fight against corruption.<sup>117</sup> Congress' Nationalist president Mauricio Oliva went even further and unconvincingly tried to spin the table claiming that only the MACCIH and UFECIC really benefit from impunity, but not congresswo/men.<sup>118</sup> But even El Heraldo could not deny Congress' attempts anymore to protect itself from investigations. "In less than 60 days, the National Congress has shown four times that it seeks at all costs to shield some sectors, including politicians, linked to acts of corruption."<sup>119</sup>

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109 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/11/25/analisis-las-demandas-ciudadanas-del-2015-y-el-apoyo-a-la-extension-de-la-maccih-una-comparacion-entre-dos-hitos/>

110 <https://twitter.com/WHAAsstSecty/status/1199337070713430016>

111 <https://twitter.com/HouseForeign/status/1199441242586861570>

112 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3631-justicia-hondurena-duerme-a-pandora-y-la-arca-abierta>

113 <http://elpulso.hn/los-obstaculos-que-han-querido-detener-a-la-maccih/>

114 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1335689-466/mp-presenta-recurso-de-inconstitucionalidad-contr-la-inmunidad-parlamentaria>

115 <https://criterio.hn/oficialismo-en-el-congreso-nacional-aprueba-nuevo-pacto-de-impunidad/>

116 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/cna-denuncia-que-reformas-al-tsc-fomenta-la-delincuencia-y-limita-investigaciones.html>

117 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/reforma-a-ley-del-tsc-fortalece-lucha-contr-la-corrupcion-y-hay-que-aplaudir-la-jose-juan-pineda.html>

118 <https://confidencial.hn.com/los-que-tienen-inmunidad-son-la-maccih-y-ufecic-los-diputados-tienen-fuero-legislativo/>

119 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1336574-466/contundente-rechazo-a-reformas-a-la-ley-del-tribunal-superior-de-cuentas>

## The IHSS Case

Another hearing took place in the IHSS corruption case this month. In this sub-case, former board members are accused of illegally transferring more than 600 million Lempiras.<sup>120</sup>

## The Narcopolítica Case

The initial hearing in the Narcopolítica corruption case will take place on November 12<sup>121</sup> and trial was successfully opened against Norberto Quezada Suazo.<sup>122</sup>

## State Security Forces

Last month, the attacks from the JOH regime against the former head of forensic medicine Julissa Villanueva increased (see last month's monitor). In November, the persecution continued and the MP suspended her for three weeks without pay for "abusing freedom of expression".<sup>123</sup> The Medical Association of Honduras (CMH) denounced this as a violation of freedom of expression.<sup>124</sup> ConfidencialHN listed additional problems inside the ATIC that should raise alarm.<sup>125 126</sup>

Several state security agents made negative headlines this month. A police agent was arrested in Copán.<sup>127</sup> An appeals court revoked the dismissal of proceedings against five Military Police agents and open trial against them for breaking and entering as well as torture.<sup>128 129</sup> The MP successfully accused a former army colonel for damaging the environment.<sup>130</sup> Eight people, among them two police agents, were arrested for illegally searching a house.<sup>131</sup> A trial was announced against four preventive police agents for illegal detention. They illegally arrested a young man, hit him on several occasions and then planted a fire arm on him.<sup>132</sup> Last but not least, the MP informed that two active police members would remain in pre-trial detention accused of various crimes.<sup>133</sup>

## Post-Electoral Human Rights Violations

As part of the post-electoral repression in 2017, dozens of protesters were arrested and criminalized, at least two remain in prison, others await trial outside of prison. Among the latter is Jhony Andrés

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120 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/autor-login/148-noviembre2019/5158-a-audiencia-de-proposicion-de-pruebas-exdirectivos-del-ihss-acusados-por-trasferencia-irregular-de-mas-de-600-millones-de-lempiras>

121 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/medidas-cautelares-a-otro-senalado-en-caso-narcopolitica.html>

122 <https://tiempo.hn/caso-narcopolitica-juez-decide-procesar-a-antonio-quezada-suazo/>

123 <https://confidencialhn.com/venganza-chinchilla-suspende-sin-goce-de-sueldo-a-exjefa-forense-por-ejercer-libertad-de-expresion/>

124 <https://tiempo.hn/mp-cancela-julissa-villanueva-me-quieren-callar-del-todo/>

125 <https://confidencialhn.com/fiscal-general-despide-a-exjefa-forense-julissa-villanueva-por-revelar-ilicitos-en-el-ministerio-publico/>

126 <https://confidencialhn.com/agente-de-la-atic-mato-a-dos-personas-en-accidente-automovilistico-en-la-capital/>

127 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/atic-captura-agente-policia-acusado-de-violacion-en-copan.html>

128 <https://confidencialhn.com/revocan-sobreseimiento-definitivo-a-cinco-policias-militares-acusados-por-torturas/>

129 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/revocan-sobreseimiento-definitivo-y-dicta-auto-de-formal-procesamiento-a-cinco-policias-militares.html>

130 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/autor-login/148-noviembre2019/5101-fiscalia-del-ambiente-obtiene-auto-de-formal-procesamiento-contr-excoronel-por-danos-a-la-laguna-el-cacao-jutiapa-atlantida>

131 <https://www.laprensa.hn/sucesos/1335326-410/detienen-a-dos-polic%C3%ADas-y-seis-civiles-por-falso-allanamiento-en-santa>

132 <https://tiempo.hn/auto-formal-procesamiento-cuatro-policias-acusados-detencion-ilegal/>

133 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/autor-login/148-noviembre2019/5156-en-prision-continuaran-dos-policias-de-inteligencia-y-seis-acompanantes-acusados-de-varios-delitos>

Salgado, whose trial started this month.<sup>134</sup> At the same time, there were barely any investigations into the assassinations of protesters conducted by state agents. This month the hearing of a Military Police agent accused of having murdered David Octavio Quiroz on December 15, 2017 was suspended.<sup>135</sup> University students who took to the streets to remind the national and international public about the electoral fraud and repression were themselves repressed by state security forces.<sup>136</sup> "Two years after the electoral fraud in Honduras, Carlos Paz, Director of the Cáritas Social Ministry of the Diocese of San Pedro Sula, argues that when justice is sought in the country for victims of human rights violations, they encounter an evasive environment. With a justice service completely folded to power, with a Public Ministry that is not committed to the search for truth, research and access to justice."<sup>137</sup>

