

Another Month in Honduras...

Human Rights Monitor – February 2022

The refoundation of Honduras took two more important steps this month. After the successful electoral win of the opposition in November, the initially divided opposition in Congress came together this month and the US officially requested the extradition of JOH for his drug trafficking ties which led to his arrest. Of course, this does not mean that the old power structures are gone, they are still in place, especially in the Judiciary. But change seems possible. This also included the announcement to demilitarize the prisons as well as the state security forces in general. There were other things to celebrate in February, especially the liberation of the Guapinol defenders after over 900 days illegally imprisoned. But the way to a Honduras respecting human rights is still long and steep. Three members of the LGBTQ+ community were murdered in the first week of February; the Minosa mining company seems to be free to ignore court rulings and go on with the exhumation of a Maya Chortí cemetery in Azacualpa; and the indigenous Lenca Tierras del Padre community faced eviction threats. 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

The Post-JOH Honduras

Since the National Party lost the elections in November, the fate of JOH has been on everybody's mind. What options would he have left to protect himself from a deportation. When he was nominated as a member of the Central American Parliament (Parlacen) many observers thought this would be his way out¹, but others highlighted that it does not grant him protection from an extradition.^{2 3} The question about his fate became even more urgent in the first week of February, when it was made public that the US had revoked his visa and put him on the Engel's List.^{4 5} US Senator Jeff Merkley tweeted: "Today, a year after I introduced the Honduras Human Rights and Anti-Corruption Act, the State Department finally made public its sanctions against former Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández for corruption and narcotics trafficking."⁶ US Rep Jan Schakowsky followed-up: "The State Dept's actions against narcotics trafficker Juan Orlando Hernández are long overdue. I am proud to lead the Honduras Human Rights and Anti-Corruption Act in the House and look forward to keeping up the pressure with @SenJeffMerkley to hold JOH and others accountable."⁷ In Honduras, the news was widely welcomed but the problematic role of the US in backing up JOH all these years, especially after the 2017 electoral fraud, was also emphasized. JOH himself reacted with a public letter continuing with his story that he successfully fought drug trafficking.⁸

On February 10, JOH's lawyer even sought out the Supreme Court asking information about a possible investigation into JOH.⁹ According to the speaker of the Supreme Court, there is no pending extradition request for JOH at the time being.¹⁰ But only four days later, everything changed. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs tweeted that they had received a request by the US embassy "requesting the provisional arrest of a Honduran politician for the purpose of extradition to the United States of America".¹¹ The Supreme Court announced an "urgent" meeting at 9:30am to designate a judge for the US request.¹² Then the police surrounded the house of JOH.¹³ Already the same day, various sources confirmed that the extradition request was for JOH.^{14 15 16}

A day later, JOH was arrested.^{17 18} And another day later, he had his first hearing before the judge assigned to review his extradition.¹⁹ There he was presented with the extradition request. A second hearing would later take place to present the evidence.²⁰ The nominated judge, Edwin Francisco Ortez Cruz, has links to the National Party and played a key role in dismissing the charges against

1 <https://elpulso.hn/2022/02/08/estamos-analizando-que-no-haya-impedimentos-para-que-joh-sea-extraditado/>
2 https://twitter.com/Luis_Santos_C/status/1493429405749854208
3 <https://criterio.hn/aun-siendo-juzgado-por-traicion-a-la-patria-joh-puede-ser-extraditado-raul-pineda-alvarado/>
4 <https://www.state.gov/u-s-actions-against-former-honduran-president-juan-orlando-herandez-for-corruption/>
5 <https://twitter.com/SecBlinken/status/1490795809692135438>
6 <https://mobile.twitter.com/senjeffmerkley/status/1490820420899151873>
7 <https://twitter.com/janschakowsky/status/1490827053729742848?s=20&t=P11Xk1kpgmSTVf9Jav4nEg>
8 <https://twitter.com/JuanOrlandoH/status/1490858903583682562?ext=HHwWhMcR5cORzLApAAAA>
9 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/abogado-de-joh-pide-informacion-a-la-csj-por-posible-investigacion-KC5675905>
10 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/corte-suprema-justicia-dice-no-hay-solicitud-extradicion-expresidente-juan-orlando-herandez-DL5692342>
11 <https://twitter.com/CancilleriaHN/status/1493358120206221313>
12 <https://twitter.com/HondurasNow/status/1493447499524235269>
13 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/videos-fuerte-contingente-policia-militar-rodea-vivienda-expresidente-juan-orlando-herandez-extradicion-CH5779444>
14 <https://www.univision.com/univision-news/latin-america/univision-sources-confirm-the-u-s-has-requested-the-extradition-of-former-honduran-president-herandez>
15 <https://apnews.com/article/media-honduras-caribbean-arrests-united-states-fc34640a42a1443c400654f1b652c5a8>
16 <https://contracorriente.red/2022/02/14/ee-uu-solicita-arresto-preventivo-de-juan-orlando-herandez-con-fines-de-extradicion/>
17 <https://twitter.com/diarioelheraldo/status/1493684481319919621>
18 <https://contracorriente.red/2022/02/15/esposado-de-pies-y-manos-cae-el-expresidente-juan-orlando-herandez-solicitado-en-extradicion-por-estados-unidos/>
19 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/portada/elementos-tecnico-juridicos-que-fundamentan-la-extradicion/>
20 <https://twitter.com/HondurasNow/status/1493707637246025734>

22 public officials in the Pandora corruption case.²¹ Additionally, JOH put together a defense team of 12 lawyers.²² Both did not help, at least at this step. JOH was sent to pre-trial detention at the installations of the COBRAS. The second hearing will take place in a month, on March 16.²³ A request for house arrest by his lawyers was denied.²⁴

While in custody awaiting his second extradition hearing next month, many observers explain that the structure built up by JOH over the last 12 years inside the Judicial Power is still intact and could try to protect him.²⁵ ²⁶ A way for this to happen would be to “uncover” an open investigation against him. On February 18, “[t]he natural judge in charge of the extradition process of former president Juan Orlando Hernández requested the Public Prosecutor's Office to provide information on whether the accused has any pending cases”.²⁷ The same day, JOH's case was also reported on in Israel, where the Times of Israel wrote: “Former Honduras president Juan Orlando Hernández reportedly claimed to have received assurances from Israel that it would act on his behalf in the event that the US would seek his arrest on drug and weapons trafficking charges.”²⁸

On February 19, JOH's lawyers appealed the decision of not allowing him house arrest.²⁹ Judge Edwin Francisco Ortiz Cruz admitted the appeal.³⁰ “While the lawyers of former President Juan Orlando Hernandez and his wife Ana Garcia, either through legal procedures or by appealing to the sympathy of the public, seek to have the former president return home through house arrest, it is important to clarify that the agreed order governing the extradition procedure in Honduras at no time speaks of any other measure than provisional detention.”³¹ The Supreme Court judges seemed to agree. On February 24, its plenary session rejected the appeal.³² Only one judge voted in favor of JOH.³³

On February 22, the MP informed that there was no open investigations against JOH in Honduras. This was important as many feared that such investigations would suddenly appear in order to stop the extradition of JOH to the US (see above).³⁴

JOH and the US

While many applaud the swift extradition request, Hondurans and those knowing its history are well aware of the dismal role played by the US under the JOH regime in propping him up. Senator Patrick Leahy finds clear words her: “Throughout the past eight years of decay, depravity, and impunity, successive U.S. administrations sullied our reputation by treating Hernandez as a friend and partner. By making excuse after excuse for a government that had no legitimacy and that functioned as a criminal enterprise, U.S. officials lost sight of what we stand for and that our real

