

Another Month in Honduras...

Human Rights Monitor – February 2020

Last month, Honduras lost the MACCIH and its Honduran counterpart UFECIC, this month it lost the strong leadership at OACNUDH in the person of María Soledad Pazo. The defenselessness of Honduras' civil society and human rights defenders further increased. At the same time, a new report highlighted that Honduran human rights defenders suffered the most attacks worldwide related to businesses. Another source of violence is the police, which itself lived through a difficult month as police commissioner Leonel Luciano Saucedo Guifarro was arrested. This further raised question about the work of the purging committee which just previously had promoted Saucedo. Last but not least, another member of the newly coined "Hernández Clan" was arrested in the US for links to drug trafficking - Mauricio Hernández Pineda, former member of the police force and cousin of JOH. Welcome to another month in Honduras.

In solidarity,

Daniel Langmeier

Honduras Forum Switzerland

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Abbreviations

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

Human Rights and Their Defenders

February was not a good month for human rights in Honduras.¹ After weeks of uncertainty, the departure of the head of OACNUDH in Honduras, María Soledad Pazo, was made official.² Human rights defender Edy Tábora denounced that it was due to pressure by the JOH regime. He denounced this as a strategy "to weaken an office that has been denouncing the serious situation of human rights violations in Honduras".³ Human rights defender Gilda Rivera sees this as part of the strategy by the JOH regime to have important bodies and personalities in the struggle against corruption and human rights violations withdrawn from Honduras.⁴ "We know that her term was expiring as established by the Human Rights Council, but we know that this term can be renewed and from our analysis as civil society we consider that her departure is quite inopportune and that there could be certain types of pressure from the government not to renew her mandate".⁵ The regional secretary of UITA wrote an open letter to High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet regarding OACNUDH in Honduras expressing grave concern about the departure of both the deputy head Silvia Lavagnoli and the head of the office María Soledad Pazo within just two months.⁶ Bertha Oliva denounces that "Bachelet is leaving Honduran human rights defenders orphaned by the abrupt removal of (...) María Soledad Pazo".

The UN has released the Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Honduras.⁷ ⁸ This May, Honduras will have its third Universal Periodic Review (UPR) at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.⁹ Pasos de Animal Grande looks back at the two previous ones in 2010 and 2015 and all the unfulfilled recommendations by the JOH regime.¹⁰ Amnesty International published its annual report on the human rights situation across the globe in 2019. On Honduras they write: "The Honduran security forces brutally repressed protests between April and June. Human rights defenders continued to be subjected to attacks, including killings and the misuse of criminal proceedings against them. This raised further concerns over the shrinking space for civil society in the country. Persistent high levels of crime and violence, impunity, inequality and poverty led thousands of people to flee Honduras, either individually or as part of several "caravans" seeking refuge in the USA and Mexico. However, in September the governments of Honduras and the United States signed an Asylum Cooperative Agreement, also known as a "safe third country" agreement, provoking well-founded concerns

1 <https://www.radioprogreso.net/instante/salida-de-titular-de-la-oacnudh-deja-indefensa-a-la-poblacion-bertha-oliva/>

2 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/123311733314686977>

3 <http://www.radioamerica.hn/oacnudh-ha-venido-sufriendo-hostigamiento-por-parte-del-gobierno-de-honduras-edy-tabora/>

4 <https://confidencialhn.com/joh-ordena-salida-inmediata-de-jefa-de-la-oficina-para-los-ddhh-de-onu/>

5 <http://elpulso.hn/representante-del-alto-comisionado-de-naciones-unidas-deja-el-pais-el-viernes/>

6 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/carta-de-rel-uita-a-la-alta-comisionada-michelle-bachelet/>

7 ENG: https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session43/Documents/A_HRC_43_3_Add2_AUV.DOCX

8 SP: https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session43/Documents/A_HRC_43_3_Add2_AUV_SP.DOCX

9 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/12722-2/>

10 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2707-estado-de-honduras-a-las-puertas-de-una-nueva-examinacion-de-los-derechos-humanos-en-el-epu>

about Honduras' capacity to ensure the protection of people forced to seek asylum there instead of the US."¹¹

Also this month, the National Network of Women Human Rights Defenders in Honduras (RNDDH) held its first National Situation Analysis, "a space for reflection and political discussion for women who recognize the country's structural problems and are interested in generating strategies for political, social, economic and cultural transformation from a feminist perspective". In a press release, they highlighted various findings, such as "a badly distributed general state budget" or "a growing application of neoliberal measures accompanied by the progressive dismantling of all public institutions".¹²

Assassinations

"On February 6, 1995, Blanca Jeannette Kawas Fernández was murdered in retaliation for her work in defense of human rights and the environment after she denounced cases of illegal logging and publicly opposed various economic projects on the Punta Sal Peninsula. 25 years later, her case, like that of hundreds of environmentalists murdered in Honduras, remains totally unpunished."¹³

Gabriel Chacón, a lawyer in Tegucigalpa, was murdered in his house in front of his wife and daughter.¹⁴

Attacks, Criminalization and Harassment

"From 2015 to 2019, the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre has documented more than 2,000 attacks on HRDs raising concerns about business-related human rights abuses - from frivolous lawsuits, arbitrary arrests and detentions to death threats, beatings and even killings." They also have a case study on Honduras and the findings are very bleak. "In 2019, Honduras was the country with the highest number of attacks against HRDs related to business. (...) Since the 2009 coup, Honduras's economic growth strategy has been focused on opening the country to mining, agribusiness and renewable energy investment and in 2011, the government declared the country "open for business". As part of this promise, the government has relaxed environmental regulations, and approved projects without ensuring free, prior and informed consent. In 2019 we recorded 98 attacks on HRDs in Honduras, up from 31 in 2018."¹⁵

The offices of Vía Campesina Honduras were robbed again this month.¹⁶ It was the ninth attack on their offices in recent time.¹⁷ IM-Defensoras denounced the defamation campaign against journalist and human rights defender Dina Meza. "From various profiles and Facebook pages, images were published with photographs of the defender and the detained youth [from a COPINH rally, see last

11 <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AMR0113532020ENGLISH.PDF>

12 <http://im-defensoras.org/2020/02/boletin-informativo-31-de-enero-2020-la-mddh-desarrolla-jornada-de-analisis-de-coyuntura-nacional/>

13 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn/portada/a-25-anos-del-asesinato-de-jeannette-kawas-honduras-tiene-pendiente-garantizar-justicia/>

14 <https://tiempo.hn/asesinan-a-un-abogado-frente-a-su-esposa-e-hija-en-residencial-las-uvvas/>

15 <https://dispatches.business-humanrights.org/hrd-january-2020/index.html>

16 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2709-ataques-reiterados-incursionan-en-la-sede-de-via-campesina-honduras>

17 <http://im-defensoras.org/2020/02/alertadefensorashn-personas-desconocidas-irrumpen-y-ocasionan-danos-materiales-a-oficinas-de-la-via-campesina/>

week] with comments where she is accused of "helping mareros and delinquents to go free" which in the Honduran context means placing Dina in the sights of multiple aggressors."¹⁸

But there were also some good news this month. A judge dismissed the criminalizing trial against defender and priest Florentino Hernández from El Triunfo, Choluteca (see January monitor).¹⁹ The environmental defenders Iván Juárez and Meregildo Guillén from the community of Cuaca, located in the municipality of Gualaco had gone to the MP to ask it to investigate illegal logging in the community, but instead of investigating, it notified the businessman Nery Roberto Murillo Montalván held responsible for the logging. He then went on to criminalize the community. But now, the Court of Judgments of Juticalpa, Olancho issued a definitive dismissal of the case.²⁰

Indigenous Peoples

The MP presented charges against the president of the Honduran Association of Renewable Energy, Elsia Esther Paz Mancias, who has been publicly attacking indigenous peoples and human rights defenders for their opposition to extractive projects. The MP accused her of discrimination against indigenous Lenca leaders.²¹ COPINH welcomed this²² and thanked Jany del Cid, the special prosecutor for Indigenous people, for bringing charges of discrimination against the president of the Honduran Assoc of Renewable Energy for "publicly insulting the Lenca people".²⁴ Honduras' indigenous communities hope that this serves as a legal precedent.²⁵ The Coalition against Impunity published a press release denouncing the "racist and classist behaviour" by Paz.²⁶

On the day of the hearing, COPINH held a Dignity Rally of the Lenca People outside the courts in Tegucigalpa.²⁷ The protest was met with state violence as the police started to arbitrarily detain young protesters.²⁸ One of them, Selvin Milla, member of a community radio, was later transferred to the hospital due to the blows he received by the police.²⁹ Berta Zúniga, coordinator of COPINH, denounced: "The police have a "natural" instinct to side with the tie-wearing, high-heeled people who show in their appearance their superiority and also a brutal prejudice with young people with simple clothes, piercing and bracelets. Today we have experienced xenophobia".³² The three young men detained were later released again.³³ But then the court dropped the charges against Paz

18 <http://im-defensoras.org/2020/02/alertadefensorashn/>

19 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/declaran-sin-lugar-querella-contra-el-padre-florentino-herandez/>

20 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/sobreseimiento-definitivo-para-ambientalistas-querellados-por-defender-el-bosque/>

21 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/153-febrero2020/5451-requerimiento-fiscal-contra-presidenta-de-la-asociacion-de-energia-electrica-renovable>

22 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2693-por-discriminacion-contra-indigenas-lencas-libran-requerimiento-fiscal-contra-presidenta-de-empresas-energeticas>

23 <https://copinh.org/2020/02/fiscalia-de-etnias-presenta-requerimiento-fiscal-contra-elsia-paz-video/>

24 <https://twitter.com/JosephBerra/status/1227731119308759045>

25 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/57-pueblos-indigenas/1396-estado-hondureno-sentaria-precedentes-tras-acusar-a-elsia-paz-por-discriminacion>

26 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2705-coalicion-contra-la-impunidad-repudiamos-la-conducta-racista-y-clasista-de-elsia-esther-paz-mancias>

27 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1230887379730403328>

28 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2708-por-protestar-contra-la-discriminacion-de-que-han-sido-victimas-detienen-a-integrantes-de-copinh>

29 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1230920265011548160>

30 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1230973774071304198>

31 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1231081219628191744>

32 <https://twitter.com/BerthaZuniga1/status/1230959119462473729>

33 <https://copinh.org/2020/02/liberados-los-jovenes-detenedos-ayer/>

and the hope for an important legal precedent vanished again.³⁴ At least the Special Prosecutor's Office for Ethnic Affairs and Cultural Heritage later challenged the dismissal of the charges.³⁵

María Santos, National Coordinator of Indigenous and Black Women of Honduras, CONAMINH, denounced verbal aggression, harassment and death threats against several women defenders who belong to the original Maya Chortí people, in the community of El Florido, Santa Rita, in the department of Copán.³⁶

FPIC

The Observatory of the Human Rights of Honduras' Indigenous and Black Peoples (ODHPINH) invited opposition politicians to inform them about the problematic consultation bill promoted by Nationalist congressman Óscar Nájera.³⁷ ³⁸ Berta Zúniga Cáceres, coordinator of COPINH, denounced that the bill contains three problematic proposals: "1. To limit who will be consulted and only refer to those directly affected when in the extractive projects there are affected people who are not in the project area. 2.- To establish that the consultation period will be 120 days and this does not respect the communities' times. 3.- To establish that the head of the CONACOL will be appointed by the President of the Republic and not by the indigenous peoples."³⁹ Later in February, ContraCorriente spoke with Olivia Zúniga Cáceres, Libre congresswoman and daughter of Berta Cáceres, about the Nájera Bill, extractivism in Honduras and the lack of legitimacy of the indigenous groups presented by the JOH regime to whitewash the bill.⁴⁰