## Repressions

Residents of Tegucigalpa and neighboring villages took up the protests again this month in defense of the National Park La Tigra (see previous monthly monitor). They demanded that the mayor Nasry Asfura would comply with his promise for a town hall meeting on the controversial project in the national park. But instead, the protests were repressed by state security forces.<sup>138</sup> <sup>139</sup> The political party Pinu spoke to the protesters defending the La Tigra National Park and set up a commission to investigate. "According to deputy Doris Gutiérrez, who met with the director of the Prosecutor's Office of the Environment, the results of the investigation should lead to arrest warrants against the officials who granted the building permits, since it has been shown that the Bosques de Santa María project affects water resources and the forest area of La Tigra National Park."<sup>140</sup> In Tegucigalpa in an encounter between the Military Police and inhabitants of the El Pedregal neighborhood the former started to shot at the latter.<sup>141</sup> Further south, the police shot and hurt protesters demanding the reparation of a street in Danlí, Paraíso.<sup>142</sup>

## Assassinations

The former police agent Denis Javier González was sentenced to 15 years in prison for the murder of the priest Cárcamo González in January 2017.<sup>143</sup> A police official shot dead a young man in Agua Caliente near Zacapa, Santa Bárbara under unclear circumstances. El Tiempo wrote that the police arrested the man for "walking under the influence" and already detained, he was hit by a bullet shot in the air by the police official.<sup>144</sup>

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134 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/jhony-salgado-enfrenta-juicio-injusto-y-vergonzante/>

135 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/se-suspende-audiencia-contra-policia-militar-acusado-del-homicidio-de-un-manifestante-durante-la-crisis-post-electoral-de-2017/>

136 <https://twitter.com/hondurasol/status/1199699758920667145>

137

138 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2607-le-echa-la-culpa-al-ministerio-publico-alcade-se-resiste-a-realizar-cabildo-abierto-sobre-parque-nacional-la-tigra>

139 <https://criterio.hn/pobladores-reactivan-protestas-contra-proyecto-habitacional-de-la-tigra-pero-son-reprimidos/>

140 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/anuncian-requerimientos-fiscales-por-aprobacion-del-proyecto-habitacional-en-la-tigra/>

141 <https://tiempo.hn/militares-dispararan-a-vecinos-de-la-colonia-el-pedregal/>

142 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/alerta-policia-dispara-contra-pobladores-que-exigen-reparacion-de-calle-en-danli/>

143 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/autor-login/148-noviembre2019/5082-quince-anos-de-reclusion-para-ex-policia-por-homicidio-de-militar>

144 <https://tiempo.hn/santa-barbara-un-policia-dispara-al-aire-y-mata-a-joven-que-fue-arrestado/>

## Penitentiary System

November began with another murder in the so-called maximum security prison El Pozo.<sup>145</sup> Human rights organizations denounced that Honduras' prisons remain "crime academies" even after the construction of these "maximum security" prisons and the investment of millions of Lempiras in failed rehabilitation policies.<sup>146</sup> "The former minister of security in the administration of the former president, Manuel Zelaya Rosales, Jorge Alberto Rodas Gamero, said that "the biggest mistake was to have delegated functions to police and military". He also criticized that "there are no professionals educated in prison management employed in the prisons".<sup>147</sup> In the last two years, the Honduran prison population grew by 13%.<sup>148</sup> The MACCIH, meanwhile, sent recommendations to Congress' president Mauricio Oliva regarding the National Penitentiary System Bill.<sup>149</sup> On November 25, three prison guards were arrested after an inmate escaped from the so-called maximum-security prison La Tolva.<sup>150 151</sup>

## Militarization

Last month, four colonels were suspended from the Armed Forces, apparently for criticizing JOH. Joprodeh demanded protection for them.<sup>152</sup> By the end of the month, a judge accepted an appeal by the four men.<sup>153</sup> The main headlines were caused by the Agriculture Development Program for Honduras (PDAH), a 4 billion Lempira gift granted by an executive decree from JOH to the Armed Forces<sup>154</sup> (see the JOH section below for more on this). COPINH denounced that the farm land of the agricultural development plan controlled by the Armed Forces is "by accident" in those territories threatened by extractive projects. "Freeing the military from their responsibility for crimes against humanity is the strategy used to impose projects through violence against those who fight against the looting of their land".<sup>155</sup> There is a general fear of even more criminalization as a consequence of the program.<sup>156</sup> Defensores en Línea wrote about the symbolic and the real power of the Armed Forces. "However, in the current situation of the Armed Forces, committed to an impostor government and the dynamics of organized crime, we must discuss whether the transfer of 4 billion Lempiras for agricultural production means an important task of command, a compensation for their dog-like loyalty or the continuation of the transfer of political power. In the experience of COFADEH during the last 40 years of existence that question is answered with the

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145 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3604-12-dias-despues-de-magdaleno-matan-otro-reo-en-el-pozo>

146 <https://tiempo.hn/160-millones-costado-rehabilitacion-reclusos-organismos-ddhh/>

147 <http://elpulso.hn/seguridad-en-las-carceles-de-honduras/>

148 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1332394-466/reos-carceles-honduras-analisis>

149 <https://www.oas.org/documents/spa/press/Oficio-No.291-2019-MACCIH-Recomendaciones-Propuestas-de-Reforma-Ley-Sistema-Penitenciario-Nacional.pdf>

150 <https://confidencialhn.com/sujeto-recluido-en-la-carcel-la-tolva-se-escapa-a-traves-de-un-tambo-de-basura/>

151 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/sucesos/1337288-466/detienen-a-tres-agentes-penitenciarios-por-fuga-de-un-presos-en-morocel%C3%AD>

152 <https://tiempo.hn/joprodeh-amparo-coroneles-disponibilidad-csj-1/>

153 <https://confidencialhn.com/admiten-recuso-a-favor-de-altos-oficiales-de-las-ffaa-destituidos-por-criticar-a-joh/>

154 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3602-insolito-gobierno-da-4-mil-millones-a-militares-para-produccion-agricola>

155 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1193983955499962368>

156 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/1293-plan-agricola-militar-acrecentara-la-criminalizacion-en-departamentos-con-proyectos-extractivos>



third option. The delegation of control of agriculture to the military is the continuity of a process of transfer of political power that restarted in July 2009 with the coup d'état.<sup>157</sup>

Israel has become Honduras' main arms seller. In the last ten years, Honduras bought arms worth \$105 million, 29% of which came from Israel and 20% from the US. "In addition to buying conventional weapons, the Government must pay Israel \$ 48,987,378 (23% of the \$ 209 million agreement) for equipment, software and training for the development of a cybersecurity project for the National Directorate of Research and Intelligence (DNII)." Among them are spyware software from NSO Group to access WhatsApp messages and calls.<sup>158</sup> There were also new attempts to grant impunity for members of the Armed Forces through the new Penal Code.<sup>159 160</sup>