21 <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/transparencia/1967-magistrado-acusado-de-liberar-a-pandoros-designado-para-conocer-extradicion>
 22 <https://tiempo.hn/equipo-12-abogados-conforman-defensa-joh/>
 23 <https://criterio.hn/dentro-de-un-mes-sera-segunda-audiencia-de-extradicion-de-joh-seguira-en-cuartel-de-la-policia/>
 24 <https://twitter.com/HondurasNow/status/1494060561755041794>
 25 <https://criterio.hn/senalan-que-estructura-de-poder-que-erigio-joh-se-conserva-dentro-de-la-corte-y-el-mp/>
 26 <https://confidencialhn.com/el-ministerio-publico-podria-decir-que-hay-una-investigacion-en-secreta-contrajoh-alerta-abogado-oliver-erazo/>
 27 <https://confidencialhn.com/juez-pide-al-ministerio-publico-que-verifique-si-expresidente-joh-posee-cause-pendiente-en-honduras/>
 28 <https://www.timesofisrael.com/honduran-ex-president-reportedly-asked-israel-to-help-prevent-his-extradition-to-us/>
 29 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/defensa-de-joh-apela-para-que-cumpla-arresto-en-casa-LH5876814>
 30 <https://criterio.hn/defensa-de-juan-orlando-hernandez-busca-cambiar-medida-de-detencion-provisional/>
 31 <https://criterio.hn/auto-acordado-no-permite-arresto-domiciliario-en-casos-de-extradicion-por-narcotrafico/>
 32 <https://criterio.hn/corte-suprema-niega-peticion-de-arresto-domiciliario-a-juan-orlando-hernandez/>
 33 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/corte-suprema-justicia-ratifica-detencion-preventiva-contrajoh-extradicion-honduras-expresidente-CY6045004>
 34 <https://elpulso.hn/2022/02/22/el-ministerio-publico-aclara-que-no-existe-requerimiento-contrajoh-extraditable-hernandez/>

partners are the Honduran people."³⁵ Similar words from Senator Senator Jeff Merkley: "“It was completely unacceptable that the U.S. government was supporting former President Hernández despite his extensive ties to narco-trafficking, including an alleged pattern of using campaign funds and taxpayer resources to protect and facilitate drug shipments to the United States.”³⁶

The JOH Clan

"The narcos, the bribes, and the recordings: The DEA has spent almost a decade building the case that led them to Juan Orlando Hernández, until recently the president of Honduras."³⁷ Criterio investigated the fortunes amassed by the Hernández-García clan these last 12 years. "The assets found by this investigation have been registered in the capital Tegucigalpa and the departments of Lempira and Olancho. As extended family they registered at least 109 real estate properties and 11 companies. From 2010, when Juan Orlando Hernández became president of the National Congress to date, the former presidential couple registered 7 companies and 60 real estate assets whose value is around 7.8 million dollars."³⁸ They also published a second part.³⁹

On February 18, a cousin of JOH was arrested with 400'000 Lempiras leaving one of the houses belonging to JOH.⁴⁰ He was released a day later.⁴¹

CEPR put together a set of indicators highlighting the dire legacy JOH left Honduras after twelve years in power (4 as the president of Congress, 8 years as the president).⁴²

Human Rights and Their Defenders

Elder, spiritual leader, & long-time COPINH leader Pascualita Vásquez has become an ancestor of the Lenca people. Today, COPINH reported that Doña Pascualita passed away after a long battle against Covid. She will be sorely missed by many."⁴³

The Ministry of Human Rights and OACNUDH started this month "an in-depth dialogue to advance the 2022 human rights agenda based on our monitoring and technical cooperation mandate".⁴⁴

Attacks, Criminalization and Harassment

The inhabitants of Castaños de Choloma have organized against the human rights violations by the company Inter-Mac.⁴⁵ As an act of retaliation, the company tried to uninstall water pump in the community.⁴⁶

³⁵ <https://www.leahy.senate.gov/press/statement-on-the-dishonorable-legacy-of-juan-orlando-hernandez>
³⁶ <https://www.merkley.senate.gov/news/press-releases/merkley-statement-on-us-extradition-request-of-former-honduran-president-juan-orlando-hernandez-22>
³⁷ <https://www.univision.com/latin-america/analysis-state-sponsored-drug-trafficking-the-case-against-former-honduran-president>
³⁸ <https://criterio.hn/la-cuantiosa-fortuna-de-los-hernandez-garcia-un-potestado-construido-en-doce-anos/>
³⁹ <https://criterio.hn/el-ascenso-politico-de-joh-y-sus-redes-de-corrupcion/>
⁴⁰ <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/detienen-primo-expresidente-hernandez-maleta-dinero-lempira-joh-DG5877151>
⁴¹ <https://www.elheraldo.hn/sucesos/dejan-libre-primo-juan-orlando-hernandez-sustraer-dinero-casa-lempira-joh-marlon-salvador-quintanilla-FB5883447>
⁴² <https://cepr.net/honduras-social-and-economic-indicators-after-12-years-of-national-party-rule/>
⁴³ <https://twitter.com/HondurasNow/status/1497002108423344143>
⁴⁴ <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/HN/status/1491191468530495489>
⁴⁵ <https://twitter.com/bufetedignidad/status/1493344853320683526>
⁴⁶ <https://twitter.com/bufetedignidad/status/1494075075171074052>

On “February 16, 2022, after 10 p.m., a group of men on motorcycles and in a private vehicle shot at the corner of the house of Juana Zúniga, leader of the Guapinol Environmental Committee, in a serious act of aggression against her, her family and her colleagues. At least 20 shots were fired at the place where a bus was leaving with members of the Committee who were on their way to an activity today in the city of Tegucigalpa”.⁴⁷

On February 26, OFRANEH’s Miriam Miranda denounced unknown armed men showing up in Garifuna community Triunfo de La Cruz as well as direct threats against her and her family.⁴⁸

Guapinol

At the beginning of the month, it was announced that the conclusions of the criminalization trial against the Guapinol defenders would take place on February 4. “As the trial draws to a close, the company is desperately and dangerously attacking. Lenir Perez/Los Pinares, part of the Emco Group, has issued false and defamatory press releases, while the national media is publishing outlandish claims in favor of the company in what appears to be paid advertising. Online defamation campaigns against the defenders and the Municipal Committee have increased, while we have documented intimidation and threats at the local level against the defenders, their families, the Municipal Committee, the legal team and others who are accompanying the judicial process.”⁴⁹ In the run up, there were again various calls for their freedom.^{50 51 52}

Honduras Now summarized the concluding remarks of the Guapinol trial including a helpful analysis of the proceedings. “The defense did a superior job at constructing legal arguments throughout the trial and a outstanding job at highlight the serious contradictions between the witness testimony, which makes up the majority of the prosecution’s case. The prosecutors failed to clearly demonstrate how each of the eight accused defenders are individually involved in the crimes and what their role entailed in the incident. Too much of the prosecution’s evidence is contradictory and lacked detail to adequately corroborate basic facts. In my non-lawyer opinion (I also have not read the compete legal file), the prosecution did not do a sufficient job at showing their guilt. What is clear is that a violent incident occurred that day but it could have been incited by any number of actors including the mining company and the security guards themselves. The problem with this case is that it’s not a legal case, it’s a political one. The decision to declare the water defenders guilty or not guilty, will be a political one, not a legal one.”⁵³

A day before the verdict, OACNUDH commented: “Based on its observation of the trial, OACNUDH expresses its concern that the MP has not met the minimum standard of proof nor has it fully observed the principle of objectivity that should govern its proceedings.”⁵⁴ But the judicial system imposed by the previous JOH regime did not acknowledge these problems and came to a different verdict. On February 9, Six of the Guapinol water defenders were found guilty in a court

47 <https://im-defensoras.org/2022/02/alerta-defensoras-tiroteo-junto-a-la-vivienda-de-la-defensora-juana-ramona-zuniga/>
 48 <https://im-defensoras.org/2022/02/alerta-urgente-honduras-intimidacion-y-amenazas-contr-la-vida-de-miriam-miranda-coordinadora-y-defensora-garifuna-de-la-ofraneh/>
 49 <https://www.guapinolresiste.org/post/trial-of-guapinol-river-defenders-to-conclude-this-friday-in-honduras>
 50 https://twitter.com/MaryLawlorhds/status/1489279892646682632?ctx=HHwWklCzxf-K_qopAAAA
 51 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDDHN/status/1489399844313735169?ctx=HHwWgoC9jY3RtKspAAAA>
 52 <https://twitter.com/janschakowsky/status/1489381395399168007?ctx=HHwWjsC-Z2frKspAAAA>
 53 <https://www.hondurasnow.org/day-seventeen-concluding-remarks/>
 54 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDDHN/status/1490763058070839310?ctx=HHwWnlCzicvGoLApAAAA>

with heavy police presence and whose proceedings were not live-streamed as should have been the case. "All six of the defenders found guilty will remain in detention until the first of two sentencing hearings scheduled on Monday February 21, 2022 at 9 am or until the amnesty is applied". The latter is now their great hope. "Several state institutions and non-government organizations expressed their deep concern with the guilty verdict. These include the National Human Rights Commissioner (CONADEH), the Ministry of Human Rights, the UN Special Rapporteur the National Network of Women Human Rights Defenders, COPINH, among others."⁵⁵ Reporting for The Guardian, Nina Lakhani highlighted the international condemnation of the verdict. "Amnesty International, which considers the Guapinol environmentalists to be prisoners of conscience, described the verdict as "outrageous". (...) Mary Lawlor, the UN special rapporteur on human rights defenders, said she was "appalled", especially given Honduras last month took its seat the UN human rights council."^{56 57 58}