The Case of Berta Cáceres

COPINH and Berta's family help a press conference this month outside the MP accompanied by human rights organizations and social movement. They handed over a petition to the MP demanding the prosecution of the intellectual authors for the murder of Berta Cáceres. The petition was signed by over 1000 national and international organizations and individuals.⁴¹ ⁴²

Also in February, the expert mission on the Berta Cáceres case together with Honduran indigenous and human rights organizations held a forum on the link between the violation of free, prior and informed consent and the assassination of Berta.⁴³ ⁴⁴ A day later, they presented a report⁴⁵ highlighting the "history debt of justice". "Justice in the case of Berta Cáceres will not be fully realized until the responsibilities for the intellectual authorship of the actions as well as for the

34 <https://tiempo.hn/dictan-sobreseimiento-definitivo-a-favor-de-elsia-paz123/>

35 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/autor-login/153-febrero2020/5524-mp-apelara-sobreseimiento-a-favor-de-presidenta-de-asociacion-hondurena-de-energia-renovable>

36 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2699-testaferros-ligados-a-crimen-organizado-amenazan-a-lideresas-del-pueblo-maya-chorti>

37 <https://copinh.org/2020/02/porque-estamos-en-contra-del-la-ley-najera/>

38 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2684-cuestionan-ley-najera-por-violentar-derechos-ancestrales-de-los-pueblos-indigenas>

39 <https://criterio.hn/cn-tiene-3-propuestas-de-la-ley-de-consulta-previa-y-son-lesivas-para-los-pueblos-originarios/>

40 <https://contracorriente.red/2020/02/13/libre-tiene-que-permanecer-en-su-demanda-y-denuncia-a-favor-de-la-madre-tierra-olivia-zuniga-caceres-sobre-proyecto-de-ley-de-consulta-previa/>

41 <https://copinh.org/2020/02/no-mas-excusas-el-mundo-exige-justicia-para-bertha/>

42 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/component/k2/item/2680-enjuiciamiento-a-los-autores-intelectuales-en-el-crimen-de-bertha-caceres-reiteran-en-escrito-presentado-ante-mp>

43 <https://copinh.org/2020/02/foro-publico-consulta-previa-y-el-crimen-de-bertha-caceres/>

44 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2687-senalan-en-conversatorio-estado-implementa-una-farsa-detras-de-la-consulta-previa>

45 <https://www2.abogacia.es/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Resumen-ejecutivo-misi%C3%B3n-Berta-C%C3%A1ceres.pdf>

different delaying tactics and the hindering of the investigation and trial of the case are established."⁴⁶

There was also news on the Gualcarque Fraud case. The MP informed that a court dismissed the attempt by the accused of the case to avoid a hearing.⁴⁷

LGBTIQ

Honduras LGBTIQ community denounced that "[t]he deaths against the LGTBI community continue to be treated as a common crime, without analyzing the fact that they are members of a discriminated group where the State of Honduras tries to avoid his responsibility."⁴⁸

Freedom of Expression and Journalists

Honduras is one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a journalist. During the last decade, at least 40 have been killed in connection with their work, according to a report published by the International Press Institute (IPI). This figure makes Honduras the second deadliest country for a reporter, and more dangerous than some war zones. Even worse, including social communicators and media workers in general, the number is likely to be over 80.⁴⁹ C-Libre published a report yesterday on journalism and freedom of expression in Honduras called "From Informative Silence to Exodus".⁵⁰ ⁵¹ According to the report, least 20 journalists had to leave Honduras between 2018 and 2019 to save their lives.⁵² ⁵³

The social communicator Mauricio Ortega wanted to report a missing person to the police in Omoa, Cortés, but the police did not attend him and a police agent tried to force him out of the station.⁵⁴ Later, the police agent even accused him and Ortega had to appear before a judge.⁵⁵ ⁵⁶ Trying to cover the murder of a young man in police detention, the journalist Nahún Monje was harassed and threatened with death by the police.⁵⁷ Journalist Esdras Amado López filed an appeal of unconstitutionality at the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court for the annulment of the trial against a member of the Armed Forces who broke into the Canal 36 facilities in Tegucigalpa during the coup d'état.⁵⁸ The president of the Honduran College of Journalists (CPH), Dagoberto

46 <https://copinh.org/2020/02/1a-justicia-hondurena-en-deuda-en-caso-berta/>

47 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/153-febrero2020/5456-sin-lugar-excepciones-por-falta-de-accion-y-competencia-interpuestas-por-defensores-privados-de-imputados-en-el-caso-fraude-sobre-el-gualcarque>

48 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2701-sistema-de-justicia-de-honduras-no-penalizo-como-un-crimen-de-odio-el-asesinato-de-bessy-ferrera-de-la-comunidad-lgtbi>

49 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/libertad-de-expresion/1380-honduras-uno-de-los-lugares-mas-peligrosos-del-mundo-para-los-periodistas>

50 <https://criterio.hn/estado-hondureno-retrocede-en-promocion-a-la-libertad-de-expresion-sostiene-informe/>

51 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/vigilancia-intimidacion-ataques-y-asesinatos-rebela-informe-sobre-libertad-de-expresion-en-honduras/>

52 <https://tiempo.hn/c-libre-20-periodistas-hondurenos-huyeron-pais-entre-2018-2019/>

53 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/libertad-de-expresion/1407-periodistas-hondurenos-huyen-para-protger-sus-vidas>

54 <https://tiempo.hn/video-policia-agrede-comunicador-intentaba-realizar-denuncia/>

55 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2700-nuevo-hecho-de-violencia-contr-la-prensa-en-cortes-policias-criminalizan-a-reportero-al-que-agredieron-con-gas-lacrimogeno>

56 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2702-periodista-entre-citatoria-judicial-y-problemas-de-salud-por-gases-lacrimogenos-que-le-lanzo-la-policia-de-omoa-cortes>

57 <http://elpulso.hn/periodista-es-victima-de-agresion-por-miembros-de-la-policia/>

58 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/presentan-recurso-contr-anulacion-de-juicio-a-militar-que-irrumpio-instalaciones-de-canal-36.html>

Rodríguez, denounces that journalists are being restricted and threatened so that information can no longer inform the public because of the danger to their lives.⁵⁹

Criterio reported on the ongoing criminalization of journalist Jairo Antonio López. The MP now even accuses him of possession of commercial explosives and possession of home-made construction devices. They even went after a former member of the police who had been assigned as a guard for the journalist.⁶⁰ "[W]ith tears in his eyes and his choked voice [he] asked Edison Lanza, Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), this Thursday to do something for his case because otherwise they are going to put him in jail or kill him".⁶¹

Penal Code

A new scheme by Congress regarding the new Penal Code caused widespread condemnation this month.⁶² C-Libre detected no less than 20 attacks on freedom of expression in the Penal Code.⁶³ According to C-Libre, among the main impacts of the approval of the new Penal Code are "the lack of transparency and accountability in relation to the drafting, discussion and approval process, the limited access to information in relation to the discussion schedule of the draft Penal Code and the weakness of channels of dialogue in the process of building the Penal Code and the limited impact of the observations by civil society".⁶⁴ One main problem with the Penal Code remains the legal persecution with possible prison sentences of so-called crimes against honor, i.e. injury or defamation.⁶⁵ The political opposition called the newest changes to the Penal Code illegal.⁶⁶ In a press release, the National Anti-Corruption Council (CNA) later agreed with this assertion.⁶⁷

The Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the IACHR, Edison Lanza, held a speech this month in Honduras saying that if the new Penal Code were to enter into force as it stands, Honduras would go backwards in terms of freedom of expression, while he also regretted that murders against journalists continue to go unpunished.⁶⁸ ⁶⁹ He also asked for the decriminalization of honor crimes.⁷⁰ "[S]ocial communicators and journalists located in different departments of Honduras presented a letter with petitions according to the specific needs and problems of their work context and, above all, the impact that the new Criminal Code will have on the exercise of journalism, to the IACHR's Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, so that he can intercede in accordance with his mandate before the State of Honduras".⁷¹

59 <http://elpulso.hn/solo-en-regimenes-dictatoriales-se-cuarta-la-libertad-de-expresion-dagoberto-rodriguez/>

60 <https://criterio.hn/ministerio-publico-arremete-contra-periodista-jairo-lopez-acusando-de-varios-delitos/>

61 <https://criterio.hn/hoy-graben-por-si-me-matan-o-me-llevan-presos-periodista-jairo-lopez/>

62 <https://criterio.hn/cph-pidio-eximir-a-duenos-de-medios-de-aplicacion-de-codigo-penal/>

63 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/libertad-de-expresion/1408-c-libre-nuevo-codigo-penal-contiene-20-delitos-que-violentan-la-libertad-de-expresion>

64 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/libertad-de-expresion/1406-el-nuevo-codigo-penal-sigue-siendo-una-amenaza-para-la-libertad-de-expresion>

65 <https://confidencialhn.com/presidente-del-cph-esta-preocupado-porque-no-hubo-derogacion-de-delitos-contra-el-honor/>

66 <https://twitter.com/cnahonduras/status/1231992207441301505>

67 <https://criterio.hn/ilegalidad-sigue-vigente-con-nuevas-reformas-al-codigo-penal/>

68 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/con-el-nuevo-codigo-penal-en-vez-de-avanzar-se-retrocede-en-materia-de-libertad-de-expresion/>

69 <https://criterio.hn/nuevo-codigo-penal-limita-investigacion-de-corrupcion-en-honduras/>

70 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/honduras-a-tiempo-de-despenalizar-delitos-contra-el-honor-relator-lanca.html>

Violence against Women

This month, the JOH regime once again announced a special commission to investigate femicides - there are already bodies responsible for that but they are underfunded and lack a strong mandate.⁷² Accordingly, the Center for Women's Studies of Honduras, together with 28 organizations that make up the Platform November 25 demanded that the JOH regime invest more resources from the General Budget to counteract violence against women.⁷³

Cristina Alvarado of the Movimiento de Mujeres por la Paz Visitación Padilla denounced that more than 50 women have been murdered so far this year in Honduras and demanded that a national emergency be declared.⁷⁴

Protection Mechanism

Almost six years after a resolution by the IACHR, in which it requested the State of Honduras to adopt protection measures to benefit more than one hundred members of peasant organizations in Bajo Aguán, the demands are still not met.⁷⁵

Political Prisoners

In the evidentiary hearing against the political prisoner Rommel Baldemar Herrera Portillo this month, the US Embassy in Honduras intended to charge him \$1.7 million for alleged damage to the structure of the embassy. The defense of the accused has opposed the charge because it is disproportionate and not calculated according to the law.^{76 77} The hearing will continue in April.⁷⁸ The trial against the political prisoner Raúl Álvarez, currently free after 19 months in prison, was set to December 3. Already in May, he will face other charges together with the second political prisoner Edwin Espinal.⁷⁹

This month, the National Committee for the Liberation of the Political Prisoners commemorated its two years of existence and on this occasion it demanded that all the criminalizing charges be dropped against the people who protested against the electoral fraud in late 2017, beginning 2018.⁸⁰

71 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2713-periodistas-el-interior-del-pais-expresaron-ante-relator-edison-lanza-sus-preocupaciones-sobre-nuevo-codigo-penal>

72 <https://tiempo.hn/comision-investigar-femicidios-luis-suazo/>

73 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2704-mujeres-le-exigen-al-estado-rendicion-de-cuentas-del-presupuesto-asignado-para-investigar-las-muertes-violentas-y-femicidios>

74 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/femicidios-se-recrudecen-en-honduras.html>

75 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2690-casi-seis-anos-de-sobresaltos-amenazas-y-persecucion-por-falta-de-proteccion-idonea-del-estado-de-honduras>

76 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/en-abril-sera-el-juicio-oral-y-publico-contr-el-profesor-rommel/>