## International Community

FOSDEH criticized that a recent IMF delegation (last month) did not take into account the view of civil society organizations.<sup>161</sup> Javier Suazo wants a completely new development model for Honduras, one which excludes the IMF. "Honduras is in urgent need of an alternative development model to the current one, accompanied by a new political project that integrates the participation of a diverse range of economic actors (industrialists, for example) and a variety of social-based organizations. However, the deepening of neoliberal policies and their consequences will leave little room to achieve this change, once the political opposition reaches power, so you have to build a public agenda to gradually dismantle the morass of laws, regulations, programs, projects and institutions, left by the current government."<sup>162</sup> The UNDP signed an agreement with the MP to strengthen its work on citizen security<sup>163</sup> and the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (BCIE) signed an agreement worth 725'400 Euros to conduct a feasibility study on a cable car in Tegucigalpa.<sup>164</sup>

## US

US Chargé d'Affaires Colleen Hoey met with the Honduran Human Rights Secretary Carla Cueva this month.<sup>165</sup> There were also meeting with the Acting Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security Chad Wolf<sup>166</sup> and an especially worrisome ceremony with the head of the Armed Forces (see subsection below on drug trafficking).<sup>167 168 169</sup> Colleen Hoey also participated in the

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157 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/el-poder-simbolico-y-real-a-los-militares/>

158 <https://www.laprensa.hn/premium/1334236-410/israel-primer-proveedor-armas-honduras>

159 <https://criterio.hn/diputado-denuncia-que-cn-elimino-los-delitos-de-lesa-humanidad-a-militares/>

160 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/estamos-en-un-momento-de-la-historia-de-honduras-mas-critico-que-se-registra-bertha-oliva/>

161 <https://confidencialhn.com/fosdeh-muestra-inconformidad-con-fmi-por-no-pedir-opinion-a-organizaciones-civiles/>

162 <https://www.alainet.org/es/articulo/203534>

163 <https://twitter.com/PNUDHN/status/1192876961342857217>

164 <https://confidencialhn.com/bcie-dona-a-la-alcaldia-capitalina-725-mil-euros-para-estudios-sobre-instalacion-de-teleferico/>

165 <https://twitter.com/usembassyhn/status/1192962364678852610>

166 [https://twitter.com/DHS\\_Wolf/status/1195076959769964559](https://twitter.com/DHS_Wolf/status/1195076959769964559)

167 <https://twitter.com/Southcom/status/1198939155583115264>

168 <https://twitter.com/Southcom/status/1199135937114124289>

169 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/comando-sur-de-eeuu-condecora-con-medalla-legion-al-merito-a-jefe-de-las-ffaa.html>

inauguration of a police post in La Ceiba<sup>170</sup> and the tweeted that due to the support by the US State Department (INL), the Honduran police successfully combated kidnappings.<sup>171</sup>

## EU

The Spanish cooperation agency inaugurated a sewage and a water treatment plant in Gracias, Lempira. Both JOH and the Spanish ambassador were present.<sup>172</sup> As part of the project "Strengthening access to justice for the communities of Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples of Honduras" by the Spanish development cooperation agency AECID, there will be a special prosecutor's office for indigenous peoples in Tea by 2020.<sup>173</sup> In Europe, a group of women defenders of environmental rights, land rights and the rights of indigenous peoples in Colombia, Honduras, Guatemala and Mexico denounced in the European Parliament the increase in femicides and sexual assaults due to their work.<sup>174</sup>

## Drug Trafficking

Last months trial against Tony Hernández once more highlighted the role of the Armed Forces in drug trafficking. Radio Progreso published an overview.<sup>175</sup> At the same time, the head of the National Defense Secretariat, Fredy Santiago Díaz Zelaya, praised the work of the Armed Forces in combating drug trafficking and highlighted the importance of US collaboration.<sup>176</sup> Shortly afterwards, the head of SOUTHCOM visited Honduras again. He presented the Legion of Merit award to the head of the Armed Forces for his contribution in fighting drug trafficking...<sup>177 178 179</sup>

The convicted son of the former president Pepe Lobo, Fabio Lobo, wrote a letter writing that he was ill-advised by his lawyer to declare himself guilty. He challenged his sentence of 24-years in prison from 2017.<sup>180</sup> Two associates of the former police commissioner Jorge Barralaga (he was arrested in 2017 accused of money laundering) were sent to pre-trial detention on November 7.<sup>181</sup> By the end of the month, Barralaga himself was declared guilty in his own trial.<sup>182</sup>

For more on drug trafficking and the JOH regime, see the following section on JOH.

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170 <https://twitter.com/usembassyhn/status/1195125485275156480>

171 <https://twitter.com/usembassyhn/status/1200449882999414784>

172 <https://tiempo.hn/gracias-lempira-espana-habilita-planta-de-tratamiento-de-agua-y-potabilizadora/>

173 <https://criterio.hn/tela-contara-con-una-fiscalia-especial-de-etnias-en-el-2020/>

174 <https://www.lavanguardia.com/politica/20191111/471526345644/activistas-latinoamericanas-denuncian-ante-la-ue-el-aumento-de-femicidios.html>

175 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/droga-con-sello-de-dos-alas-perteneceria-a-militares-hondurenos-segun-agente-de-inteligencia/>

176 <http://elpulso.hn/gobierno-reafirma-que-solo-cuatro-por-ciento-de-la-droga-pasa-por-honduras/>

177 <https://twitter.com/Southcom/status/1198939155583115264>

178 <https://twitter.com/Southcom/status/1199135937114124289>

179 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/comando-sur-de-eeuu-condecora-con-medalla-legion-al-merito-a-jefe-de-las-ffaa.html>

180 <https://tiempo.hn/fabio-lobo-apela-sentencia-narcotrafico-ny-senala-negligencia/>

181 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/dictan-prision-preventiva-a-socios-del-clan-del-exsubcomisionado-jorge-barralaga.html>

182 [https://twitter.com/MP\\_Honduras/status/1199454895427989505](https://twitter.com/MP_Honduras/status/1199454895427989505)