At this moment, the only hope for the Guapinol defenders seemed to be the new amnesty bill (see below). The day after the verdict, their lawyers presented an appeal based on the bill.⁵⁹ But then all of this became redundant as the Supreme Court finally resolved the appeals in favor of them. "According to the resolution, by unanimous vote, the Constitutional Chamber ruled in favor of two appeals filed by the defense of the 8 defenders criminalized by the Public Prosecutor's Office and the mining company Inversiones Los Pinares, for the crimes of deprivation of liberty, aggravated damages and simple damages."⁶⁰ This ruling annuls the trial and Wednesday's verdict.⁶¹ OACNUDH welcomed the ruling and called for their immediate release.⁶² Nevertheless, their release took more time. A hearing was called for the following Monday, three days later.⁶³

Everyone who dared to hope for their release on Monday was further disappointed. The judges claimed to have to wait for a communication from the Appeals court in La Ceiba and announced to give their decision the next day.⁶⁴ OACNUDH condemned the ongoing detention of the defenders.⁶⁵ A day later, the defenders continued in prison⁶⁶ and even worse, the Sentencing Court in Trujillo denied the request for a change of precautionary measures for the defenders.^{67 68} Meanwhile, Congress decorated the defenders with the distinction of Grand Cross Gold Plaque. "However, the defenders of Guapinol are clear; beyond an award, what the families of Tocoa need is the immediate cancellation of the mining project of Inversiones Los Pinares owned by Lenir Pérez, who is illegally extracting iron from a national park."⁶⁹

On February 19, the Appeals court overturned a previous ruling to send case against the defenders to trial. This meant that the case should have never gone to trial and that the defenders should be

⁵⁵ <https://www.hondurasnow.org/day-eighteen-the-verdict/>

⁵⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/feb/09/honduras-environmentalists-guilty-crimes-mining-company>

⁵⁷ <https://oacnudh.hn/oacnudh-condena-de-seis-defensores-del-rio-guapinol-contraviene-obligaciones-de-derechos-humanos/>

⁵⁸ <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/secretaria-derechos-humanos-condena-fallo-caso-guapinol-HA5640889>

⁵⁹ <https://radioprogreso.hn/aplicacion-movil/presentan-un-escrito-para-aplicacion-de-amnistia-en-caso-guapinol/>

⁶⁰ <https://www.guapinolresiste.org/post/supreme-court-orders-freedom-for-guapinol-river-defenders-in-honduras>

⁶¹ <https://tiempo.hn/libertad-defensores-de-guapinol/>

⁶² <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1491969821478637569>

⁶³ <https://criterio.hn/defensores-de-rio-guapinol-saldran-hasta-el-proximo-lunes/>

⁶⁴ <https://www.hondurasnow.org/unexpected-rulings-from-higher-court-delay-tactics-to-continue-illegal-detention/>

⁶⁵ <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1493398193555619841>

⁶⁶ <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/guapinol/las-cortes/item/3342-se-le-acabaron-las-excusas-al-poder-judicial-y-al-mp-para-mantener-en-prision-a-los-defensores-de-guapinol>

⁶⁷ <https://radioprogreso.hn/aplicacion-movil/tribunal-de-sentencia-de-trujillo-decide-mantener-en-prision-a-los-ambientalistas-de-guapinol/>

⁶⁸ <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/guapinol/juicio-guapinol/item/3343-caso-guapinol-juez-emite-voto-disidente-contradecision-de-tribunal-de-sentencia-de-trujillo-que-desconoce-resolucion-de-la-sala-de-lo-constitucional>

⁶⁹ <https://radioprogreso.hn/aplicacion-movil/ambientalistas-de-guapinol-piden-a-congreso-nacional-cancelar-concesion-minera-de-lenir-perez/>

released.⁷⁰ In the following days, there were again various calls for their liberation, by Euro-parliamentarians⁷¹, European embassies in Honduras⁷², even CONADEH.⁷³

And then, on February 24, after over 900 days illegally held in pre-trial detention, the Guapinol defenders were freed.⁷⁴ OACNUDH welcomed the development, but it "also recalls the State's obligation to provide full reparation and conduct a thorough investigation of the facts that gave rise to his arbitrary deprivation of liberty, as provided by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention".⁷⁵

Indigenous Peoples

One year ago, a court in San Pedro Sula ordered the municipality of Yoro to protect the right to health and food of the Tolután people.⁷⁶ "OACNUDH welcomed this recognition and the decision to open a medical clinic for the benefit of the community based on the ruling. However, it is of concern that the local authorities are not providing continuity in this care."⁷⁷ MADJ denounced: "The San Francisco de Locomapa Tribe of Yoro is once again subjected to dispossession, discrimination and condemned to not having access to quality health care. The Ministry of Health and the negligence of the outgoing authorities of the municipality of Yoro have put at risk the operation of the clinic that was won through a court ruling in 2021."⁷⁸

"The leader of the Honduran Black Fraternal Organization, Ofraneh, Nahúm Lalín, denounces that 50% of islets of the Cayos Cochinos are in the hands of businessmen. "We are concerned as Garifuna communities in the area and as Ofraneh because food security is being violated, as is the right to fish because foreigners are appropriating our territories and are being favored with the complicity of the Cayos Cochinos Foundation that was created to protect the region," said Lalin."⁷⁹

Tierras del Padre

On February 8, a court in Tegucigalpa reactivated an eviction order against the indigenous Lenca community Tierras del Padre. "According to the communiqué issued by the organization of Lenca Indigenous Women of the Tierras del Padre Community, 11 inhabitants of the community are currently accused of usurpation, because Mario Facussé Handal, owner of the Siglo XXI Real Estate company, presented a supplementary document from 2013 where, without the consent of the community, he claims to be the owner of the territory. The Lenca Tierras del Padre Community has held an ancestral land title since 1739 and in November 2021 had already been threatened with eviction, putting more than 120 families at risk, however, through a process of resistance and community organization, with the support of human rights organizations and social movements, the eviction was suspended. Despite this, the suspension did not mean the end of the criminalization

⁷⁰ <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/guapinol/las-cortes/item/3344-sobreseimiento-definitivo-corte-de-apelaciones-de-francisco-morazan-dejo-sin-valor-el-auto-de-formal-procesamiento-contradefensores-de-guapinol>

⁷¹ <https://proceso.hn/eurodiputados-exigen-libertad-de-defensores-hondurenos-finalistas-del-sajarov/>

⁷² <https://twitter.com/UEenHonduras/status/1495807718204051463>

⁷³ <https://proceso.hn/conadeh-pide-que-no-se-siga-dilatando-libertad-de-defensores-de-guapinol/>

⁷⁴ <https://www.radiohmn.hn/honduras-justicia-liberacion-defensores-guapinol-oacnudh>

⁷⁵ <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1497029943368290304>

⁷⁶ <https://twitter.com/bufetedignidad/status/1490031264522452997?ext=HHwWioCyoczi060pAAAA>

⁷⁷ <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1490080950348308484?ext=HHwWiiCzwdiu6q0pAAAA>

⁷⁸ <https://madj.org/2022/02/07/indigenas-tolupanes-demandan-permanencia-de-clinica-dentro-de-la-tribu/>

⁷⁹ <https://radioprogreso.hn/aplicacion-movil/la-mitad-de-los-isletes-de-cayos-cochinos-están-privatizados-denuncia-la-ofraneh/>

and eviction process, so the communities have suffered a prolonged psychosocial and economic impact, due to the uncertainty about their permanence in the area."⁸⁰ OACNUDH expressed concerns.⁸¹

As feared, the next day state security forces started with the eviction of indigenous Lenca Tierras del Padre community^{82 83} even though they have documented ancestral land rights.⁸⁴ They even tried to evict children from their school.⁸⁵ Human Rights Minister Natalie Roque tweeted: "With instructions from President Xiomara, we are sending accompaniment & lawyers to suspend eviction. The HR Ministry & other Ministries accompany residents of Tierras del Padre. The justice system continues under the control of dictatorship".⁸⁶ The eviction was later temporarily suspended by a court order⁸⁷ but the community continued to live under uncertainty.⁸⁸