77 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/mp-estigmatiza-protesta-social-en-caso-de-rommel-herrera/>

78 <https://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/agendan-para-abril-el-juicio-para-joven-acusado-de-quemar-puerta-de-embajada-de-eeuu.html>

79 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/en-diciembre-se-realizara-juicio-oral-y-publico-contr-raul-alvarez-en-caso-burger-king/>

80 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/en-el-segundo-aniversario-del-comite-pro-liberacion-de-los-presos-politicos-de-honduras-exigimos-nulidad-de-los-casos/>

Extractive Industries

In 2013, the British company BG Group International signed an exploration and exploitation agreement for oil with the Honduran government. BG Group was later bought by Shell which then sold the license to Azipetrol Honduras and CarbiX, the later again from the UK. The drilling of the new well is expected to take place in 2021, in the Mosquitia region on the Atlantic coast where the government granted a 4-year concession, extendable by two years, as well as a concession of 20 years for exploitation.⁸¹

While the extractive industry continues to try to force its way in Honduras, public resistance grows. Honduras' social movements organized a first Encounter of the Peoples in Defense of Water and the Environment where they formed a national movement in defense of the natural resources.⁸² Over 20 communities from Honduras and even El Salvador met in Tegucigalpa to denounce the widespread destruction by extractive industries.⁸³ The municipality of Tela declared itself a Green Municipality. "The declaration includes a ban on the sale of turtle eggs, protection of the forest especially in water-producing areas, as well as strategies to end the planting of African palm monocultures in protected areas, such as the Jeannette Kawas White National Park. It also includes a ban on single-use plastics (straws and bottles)."⁸⁴ At the same time in Comayagua, the community Mototal said no in a public town hall meeting to the exploitation of their rivers.⁸⁵ In Marcala, La Paz, its residents approved that there will be no more logging, mining or hydroelectric projects in their territory.⁸⁶ Over 70 communities in Honduras have so far declared themselves free of extractive projects.⁸⁷

Hydroelectricity

After a prolonged struggle, the community of Pajuiles near Tela, Atlántida is still waiting for the Supreme Court of Justice to issue a resolution to stop the construction of the Central El Progreso project by HIDROCEP.⁸⁸ El Pulso reported that communities in the municipality of Patuca, Olancho living near the Patuca III hydroelectric dam project have been affected by flooding and have been cut off from their environment.⁸⁹

"In the face of global threats to water, as a country we have an obligation to promote minimum agreements on water, which will help to address current deficiencies and prevent future conflicts. First agreement. To establish water as a strategic asset for the country. This implies revising the current General Water Law, establishing new legal regulations that protect water as a strategic asset for the population and for the State. It implies that our rivers, aquifers, and lakes are a priority in

81 <https://criterio.hn/perforaran-pozo-en-la-mosquitia-hondurena-en-busca-de-petroleo/>

82 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn/instante/articular-lucha-por-el-agua-consigna-de-encuentro-nacional-de-los-pueblos/>

83 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2710-encuentro-nacional-de-comunidades-en-defensa-del-agua-y-el-medio-junto-fuerzas-para-luchar>

84 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn/noticias-nacionales/declaran-a-tela-municipio-verde/>

85 <https://criterio.hn/comayagua-dice-no-a-la-explotacion-de-sus-rios/>

86 <https://criterio.hn/marcala-la-paz-en-cabildo-abierto-dice-no-a-proyectos-extractivistas/>

87 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn/n/mas-de-70-municipios-se-han-declarado-libre-de-extractivismo/>

88 <https://criterio.hn/corte-suprema-aun-no-suspende-proyecto-hidroelectrico-de-hidrocep-en-pajuiles-tela/>

89 <http://elpulso.hn/comunidades-del-municipio-de-patuca-se-encuentran-incomunicadas/>

terms of public policy. Second agreement. Linked to the first agreement, to define water as a public good and a human right. This implies that under no circumstances should community and municipal water systems be privatized, it implies rescuing SANAA, investing in it and turning it into a strategic institution of the State. Third agreement. Revise the current development model centered on extractivism, because it has become the main threat to the water production cycle and the entire ecosystem. To continue with this model is to sign the death certificate of the rivers that are still alive. Fourth agreement. To promote educational processes in public schools as well as private institutions on the care and production of water. This implies raising awareness about water use, creating programs for protecting national parks, programs for delimiting and reforesting micro-basins, and programs for educating and protecting national aquifers."⁹⁰

Mining

February began with news in the Guapinol case.⁹¹ The Municipal Committee for the Defense of the Commons and Public Assets of Tocoa, Colón held a press conference denouncing that the mining concession for the extraction and processing of iron oxide in favor of the companies Inversiones Los Pinares and Pelletizadora Ecotek belonging to Lenir Perez, was granted illegally. They revealed new irregularities found in the documentation that the company has presented to the environmental authorities in order to obtain the corresponding environmental license and operating permits.⁹² On February 25, Radio Progreso reported that 64-year old Jeremías Martínez would be the first of the criminalized environmental defenders from Guapinol to go to court. He had already been in pre-trial detention for 14 months.⁹³ Shortly afterwards, CEJIL argued before the Honduran Court of Appeals that the deprivation of liberty of the seven criminalized defenders from Guapinol should be revoked, as it constitutes an arbitrary measure contrary to international human rights standards and due process guarantees.⁹⁴

There was also international support. US congresswoman Jan Schakowsky spoke out about the Guapinol case: "It is clear the Guapinol water Defenders in #Honduras must be immediately released. Those who speak out to defend community water sources should not be jailed! I urge the appeals court to act swiftly and ensure due process in this case."⁹⁵ Earth Rights International offered a short overview of the case ending with the same call for justice. "Today, we join others in calling for justice and the immediate release of the criminalized Guapinol defenders. Earth rights defenders must be able to conduct their essential activities in defense of the earth, its resources, and their communities without fear of criminalization and arbitrary detention."⁹⁶

90 <https://www.radioprogreso.net/np/acuerdos-minimos-sobre-el-agua/>

91 <https://www.radioprogreso.net/noticias-nacionales/familiares-y-ambientalistas-exigen-libertad-de-defensores-del-rio-guapinol/>

92 <https://www.radioprogreso.net/noticias-nacionales/en-ambiental-de-tocoa-denuncia-nuevos-enganos-e-ilegalidades-de-inversiones-los-pinares/>

93 <https://www.radioprogreso.net/instante/ambientalista-de-tocoa-colon-a-juicio-oral-y-publico-por-oponerse-a-minera/>

94 <https://www.cejil.org/es/honduras-cejil-solicita-revocacion-prision-preventiva-caso-defensores-guapinol>

95 <https://twitter.com/janschakowsky/status/1233437669847420928?s=21>

96 <https://earthrights.org/blog/criminalized-guapinol-earth-rights-defenders-should-be-immediately-released/>

Corruption and Its Enemies

Last December, the IACHR published a report on corruption and human rights.⁹⁷ DPLF published a helpful summary of its findings this month.⁹⁸

On the launch of the Observatory of Criminal Anti-Corruption Policy, the CNA and FOSDEH presented the result of a new study.⁹⁹ ¹⁰⁰ Honduras is losing 65 billion Lempiras every year to corruption, that is 12.5% of its GDP.¹⁰¹ Vice-dean at UNAH and economist Julio Raudales welcomed study: "It is clear that the FOSDEH and CNA document allows us to conclude with greater rigor, that corruption has a strong impact on the already turbulent life of the people and perhaps it is worth asking and reflecting rigorously, what is the effect that acts of corruption and above all their impunity have on the economy: How does it affect public finances, the distribution of wealth and free competition between companies? Well, how much poorer is Honduras due to these terrible vices of public behavior? Among the most common corrupt practices is the use of public office for personal gain. (...) Another clear example is the construction of large public works that are financed in an unjustified manner that entails enormous costs for the treasury and that do not generate any social benefit or economic return."¹⁰²

CONADEH's Roberto Herrera called corruption "the biggest threat" for democracy in Honduras. And, interestingly, he considers to invite the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to Honduras.¹⁰³ But Congress does not see this "threat" and made questionable reforms to the budget this month. If there are surplus items in one sector, the Ministry of Finance will be empowered to subtract them and allocate them where it sees fit.¹⁰⁴ "Opposition deputies described the reforms as a new abuse by the ruling party, and the creation of a legal way to finance the ruling party's candidacies with public funds for the next electoral process."¹⁰⁵ The MP announced the filing of an injunction against the former rector of the National University of Agriculture (UNA) and 18 other people, implicated in a millionaire diversion of resources that were used for an irregular salary increase. The former rector, Marlon Escoto, was the Secretary of Education under Lobo and still holds a position in the JOH regime.¹⁰⁶ He was allowed to await trial for corruption outside prison.¹⁰⁷

The construction of the Palmerola airport and its tender process had raised concerns on various occasions (see previous monitors), this month the president of the private business lobby COHEP demanded a revision of its contracts.¹⁰⁸ Even La Prensa critically wrote: "The Palmerola International Airport will be a profitable business for Inversiones Emco S.A de C.V. and for the

97 <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/informes/pdfs/CorrupcionDDHHES.pdf>

98 http://www.dplf.org/sites/default/files/info_corrupcion_digital_vf.pdf

99 <http://www.fosdeh.com/2020/02/estimacion-del-impacto-macroeconomico-de-la-corrupcion-en-honduras/>

100 <http://www.fosdeh.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Preguntas-y-Respuestas-al-Estudio.pdf>

101 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn/noticias-nacionales/65-mil-millones-de-lempiras-pierde-honduras-cada-ano-por-corrupcion/>

102 <https://www.latribuna.hn/2020/02/08/un-estudio-con-proposito-serio/>

103 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/corrupcion-la-amenaza-mas-grave-para-democracia-y-desarrollo-de-honduras.html>

104 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn/uncategorized/congreso-nacional-elimina-presupuesto-para-educacion-y-proyectos-sociales/>

105 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn/noticias-nacionales/presupuesto-general-podria-utilizarse-para-financiar-campanas-electorales/>

106 <https://criterio.hn/por-millonario-desvio-de-fondos-en-universidad-de-agricultura-presentan-requerimiento-fiscal-contra-marlon-escoto/>

107 <https://confidencial.hn.com/escoto-recibe-medidas-sustitutivas-por-presunta-corrupcion-en-universidad-de-agricultura/>

108 <https://www.laprensa.hn/premium/1355415-410/contrato-de-palmerola-debe-ser-sometido-a-una-revisi%C3%B3n-detallada-juan-carlos>

operator of the Munich-Franz Joseph Strauss International Airport, but it will represent a terrible investment for the State of Honduras, which for nearly 30 years will not receive a single penny from the administration and operation of the airport, nor from the payment of taxes."¹⁰⁹ But there are not only problems with airports. Rodulio Perdomo, an economist at Fosdeh, said that the most expensive roads in Central America are in Honduras. According to him, in Costa Rica one kilometer costs 700,000 dollars, while in Europe they are worth approximately 1.2 million dollars and in Honduras they reach 2.3 million dollars.¹¹⁰

New corruption cases were also made at the level of central and local government as well as in the energy sector. The CNA presented a corruption case at the TSC against a high official at the Development Secretariat (Sedis) for illegal enrichment.¹¹¹ They also informed about a corruption network involving 25 current and former mayors accused of having embezzled 33.5 million Lempiras.¹¹² "In 2007, the Law for the Promotion of Electricity Generation from Renewable Resources was approved, authorizing the direct purchase of energy without the need for bids and the promotion of incentives for power-generating companies. Since then, more than 200 contracts have been signed with private companies, of which only 90 have come into operation and are generating energy. The installed capacity of renewable generators represents 62% of the total contracted in the country. According to estimates by the Workers' Union of the National Electrical Energy Company (STENEE), between renewables and thermal, Honduras produces an average of 1,600 megawatts of the 1,670 megawatts required in 2020. After 13 years, a large percentage of the 70 billion Lempiras of debt held by ENEE is due to contracts that guaranteed a great business for the entrepreneurs, but meant tariff increases and no improvement for the approximately 1.6 million inhabitants that do not have electricity in the country."¹¹³ Last but not least, ConfidencialHN reported that a magistrate in the judiciary pulled strings so that a friend of his avoided going to jail for tax fraud and alleged money laundering for which he has been under investigation since 2009.¹¹⁴