## Varia

### JOH

This month, Honduras entered the post-Tony Hernández trial-era (see last months monitor). Already in October, the trial was followed by a brutal murder of a possible key witness, Nery Orlando Sanabria a.k.a. Magdaleno Meza in a Honduran maximum-security prison (see also last month).<sup>183</sup> “The murder is the latest embarrassment for the US state department, which continues to ignore the haze of allegations around the Honduran government while pushing the country to cooperate in Donald Trump’s regional crackdown on migration. (...) “The first message is for those who are linked to drug trafficking in Honduras related to Tony Hernández, or Juan Orlando Hernández and their whole group – to show them that they or their family members will be murdered if they continue providing evidence,” said Dr Joaquín Mejía, a human rights lawyer who has studied violence in Honduras.”<sup>184</sup> The Lawyers Association of Honduras called on the MP and CONADEH to protect the lawyer of the murdered witness, Omar Enrique Dubón.<sup>185</sup> The vice-minister of security, Luis Fernando Suazo, meanwhile, offered a reason why the JOH regime is not behind the murder: It would be too obvious.<sup>186</sup>

At the end of October, there was another arrest that caused problems to the JOH regime. "Two brothers — longtime political powerbrokers in a northeastern region of Honduras that is a major maritime and aerial drug route — have been arrested in a case that exposes further ties between the country’s traffickers and politicians. Roberto and Seth Paisano Wood were taken in a joint operation between the Attorney General’s Office and anti-drug authorities in northern Honduras (...) The brothers are part of a powerful political family in Gracias a Dios. Roberto has long been an operator in the National Party, while Seth was a congressman for the Liberal Party." <sup>187</sup>

Given the violent repression and the over 30 murdered protesters in the last two years, the protest against the JOH regime after the trial was not as big as one may have expected. But there is one group which still takes to the streets regularly, students. It is, therefore, especially worrisome that two student leaders were murdered in just a few days. The 18 year-old high school student, Oscar Mencía was last seen in his high school cafeteria on Oct 29 and later found dead in Tegucigalpa.<sup>188</sup> On November 1, the 25 year-old Leonardo Daniel Castillo Lagos, member of the University Student Movement (MAU), was assassinated.<sup>189</sup>

But also the political opposition was in the crossfire. The indigenous Miskito Libre leader Buenaventura Calderon Ramírez and his wife Maribel Bolian from Gracias a Dios and had been murdered the day before. Defensores en Línea reported that he had received death threats and

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183 <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/brief/honduras-prison-murder-silences-trafficker-with-links-president/>

184 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/nov/01/honduras-juan-orlando-herandez-prison-murder-drug-trial>

185 <https://tiempo.hn/collegio-de-abogados-omar-dubon-corre-grave-peligro/>

186 <http://elpulso.hn/la-unica-relativa-respuesta-sobre-asesinato-de-magdaleno-del-subsecretario-de-seguridad/>

187 <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/brothers-arrest-narco-politics-honduras-drug-corridor/>

188 <https://criterio.hn/aparece-asesinado-lider-estudiantil-del-tecnico-luis-bogran/>

189 Attention, graphic image: <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1190445424366227458>

unsuccessfully demanded support from the protection mechanism.<sup>190</sup> OACNUDH lamented their murder and according to them, he should have benefited from collective protection measures granted to the National Platform for Indigenous Matters of Honduras whose board member he was.<sup>191</sup> COFADEH's

Berta Oliva describes the current situation as one of total defenselessness and denounced the activity of death squads.<sup>192</sup> Pasos de Animal Grande came to the same conclusion<sup>193</sup>, so did MADJ: "The murders of four students, two active members of the Libre Party and the kidnapping and torture of a magisterial leader in the same week, clearly show that in Honduras the tarantulas have never left and continue to attack."<sup>194</sup> The Human Rights Board, a network of Honduran human rights organizations, expressed grave concern about the current situation in Honduras. They have documented six murders of students between 17 and 25 years old in this year's protests called for by the Platform for the Defense of Education and Healthcare. They have documented an additional 5 assassinations of social and opposition leaders and activist since the verdict against Tony Hernández.<sup>195</sup> <sup>196</sup> And if under these circumstances protests that still took place, women played an important role<sup>197</sup> and journalists who covered the protests suffered repression.<sup>198</sup>

The JOH regime made also negative headlines when it came to corruption. Honduras once more failed to get access to the Millennium Challenge funds.<sup>199</sup> Pressure not only rose for JOH, but also some of his allies. The MP charged JOH's presidential commissioner on climate change, Marlon Oniel Escoto Valerio, with usurpation and aggravated damage against the indigenous Pech community of Culuco, Olancho and against the environment.<sup>200</sup> The same day, a judge ordered alternative measures imprisonment for the Nationalist activist Fernando Anduray. He is accused for a crime against the environment. Anduray was among other things the former director of the National Persons Registry (RNP).<sup>201</sup> The JOH regime, meanwhile, tried to paint a good picture of itself and claimed that it is to be congratulated for the prolongation of the Temporary Protection Status (TPS) of Hondurans in the US.<sup>202</sup> The National TPS Alliance challenged this narrative.<sup>203</sup> At the same time, JOH tried to guarantee the loyalty of the Armed Forces. He granted them a 4 billion Lempira program on "Agriculture Development" (ADPH) through a executive decree.<sup>204</sup> <sup>205</sup> Even

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190 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/asesinan-a-lider-social-y-su-esposa-en-la-mosquitia-quien-habria-solicitado-medidas-de-proteccion/>

191 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1190394596267905025>

192 <https://tiempo.hn/bertha-oliva-hay-escuadrones-de-la-muerte/>

193 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2598-escuadrones-de-la-muerte-podrian-estar-operando-para-matar-estudiantes-que-protestan-en-honduras>

194 <https://madj.org/index.php/2019/11/04/editorial-las-tarantulas-nunca-se-han-ido/>

195 <https://criterio.hn/denuncian-ola-de-crmenes-tras-acusaciones-de-hernandez-con-el-narcotrafico/>

196 <http://ciprodeh.org.hn/index.php/noticias-principales/483-mesa-de-derechos-humanos-preocupada-por-la-materializacion-de-atentados-y-actos-de-violencia-contra-lideres-sociales-estudiantiles-y-de-oposicion-politica>

197 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/mujeres-se-autoconvocan-en-demanda-de-la-salida-de-joh/>

198 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1076-lanzan-gas-lacrimogeno-contra-periodista-de-canal-6-en-plena-transmision>

199 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3597-corrupcion-otra-vez-deja-fuera-a-honduras-de-fondos-donados-por-cuenta-del-milenio>

200 <https://www.latribuna.hn/2019/11/04/presentan-requerimiento-fiscal-contra-marlon-escoto-por-usurpacion-de-tierras-al-pueblo-pech/>

201 <https://criterio.hn/dictan-medidas-sustitutivas-y-prohiben-salir-del-pais-a-fernando-anduray/>