The Case of Berta Cáceres

After more than seven months delay, the Supreme Court scheduled this month the sentencing hearing of David Castillo in the Berta Cáceres case. It will take place on April 4.^{89 90}

COPINH also informed about the Swearing-in Hearing of the expert in charge of extracting information from two computers of Daniel Atala that have key information of crimes related to the murder of Berta Cáceres.⁹¹ On February 24, COPINH sent out an alert that the BAC Credomatic bank from Jacobo Atala, held responsible by COPINH for the murder of Berta Cáceres, has an entailment (fideicomiso) granted by the JOH regime until 2045.⁹²

LGBTQ

"First (huge, considering the institutionalized transphobia of the post-coup dictatorships) step by the new Honduran government in recognizing the humanity of trans people: permitting the use of their chosen name on work IDs."⁹³

⁸⁰ <https://im-defensoras.org/2022/02/alerta-urgente-honduras-juzgados-de-tegucigalpa-reactivan-orden-de-desalojo-contr-la-comunidad-indigena-lenca-tierras-del-padre/>
⁸¹ <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1491236795194826753?ext=HHwWgoCj2dv997EpAAAA>
⁸² <https://im-defensoras.org/2022/02/alerta-urgente-honduras-clan-facusse-y-familia-criminalizan-y-expulsan-a-defensores-y-defensoras-indigenas-de-sus-territorios/>
⁸³ <https://criterio.hn/desalojo-en-tierras-del-padre-mide-fuerzas-entre-los-poderes-ejecutivo-y-judicial/>
⁸⁴ <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1491512315375722497>
⁸⁵ https://twitter.com/All_Things_HND/status/1491604975717335043
⁸⁶ <https://twitter.com/HondurasNow/status/1491473090634784773>
⁸⁷ <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1491602739792646145>
⁸⁸ <https://radioprogreso.hn/aplicacion-movil/suspendieron-el-desalojo-pero-no-la-zozobra-de-las-familias-de-comunidad-lenca-tierras-del-padre/>
⁸⁹ <https://copinh.org/2022/02/lectura-de-sentencia-de-caso-en-contr-de-david-castillo-el-04-de-abril-de-2022/>
⁹⁰ <https://criterio.hn/nueve-meses-despues-corte-dara-lectura-a-fallo-contr-david-castillo-por-asesinato-de-berta-caceres/>
⁹¹ <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1494803042331504642>
⁹² <https://twitter.com/BerthaZuniga1/status/1496931450129887232>
⁹³ <https://twitter.com/adriennepine/status/1497196354942214159>

Assassinations

Three members of the LGBTQ1 community, Jonathan Gabriel Martínez, Cesar Gustavo Zúñiga & María Fernanda Martínez, were murdered on February 3.⁹⁴ OACNUDH condemned the murders.⁹⁵ At least five members of the LGBTQ+ community have been murdered in Honduras in only 5 weeks. "Rihanna Ferrera, director of the Conzumel Trans Human Rights Association of the community, said that the five deaths in such a short time is "worrying", indicating that these are not simple deaths, but caused by hatred, discrimination, because the perpetrators rage against the victims."⁹⁶

Violence against Women

It has been a year this month since the murder of nursing student Keyla Martínez in a police station in Intibucá. Her family and human rights organizations continue to call for justice.⁹⁷ Her mother met with the new Minister of Human Rights Natalie Roque. The Human Rights Ministry later published a press release announcing the case as a priority.⁹⁸

More than 30 women had been murdered in the first weeks of 2022.⁹⁹ On February 8, the Secretariat for Economic Development signed an agreement with the UN to eradicate violence against women.¹⁰⁰

Political Prisoners

COFADEH successfully gained freedom of the political prisoner Joseph Castillo. The young man had been detained since December 2019.¹⁰¹ COFADEH requested amnesty for 11 people facing political persecution.¹⁰²

The Committee for the Liberation of Political Prisoners in Honduras and the Convergence Against Continuity (CCC) denounce the arrest of José Antonio Torres Meza. He had been criminalized after the coup d'état and arrested. He was later released and now, 12 years later, he has been arrested again for the same crimes he was accused of in 2009.¹⁰³ He was later liberated again based on the Amnesty Law (see below).

Extractive Industries

"7 out of 10 municipalities in Honduras have at least one land concession for the installation of mining, hydroelectric, tourism, monoculture or agricultural projects, among others. These are projects whose boom began in the 2000s and which were installed in Honduras with the ideal of generating development. Hence the relevance of the question: have they contributed to the progress

⁹⁴ <https://twitter.com/HondurasNow/status/1489426848253714438?ctx=HHwWjIC9kfj0wKspAAAA>

⁹⁵ <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1489355333801852930?ctx=HHwWjIC9kfj0wKspAAAA>

⁹⁶ <https://proceso.hn/denuncian-asesinato-de-cinco-miembros-de-comunidad-lgbt-en-lo-que-va-del-ano/>

⁹⁷ <https://proceso.hn/familiares-de-keyla-martinez-anuncian-planton-para-exigir-justicia-a-un-ano-de-su-muerte/>

⁹⁸ <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/ministra-derechos-humanos-natalie-roque-acompanara-caso-keyla-patricia-martinez-celda-intibuca-YY5881717>

⁹⁹ <https://confidencial.hn.com/al-menos-treinta-mujeres-han-sido-asesinadas-en-el-inicio-del-ano-en-honduras/>

¹⁰⁰ <https://twitter.com/pjbarquero/status/1491157124956958721?ctx=HHwWgsDRlabg07EpAAAA>

¹⁰¹ <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/en-audiencia-de-revision-de-medidas-cofadeh-logra-la-libertad-del-presos-politico-joseph-castillo/>

¹⁰² <https://criterio.hn/cofadeh-solicita-a-los-juzgados-amnistia-para-once-exiliados-y-perseguidos-politicos/>

¹⁰³ <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/continua-el-patron-de-criminalizacion-de-oponentes-politicos-y-defensores-de-derechos-humanos/>

of the communities where they are installed? (...) Poverty indexes indicate that 60% of the Honduran population has lived without the minimum basic conditions during the last decade, according to official data from the National Institute of Statistics (INE). Similarly, unemployment and underemployment have remained a major problem. But, despite this scenario, businessmen and politicians continue to claim in their discourse that extractive companies bring progress for the communities and development for the country. (...) The common factor of extractive companies is the promise of change. While that change is translated into words like "development" or "progress", these types of companies boast of bringing benefits to communities, which helps them grow economically. (...) The communities need urgent solutions to the problems arising from poverty and unemployment, but the installation of mining, hydroelectric and other types of companies in various areas of the country has shown that extractivism is not an alternative for the generation of development for the people. On the contrary, extractivism leaves as a result the constant persecution, criminalization, prosecution and murder of villagers, who become defenders of the natural resources of their communities, a precedent that demonstrates the need to reform public policies on extractivism, to ensure respect for the human rights of communities."¹⁰⁴

Mining

Last month, the conflict in Azacualpa, Copán, reinitiated with the mining company restarting the exhumation of the cemetery of the Maya-Chortí community (see last month). Bufete Estudios Para la Dignidad filed an injunction which was granted by an appeals court on February 2.¹⁰⁵ "Court of Appeals of Santa Rosa de Copán ordered through a sentence to annul any authorization to exhume, transfer and bury the Maya Chortí cemetery of Azacualpa. What does this resolution imply? 1. Demanding reparation for the damage caused. 2. The criminal investigation against Judge Rivera Tábor for abuse of authority and judicial malfeasance by virtue of his proven abuse in the authorization he gave."¹⁰⁶ OACNUDH welcomed the decision.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, ignoring the court order, the mining company Aura Minerals (MINOSA) and members of the municipality of La Unión, Copán started to exploit the soils of the Maya Chortí cemetery in Azacualpa on February 9.¹⁰⁸ ¹⁰⁹ OACNUDH then organized a three-day visit to the Azacualpa community. "We express concern about the non-compliance with international standards on the environmental and social impact of mining activities, as well as the protection of the rights of indigenous peoples, in administrative and judicial proceedings."¹¹⁰