115

The Onslaught against the Anti-Corruption Bodies

CESPAD started the month trying to make sense of the end of the MACCIH. "The question then arises: what is behind Juan Orlando Hernández's decision not to extend the MACCIH agreement? The answer to the previous question cannot be found from political rationality. (...) The rationality that has dominated in the case of the non-renewal of the MACCIH agreement is the instrumental and protective rationality by the networks of corruption and impunity in the face of possible judicial actions, even at any political cost. There are those who still wonder why the MACCIH agreement was not renewed if its actions did not reach the highest levels of political and economic power. The

109 <https://www.laprensa.hn/premium/1355416-410/concesi%C3%B3n-de-palmerola-no-pagar%C3%A1-canon-en-28-a%C3%B1os>

110 <https://confidencialhn.com/senalan-que-honduras-tiene-las-carreteras-mas-costosas-de-centroamerica-odebrecht-fue-beneficiada/>

111 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/cna-denuncia-a-alto-funcionario-de-sedis-por-presunto-enriquecimiento-ilicito.html>

112 <https://criterio.hn/red-de-alcaldes-corruptos-desvio-mas-de-1-33-5-millones-de-las-aportaciones-al-ihss/>

113 <https://contracorriente.red/2020/02/20/la-gran-estafa-renovable-de-la-enee/>

114 <https://confidencialhn.com/magistrado-trafico-influencias-para-protoger-a-perseguido-por-defraudacion-fiscal-y-lavado/>

115 <https://confidencialhn.com/protegido-de-magistrado-pineda-valle-venia-defraudando-al-fisco-desde-hace-14-anos/>

answer is that the non-renewal of the MACCIH agreement was a reaction not so much to what the MACCIH had done, but to what it could do in a second period. (...) Now, without the MACCIH, the context for the fight against corruption is extremely adverse. (...) A new unit has been set up at the MP, the Special Prosecutor's Unit against Networks of Corruption (UFERCO), as well as UFECIC, led by Prosecutor Luis Javier Santos. However, the same Prosecutor Santos, has denounced that UFERCO has less budget than UFECIC; prosecutors have less protection and salaries are lower (which generates discouragement) and do not have the support of at least 25 technical specialists that UFECIC had through MACCIH. On 27 January 2020, Juan Orlando Hernández announced a new System of Transparency and Fight against Corruption and Impunity, which will be comprised primarily of the Supreme Court, the Executive Branch, the Superior Court of Accounts, the National Congress and the Attorney General's Office, among others. This initiative, which comes from the government and, above all, from officials and institutions that have been denounced for being involved in high-profile corruption cases and for being the ones who promoted the campaign against the MACCIH until it was eliminated, lacks credibility and does not generate any type of expectation in the fight against corruption."¹¹⁶

The CNA criticized that UFERCO does not have the right tools to fight corruption.¹¹⁷ UFERCO coordinator Luis Santos, meanwhile, repeated this month his call for international support for the new anti-corruption body.¹¹⁸ He also spoke with Radio Progreso. "I have been very clear that the moment I feel that there is not enough support to continue this fight, I will make my position available to the Attorney General". He also admits that UFERCO "was born weakened, no longer has the specialists assigned by the Maccih to accompany the investigations and does not have international backing either".¹¹⁹ Radio Progreso later wrote: "The presence of the Maccih in Honduras was accepted in the midst of serious doubts by Honduran society, but it has received with greater frustration the news of the recently created Specialized Fiscal Unit Against Networks of Corruption, Uferco. An instance, almost as if taken out of the sleeve by the authorities at the MP and JOH's government, used to coin this false sensation that the will to fight corruption is maintained, and with greater strength, in spite of ending, in one fell swoop, the Maccih and the Special Prosecutor's Unit Against the Impunity of Corruption, UFECIC. Prosecutor Luís Javier Santos, former director of Ufecic and current director of the newly created Uferco, is right to point out that they are using it to send false messages of the fight against corruption. They are taking advantage of the image of an honest, hard-working prosecutor committed to the ideals of the MP to defend Honduran society. Santos knows this, and Honduran citizens are waiting to see what action he will take in this regard beyond making a public denunciation. Honduran society knows, very clearly, that institutions such as the MP are politically controlled by sectors of power that tie up the possibility of it fulfilling its function. However, as attorney Luis Javier Santos has publicly voiced, they, now as Uferco, assume their commitment to investigate and present cases of corruption and hope that there is the political will to take firm steps to follow-up all the fiscal requirements that

116 <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/02/04/cronologia-y-sin-la-maccih-y-la-ufecic-en-honduras-cual-es-la-ruta/>

117 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/ufeco-no-tiene-herramientas-para-investigar-corrupcion-hay-retroceso-en-esta-lucha-dice-cna.html>

118 <https://confidencialhn.com/jefe-de-ufeco-enfatiza-necesidad-de-apoyo-internacional-para-combatir-corrupcion/>

119 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn/noticias-nacionales/si-no-hay-apoyo-me-ire-del-ministerio-publico-sentencia-fiscal-luis-javier-santos/>

will be presented. Attorney Santos also committed, publicly and most recently in an interview with Radio Progreso, to denounce and resign, if necessary, if the institutionality of the MP, under the charge of the questioned five-star prosecutor Oscar Fernando Chinchilla, hinders him from presenting the cases or simply stores them in the drawers of his office. They have also committed to continue with the cases they have already presented and which are public knowledge such as "Red de Diputados", "Pacto de Impunidad", "La Caja de Pandora", "Caja Chica de la Dama", "Caja Chica del Hermano", "Arca Abierta", among others. But he also promised to continue the investigations into the cases that had been identified with the Maccih, cases that will surely test the political will to put an end to the corruption that the Attorney General is so fond of."¹²⁰

Santos was even interview by Proceso Digital. He spoke of his 22 years as a public prosecutors, a career full of death threats and obstacles put in his way. He then focused on UFERCO, the open corruption cases brought over by MACCIH and UFECIC and the challenges ahead. Answering the question if he is satisfied with the justice system in Honduras, he answered: "Definitely not. We are really far from satisfied with justice". He also reiterates the need for international support and the problems with the new Penal Code.¹²¹ Santos situation further worsened when on February 24, it was made public that the deputy coordinator of UFERCO would be military man.¹²²

A weak UFERCO is just one of many obstacles to fight corruption in Honduras. There are also attempts to weaken the CNA. Javier Suazo presented the recently resurfaced FONAC (see previous monitor) as a way of the JOH regime to debilitate the and the fight against corruption in general.¹²³ And then there is also the use of violence. The former lawyer Francisco Muñoz Tábora, who recently had filed a complaint against the Banco de Occidente, was attacked and wounded by unknown assailants.¹²⁴

To make forget all of the above, the JOH regime had the MP conduct Operation Jupiter II at the end of the month. It let UFERCO play the leading role. It seized goods in two important corruption cases - the case against the former first lady Rosa Elena Bonilla de Lobo and in the Pandora case.¹²⁵

IHSS

This month, a new trial against Mario Roberto Zelaya Rojas in the IHSS corruption case started.¹²⁶

120 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn/net/np/luis-javier-santos-y-la-dura-lucha-contra-la-corrupcion/>

121 <https://proceso.hn/portadas/10-portada/la-corrupcion-no-tiene-color-hay-que-visibilizarla-fiscal-santos.html>

122 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn/net/instante/nombran-a-fiscal-con-talla-militar-como-subcoordinador-de-uferco/>

123 <https://www.alainet.org/es/articulo/204810>

124 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3727-urgente-atentan-contra-don-francisco-abogado-que-denuncio-al-banco-de-occidente>

125 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/153-febrero2020/5527-mp-solicita-privacion-definitiva-de-bienes-y-hace-nuevos-aseguramientos-en-casos-emblematicos-de-corrupcion-y-secuestra-documentos-por-otros-actos-ilicitos>

126 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/153-febrero2020/5449-proximo-lunes-se-celebrara-nuevo-juicio-por-corrupcion-en-el-ihss>

State Security Forces

The MP announced an evidentiary hearing in the case of the former police commissioner Ambrosio Maradiaga Ordóñez accused of money laundering.¹²⁷ The Fiscal Unit of Support to the Process of the Police Purge (Ufadpol) demanded the seizure of goods of the former police commissioner Lorgio Oquelí Mejía Tinoco and his family. He is accused of money laundering.¹²⁸ Later, ATIC captured Denisse Yamileth Morales, his former wife, while Mejía Tinoco remained on the run.¹²⁹ A judge decided on pre-trial detention for her.¹³⁰

On February 11, there was even more bad press for Honduras' police force.¹³¹ "This morning, Hondurans woke up to the news that police commissioner Leonel Luciano Saucedo Guifarro and his wife, Patricia Sbeltana Estrada Pacheco, had been arrested in Tegucigalpa. A large police and military operation raided their Tegucigalpa-based home this morning and will conduct a "series of seizures of property illicitly obtained, 8 houses, 2 vehicles, 23 bank accounts, all properties of the accused" says the communiqué published by the Honduran Prosecutor's Office. (...) Just ten days ago on January 30, Leonel Saucedo was promoted to police commissioner - one of the highest positions in the Honduran National Police. Despite the April 2016 creation of the U.S.-funded Special Commission for the Cleanup and Transformation of the Honduran National Police (CEDTPN), Saucedo and other police believed to be involved in criminal activities, remain active and are promoted inside the institution. (...) Two public figures that represent Honduran "civil society" are involved in the CEDTPN including representatives of the U.S.-funded Association for a More Justice Society (ASJ). Up until last year, ASJ received over half of their total budget in Honduras from different agencies of the U.S. government."¹³² Hours later, the MP announced that the accused would be held in custody.^{133 134}

The purging commission immediately tried to whitewash its role in it publishing a press release.¹³⁵ Their statement was later fact-checked by El Heraldito and failed the test.¹³⁶ At the same time, the press speaker of ATIC said that he had been investigated for four years. The purging committee itself asked for an investigation in 2016 contradicting their claim that they had known nothing about an investigation.¹³⁷ The Bureau of Police Disciplinary Affairs (DIDADPOL) then also claimed they had known of nothing.¹³⁸ Political analyst Tomás Andino Mencía offers three explanations for why Saucedo was arrested now: 1) pressure by the US embassy; 2) it is a rescue mission for him; by trying him in Honduras, he would not be extradited to the US; or 3) they want to silence him so that

127 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/153-febrero2020/5405-mp-a-la-espera-de-la-audiencia-de-proposicion-de-pruebas-contra-excomisionado-ambrosio-ordonez>

128 <https://confidencialhn.com/fiscalia-pide-confiscar-unos-24-bienes-de-exfuncionario-policia-acusado-por-lavado-de-dinero/>

129 <https://tiempo.hn/exesposa-lavado-activos-lorgio-oqueli-mejia-tinoco/>

130 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/153-febrero2020/5530-fiscales-de-apoyo-al-proceso-de-depuracion-policia-obtienen-la-prision-preventiva-de-exesposa-de-comisionado-de-policia-implicada-en-lavado-de-activos>

131 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/153-febrero2020/5441-mp-captura-y-asegura-33-bienes-a-comisionado-general-de-policia>