202 <https://criterio.hn/extienden-tps-para-honduras-y-otros-paises/>

203 <https://criterio.hn/tepeianos-desmienten-que-gobierno-de-juan-hernandez-haya-hecho-gestiones-para-su-beneficio/>

204 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3602-insolito-gobierno-da-4-mil-millones-a-militares-para-produccion-agricola>

205 <https://criterio.hn/es-hora-de-preguntar-y-exigir-respuestas/>

corporate media outlets critically reported on this.<sup>206</sup> <sup>207</sup> Some observers interpreted it as a sign of weakness of the JOH regime.<sup>208</sup> La Vía Campesina Honduras denounced it and demands the derogation of the underlying executive decree.<sup>209</sup> Various professional networks such as the Association of Agronomists of Honduras (CINAH) agreed<sup>210</sup> and so did even the Commercial and Industrial Chamber of Tegucigalpa (CCIT).<sup>211</sup> CESPAD published a helpful analysis of the legal background and highlighted the lack of transparency and accountability.<sup>212</sup>

On November 9, JOH suddenly claimed that the Armed Forces were not managing the funds for the agricultural development program.<sup>213</sup> <sup>214</sup> But the same day his Nationalist congressman Milton Puerto Oseguera said that the Armed Forces took up the challenge of managing the funds because they are capable of it.<sup>215</sup> At the same time, discussion took place at Congress to grant impunity to the Armed Forces.<sup>216</sup>

JOH also tried to get on the good side of the teachers again. El Libertador denounced that the JOH regime and the Education Secretariat spent more than 1.6 million Lempiras on holidays for school directors in Spain - the school directors who benefited were those who brought their students to the National Stadium on September 15 to greet JOH instead of participating in the alternative protest march on Honduras' "independence" day.<sup>217</sup> And he seems to can continue counting on IMF support. "The biggest problem of the IMF is that it does not count deaths, nor disappeared, nor jailed people, no migrants, no raped and beaten women, which are the result, among other things, of regressive economic and social policies, many of which have been endorsed by their own officials. Moreover, even as it happens in Honduras, it does not count corrupt or drug traffickers; rather, it consults and negotiates with them."<sup>218</sup>

But there is rising pressure from inside his own party. Radio Progreso spoke with congressman Jorge Lobo, son of former president Pepe Lobo, about the death threats against him and his father and about how JOH tries to keep the National Party aligned with his interests.<sup>219</sup> Jorge Lobo presented a bill in Congress to form a special commission to investigate those people mentioned in the Tony Hernández trial.<sup>220</sup> The former Attorney General Edmundo Orellana, meanwhile, denounced that the Judicial Power in Honduras is at the total disposition of JOH. He also highlighted the important distinction that Honduras has a narco-government, which not

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206 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1332104-410/ilogico-califican-asignar-fuerzas-armadas-programa-agricola-honduras>

207 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/es-un-irrespeto-a-la-institucionalidad-que-militares-manejen-fondos-agricolas-dice-julieta-castellanos.html>

208 <http://elpulso.hn/fondos-para-militares-muestran-debilidad-de-juan-orlando-belinda-martinez/>

209 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/la-via-campesina-exige-derogacion-inmediata-del-decreto-que-otorga-la-conduccion-del-agro-a-las-ffaa/>

210 <https://criterio.hn/colegios-agroforestales-piden-derogacion-de-decreto-que-da-millones-a-las-fuerzas-armadas/>

211 <https://confidencialhn.com/ccit-esta-en-contra-de-que-joh-de-dinero-a-militares-para-cultivar-la-tierra/>

212 <http://cespad.org.hn/2019/11/06/analisis-mas-recursos-sin-rendicion-de-cuentas-las-fuerzas-armadas-y-los-4-mil-millones-para-el-desarrollo-agricola/>

213 <https://confidencialhn.com/herandez-se-contradice-asegura-que-ffaa-no-manejaran-dinero-para-programa-agricola/>

214 <https://tiempo.hn/joh-asegura-ffaa-no-manejara-fondos-del-sector-agro/>

215 <https://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/si-ffaa-ha-aceptado-reto-de-manejar-fondos-agricolas-es-porque-tiene-la-capacidad-milton-puerto.html>

216 <https://tiempo.hn/pinu-eliminarian-delitos-lesa-humanidad-cn-desmiente/>

217 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3611-con-viaje-a-espana-premian-a-directores-por-desfiles-del-15-de-septiembre>

218 <https://www.alainet.org/es/articulo/203094>

219 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/diputado-jorge-lobo-escuadrones-de-la-muerte-me-ejecutarian-a-mi-padre-o-a-mi-sino-no-callamos/>

220 <https://radiohm.hn/pepe-la-oposicion-tiene-los-votos-para-aprobar-el-decreto-y-que-se-investigue-a-los-mencionados-en-el-juicio-de-tony-hernandez/>

automatically means that it is a narco-state. "The Prosecutor of the Southern District Court said it clearly: it is a narco government and not a narco state because being a narco State would include you, me and the rest of the people who are elements of the State. It is a narco government, that is to say, the government is in charge of politics, the government is made up of the three powers of the State and the bodies that are in charge of planning and executing the policy, that is where drug trafficking has become entrenched."<sup>221</sup> Drug trafficking continued to make headlines as on November 9 two men with links to the Los Valle drug cartel were murdered - two additional murdered drug traffickers with links to the Tony Hernández case.<sup>222</sup> An inmate murdered last month in the high-security prison La Tolva just a day before the murder of Magdaleno Meza was this month exposed as a right-hand man of the former mayor, drug trafficker and JOH ally Alexander Chande Ardón.<sup>223</sup> Then, the prison director of the El Pozo maximum-security prison, where Meza had been murdered, was fired. He asked for political asylum fearing for his life.<sup>224</sup>

While the protest against the role of the Armed Forces in the agricultural sector continued, they did do the job JOH wanted them to.<sup>225</sup> COFADEH denounced the use of the Military Police to follow, harass and intimidate the social and political opposition.<sup>226</sup> Campesino organization, meanwhile, presented a constitutional challenge against the executive decree by JOH.<sup>227</sup> The Armed Forces, meanwhile, sent out not-so-veiled-threats against campesinos opposed to the plan.<sup>228</sup> The same day, ConfidencialHN published a new article on corruption by the JOH regime linked to the agricultural sector.<sup>229</sup> On November 20, the Armed Forces received the first 12.5 million Lempiras from the ADPH.<sup>230</sup> Javier Suazo published a helpful analysis of the agricultural sector going back to the 1992 agrarian reform.<sup>231</sup>