On February 18, the Court of Appeals of Santa Rosa de Copán declares inadmissible the appeal filed by lawyers of MINOSA and the Municipality of La Unión, which sought to reverse the decision that ordered to stop the exhumations of the cemetery.¹¹¹ A few days later, "[t]he law firm Estudios para la Dignidad denounced that the company Minerales de Occidente S.A de C.V. (Minosa) is preparing to carry out detonations in the Maya Chortí San Andrés cemetery in

¹⁰⁴ <https://cespad.org.hn/2022/02/25/mineras-e-hidroelectricas-han-generado-desarrollo-en-los-pueblos-de-honduras/>

¹⁰⁵ <https://twitter.com/bufetedignidad/status/1489025745322192906?ctx=HHwWIMC5tdbBiqopAAAA>

¹⁰⁶ <https://twitter.com/bufetedignidad/status/1490779018312003589?ctx=HHwWisC9kcznp7ApAAAA>

¹⁰⁷ <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1489060389455282180?ctx=HHwWiICyqZ2imqopAAAA>

¹⁰⁸ <https://twitter.com/bufetedignidad/status/1491463209626259457>

¹⁰⁹ <https://tiempo.hn/denuncian-exhumaciones-en-cementerio-copan/>

¹¹⁰ <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1494747266783002625>

¹¹¹ <https://twitter.com/bufetedignidad/status/1494807201382285322>

Azacualpa, Copán, despite multiple orders from the Judicial Power that put a stop to mining activities in the area”.¹¹² MADJ and the human rights law firm Estudios para la Dignidad called on the Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment to intervene.¹¹³

ZEDEs

"Maribel Espinoza, deputy of the Salvador Party of Honduras, presented the bill for the repeal of the Model Cities disguised as Employment and Economic Development Zones (ZEDE) promoted by the previous government, which is nothing more than the sale of territory and national sovereignty."¹¹⁴ The Xiomara administration appointed Fernando Emilio García Rodríguez as presidential commissioner against ZEDEs.¹¹⁵ But the Próspera ZEDE pretends that nothing changed since the last elections and holds a pre-sale event of luxury apartments.¹¹⁶ Additionally, "Próspera has resorted to threats of a lawsuit in excess of US\$1.3 billion against the State and says that the repeal of the law is an indirect and illegal expropriation that contravenes the Constitution".¹¹⁷

Corruption and Its Enemies

At the beginning of the month, with the new administration in place, "the new authorities that make up the cabinet of Honduran President Xiomara Castro have unveiled the first findings of significant corruption in state institutions after eight years of the government of former President Juan Orlando Hernández".¹¹⁸ On February 2, the Redondo Congress approved a law needed for the the creation of a UN-backed anti-corruption mission.¹¹⁹ A few days later, La Gaceta printed the decision¹²⁰ and Foreign Minister Eduardo Reina confirmed that Xiomara would request such a mission in the next days.¹²¹ The US confirmed their support for such a mission.¹²² On February 17, the Xiomara administration officially requested the mission at the UN.¹²³ Libre highlighted its will to prepare the ground for such a mission by getting rid of all the harmful JOH-era laws.¹²⁴

"Rixi Moncada Godoy, Secretary of Finance, said Monday that the General Budget of the Republic (PGR), is false and a source of corruption, while she asked the cabinet ministers elected President Xiomara Castro, not to have illusions about the millions approved, because it only exists on paper and should be reviewed. The official initially said that they receive a bankrupt country and that in the bank account they only received 800 million Lempiras".¹²⁵ "Practically 60% of the budget that we supposedly have to work with is actually resources that are not there, it is a mirage, it is a fraud, this budget that we have received is exorbitant", said the official."¹²⁶ She later commissioned a first

¹¹² <https://criterio.hn/pese-a-orden-judicial-denuncian-que-empresa-minera-realizara-detonaciones-en-cementerio-maya-chorti/>

¹¹³ <https://twitter.com/bufetedignidad/status/1496637726640197639>

¹¹⁴ <https://criterio.hn/congreso-de-luis-redondo-se-encamina-a-derogar-las-zede-penalizar-reeleccion-y-aprobar-beneficios-sociales/>

¹¹⁵ <https://criterio.hn/fernando-garcia-designado-por-la-presidenta-de-honduras-para-luchar-contra-las-zede/>

¹¹⁶ <https://twitter.com/ArtSuaTgu/status/1488652926520369155>

¹¹⁷ <https://criterio.hn/demanda-superior-a-us1300-millones-interpondria-zede-prospera-contra-estado-de-honduras/>

¹¹⁸ <https://criterio.hn/nuevo-gobierno-comienza-a-destapar-corrupcion-de-exfuncionarios-del-gobierno-de-joh/>

¹¹⁹ <https://twitter.com/HondurasNow/status/1489099091795611654?ctx=HHwWjMCsnYDvg6opAAAA>

¹²⁰ <https://confidencialhn.com/publicado-en-el-diario-oficial-la-gaceta-decreto-de-creacion-de-la-cicih-en-honduras/>

¹²¹ <https://confidencialhn.com/solicitud-de-apoyo-a-la-onu-para-instalacion-de-la-cicih-sera-esta-semana-afirma-canciller-de-la-republica/>

¹²² <https://proceso.hn/eeuu-dispuesto-a-ayudar-a-honduras-en-la-instalacion-de-la-comision-anticorruption/>

¹²³ <https://tiempo.hn/xiomara-castro-solicita-la-cicih/>

¹²⁴ <https://proceso.hn/edmund-orellana-confirma-su-participacion-en-conformacion-de-la-cicih/>

¹²⁵ <https://proceso.hn/rix-moncada-dice-que-presupuesto-aprobado-es-falso-y-pide-a-ministros-no-ilusionarse-con-millones-asignados-en-papel/>

¹²⁶ <https://proceso.hn/el-60-del-presupuesto-general-es-un-espejismo-dice-ministro-de-la-presidencia/>

report on the financial crisis which highlighted that the JOH regime stole 165 billions of Lempiras during its time in power (see below under “Debt”).

On February 19, El Pulso reported that a 200 million fund approved by the Nationalist-controlled Congress in 2020 "disappeared" and the new administration demanded an investigation.¹²⁷ "The head of the Secretariat of Development and Social Inclusion (Sedis), José Carlos Cardona, denounced that 262 NGOs owe more than 417 million lempiras to the organization he leads. He said that during the investigation they found phantom payrolls and "we (thought) we were going to find corruption, but this is bigger than we thought". He added that many employees received money to carry out social projects and did nothing."¹²⁸ "The head of the Ministry of Health, José Manuel Matheu, presented before the National Congress the report on the financial situation faced by the Honduran health system, highlighting a deficit of more than six billion Lempiras, in addition to illegal appointments and agreements in favor of those related to the conservative National Party."¹²⁹

The Onslaught against the Anti-Corruption Bodies

The disputed reform of the Money Laundering Law by the outgoing Nationalist-controlled Congress last fall helped another person to get free. "Although Leonel Saucedo could not disprove the crime of money laundering - since he had been in prison for two years because he had not been able to justify 13.8 million lempiras that circulated in thirteen of his bank accounts between 2006 and 2017 -, according to the Judiciary, the Public Ministry could not prove the existence of the crime of embezzlement of public funds, a preceding crime to the charge of money laundering, so it determined to acquit Leonel Saucedo also of the crime of money laundering."¹³⁰ Saucedo had been named in the drug trafficking trials in New York as co-conspirator 9, CC-9.¹³¹

"The National Anti-Corruption Council (CNA) expressed its concern through a statement in which it stated its position on the need to impart justice in the country on significant cases of corruption and drug trafficking. In the document published in its official social networks, the non-governmental entity denounced that with their recent actions, some justice entities in the country have moved away from their purpose, as they have issued resolutions in favor of people linked to cases such as the embezzlement of the Honduran Institute of Social Security (IHSS) and that they also plan to favor those responsible for the mobile hospital fraud."¹³²

Libre representative Jari Dixon presented a bill to repeal the Secrecy Law at the beginning of the month.¹³³ On February 24, Congress prepared the ground for it to happen.¹³⁴ The anti-corruption commission presented further bills to repeal JOH-era laws.¹³⁵ The congressional committee tasked with repealing all the harmful laws of the last 12 years impeding corruption investigations also met with the Anti-Corruption Coalition.¹³⁶

¹²⁷ <https://elpulso.hn/2022/02/19/la-fiscalia-debe-investigar-que-paso-con-los-200-millones-que-destinaron-para-el-estadio/>