132 <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2020/2/11/active-police-commissioner-with-ties-to-us-drug-cases-arrested-for-money-laundering>

133 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/153-febrero2020/5448-detencion-judicial-por-lavado-de-activos-contra-comisionado-general-de-policia>

134 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/153-febrero2020/5473-mp-obtiene-la-prision-preventiva-de-comisionado-general-de-policia-acusado-de-lavar-activos>

135 <https://confidencialhn.com/depuradores-se-lavan-las-manos-tras-arresto-de-saucedo-no-sabian-de-investigaciones-en-su-contra/>

136 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/inspectoreh/1359113-504/omar-rivera-no-se-obstaculiz%C3%B3-ascenso-de-saucedo-porque-no-exist%C3%ADa-reparo>

137 <https://confidencialhn.com/atic-investigaba-patrimonio-de-saucedo-desde-hace-cuatro-anos-y-desmiente-a-junta-depuradora/>

138 <https://tiempo.hn/didadpol-no-conocio-denuncia-alguna-contra-leonel-saucedo/>

he cannot be used against the JOH regime.¹³⁹ Another political analyst, Jorge Yllescas, said that this is another proof of the failure of the police purge.¹⁴⁰

While his arrest made international headlines¹⁴¹, in Honduras everyone tried to pretend that they were not to blame for his recent promotion¹⁴². JOH ally and member of the purging committee Alberto Solórzano even tried to defend Sauced.¹⁴³ The next days did not bring more clarity. The MP and the TSC continued to claim that there were no open investigations into the detained police commissioner Leonel Saucedo even though evidence exists that he has been investigated for years for money laundering.¹⁴⁴ At the end of the month, CESPAD published a short analysis of the trial against police commissioner Leonel Luciano Saucedo Guifarro and the purge of the National Police Force. The analysis also takes a close look at the role of the US.¹⁴⁵

The head of the Fiscal Unit of Support to the Process of Police Clearance (Ufadpol), Luis Echeverría, announced that there were a dozen fiscal requirements against police officers for money laundering.¹⁴⁶ El Herald reported that there were 20 arrest warrants at Ufadpol for high-ranking current and former police officials.¹⁴⁷ The director of Didadpol, Alan Edgardo Argeñal, confirmed that since January 2, 2020 they have in their possession 150 files of police for the alleged participation in illegal actions.¹⁴⁸ In 2019, Didadpol presented 377 cases of which only 45 were successful.¹⁴⁹

There were additional negative headlines involving the Honduran state security forces. A police agent helped a gang member escape from a police station in Zambrano, Francisco Morazán.¹⁵⁰ Family members of Franklin Díaz López, a MS-13 member, denounce that he was forcefully disappeared after a raid by the National Anti-Mara and Pandilla Force (FNAMP).¹⁵¹ Proceso Digital reports on corruption inside the National Police Force.¹⁵²

Post-Electoral Human Rights Violations

On December 3, the young Manuel de Jesús Bautista Salvador was forcefully disappeared. COFADEH, after receiving the complaint from the family of the young man and taking the necessary actions, and not obtaining any response, presented the complaint to the United Nations Committee on Enforced Disappearances. After analyzing the case, the Committee made a series of

139 <https://criterio.hn/el-arresto-de-leonel-sauceda-y-sus-posibles-motivos/>

140 <https://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/captura-de-comisionado-sauceda-evidencia-el-fracaso-de-depuracion-policia-dice-analista.html>

141 <https://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2020/02/11/world/americas/ap-lt-honduras-corruption.html>

142 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn/noticias-nacionales/congreso-nacional-se-lava-las-manos-sobre-ascenso-de-leonel-sauceda/>

143 <https://confidencialhn.com/solorzano-recurre-a-la-hipocresia-al-lamentar-la-detencion-de-sauceda-y-su-esposa/>

144 <https://confidencialhn.com/a-pesar-de-investigaciones-contrasauceda-fiscalia-y-tsc-aseguraron-que-no-tenia-cuentas-pendientes-con-la-ley/>

145 <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/02/28/analisis-el-juicio-al-comisionado-general-sauceda-y-el-proceso-de-la-depuracion-de-la-policia-nacional>

146 <https://confidencialhn.com/anuncian-docena-de-requerimientos-fiscales-para-varios-policas-por-blanqueo-de-capitales/>

147 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1356361-466/acusar%C3%A1n-por-lavado-a-veinte-exoficiales-de-la-polic%C3%ADa-nacional>

148 <https://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/en-poder-de-didadpol-150-expedientes-de-policas-involucrados-en-actos-ilicitos.html>

149 <https://www.proceso.hn/mas-noticias/32-m%C3%A1s-noticias/didadpol-judicializo-377-policas-en-2019.html>

150 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/seguridad-confirma-complicidad-policia-en-fuga-de-un-pandillero-de-posta-policia.html>

151 <https://tiempo.hn/familiares-denuncian-desaparicion-de-un-ms-13-tras-allanamiento-de-la-fnamp/>

152 <https://www.proceso.hn/nacionales/9-nacionales/impunidad-empieza-a-ceder-en-la-policia-nacional.html>

recommendations to the State, but it did not respond.¹⁵³ The Committee gave the state of Honduras until February 22, 2020, to send information on the recommendations.¹⁵⁴ On February 3, former president Mel Zelaya filed a complaint for obstruction of the investigation of cases of crimes against humanity with the Special Prosecutor for Human Rights demanding the prosecution of the military and police who killed more than 40 people during the period of the protests in the 2017 elections.¹⁵⁵ Last month, OACNUDH had published an important report on this highlighting the ongoing impunity in these cases (see last month's monitor). 26 national, regional and international human rights organization published a press release in support of OACNUDH and the report.¹⁵⁶

On February 5, the MP informed that the primary hearing against the police agent Olvin Fernando Gonzáles Velásquez was evacuated the day before. He is held responsible for the murder of the 17-year old Virgilio Jared Ávila Gonzáles in December 2017. He had been arrested already in November 2018, but the trial has still not started yet.¹⁵⁷ Defensores en Línea spoke with Sandy Mancía, whose husband David Octavio Quiroz was murdered by the Military Police on December 15, 2017 as part of the post-electoral repression. "So far what I've received are threats, abuse, persecution and arrests, because of all those situations I faced after my husband's death. I had to flee my country to safeguard the life of my family, and even so, where we are now, it hasn't been easy to face our life together with my children, it's not easy for them or for me".¹⁵⁸ In one of the cases linked to the post-electoral human rights violations, the murder of David Octavio Quiroz Urrutia on December 15 by the Military Police, there was at least an arrest and an accusation. The defense team of the accused, Denis Omar Cáceres, are looking for a minimal sentence and a abbreviated trial.¹⁵⁹

Radio Progreso had an important comment on the impunity for the post-electoral repression and the role of Attorney General Óscar Chinchilla. "In recent weeks, the regime and its spokespersons have launched a campaign to highlight the figure of the "Five Star Prosecutor", Óscar Chinchilla, and sell him as a champion of justice. However, it is impossible to hide the fact that in his two illegitimate periods he has done nothing relevant in the fight against corruption and impunity without the push of the disappeared MACCIH. A glance at the serious human rights violations is enough to prove that the MP is one of the key institutions in the existence of a structural impunity that, according to the IACHR, exceeds 90%, which places Honduras among the 13 countries with very high impunity in the world according to the Global Impunity Index. One example: According to OACNUDH, in the context of the 2017 electoral fraud, the Military Police, the National Police and the Army used lethal force against protesters, injuring at least 60 and killing 22, including two children. Two years later, no case of human rights violation has obtained a conviction and most of the grave violations

153 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/berta-oliva-el-estado-de-honduras-en-temas-de-desaparicion-forzada-esta-haciendo-el-ridiculo/>

154 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/el-estado-hondureno-tiene-hasta-el-22-de-febrero-para-informar-a-la-onu-sobre-la-desaparicion-de-joven-durante-la-crisis-post-electoral/>

155 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2681-mel-zelaya-ante-el-mp-crimeenes-de-lesa-humanidad-en-honduras-se-mantienen-en-impunidad-por-la-obstruccion-del-mismo-estado-hondureno>

156 <https://criterio.hn/organizaciones-de-dd-hh-respaldan-informe-de-la-oacnudh-sobre-violaciones-en-honduras/>

157 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/autor-login/153-febrero2020/5413-mp-pedira-auto-de-apertura-a-juicio-en-contra-de-policia-acusado-de-muerte-de-menor-de-edad-durante-protesta-post-electoral>

158 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/violaciones-a-los-derechos-humanos-y-asesinatos-politicos-durante-crisis-post-electoral-siguen-en-la-impunidad/>

159 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/defensa-de-pmop-acusado-de-homicidio-contra-manifestante-busca-la-pena-minima/>

documented by OACNUDH, such as summary or extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances, remain under investigation; others have not even been investigated. Guess what is one of the reasons for the impunity in these cases? The Public Prosecutor's Office led by the "Five Star Prosecutor", thanks to "the weakness in the investigation and prosecution strategy" it adopted, and internal staff and coordination limitations, according to OACNUDH."¹⁶⁰

The month ended with another worrisome sign that impunity will prevail. A change to the new Penal Code, which comes into force in May, will see to that. Two important articles were eliminated. Article 153 established that senior military officials or their superiors had criminal responsibility for human rights violations, not only the one who executes.¹⁶¹ Radio Progreso denounced this as guaranteed impunity for military officials¹⁶² and COPINH as legalized impunity.¹⁶³ OACNUDH ones more reminded the JOH regime about the importance to investigate human rights violations to avoid impunity and the lack of access to justice. They also reminded it about the chain-of-command, i.e. that officials can be held responsible for the human rights violations of their subordinates.¹⁶⁴ For more on the Penal Code, see above in the freedom of expression sub-section.

Penitentiary System

The CPTRT denounced the ongoing mistreatment of inmates by military personnel.¹⁶⁵ Some time ago, the now defunct MACCIH presented a plan to reform the Honduran prison system. This month, the OAS announced that it would help Honduras develop a plan to reform its prison system - no mention of the already existing plan.¹⁶⁶

Militarization

Criterio reported on the militarization of Honduras by Pepe Lobo and than even more by JOH in the last 10 years. "In one decade, the government spent more than 150 billion Lempiras on defense and security, yet the country remains among the most violent in the world. (...) Currently, the country has 60 police and military forces that have been unable to stop the violence in the country. And recently, President Hernández announced the creation of a new unit."¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, data from UNAH's Violence Observatory reveal that between 2010 and 2019, nearly 4,000 people were killed in the 988 documented massacres, counting only those events with three or more victims.¹⁶⁸ The observatory's director, Migdonia Ayestas, told Proceso Digital that 98% of violent deaths in Honduras remain unpunished.¹⁶⁹ "In 2019, Honduras ranked third among Latin American countries

160 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn/net/hp/la-impunidad-el-fiscal-5-estrellas-y-el-informe-de-la-oacnudh/>

161 <https://criterio.hn/congreso-exime-de-responsabilidad-penal-a-autores-intelectuales-de-crimenes-de-lesa-humanidad/>

162 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn/net/noticias-nacionales/congreso-nacional-otorga-inmunidad-a-altos-mandos-militares/>

163 <https://twitter.com/BerthaZuniga1/status/1230358781839761414>

164 <https://twitter.com/ONUDDHH/status/1230632782583517187>

165 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/contexto/item/2694-el-cprtr-no-parara-denuncias-contr-coroneles-que-permiten-abusos-en-las-carceles>

166 https://www.oas.org/es/centro_noticias/fotonoticia.asp?sCodigo=FNC-98529

167 <https://criterio.hn/analistas-afirman-60-fuerzas-militares-y-policiales-incapaces-de-frenar-ola-de-violencia-en-honduras/>