On November 17, another social and labor leader was murdered in Honduras. Jorge Alberto Acosta, president of the loan and credit cooperative at the labor union Sitraterco, was shot dead in La Lima.<sup>232</sup> OACNUDH expressed grave concern reiterating a call by UN Special Rapporteur Michel Forst that Honduras "prioritize the fight against impunity for murders, attacks and threats against defenders".<sup>233</sup> Pasos de Animal Grande denounced that Acosta had received death threats previously to his assassination and that he should have benefited from state protection.<sup>234</sup> US congresswo/men also condemned his murder. "Acosta's assassination is just one of a recent brutal wave of killings, threats, kidnappings, beatings, torture, and disappearances of labor and social movement activists in

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221 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/poder-judicial-esta-a-disposicion-del-presidente-dice-ex-fiscal-general/>

222 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3610-en-menos-de-72-horas-asesinan-a-dos-hombres-vinculados-a-los-valle>

223 <https://confidencialhn.com/revelan-que-recluso-asesinado-en-la-tolva-era-la-mano-derecha-del-exjefe-narco-chande-ardon/>

224 <https://confidencialhn.com/director-de-carcel-el-pozo-esta-pidiendo-asilo-tras-crimen-de-magdaleno-meza/>

225 <https://criterio.hn/hernandez-siembra-discordia-y-abre-choque-entre-campesinos-y-militares/>

226 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/alerta-pmop-mantiene-seguimiento-constante-a-opositores-politicos/>

227 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2611-honduras-interponen-recurso-de-inconstitucionalidad-para-evitar-que-militares-manejen-el-agro>

228 <https://confidencialhn.com/jefe-militar-asegura-que-tiene-identificados-a-quienes-se-oponen-a-programa-agricola/>

229 <https://confidencialhn.com/hernandez-saqueo-recursos-de-fideicomiso-agricola-para-financiar-campana-de-2017/>

230 <http://elpulso.hn/militares-reciben-la-primera-parte-del-proyecto-pdah/>

231 <https://www.alainet.org/es/articulo/203241>

232 <https://tiempo.hn/dirigente-de-sitraterco-acribillado-dentro-de-billares-en-la-lima/>

233 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1196541452534333446>

234 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2617-estaba-acogido-en-el-mecanismo-de-proteccion-dirigente-del-sitraterco-fue-asesinado-este-fin-de-semana-en-la-lima-cortes>

Honduras, directed at Afro-Indigenous women, campesinos, teacher unionists, opposition political activists, supportive journalists, and many others. (...) Rather than legitimize and support the Honduran government, the Trump Administration should publicly denounce these killings, kidnappings, and forced disappearances. Rather than treat the migrants who seek to flee this terror like dangerous invaders, we must welcome them as asylees.<sup>235 236</sup>

But the threats continued. COFADEH warned alarm about the situation of human rights defender and local councilor from Marcalam La Paz, Marlon Enrique Calles Domínguez. He had been receiving threats since February 2018, but they grew this month; he even received a direct death threat.<sup>237</sup> The protection mechanism just advised him to leave the country instead of offering protection so that he could continue defending the woods and water sources.<sup>238</sup>

In November, three big employers announced to leave Honduras. The former head of the business lobby COHEP, Aline Flores, held the JOH regime responsible for this.<sup>239</sup> The former president of the Central Bank of Honduras announced a further decrease of foreign investment in Honduras.<sup>240</sup> Growing discontent was observable in the business community with JOH.<sup>241</sup> El Libertador reported on divisions inside the business lobby COHEP. The Federation of Farmers and Cattle Holders of Honduras (Fenagh) rejected attending a reunion denouncing the lack of support by COHEP against the Agriculture Development Plan.<sup>242</sup> At the same time, ContraCorriente uncovered that the JOH regime payed the travel expenses of journalists to travel to Israel to favorably report on the opening of the Honduran commerce and cooperation office in Jerusalem.<sup>243</sup>

In the midst of this, the Nationalist president of Congress and aspiring president of Honduras, Mauricio Oliva, told El Tiempo that JOH told him in confidence that he would not seek another reelection.<sup>244</sup> The mayor of Tegucigalpa, Nasry Asfuera, also threw his hat in the race.<sup>245</sup> On the last weekend of November, the National Party celebrated its annual convention, but it was marked by internal division.<sup>246</sup> Four leading representatives announced not to attend<sup>247</sup> (Ricardo Álvarez, Pepe Lobo, Roberto Ramón Castillo and Mauricio Oliva), the latter showed up after all. JOH presented him and the mayor of Tegucigalpa, Nasry Asfura, as primary candidates for the race for the Nationalist ticket next year.<sup>248</sup> JOH also threatened Nationalist leaders with separating them from

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235 <https://schakowsky.house.gov/press-releases/congressmembers-schakowsky-pocan-mcgovern-and-garcia-denounce-assassination-of-honduran-trade-unionist/>

236 <https://twitter.com/RepJavapal/status/1197545207446867974>

237 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/defensor-de-derechos-humanos-en-riesgo-en-honduras/>

238 <https://criterio.hn/mecanismo-de-proteccion-pide-a-regidor-que-salga-del-pais-en-vez-de-protegerlo/>

239 <https://criterio.hn/empresas-se-van-del-pais-por-culpa-del-gobierno-aline-flores/>

240 <https://tiempo.hn/hugo-noe-pino-preve-disminucion-inversion-extranjera-2020/>

241 <https://criterio.hn/crisis-economica-y-social-hara-que-empresarios-se-sumen-al-clamor-general-rodil-rivera-rodil/>

242 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3630-apoyo-de-sikaffy-al-gobierno-crea-conflicto-entre-socios-del-cohep>

243 <https://contracorriente.red/2019/11/16/casa-presidencial-pago-viaticos-de-periodistas-que-viajaron-a-israel/>

244 <https://tiempo.hn/mauricio-oliva-esta-sera-ultima-gestion-joh-no-buscara-reeleccion/>

245 <https://confidencialhn.com/tito-asfura-admite-que-lanzara-su-precandidatura-presidencial-por-el-movimiento-sin-cabeza/>

246 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/partido-nacional-llegara-dividido-a-convencion/>

247 <https://criterio.hn/convencion-nacionalista-sera-solo-de-seguidores-de-joh-video/>

248 <https://criterio.hn/en-alusion-a-ricardo-alvarez-herandez-amenaza-con-correr-de-su-gobierno-al-que-siempre-division-en-el-partido-nacional/>

the public positions if they "attack the unity of the National Party".<sup>249</sup> He also tweeted that he wanted the National Party to regulate the reelection in their bylaws limiting it to two terms.<sup>250</sup>