¹²⁸ <https://elpulso.hn/2022/02/20/titular-de-sedis-denuncia-que-unas-262-onges-adeudan-unos-417-millones-de-lempiras/>

¹²⁹ <https://criterio.hn/ministro-de-salud-revela-calamidad-del-sistema-sanitario-y-corupcion-en-contratacion-de-personal/>

¹³⁰ <https://contracorriente.red/2022/02/02/el-comisionado-leonel-saucedo-es-absuelto-del-delito-de-lavado-de-activos/>

¹³¹ https://twitter.com/Prohn_Honduras/status/1489063641374732290?ctx=HHwWhMC5gcLfm6opAAAA

¹³² <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/cna-denuncia-magistrados-buscan-favorecer-implicados-corupcion-consejo-nacional-electoral-ihss-hospitales-moviles-DA5640371>

¹³³ <https://proceso.hn/presentan-proyecto-de-decreto-para-derogar-ley-de-clasificacion-de-documentos-publicos/>

¹³⁴ <https://criterio.hn/congreso-derogara-ley-de-secretos-y-desclasificara-documentos-de-administracion-de-joh/>

¹³⁵ <https://confidencial.hn.com/comision-anticorupcion-del-cn-va-derogacion-de-la-ley-de-secretos/>

¹³⁶ <https://confidencial.hn.com/coaliccion-anticorupcion-apoyara-derogacion-de-leyes-que-bliandan-redes-de-corupcion/>

Pandora

The Supreme Court continues to protect the corrupt - it confirmed a ruling that dropped the charges against the accused in the Pandora corruption case. The MP itself did not mince words, accusing the Supreme Court of protecting the accused in "one of the most reprehensible acts of corruption in Honduran history".¹³⁷ Over 300 million Lempiras were stolen.¹³⁸ The National Anti-Corruption Council (CNA) denounced that impunity would remain intact with the current, chosen by JOH, Attorney General and Supreme Court judges.^{139 140}

Palmerola

"A new act of corruption that harms the interests of teachers was carried out in the Instituto de Previsión Magisterial (Inprema) hours before the transfer of office of the President of Honduras, Xiomara Castro. According to the head of the Secretariat of Economic Development, Pedro Barquero, 100 million dollars were transferred from the teachers' money to investors in Palmerola."^{141 142 143}

Rosa Elena Bonilla de Lobo

The retrial of the former first lady Rosa Elena Bonilla de Lobo was meant to start at the beginning of this month.^{144 145} "Bonilla was accused by the MACCIH of taking just over 12 million lempiras -- more than \$510,000 -- from the first lady's office account to a personal account just four days before her spouse's term ended on January 27, 2014. She was also linked to money laundering, embezzlement of public funds and illicit association for allegedly keeping 16 million lempiras and the creation of a money laundering network to hide money from the state destined for social works."¹⁴⁶ A day before the start, it was postponed to February 21.¹⁴⁷

Mobile Hospital

Last month, the mobile hospital corruption case went to court (see January monitor). On the last day, the accused former director of Invest-H stated that the purchase would not have been possible without the support of the former Minister of Finance, Rocío Tábor. Many observers have already previously highlighted the involvement of the JOH regime in the case but the legal persecution has been very limited so far.¹⁴⁸

¹³⁷ <https://www.mp.hn/publicaciones/sala-constitucional-notifica-fallo-que-blinda-de-impunidad-a-implicados-en-caso-pandora/>

¹³⁸ https://twitter.com/Luis_Santos_C/status/1492301705396076551

¹³⁹ <https://elpulso.hn/2022/02/11/odir-fernandez-con-el-actual-fiscal-y-los-magistrados-continuar-la-impunidad/>

¹⁴⁰ <https://confidencialhn.com/cna-senala-que-el-sobresimiento-definitivo-otorgado-a-imputados-en-caso-pandora-es-un-golpe-de-ilegalidad/>

¹⁴¹ <https://notibomba.com/interventora-del-inprema-transfirió-110-millones-antes-del-traspaso-de-mando-en-honduras/>

¹⁴² <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1511276-466/sectores-repudian-prestamo-inprema-palmerola-investigacion>

¹⁴³ <https://proceso.hn/denuncian-intento-de-sustraccion-de-100-millones-de-inprema-a-una-funeraria-de-el-salvador/>

¹⁴⁴ <https://cespad.org.hn/2022/02/08/culpable-o-inocente-la-historica-repeticion-de-un-juicio-contra-una-ex-primera-dama-en-honduras/>

¹⁴⁵ <https://cespad.org.hn/2022/02/09/los-zapateros-sin-talleres-ni-zapatos-de-la-ex-primera-dama-de-honduras/>

¹⁴⁶ <https://elpulso.hn/2022/02/01/somos-inocentes-inicia-repeticion-del-juicio-por-la-causa-penal-caja-chica-de-la-dama/>

¹⁴⁷ <https://confidencialhn.com/posponen-para-el-21-de-febrero-el-juicio-contra-rosa-elena-bonilla-y-saul-escobar/>

¹⁴⁸ <https://ellibertador.hn/2022/02/04/sin-apoyo-de-rocio-tabora-no-procedia-estafa-movil-marco-bogran/>

IHSS

"The National Unit of Fiscal Support (UNAF) filed a cassation appeal against the sentence of the repetition of the oral and public trial against the former vice ministers of Health, Javier Rodolfo Pastor Vásquez and Labor and Social Security, Carlos Montes Rodríguez, who last November were convicted of improper passive bribery but were acquitted of money laundering in the notorious case of the Honduran Institute of Social Security (IHSS)."¹⁴⁹

State Security Forces

President Castro assumed as the first woman the command of the Honduran Armed Forces.¹⁵⁰

Former members of the Armed Forces ousted by the JOH regime for not supporting him have been reintegrated into the force.¹⁵¹ "Political and social actors announced that 85 percent of the officers expelled by the purging commission will return to the National Police, due to several irregularities in the process by which they were removed. The retired police commissioner, Leandro Osorio, expressed his satisfaction after the removed officers won the lawsuit against the State."^{152 153}

"The authorities of the Ministry of Security and the National Police of Honduras, made several changes in the National Directorates, Departmental Units, Metropolitan and Police Headquarters, of which 40% will be commanded by female officers."¹⁵⁴ "Defense Minister Jose Manuel Zelaya announces that the Ministry of Defense & the Joint Chief of Staff of the military will have human rights offices to follow up on human rights complaints so that these institutions "never again become enemies of the Honduran people""¹⁵⁵

Repressions

Pasos de Animal Grande denounced that a resolution by the special prosecution unit meant to protect defenders is actually justifying abuse by state actors.¹⁵⁶

Penitentiary System

As one of her first acts as the new head of the Armed Forces, Xiomara announced the withdrawal of the Armed Forces from Honduran prisons.¹⁵⁷

Militarization

"The Chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces, José Jorge Fortín, declared that the future of the Military Police of Public Order (PMOP) will depend on President Xiomara Castro."¹⁵⁸

¹⁴⁹ <https://www.mp.hn/publicaciones/mp-presento-recurso-de-casacion-contrasentencia-que-absuelve-por-lavado-de-activos-a-ex-vice-ministros-implicados-en-el-caso-ihss/>

¹⁵⁰ <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/presidenta-xiomara-castro-cargo-comandante-general-fuerzas-armadas-honduras-XY60673>

¹⁵¹ <https://elpulso.hn/2022/02/02/reintegran-en-sus-cargos-a-varios-coroneles-de-ffaa-que-se-opusieron-al-gobierno-de-joh/>

¹⁵² <https://elpulso.hn/2022/02/11/oficiales-removidos-por-junta-depuradora-se-reintegran-a-la-policia/>

¹⁵³ <https://criterio.hn/seran-retomadas-las-denuncias-del-comisionado-leandro-osorio-por-el-presente-gobierno/>

¹⁵⁴ <https://confidencialhn.com/el-40-de-las-efaturas-policiales-en-honduras-seran-dirigidas-por-mujeres/>

¹⁵⁵ <https://twitter.com/HondurasNow/status/1496654235504680963>

¹⁵⁶ <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/denuncias/item/3337-fiscalia-de-proteccion-con-resoluciones-normaliza-agresiones-de-la-policia-contradefensores-de-derechos-humanos>

¹⁵⁷ <https://proceso.hn/la-comandante-general-de-las-ffaa-anuncia-retiro-militar-de-las-carceles/>