168 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3725-honduras-casi-mil-masacres-en-ultimo-decenio-dejo-imperio-criminal>

169 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/el-98-de-asesinatos-quedan-en-impunidad-segun-migdonia-ayestas.html>

with the most members of the "Security" Forces who graduated from the School of the Americas that year. Colombia ranks first with 490, Chile second with 201 and Honduras third with 146 members of the security forces trained at the School of the Americas, which was founded in 1946 in Panama and is operated by the United States Army. In Honduras, since the 2009 coup d'état led by SOA graduates, 13 forced disappearances have been documented and more than 160 social activists and land defenders have been killed."¹⁷⁰

And the militarization continues. The human rights organization CPTRT denounced an attempt by Congress to militarize the Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture, Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (CONAPREV). The JOH regime wants one of its three commissioners to have a military background.¹⁷¹ Some months ago, a 4 billion Lempiras "gift" to the Armed Forces in the form of the supervision of the Program for Agriculture Development of Honduras (PDAH) was met with widespread criticism. Now, the JOH regime suddenly announced that it may be substantially less money, 1 billion Lempiras, but still a lot.¹⁷²

International Community

The Swiss government announced to withdraw its cooperation from Latin America this month.¹⁷³ Swiss social movements are trying to avoid this and the final say will be with the parliament.¹⁷⁴

US

"The astonishing violence in Central America is a major root cause of forced migration to the US from the region. US guns play a clear role in fueling the crisis. A few of these weapons originated from US military shipments to militaries and paramilitaries in the region during the Cold War. Most modern traffic to cartels and gangs occurs through the black market, with US residents legally purchasing firearms here and then illegally transporting them south. Harry Penate — at the time the only ATF official responsible for US arms tracing in all of Central America — gave one example of a gun bought at a licensed gun store in Baltimore being recovered from criminals in El Salvador less than a week later. But not all US guns come through the black market. US gun manufacturers regularly export guns to foreign buyers legally through a weak and underenforced regulatory system, often allowing guns to wind up in the hands of organized crime. The Trump administration has recently published regulations that will make the system even weaker. This will not only put profits before lives in Central America, but is likely to worsen the drivers of the very migrant flows Trump viciously opposes."¹⁷⁵

170 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/en-el-2019-honduras-entreno-146-miembros-de-las-fuerzas-de-seguridad-en-la-escuela-de-las-americas/>

171 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/denuncias/item/2686-segun-cptrt-congreso-nacional-estaria-cometiendo-una-nefasta-decision-al-nombrar-militares-en-el-conaprev>

172 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1359745-410/-millones-programa-agr%C3%ADcola-fuerzas-armadas-honduras-agro->

173 <https://confidencialhn.com/suiza-retirara-su-agencia-de-cooperacion-de-honduras-y-tres-paises-de-america-latina/>

174 <https://www.proceso.hn/nacionales/9-nacionales/cooperacion-suiza-se-retirara-de-nicaragua-y-honduras.html>

175 <https://cepr.net/the-trump-administrations-new-rules-on-arms-exports-are-aimed-at-enriching-the-firearms-industry-at-the-expense-of-human-lives-around-the-world-especially-in-mexico-and-central-america/>

Acting Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection Mark Morgan visited Honduras. He met, among others, with Security Minister Julián Pacheco Tinoco¹⁷⁶; the same Pacheco linked to drug trafficking both in the case against Fabio Lobo and against Tony Hernández. For more on his visit, see migration sub-section below. The US, through INL, and the mayoralty of San Pedro Sula collaborate "to strengthen" the police.¹⁷⁷ US Acting Secretary of Homeland Security Chad F. Wolf has become a regular guest in Honduras and he arrived there again this month for the 12th Regional Security Conference. "The ministerial will bring together security officials from the U.S., Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Panama to discuss efforts to jointly address irregular migration, border security, and transnational criminal organizations in the region. As part of an ongoing emphasis on regional coordination, the officials will discuss ways they can continue to work together to target human smuggling and trafficking organizations operating in the region. The group will plan further progress on the agreements signed in 2019 and consider initiatives, with a focus on creating an environment that leads to greater opportunity and prosperity for people closer to home, instead of undertaking a long, dangerous, and expensive journey to the U.S."¹⁷⁸ The US embassy in Honduras published his opening remarks.¹⁷⁹ The Honduran embassy in Washington used the occasion to publish two press releases, one highlighting the final implementation of the so-called third safe country agreements, the other one tries to present the JOH regime as a willing to fight corruption.^{180 181}

The Secretary of National Defense of Honduras, General Fredy Díaz Zelaya, and the head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces, General Tito Livio Moreno, held a meeting with the U.S. Southern Command at the headquarters in Miami.¹⁸² ConfidencialHN reported that a DEA mission was in Honduras for two weeks to investigate the murder of a key witness, Magdaleno Meza Fúnez, in a Honduran maximum-security prison last year.¹⁸³

EU

A delegation from the European Parliament traveled to Honduras. Proceso Digital reported on talks about security, climate change, transparency and electoral reforms but did not mention human rights.¹⁸⁴ On their second day in Honduras, the EU parliamentarians also expressed concern about the closure of the MACCIH and they asked for the implementations of the electoral reforms recommended by the EU. They also called for transparency in the Berta Cáceres case and expressed concern about the situation of the LGBTQ community.¹⁸⁵

176 <https://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/jefe-de-proteccion-fronteriza-de-eeuu-sostiene-reuniones-en-honduras-sobre-temas-de-migracion.html>

177 <https://tiempo.hn/alcaldia-de-sps-y-embajada-de-eeuu-fortaleceran-a-la-policia-nacional-y-comunitaria/>

178 <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2020/02/19/acting-secretary-wolf-traveling-honduras-regional-security-conference>

179 <https://hn.usembassy.gov/acting-dhs-secretary-chad-wolf-opening-remarks-regional-security-conference-tegucigalpa-honduras/>

180 <https://twitter.com/EmbHondurasUSA/status/1230650455174385664>

181 <https://twitter.com/EmbHondurasUSA/status/1230578063479595013>

182 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1359373-466/honduras-socio-confiable-comando-sur-lucha-narcotrafico>

183 <https://confidencialhn.com/la-dea-investiga-en-honduras-el-asesinato-de-magdaleno-meza-antes-de-ser-extraditado-a-ee-uu/>

184 <https://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/el-presidente-de-honduras-y-un-grupo-de-eurodiputados-hablan-sobre-seguridad.html>

185 <https://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/eurodiputados-preocupados-por-la-cancelacion-de-la-mision-de-oea-en-honduras.html>

Drug Trafficking

On February 13, a MS-13 gang leader, Alexander Mendoza a.k.a. “El Porky.” Mendoza, was freed from custody when he was brought to a courthouse in El Progreso for unknown reason from his prison cell at the Támara prison. He was freed through a shoot-out in which four state security forces, two of which Military Police, died. Aqui Abajo raised some important questions: "So why was Mendoza imprisoned in the Tamara prison after he was taken last year BY HELICOPTER – because of his highly dangerous status - to La Tolva jail? Why was Mendoza brought to the courthouse if he has already been sentenced?"¹⁸⁶ The JOH regime put out a two million Lempiras reward for information leading to his re-capture.¹⁸⁷ The violent rescue mission made international headlines¹⁸⁸ and a video later showed how the assailants were dressed in military uniforms.¹⁸⁹ In record speed, the JOH regime presented two young men allegedly responsible for the rescue mission.¹⁹⁰ La Prensa reports that the rescue mission of gang leader "El Porky" Mendoza cost some 20 million Lempiras. The two accused were sent to the so-called maximum-security prison El Pozo.¹⁹¹ The former police commissioner María Luisa Borjas claimed that a special operations team rescued him also highlighted by their ATIC gear and uniform.¹⁹² COFADEH commented on the statement by Borjas: "If we read that quote carefully between the lines, we can easily deduce that the MS leader was uncomfortable inside the prison, as was Magdaleno Meza [a drug trafficker and witness to the Tony Hernández case murdered inside prison], because of his direct relationship with the structure of organized crime that controls the State of Honduras from 2009 to date."¹⁹³

InSight Crime picked up the story highlighting all the questioned it raised. "First, by all accounts, Mendoza was a prominent MS13 gang leader in Honduras’ second-largest city, and authorities have treated him as such in the past. After already being sent to La Tolva maximum-security prison and receiving a 20-year sentence for illicit association, authorities have yet to clarify why Mendoza was brought to El Progreso less than a year after his high-profile transfer. What’s more, with the presence of such a high-ranking member of the MS13 — one of the government’s primary anti-gang targets — security surrounding the courthouse was woefully inadequate. Such targets have in the past been accompanied by extra security to mitigate the threat of any possible attack. The style of the attack also did not appear to resemble the MS13’s work. While the gang has previously sold high-powered weapons, its members rarely use them nor have they shown an ability to carry out a coordinated attack with this level of sophistication. Extortion is the bedrock of the MS13’s operations, but the group is also involved in petty drug dealing and other small-time crimes in the territories they control. More importantly, the gang has a decentralized power structure with no clear hierarchy, which raises questions about the group’s ability to carry out such an attack. (...) This

186 <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2020/2/13/youre-not-safe-in-a-courtroom-in-honduras-todays-shoot-out-in-el-progreso>

187 <https://twitter.com/PMOP016/status/1228103880879353856>

188 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-51501103?>

189 <https://twitter.com/hondurassol/status/1228325055538401280>

190 <https://www.mp.hn/index.php/author-login/153-febrero2020/5474-requerimiento-fiscal-contra-primeros-implicados-en-la-liberacion-de-alexander-mendoza-el-porky>

191 <https://www.laprensa.hn/sucesos/1357180-410/unos-120-millones-pag%C3%B3-el-porkys-por-ejecutar-su-fuga>

192 <https://tiempo.hn/maria-borjas-unidad-especial-ejecuto-operacion-liberar-el-porkys/>

193 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/el-rescate-la-liberacion-y-el-espectaculo/>

extraordinary situation has not changed, raising questions about what role, if any, the armed forces may have played in the decision that brought Mendoza out of a maximum-security prison and to the low-security courthouse he was eventually freed from."¹⁹⁴

The former president of the Supreme Court, Jorge Rivera Avilés, demanded an extradition law to regulate the procedures. But this may lead to more suspected drug traffickers remaining in Honduras not being able to bring valuable information to US courts.¹⁹⁵

Tony Hernández

See the following sub-chapter on JOH.