The end of November was also the second anniversary of the electoral fraud of 2017. "Two years of electoral fraud, two years and illegality wins the battle, a whole project that is imposed based on the force of arms, the political support of interventionist governments such as the United States and thanks to the dark forces that move under the corridor of organized crime. An alliance that seems unbreakable or difficult to undermine. (...) Two years later, they unpack again from their "box of Pandora" the distracting theme of the so-called National Constituent Assembly and keep the main opposition political leaders entertained discussing political reforms that will never come to fruition under the current regime. On the contrary, the National Party and its government will continue to take advantage of the situation to promote political reforms that fit their electoral interests in order to continue to have control and not lose what they have been building under the umbrella of illegality."<sup>251</sup>

## Penal Code

Congress decided to prolong the *vacatio legis* of the new Penal Code for another six months, i.e. like this it would come into force on May 10, 2020.<sup>252</sup> OACNUDH welcomed this and offered its support to harmonize the Penal Code with international standards.<sup>253</sup> The CNA once more demanded that it should never come into force<sup>254</sup> and so did the the social and political opposition.<sup>255</sup><sup>256</sup> The Inter-American Press Society (SIP) criticized a non-binding decision by the Supreme Court asking Congress to withdraw a reform to the Penal Code which would decriminalize defamation.<sup>257</sup> The same day, the Constitutional Chamber rejected a constitutional challenge by the CNA against the Penal Code.<sup>258</sup>

## Public Health

"Evelyn Zorrilla, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) regional epidemiologist for Mexico and Central America, explains how MSF responded to the outbreak of dengue fever in Honduras this year and why the disease behaved in an unusual way." To the question "Why didn't the number of cases decrease in an expected way?", Zorrilla answered: "It was a mixture of factors. First, this part of Honduras is an endemic dengue fever zone and it wasn't prepared to respond to this situation. The alerts for a new outbreak were not activated in time."<sup>259</sup> This year's dengue rate has reached over

249 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3637-joh-advierte-a-lideres-nacionalistas-que-pretendan-hacerle-zanadilla>

250 <https://tiempo.hn/joh-pide-limitar-la-reeleccion-en-estatutos-partidarios-del-pn/>

251 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/la-ilegalidad-se-impone/>

252 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2600-nuevo-codigo-penal-presion-ciudadana-hizo-retroceder-seis-meses-a-congreso-nacional>

253 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1191816256162336771>

254 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1332106-466/cna-reitera-que-nuevo-c%C3%B3digo-penal-no-debe-entrar-en-vigencia-nunca>

255 <https://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/naciones-unidas-aplaude-decision-para-ampliar-vacatio-legis-del-codigo-penal.html>

256 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2602-diputados-opuestos-nuevo-codigo-penal-no-debe-entrar-en-vigencia-ni-un-segundo>

257 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/sip-lamenta-recomendacion-de-la-corte-suprema-de-honduras-sobre-difamacion.html>

258 <https://tiempo.hn/declaran-inadmisible-recursos-inconstitucionalidad-interpuestos-cna/>

259 <https://www.msf.org/honduras-msfs-response-dengue-fever-emergency>



100'000 cases and 157 people have died.<sup>260</sup> There was also an increase in the HIV infection rate; it rose by 7% since 2010.<sup>261</sup>

## Migration

The safe third country agreement continue to make negative headlines. Lisa Haugaard from LAWG published a helpful commentary to highlight its problematic importance for the Trump administration. "A New York jury convicted Tony Hernández, the brother of Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández, of drug trafficking on October 18, 2019. In the course of the trial, New York prosecutors labeled President Hernández “a co-conspirator,” (...) The next day, the U.S. Embassy’s highest official appeared at Honduras’ armed forces day parade. A State Department official declared Honduras “a reliable ally.” (...) a team of U.S. Department of Homeland Security and State Department officials arrived the next week to hammer out an agreement. Was the agreement to stop massive corruption in Honduras? Was it to call for a purge of drug trafficking-connected officials? Was it to urge the government to stop repressing protests and jailing human rights and environmental activists? No. It was to figure out how to implement the agreement establishing Honduras as a “safe third country”.<sup>262</sup> Additionally, there is also the controversial Remain in Mexico Program. "President Trump’s requirement that asylum seekers remain in Mexico while they await hearings in the United States is creating a new humanitarian crisis. Yet it isn’t generating nearly the outrage and media scrutiny that his horrific family separations did. But now a deeply dismayed asylum officer has authored a remarkable manifesto that was obtained by Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.), as part of an investigation Merkley is conducting of Trump’s asylum policies. The manifesto indicts the “Remain in Mexico” program from the inside in sweeping and scalding terms, describing it as illegal under U.S. law, a violation of the United States’ international human rights obligations and arbitrarily implemented to deliberately punish people for seeking asylum here."<sup>263</sup> Criticism also came from the general secretary of the Central American Integration System (SICA), Vinicio Cerezo, who called for a joint review and reconsideration.<sup>264</sup>

But the Trump administration and its regional allies pushed forward. "The Trump administration issued a rule on Monday [November 18] that would allow it to send migrants seeking protections in the US at the southern border back to Guatemala under an agreement brokered earlier this year. Former Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kevin McAleenan, who spearheaded the agreement, has billed it as a way to help the country build up its capacity to process migrants seeking protections under both international torture agreements and asylum. But under the rule issued Monday, the agreement will be used to deport migrants to Guatemala and, eventually, to El Salvador and Honduras, which have signed similar agreements with the US. Hundreds of thousands have fled violence and the lack of economic opportunity in the region, known as Central America’s

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260 <https://radiohm.hn/mas-de-101-mil-100-casos-de-dengue-se-contabilizan-en-honduras/>

261 <https://www.laprensa.hn/mundo/1338641-410/honduras-vih-sida-onu-sindrome-inmuno-deficiencia-adquirida>

262 [https://medium.com/@lisah\\_31342/honduras-a-safe-third-country-for-corrupt-officials-5bdecd55d978](https://medium.com/@lisah_31342/honduras-a-safe-third-country-for-corrupt-officials-5bdecd55d978)

263 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/11/12/scathing-manifesto-an-asylum-officer-blasts-trumps-cruelty-migrants/>

264 <https://www.voanoticias.com/a/vinicio-cerezo-ejecutivo-del-sica-aboga-por-un-acuerdo-migratorio-conjunto-en-el-triangulo-norte-de-centroamerica/5170355.html>