¹⁵⁸ <https://elpulso.hn/2022/02/02/jefe-de-ffaa-preve-que-la-presidenta-castro-definira-cual-sera-el-futuro-de-la-policia-militar/>

International Community

Japan granted a \$100 million loan to the Xiomara administration.¹⁵⁹

US

"Oregon's U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley and Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL-09) today led a group of 21 lawmakers in urging the Biden administration to form a strong partnership with Honduras' new leader, President Xiomara Castro. In a letter sent to Secretary Antony Blinken, the bicameral group of lawmakers emphasize the urgency of U.S. and international backing for Castro's platform of human rights, economic, and anti-corruption reform, including her pledges to strengthen human rights protections, form a new, United Nations-led anti-corruption commission, and combat poverty and inequality. They encourage the administration to seize the opportunity presented by new Honduran leadership to seek a fresh and more constructive pathway for U.S.-Honduran relations, one that prioritizes human rights, respect for the rule of law, and inclusive economic development that all Hondurans deserve."¹⁶⁰

US chargé d'affaires met with the new Honduran Foreign Minister Enrique Reina¹⁶¹ and later also with the Minister of Economic Development, Pedro Barquero.¹⁶² US representatives send a letter to Assistant Secretary Brian Nichols at the State Department and USAID Acting Assistant Administrator Peter Natiello "expressing concern over closing civic spaces in Central America and requesting that the Administration prioritize advocacy on behalf of and protections for civil society organizations (CSOs) in the region".¹⁶³ The US embassy met with the new Minister of Human Rights, Natalie Roque.¹⁶⁴

On February 8, the nominated US ambassador to Honduras, Laura Farnsworth Dogu, called for a Strategic Dialogue which would launch in April.¹⁶⁵ The next day, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, Emily Mendrala, traveled to Honduras and met with several Honduran ministers.¹⁶⁶ ¹⁶⁷ On February 18, President Xiomara met with the US embassy.¹⁶⁸ ¹⁶⁹ A week later, SOUTHCOM's Gen. Laura Richardson visited Honduras and met with President Xiomara and Minister of Defense José Manuel Zelaya.¹⁷⁰ ¹⁷¹ The same day, Honduran Foreign Minister Enrique Reina was in the US where he met with USAID's Samantha Power.¹⁷²

The MP signed a memorandum of understanding with the FBI "to strengthen the work of the ATIC".¹⁷³

¹⁵⁹ <https://tiempo.hn/japon-presta-100-millones-dolares-honduras/f>

¹⁶⁰ <https://www.merkley.senate.gov/news/press-releases/senator-merkley-and-rep-schakowsky-lead-colleagues-in-letter-encouraging-the-administration-to-cultivate-a-strong-relationship-with-new-president-xiomara-castro-of-honduras-22>

¹⁶¹ <https://twitter.com/usembassyhn/status/1488644448162615299?ext=HHwWhsC4maGP3agpAAAA>

¹⁶² <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1511333-466/apoyo-estados-unidos-gobierno-presidenta-xiomara-castro>

¹⁶³ <https://torres.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/torres-markey-castro-and-mcgovern-request-state-department-protections>

¹⁶⁴ <https://twitter.com/usembassyhn/status/1493298721857196032>

¹⁶⁵ <https://proceso.hn/eeuu-lanzara-dialogo-estrategico-con-honduras-anuncia-embajadora-nominada/>

¹⁶⁶ <https://twitter.com/usembassyhn/status/1491570452858347521>

¹⁶⁷ <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/emily-mendrala-subsecretaria-estados-unidos-visita-honduras-JA5640218>

¹⁶⁸ <https://twitter.com/XiomaraCastroZ/status/1494848024769703937>

¹⁶⁹ <https://twitter.com/usembassyhn/status/1494786631626371079>

¹⁷⁰ <https://twitter.com/HondurasNow/status/1496657746032312332>

¹⁷¹ <https://twitter.com/XiomaraCastroZ/status/1496665426318831620>

¹⁷² <https://twitter.com/EnriqueReinaHN/status/1496592086006697986>

¹⁷³ https://twitter.com/MP_Honduras/status/1490744955232522240?ext=HHwWgMC4te6omLApAAAA

Drug Trafficking

"Three former police officers, a military officer and three civilians will go on trial on February 22 for allegedly being responsible for the crime of aggravated drug trafficking."¹⁷⁴

"General Ramón Sabillón, Minister of Security, informed (...) that the Honduran National Police has several extradition requests to be executed."¹⁷⁵ 32 Hondurans have been extradited and sentenced in the US for drug trafficking since 2013.¹⁷⁶

In the US, JOH ally Geovanny Fuentes Ramirez was sentenced to life in prison.¹⁷⁷ "U.S. Attorney Damian Williams said: "Geovanny Fuentes Ramirez was convicted of importing tons of cocaine into the United States and protecting his illicit drug business with machine guns. In committing his narcotics crimes, Fuentes Ramirez bribed high-ranking Honduran officials and was responsible for brutal acts of violence and murder. Fuentes Ramirez's path of destruction, both in violence and flooding the United States with cocaine, has finally come to an end, and he will now spend his life in federal prison."¹⁷⁸ Fuentes Ramírez appealed the decision.¹⁷⁹

Varia

The Two Congresses

February started in Honduras with still two Congresses, the one supported by Xiomara led by Luis Redondo and the one backed-up by the Nationalists and Liberals led by Jorge Cálix. On February 1, the Redondo Congress met approving a fuel subsidy and continued talks about derogating the ZEDEs law, among other things.¹⁸⁰ The same day, El Tiempo reported that a meeting took place between Mel Zelaya and Jorge Cálix to discuss the political crisis.¹⁸¹ On February 2, Mel Zelaya later announced that an agreement would be found in the coming days.¹⁸² A political resolution to the crisis became even more urgent as the Constitutional Chamber declared as inadmissible the cases filed both in favor and against the Cálix court (see last month).¹⁸³ Nevertheless, Cálix's lawyer announced to bring the case to the IACHR.¹⁸⁴

On February 3, the Redondo Congress approved the amnesty bill (see below) as well as the nomination of the new Procurator General and his deputy. The manner in which they were confirmed was criticized even people identifying with the goals of the Xiomara administration. "One of the essential elements of the rule of law is that the law rules, which implies the primacy of the Constitution and international human rights treaties. If the Constitution demands certain requirements to hold a position, they must be complied with; not to do so is to violate it."¹⁸⁵

¹⁷⁴ <https://www.mp.hn/publicaciones/a-juicio-siete-presuntos-trafficantes-de-cocaina-entre-ellos-tres-expolicias-y-un-militar/>

¹⁷⁵ <https://confidencialhn.com/ministro-de-seguridad-ramon-sabillon-confirma-solicitudes-de-extradicion-pendientes-de-ejecutar/>

¹⁷⁶ <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/32-hondurenos-pagan-condena-narcotrafico-estados-unidos-DE5745511>

¹⁷⁷ <https://www.univision.com/univision-news/latin-america/geovanny-fuentes-alleged-partner-of-former-honduran-president-bernandez-sentenced-to-life-in-prison-for-drug-trafficking>

¹⁷⁸ <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/honduran-national-geovanny-fuentes-ramirez-sentenced-life-prison-and-ordered-forfeit>

¹⁷⁹ <https://proceso.hn/narcotraficante-hondureno-geovanny-fuentes-apela-sentencia-de-cadena-perpetua/>

¹⁸⁰ <https://radioprogreso.hn/instante/hoy-sesionan-diputados-convocados-por-junta-directiva-que-dirige-luis-redondo/>

¹⁸¹ <https://tiempo.hn/mel-jorge-calix-larga-reunion-revela-fuente/>

¹⁸² <https://elpulso.hn/2022/02/02/expresidente-zelaya-en-los-proximos-dias-habria-un-acuerdo-y-se-ratificaria-a-luis-redondo/>

¹⁸³ <https://criterio.hn/poder-judicial-declara-inadmisibles-recursos-planteados-por-ambas-juntas-directivas-del-congreso-nacional/>

¹⁸⁴ <https://tiempo.hn/abogado-jorge-calix-demandara-honduras-ante-cidh/>

¹⁸⁵ <https://twitter.com/LawyersforHR/status/1489297309376598016?xt=HHwWgMCypeSAhqsAAAA>

OACNUDH also expressed concerns.¹⁸⁶ The criticism was accompanied by calls on the Redondo Congress to abstain from approving laws as long as the situation is not resolved.¹⁸⁷ But given the uncertainty of how long this could take, this puts the Xiomara administration in a bind. They have a clear mandate for change from the people, whose expectations are high as seen for example by the rise in protests of different sectors demanding employment.¹⁸⁸ ¹⁸⁹ So they need to deliver, which is undermined by the political crisis. And of course, the powers that lost the elections will do everything to undermine the new administration.