Varia

JOH

The month started with a bang for JOH. The US asked for the extradition of Mauricio Hernández Pineda, former member of the police force and cousin of JOH.^{196 197} Hernández Pineda was charged with "conspiring to import cocaine into the United States and related weapons offenses involving the use and possession of machineguns and destructive devices" in September 2019.¹⁹⁸ The Judicial Power first only said that they received an extradition request related to drug trafficking¹⁹⁹, before they confirmed it the next day.²⁰⁰ As a consequence, the Pro Honduras Network started to speak of the Hernández Cartel with four members having been mentioned in US courts: brother Tony Hernández, the two cousins Mauricio Hernández Pineda and Hernán Hernández, and JOH himself.²⁰¹ Mauricio Hernandez Pineda was arrested two weeks later in the US. Some media outlets wrote that he handed himself over to US authorities.^{202 203} In his testimony before the New York court last year, confessed drug trafficker Alexander Ardón said that he spoke with Hernández Pineda on the phone and that the latter said that he did that following instructions of JOH.^{204 205} According to the Pro Honduras Network, the US wants the extradition of another key witness in the Tony Hernández case, accused drug trafficker, former JOH ally Arnaldo Urbina Soto.^{206 207}

194 <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/ms13-leader-honduras-questions-answers/>

195 <https://confidencialhn.com/indican-que-extradiciones-no-pueden-seguir-manejandose-por-un-simple-auto-acordado-entre-honduras-y-ee-uu/>

196 <https://criterio.hn/piden-en-extradicion-a-policia-primero-de-joh/>

197 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn/noticias-nacionales/primero-de-joh-seria-extraditado-a-eeuu/>

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

199 <https://tiempo.hn/nueva-solicitud-extradicion/>

200 <https://tiempo.hn/mauricio-herandez-exoficial-pedido-en-extradicion-por-eeuu-fue-depurado-en-2018/>

201 https://www.facebook.com/545738022280890/posts/1280607452127273/?d=n&_fb_noscript=1

202 <https://www.univision.com/noticias/america-latina/en-custodia-el-testigo-clave-en-el-caso-por-narcotrafico-contra-el-hermano-del-presidente-hondureno>

203 <https://tiempo.hn/explicia-mauricio-herandez-se-entrega-a-la-justicia-de-eeuu/>

204 <https://twitter.com/jeffgerst/status/1228164071398109189>

205 <https://www.univision.com/univision-news/latin-america/key-witness-arrested-in-drug-case-against-brother-of-the-honduran-president>

206 https://www.facebook.com/PROHNN/videos/1656217794517320/?vh=e&d=n&_fb_noscript=1

207 <https://www.facebook.com/545738022280890/posts/1289339421254076/?d=n>

On February 14, Tony Hernández addressed the judge of his case, Kevin Castel, telling him that he did not have any money left to cover his legal fees and that he would need a public defendant.²⁰⁸ As a consequence, the sentencing was rescheduled again (Tony was already found guilty of all four crimes he was accused for, but the sentencing has not taken place yet). The sentencing would have taken place on February 24.²⁰⁹ JOH's brother not only claimed to be lacking money for his lawyer, according to him, his defense team excluded evidence that was crucial for the jury to make a different ruling. He also claimed that he was misrepresented and therefore all the evidence in his favor should be considered to prove his innocence.²¹⁰ On February 19, a provisional legal counsel was appointed.²¹¹ The US judge also made public the new date for the sentencing, April 16, 2020.²¹²

Pinu congresswoman Doris Gutiérrez denounced the cooked homicide statistics by the JOH: "to determine the percentage of the homicide rate, a different formula is used than in previous years, which "is an invention of Arturo Corrales (former minister of security)", and serves as a "masquerade" to lower the high levels of this epidemic".²¹³ She further condemned that the National Congress with the approval of the reform to the General Budget Law leaves JOH to manage funds without any discretion.²¹⁴ The Liberal Party celebrated its 129th anniversary by protesting in Tegucigalpa demanding the end of the JOH regime.²¹⁵

On February 20, the former head of the National Police, Ricardo Ramírez del Cid, reiterated that JOH has death squads at his disposal.²¹⁶ He also leaked documents later summarized by Radio Progreso. "In recent days, through reports and statements by former senior officers of the National Police, citizens have been able to learn about audios that reveal the criminal and corrupt way in which Nationalist governments operate, in order to maintain territorial control to continue the business with drugs and organized crime. "These are documents and audios that entities such as the MP have been taking away because they link to businessmen, police and politicians," said journalist Milton Benítez to Radio Progreso, assuring that these are difficult times for the families of the Perro Amarillo team, but as journalists they feel obliged to reveal all the information because the country deserves a better future. (...) In addition, he has summoned renowned social leaders of the country to form a "Commission of Notables", to whom he proposes to follow up on the information that could reveal the direct links that the nationalist governments, Porfirio Lobo and JOH, have maintained for years with the criminal groups that control drug trafficking and hit men."²¹⁷ The director of the "El Perro Amarillo" program, Milton Benítez, later requested protection after receiving this information from Ramírez del Cid.²¹⁸ And one week later, another former police

208 <https://criterio.hn/tony-herandez-se-declara-en-quebra-y-pide-defensa-publica/>

209 <https://criterio.hn/sentencia-de-tony-herandez-ya-no-sera-el-24-de-febrero/>

210 <https://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/juez-autoriza-asignacion-de-un-nuevo-abogado-para-juan-antonio-herandez-en-eeuu.html>

211 <https://twitter.com/jeffgernst/status/1230208538552737792>

212 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3747-no-mas-atraso-a-sentencia-de-tony-juez-castel-fija-el-16-de-abril>

213 <https://tiempo.hn/metodo-ac-no-incluyen-muertos-desconocidos-estadisticas-de-homicidios/>

214 <http://elpulso.hn/ejecutivo-podra-manejar-fondos-a-su-antojo-con-reforma-ley-presupuesto/>

215 <http://www.web.ellibertador.hn/index.php/noticias/nacionales/3735-liberales-celebran-129-aniversario-con-protesta-en-la-capital>

216 <https://confidencial.hn.com/exjefe-policial-sostiene-que-escuadrones-de-la-muerte-son-operados-desde-casa-presidencial/>

217 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn.net/noticias-nacionales/el-perro-amarillo-revelaremos-informacion-que-vincula-al-gobierno-con-bandas-criminales/>

218 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/portada-alertas/1111-periodista-demanda-proteccion-tras-revelar-informacion-clave>

commissioner, Henry Osorto Canales, made similar claims in an interview with Radio Progreso. "We are in a failed state, with links to drug trafficking, corruption and organized crime. Unfortunately, those who run these institutions are part of an organization that responds to drug trafficking."²¹⁹

"Each year, the Institute for Economics and Peace releases the Global Peace Index, which is an indicator that measures the level of peace in a country or region and ranks countries according to their absence of violence. (...) In 2013, Honduras was ranked 123rd (...) However, over the years Honduras has been improving in the ranking of this index, since in 2014 it occupied position 117, in 2015 position 116, in 2016 position 111, in 2017 position 106 and in 2018 position 118. But in 2019 Honduras fell to 123rd place, dropping five places and returning to the same level of violence it experienced in 2013, which shows the failure of the repressive and militarized approach of security policies to solve the problem of serious levels of crime. While it is possible that violence may decrease in the first moments of military deployment, this index shows that it will rise again, that other forms of criminality are increasing and that reports of human rights violations by the military are increasing dramatically. The militarization of public security does not address the causes of criminality, but only its effects and diverts limited public funds to benefit the military sector in exchange for keeping the Juan Orlando Hernández regime in power."²²⁰

Radio Progreso explained how JOH can still hold on power. "At least in the last decade, Honduras has been led by the most voracious political bureaucracy in history; its public administration has been the occasion for a small group of families to concentrate the country's greatest wealth. The man in the Presidential House is a love to those families, because they need each other. For these small families, the political parties and the State are instruments to approve all the legal scaffolding that facilitates the transfer of public resources to their companies. They often act as owners of the State and from there negotiate their privileges and establish alliances with transnational companies. There is much evidence to support these claims. (...) Today, as we close the second decade of the 21st century, the dictatorship supported by the Honduran business leadership is the main obstacle to getting the country off the cliff."²²¹ Another pillar of his power is his ability to play the international community. Even after he closed the MACCIH, the JOH regime seems able to play the symbolic field of anti-corruption efforts feigning political will. This month, he invited to a forum on transparency and against corruption and impunity.²²² And it also helps to keep criticism away when one blocks it on social media.²²³ Opposition congresswo/men have denounced for the umpteenth time that they are not allowed to participate in the sessions to present their motions and projects.²²⁴

But there may come some help from the courts to improve the situation in Honduras. The Law for the Declassification of Public Documents Related to Security and Defense, better known as the

219 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn/entrevistas-categoria/honduras-ha-sido-gobernada-por-politicos-vinculados-con-el-narcotrafico-comisionado-henry-osorto/>

220 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn/np/el-fracaso-de-la-militarizacion-de-la-politica-de-seguridad/>

221 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn/np/en-quienes-se-sostiene-la-dictadura-hondurena/>

222 <https://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/presidente-herandez-dice-que-actuar-con-transparencia-es-como-una-vacuna-contra-la-corupcion.html>

223 <http://elpulso.hn/los-bloqueados-por-joh-en-redes-sociales/>

224 <http://elpulso.hn/denuncian-que-en-congreso-no-se-brinda-participacion-a-diputados-de-la-oposicion/>

"Secrecy Law" was declared partially unconstitutional by the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice. This was the response to a challenge filed by C-Libre.²²⁵ Pasos de Animal Grande demanded the complete derogation²²⁶ and C-Libre denounced the law as an important pillar of corruption.²²⁷ They also criticized that the court did not analyze the law in its entirety and presented another constitutional challenge.²²⁸ Later this month, a dispute broke out between representatives of the Chamber of Commerce and Industries of Cortés (CCIC) and the Honduran Private Enterprise Council (COHEP), the former accusing the later of being too cozy with JOH.^{229 230}

Campesinxs

"The most representative and belligerent peasant organizations in the country, grouped together in LA VIA CAMPESINA HONDURAS, and the Center of Studies for Democracy (CESPAD), have been investigating, analyzing and permanently monitoring the deep agrarian, food and environmental crisis in the country for several years. We observe with great concern the deterioration of production, productivity and the effect of climate change on the agricultural, livestock and forestry sectors of the country. (...) In the current context it is absolutely impossible to recover the agricultural, livestock and forestry sector of the country, for that reason WE PROPOSE: TO THE NATIONAL CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC, the approval of the: EMERGENCY LAW FOR THE REACTIVATION OF THE AGRICULTURAL, LIVESTOCK AND FORESTRY SECTOR TO COMBAT POVERTY."²³¹ In the press conference, they also highlighted that 88% of women in Honduras do not own land for agricultural production.²³² In the same month, at least 50 peasant families were evicted in the municipality of Guaimaca, Francisco Morazán. The eviction was directed against a peasant association, which took possession of the land more than 15 years ago.²³³ COFADEH denounced that Unit of Violent Deaths in Bajo Aguán (UMVIBA) lacks the resources to investigate but rather serves as another body intimidating and even profiling campesino activists.²³⁴

Migration

So far, the US has deported 222 Hondurans and 156 El Salvadorians to Guatemala as part of the Safe Third Country Agreement.²³⁵ 1192 Honduran minors were deported in January from the US and Mexico to Honduras.²³⁶ The US is not only deporting Honduras, they are also active directly in Honduras trying to stop migration. La Prensa reports that "[s]ome 400 agents of the Migration

225 <https://tiempo.hn/sin-unanimidad-declaran-inconstitucional-parcial-la-ley-de-secretos/>

226 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2688-pleno-de-la-csj-debe-declarar-inconstitucionalidad-absoluta-la-ley-de-secretos-oficiales>

227 <https://tiempo.hn/c-libre-sobre-ley-de-secretos-es-un-pilar-para-seguir-con-la-corrupcion/>

228 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/transparencia/secretividad/1400-csj-debe-derogar-y-declarar-inconstitucional-la-ley-de-secretos>

229 <https://confidencialhn.com/faraj-emplaza-a-presidente-del-cohep-a-aclarar-su-relacion-carnal-con-el-ejecutivo-de-joh/>

230 <https://confidencialhn.com/ejecutivo-sale-en-defensa-del-cohep-reganan-a-faraj-por-usar-a-joh-con-fines-politicos/>

231 <http://cespad.org.hn/2020/02/05/organizaciones-campesinas-presentan-propuesta-para-superar-la-crisis-agraria-alimentaria-y-ambiental-de-honduras/>

232 <https://criterio.hn/solo-el-1-de-la-mujer-campesina-logro-creditos-en-banadesa/>

233 <https://criterio.hn/desalojan-a-campesinos-de-tierras-en-guaimaca/>

234 <http://defensoresenlinea.com/berta-oliva-umviba-deficiente-para-investigar-y-eficiente-para-perfilar/>

235 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/guatemala-ha-recibido-378-hondurenos-y-salvadorenos-por-acuerdo-de-asilo.html>