Northern Triangle, over the past year."<sup>265</sup> "In the final days before launching (...) Department of Homeland Security officials were still scrambling to figure out critical details, including how those seeking protection would obtain shelter, food, and access to orientation services".<sup>266</sup> On November 21, the first Honduran was deported to Guatemala under the new agreement.<sup>267</sup> Physicians for Human Rights denounced that it violates U.S. and international law on the right to seek asylum and poses a serious risk to the safety of those seeking protection in the United States.<sup>268</sup>

A new report was published this month on internal displacement in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.<sup>269</sup> 76.1% of Central American migrants arriving in Mexico fled violence.<sup>270</sup> One group especially affected by internal and external displacement is the LGBTQ community suffering further violence as a consequence. "Studies show LGBTQ migrants are among the most vulnerable, more likely to be assaulted and killed, especially trans migrants. Of Central American LGBTQ migrants interviewed by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees in 2017, 88 percent were victims of sexual and gender-based violence in their countries of origin; two-thirds suffered similar attacks in Mexico. Yet the Trump administration is returning LGBTQ migrants seeking asylum in the U.S. to face assaults, kidnapping and death in Mexican border cities while they await U.S. court hearings."<sup>271</sup> Children are also among the vulnerablized groups. "The 3-year-old girl traveled for weeks cradled in her father's arms, as he set out to seek asylum in the United States. Now she won't even look at him. After being forcibly separated at the border by government officials, sexually abused in U.S. foster care and deported, the once bright and beaming girl arrived back in Honduras withdrawn, anxious and angry, convinced her father abandoned her. He fears their bond is forever broken. "I think about this trauma staying with her too, because the trauma has remained with me and still hasn't faded," he said, days after their reunion. This month, new government data shows the little girl is one of an unprecedented 69,550 migrant children held in U.S. government custody over the past year, enough infants, toddlers, kids and teens to overflow the typical NFL stadium. That's more children detained away from their parents than any other country, according to United Nations researchers. And it's happening even though the U.S. government has acknowledged that being held in detention can be traumatic for children, putting them at risk of long-term physical and emotional damage."<sup>272</sup> <sup>273</sup> At the same time, 21'000 children have been deported back to Honduras so far this year.<sup>274</sup>

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265 <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2019/11/19/20970868/asylum-rule-agreement-guatemala-el-salvador-honduras-safe-third-deport-dhs-doj>

266 <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/hamedaleaziz/trump-asylum-guatemala-dhs-safe-third-plan>

267 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-immigration-guatemala/u-s-sends-guatemala-first-honduran-migrant-under-asylum-deal-idUSKBN1XV1WM>

268 <https://phr.org/news/u-s-governments-new-safe-third-country-deal-with-guatemala-puts-asylum-seekers-at-grave-risk-phr/>

269 <http://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/painting-the-full-picture-displacement-data-gaps-in-the-ntca>

270 <https://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/acnur-76-1-de-los-migrantes-de-centroamerica-dejaron-su-pais-por-violencia.html>

271 <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/border-baja-california/story/2019-11-03/trump-administration-leaving-vulnerable-lgbt-migrants-to-wait-in-mexico>

272 <https://apnews.com/015702afdb4d4fbf85cf5070cd2c6824>

273 <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/kids-caught-in-the-crackdown/>

274 <https://criterio.hn/explotacion-infantil-va-en-aumento-en-honduras/>

## Electoral Reforms

By the end of the year, a new Electoral Bill will be presented to Congress. Radio Progreso fears for a bill without real, profound reforms.<sup>275</sup>

## Poverty

Various basic goods became more expensive this month<sup>276</sup> and some 70% of the corn harvest may have been lost due to the drought.<sup>277</sup> 60% of Honduras's youth in the productive age is unemployed.<sup>278</sup> At the same time, various human rights organizations expressed grave concern about the high rate of child labor in Honduras. Some 80% of children suffer from some form of exploitation.<sup>279</sup> The number of children working even increased compared to previous years.<sup>280</sup> The former head of the National Bank, Hugo Noé Pino, summarized the situation as follows: "Honduras does not advance, it is in the same situation it has been in recent years and that obviously means unemployment, high cost of living, poverty and all these evils that afflict the Honduran people."<sup>281</sup>

Hope that the 2020 budget may alleviate this situation seem naive. "Honduras' proposed budget for 2020 reduces support to the country's most needy – while protecting the military and security agencies – and, particularly if the debate on priorities is not made more inclusive, risks exacerbating already high political tensions and chronic economic mismanagement. On the revenue side, the draft budget shows a drop in tax revenues from 18 percent of GDP in 2019 to 16.5 percent – which, ICEFI has found, is not justified by technical analysis of the circumstances. Government spending – excluding payment on the national debt but including transfers to funds and trusts – equaled 19.7 percent of GDP, compared to 21.5 percent in 2019. (ICEFI estimates that the average government spending in Central America in 2019 will be 18.5 percent.) This drop will affect most public entities, particularly in social spending."<sup>282</sup>

## And Light at the End of a Month

Two Honduran women human rights defenders were awarded for their work this month. Laura Zúniga Cáceres, daughter of Berta Cáceres, received a human rights award from the National Council of Spanish Lawyers<sup>283</sup> and Miriam Miranda, OFRANEH's general coordinator, received the Human Rights Award from the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.<sup>284 285</sup>

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275 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/preparan-nueva-ley-electoral-sin-reformas-profundas/>

276 <https://confidencial.hn/variados-productos-de-la-canasta-basica-registran-aumento-durante-esta-semana/>

277 <https://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/fenagh-reporta-perdidas-del-70-en-cultivos-de-maiz-por-sequia.html>

278 <https://hondudiario.com/2019/11/19/el-60-de-los-jovenes-del-pais-están-desempleados/>

279 <https://criterio.hn/explotacion-infantil-va-en-aumento-en-honduras/>

280 <https://radiohm.hn/unos-400-mil-ninos-son-obligados-a-trabajar-en-honduras/>

281 <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn/gobierno-de-joh-ha-desmontado-la-institucionalidad-del-estado-segun-analista/>

282 <https://aulablog.net/2019/11/26/honduras-facing-the-budget-challenges/>

283 <http://www.elpais.hn/2019/11/05/hija-de-berta-caceres-es-galardonada-por-el-consejo-general-de-la-abogacia-espanola>

284 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2626-miriam-miranda-primera-hondurena-galardonada-con-premio-de-derechos-humanos-de-la-fes-alemania>

285 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITThC8ZNxOM&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITThC8ZNxOM&feature=emb_title)

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

#### Past Activities:

- Berta Zúniga Cáceres was in Switzerland in November for four days and talked about the Berta Cáceres case, presented the book “Las Revoluciones de Berta” and she analyzed the current situation of Honduras.

#### Upcoming Activities:

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