236 <https://www.proceso.hn/actualidad/7-actualidad/mas-de-mil-menores-fueron-deportados-a-honduras-en-enero.html>

Control Force guard blind spots in Choluteca in order to prevent the entry of Haitians, Cubans and Africans".²³⁷ Acting Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection Mark Morgan visited Honduras praising the Frontier Police and meeting with business leaders.²³⁸ But the main focus was again migration. Morgan confirmed that Honduras will open migrant reception centers as part of the safe third country agreement.²³⁹ He even announced that "[t]he time when large caravans could illegally travel through Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Mexico has ended. CBP is directly engaged with these countries and together we are tackling this regional crisis".²⁴⁰ In its campaign to stop migration, the US embassy tweeted that 14'636 Hondurans have been deported from the US since October 2019.²⁴¹ "President Trump's immigration policies — from travel bans and visa restrictions to refugee caps and asylum changes — have begun to deliver on a longstanding goal: Legal immigration has fallen more than 11 percent and a steeper drop is looming."²⁴²

UNICEF wrote that "[a]n estimated 2,200 migrants and asylum seekers, including 700 children, are effectively stranded in the Mexican border city of Matamoros as they wait for their asylum cases to work their way through the U.S. court system. Conditions for children and families on the ground, many of whom have been waiting at the border for weeks or months, are difficult because of insecurity and limited access to essential services".²⁴³ The IACHR, meanwhile, urged El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico to guarantee the rights of migrants and refugees in the region.²⁴⁴ "The trauma Donald Trump's administration caused to young children and parents separated at the US-Mexico border constitutes torture, according to evaluations of 26 children and adults by the group Physicians for Human Rights (PHR)."²⁴⁵

A new report by Doctors without Borders denounced the US-Mexican migration regime. "The report, No Way Out, is based on 480 interviews and testimonies of Central American migrants and asylum seekers, experiences of MSF staff, and medical data from more than 26,000 people helped along the migration route through Mexico during the first nine months of 2019. The medical evidence points to high levels of violence and ill treatment suffered by migrants and refugees in their home countries, along the migration route, and in the custody of US and Mexican authorities. The high levels of violence in the Northern Triangle of Central America (NTCA) is comparable to that in war zones where MSF has been working for decades—and is a major factor fueling migration north to Mexico and the US."²⁴⁶ "More than two-thirds of the migrants fleeing Central

237 <https://www.laprensa.hn/premium/1354609-410/honduras-tiende-muro-contra-migrantes-cubanos-haitianos-migracion>

238 <https://twitter.com/CBPMarkMorgan/status/1225541210422550528>

239 <https://twitter.com/CBPMarkMorgan/status/1225563944154169347>

240 <https://twitter.com/CBPMarkMorgan/status/1227375279615729665>

241 <https://twitter.com/usembassyhn/status/1228695741947949058>

242 <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/24/us/politics/trump-border-legal-immigration.html>

243 <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/mexico-estimated-700-migrant-children-stranded-matamoros-near-us-border>

244 <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2020/027.asp>

245 https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/feb/25/trump-family-separations-children-torture-psychology?CMP=share_btn_tw

246 <https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/what-we-do/news-stories/news/no-way-out-msf-report-shows-damaging-health-impacts-us-mexico>

America's northern triangle countries – Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador – experienced the murder, disappearance or kidnapping of a relative before their departure¹¹²⁴⁷

Human Rights Watch also published a report on the horrible situation. "A United States government program exposes children, as well as their parents, seeking asylum to serious risk of assault, mistreatment, and trauma while waiting for their cases to be heard, Human Rights Watch said today in a joint investigation report. Human Rights Watch, working with Stanford University's Human Rights in Trauma Mental Health Program and Willamette University's Child and Family Advocacy Clinic, found that the US Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) program, commonly known as "Remain in Mexico," compelled families with children to wait in unsafe environments in Mexico for many months. Parents said that prolonged immigration court proceedings, fear of being incarcerated, and uncertainty about the future took a toll on their family's health, safety, and well-being. Many described changes in their children's behavior, saying they became more anxious or depressed after US authorities sent them to Mexico to await their hearings."¹¹²⁴⁸

In Honduras, the National Migration Institute (INM) claimed that over 5000 Hondurans migrants had voluntarily returned to the country since January 15. This contradicted previous reports that less than 100 of them had returned on their own terms.²⁴⁹ Due to the increasing difficulties migrating north, more Hondurans look for refuge in Spain – more than 6700 in 2019.²⁵⁰ Thousands of Honduran women organized in different spaces sent a letter to the House of Representatives in Washington DC stating that a plan to reduce the migratory flow in the region that does not take into account the needs and minimum rights of women would be incomplete and destined to fail.²⁵¹ The United Nations Refugee Agency, UNHCR, said in a report that between 2014 and 2018, some 247,000 people have left their homes in Honduras due to violence.²⁵²

Poverty

The president of the Honduran Association of Water and Sanitation Boards, Manuel Amador, denounced that the barrel of water that used to cost 35 Lempiras rose to 100 Lempiras.²⁵³ A new study by UNAH says that the number of children between 5 and 17 years old working increased from 13.6% in 2001 to 16.4% in 2018.²⁵⁴ Honduras still depends significantly on remittances. Hondurans living in the US send on average \$542.7 per month back home.²⁵⁵ And inequality is further increasing. The salary of the president of the Central Bank of Honduras (BCH) has risen by over 30% since 2014 to over 250'000 Lempiras per month.²⁵⁶ The average pay rise for employees at

247 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/11/migrants-fleeing-central-america-guatemala-honduras-el-salvador-family-taken-killed-study>

248 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/02/12/us-remain-mexico-program-harming-children>

249 <https://www.proceso.hn/migrantes/1-migrantes/mas-de-5-mil-migrantes-hondurenos-han-optado-por-retorno-voluntario.html>

250 <https://www.proceso.hn/migrantes/1-migrantes/mas-de-6-mil-700-hondurenos-solicitaron-asilo-en-espana-en-2019.html>

251 <https://criterio.hn/mujeres-hondurenas-piden-al-congreso-de-ee-uu-de-dejarlas-fuera-de-plan-migratorio/>

252 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn/instante/en-4-anos-247-mil-personas-han-huido-de-la-violencia-segun-acnur/>

253 <https://confidencialhn.com/precio-del-barril-de-agua-aumenta-de-35-a-100-lempiras-en-tegucigalpa/>

254 <https://tiempo.hn/unah-ninos-honduras-estudio-investigacion/>

255 <https://confidencialhn.com/unos-542-7-dolares-mensuales-envian-al-pais-hondurenos-residentes-en-eeuu/>

256 <http://elpulso.hn/casi-70-mil-lempiras-ha-aumentado-desde-2014-salario-de-presidencia-del-banco-central/>

the BCH was between 8000 and 17000 Lempiras this year while the minimum wage rose by 300-400 Lempiras.²⁵⁷

Electoral Reforms

According to the National Register of Persons (RNP) the new electoral census has increased by more than 400'000 people.²⁵⁸ But it is still unclear if these new voters as well as the previous ones will be able to vote for a president in a two-round system.²⁵⁹ Congress' president Mauricio Oliva said this month, that the problematic tiny parties, used for electoral fraud by the National Party, would not disappear with the new Electoral Law.²⁶⁰ Additionally, the Nationalist-controlled Congress made questionable reforms to the budget. If there are surplus items in one sector, the Ministry of Finance will be empowered to subtract them and allocate them where it sees fit. "Opposition deputies described the reforms as a new abuse by the ruling party, and the creation of a legal way to finance the ruling party's candidacies with public funds for the next electoral process."²⁶¹

Another discussion regards the polling stations. The National Party wants there to be five people, three from the main parties and two from the small parties. Libre and the Liberal Party oppose this. Most small parties have served in the past as representatives of the National Party. In 2017, for example, the small parties received 252'000 credentials for the polling stations, but all of them together just received some 30'000 votes.²⁶² CESPAD published a new report on 2017 elections. It took the responsible bodies quite a while to come up with important dates of the election, for example that over \$42 million were spent on the electoral campaign, most of it by JOH.²⁶³

Public Health

Tomás Andino Mencía takes the occasion of the coronavirus to talk about the Honduran public health system and the reasons people currently die in Honduras. He concludes that the public health system fell victim to another virus, neoliberalism. "We cannot fall into the media trap that wants to hide the real problems of Honduras from us. The worst epidemic we are suffering from is the corrupt and inept government that has enthroned itself in power and is stealing our right to public health care. So, if we want to survive, the real virus that we must eradicate from our territory is not the coronavirus but the narco-dictatorship and its neoliberal model of underdevelopment."²⁶⁴ Accordingly, the Medial Association of Honduras (CMH) was critical about the effectiveness of a 100 million Lempiras fund to confront the coronavirus. "In our country the entire health system is

257 <https://criterio.hn/funcionarios-del-banco-central-reciben-aumentos-estratosfericos/>

258 <https://confidencialhn.com/interventora-del-rnp-confirma-que-censo-incrementara-en-mas-de-400-mil-personas/>

259 <https://confidencialhn.com/oliva-asevera-que-sigue-en-analisis-implementacion-de-segunda-vuelta/>

260 <https://www.proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/partidos-minoritarios-no-desapareceran-con-la-nueva-ley-electoral-asegura-oliva.html>

261 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn.net/noticias-nacionales/presupuesto-general-podria-utilizarse-para-financiar-campanas-electorales/>

262 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1358867-410/sin-consenso-conformaci%C3%B3n-de-las-mesas-electorales>

263 <http://cespad.org.hn/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Pol%C3%ADtica-Limpia2020-CESPAD.pdf>

264 <https://contracorriente.red/2020/02/06/coronavirus-en-honduras/>

collapsed and it is practically impossible with these amounts of money to address a problem that is structural.”²⁶⁵

At the same time, the dengue crisis has still a strong grip on Honduras.²⁶⁶ At least seven people have died so far this year in Honduras from dengue.²⁶⁷ Given this situation, it is difficult to explain why Honduras has both unemployed doctors and a lack of doctors in hospitals – except going back to the neoliberal development model.²⁶⁸

Penal Code

For the newest development regarding the controversial new Penal Code, see the Freedom of Expression section above.

And Light at the End of a Month

On February 3, 2020, communities, organizations and networks of human rights defenders recognized the work of journalist Sandra Maribel Sánchez and of alternative media outlets. "She currently works at Radio Progreso and has suffered two attacks on her life, one against her daughter and an attempted kidnapping outside her home. Even so, the journalist refused to leave the country in exile and said that Honduras is where she was born and here she wants to die."^{269 270}

265 <https://tiempo.hn/cmh-sistema-salud-colapsado-no-educacion-manejar-coronavirus/>

266 <http://elpulso.hn/incontrolable-epidemia-del-dengue-en-honduras/>

267 <https://www.proceso.hn/nacionales/9-nacionales/siete-muertes-confirmadas-por-dengue-grave-en-honduras-durante-2020.html>

268 <http://elpulso.hn/abundancia-de-medicos-desempleados-pero-carencia-en-los-hospitales/>

269 <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/en/amenazas-a-la-libertad-de-expresion/item/2682-sandra-maribel-sanchez-hacer-periodismo-alternativo-en-honduras-es-un-reto>

270 <https://www.radioprogreso.hn.net/noticias-nacionales/periodista-sandra-maribel-sanchez-una-voz-por-la-verdad-y-justicia/>

Another Month at the Honduras Forum Switzerland

Past Activities:

- The Honduras Forum Switzerland accompanied a delegation of Honduras human rights defenders visiting Geneva in preparation of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Honduras at the UN.

Upcoming Activities:

- In May, another delegation will come to Geneva to participate at the UPR.

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