On February 6, there was suddenly some hope for a resolution of the crisis. Several media outlets reported about a meeting the next day between Libre coordinator Mel Zelaya and the dissident deputies to signed a joint statement on an agreement found over the weekend.¹⁹⁰ ¹⁹¹ The next day, Zelaya and Cáliz met and announced a deal¹⁹² that integrated the dissident Libre members of Congress back into the party and recognized the pact of the opposition alliance which led Luis Redondo to be the president of Congress.¹⁹³ "Political and social actors considered that the agreement established between the dissident faction and the general coordinator of Libertad y Refundación (Libre), Manuel Zelaya, will strengthen the country's legislative work and the institutionality of the State."¹⁹⁴

The next day, for the first time, the new Congress came together as one.¹⁹⁵ Libre and PSH interpreted this as a resound support for Luis Redondo as the president of Congress. The Liberal Party also recognized the presidency of Luis Redondo.¹⁹⁶ Only the National Party did not do so.¹⁹⁷

But this did not stop Congress to start introducing important legislation.¹⁹⁸ "LIBRE introduced a proposal to overturn the Law for Hourly Employment in Hond. Congress. That law was a keystone of golpista neoliberal labor policy making workers « temporary » eliminating salaries & benefits."¹⁹⁹ ²⁰⁰

As expected, the business lobby immediately started a campaign of fear mongering claiming a possible derogation of the law would cost 700'000 jobs.²⁰¹ At the same time, the chamber of commerce from Cortés said to be open for reforms to the law.²⁰² Javier Suazo later also commented on the topic. "An initial problem is that the main objective of the law passed during the JOH government was not fulfilled, which was intended to promote decent employment, maintain jobs and prevent the growth of unemployment and underemployment rates in the country" (Article No. 1 of the Hourly Employment Law). Spurious and poor quality work has become widespread, and unemployment and underemployment have been on the rise, aggravated by Covid-19, the sharp drop in public and private investment and corruption. Likewise, the law is outdated, since the principles established in the Country Vision (2010-2032) and the National Plan (2010-2022) no

186 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/148970835559787251?ctx=HHwWhoC-pen2wKwpAAAA>

187 <https://criterio.hn/instan-a-facciones-que-rigen-el-congreso-de-honduras-abstenerse-de-aprobar-leyes-hasta-resolver-crisis/>

188 <https://confidencialhn.com/maestros-se-toman-bulevar-faa-exigiendo-asignacion-de-plazas/>

189 <https://confidencialhn.com/militantes-de-libre-se-toman-instalaciones-de-la-secretaria-de-salud/>

190 <https://tiempo.hn/crisis-en-cn-se-solucionaria-acuerdo-reunion/>

191 <https://proceso.hn/la-crisis-esta-casi-resuelta-dice-diputada-del-psh-sobre-fraccion-en-el-congreso-nacional/>

192 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/acuerdo-firmado-resolver-crisis-congreso-nacional-NF5531348>

193 <https://radioprogresohn.net/ponada/negociaciones-politicas-ponen-fin-a-conflicto-en-el-congreso-nacional/>

194 <https://elpulso.hn/2022/02/07/actores-consideran-que-acuerdo-en-libre-fortalece-la-institucionalidad-del-pais/>

195 <https://criterio.hn/sin-nueva-votacion-y-con-presencia-de-diputados-disidentes-se-reconoce-a-luis-redondo-como-presidente-del-congreso/>

196 <https://proceso.hn/partido-liberal-dice-que-ahora-esta-dispuesto-a-trabajar-con-luis-redondo-por-el-bien-de-honduras/>

197 <https://confidencialhn.com/se-soluciona-la-crisis-en-libre-pero-no-el-problema-legal-se-debe-hacer-una-nueva-votacion-senala-tomas-zambrano/>

198 <https://radioprogresohn.net/aplicacion-movil/lluvias-de-proyecto-de-ley-en-el-congreso-nacional/>

199 <https://twitter.com/hondurasol/status/1491399655862640640>

200 <https://confidencialhn.com/esta-comprobado-que-una-sociedad-con-empleo-por-hora-no-crece-economicamente-gilberto-rios/>

201 <https://confidencialhn.com/cohep-advierte-que-derogacion-de-la-ley-de-empleo-por-hora-dejaria-en-la-calle-a-700-mil-trabajadores/>

202 <https://confidencialhn.com/sector-empresarial-esta-abierto-a-que-se-revise-y-mejore-la-ley-de-empleo-por-hora-pero-advierten-que-derogarla-traeria-consecuencias-negativas-ccic/>

longer exist as guiding frameworks for policies and institutional and stakeholder interventions, as these planning instruments have been outdated and abandoned. (...) A new policy and legislation for sustainable and good quality jobs and wages is not independent of the economic and social crisis facing the country, and of the economic, financial, sectoral and social policies that the new government intends to implement. An effort must be made to build a more heterodox policy approach, so as not to fall into the facile approach of external indebtedness accompanied by indiscriminate reductions in public spending, tax increases and privatization of companies recommended by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which is partly to blame for the current crisis. The problem is no longer JOH, but the neo-liberal model set up in these 12 years and characterized by over-indebtedness, corruption, dispossession, poverty, migration and social exclusion.²⁰³

On February 19, Secretary of Congress, Carlos Zelaya, announced that the Law for Hourly Employment may be reformed instead of outright derogated.²⁰⁴ By then, The business lobby COHEP was open to discuss such a reform.²⁰⁵

Amnesty Bill

On February 2, the Redondo Congress approved "an amnesty for the Hondurans criminalized & imprisoned for defending democracy, territory, public education & healthcare & their dignity since the 2009 coup until now".²⁰⁶ ²⁰⁷ While this part was undisputed in civil society circles and the new administration, another part stirred widespread criticism. "This law includes an amnesty decree that favors defenders of sovereignty, land and water sources, but would also give impunity to public officials from the period between 2006 and 2009, who could be extinguished for corruption-related crimes."²⁰⁸ Ligia Ramos, PSH congresswoman, called for the creation of a commission led by COFADEH and the Ministry of Human Rights and accompanied by OACNUDH which would decide a case-by-case if amnesty would be granted.²⁰⁹ "Ligia Ramos stated in the plenary session that she was making these suggestions because "the spirit of this decree is to get our political prisoners out of prison and to allow the exiled people to return, at no time is this decree to give impunity to any criminal".²¹⁰ UFERCO coordinator Luis Santos tweeted: "At a time when citizens are demanding PUNISHMENT against the corrupt, it is ill-advised to include in an Amnesty decree crimes against the public administration, such as Illicit Enrichment and Embezzlement of Public Funds."²¹¹ Edmundo Orellana, who assesses the new administration on transparency and corruption, even called it a new impunity pact.²¹² ²¹³

COFADEH later also reacted.²¹⁴ "The spirit of the amnesty law is to guarantee that those who have been criminalized for fighting for democracy, for natural resources and those who fight for the right

²⁰³ <https://www.alainet.org/es/articulo/214957>

²⁰⁴ <https://proceso.hn/ley-de-empleo-por-hora-derivara-en-una-reforma-y-no-en-su-derogacion-segun-secretario-del-congreso/>

²⁰⁵ <https://confidencialhn.com/ley-de-empleo-por-hora-puede-reformarse-para-dar-mayor-seguridad-indica-directivo-del-cohep/>

²⁰⁶ <https://twitter.com/HondurasNow/status/1489100934823043076?ctx=HHwWjCj7aParkKopAAAA>

²⁰⁷ <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/es-co/contexto/item/3338-presentan-proyecto-de-ley-para-condenar-el-golpe-de-estado-y-otorgar-amnistia-para-presos-politicos-y-presos-de-conciencia>

²⁰⁸ <https://contracorriente.red/2022/02/03/diputados-oficialistas-aprueban-amnistia-que-favorece-a-exfuncionarios-del-gobierno-de-manuel-zelaya/>

²⁰⁹ <https://twitter.com/dermaligia/status/1489310967427121158?ctx=HHwWjCj2eSbjKspAAAA>

²¹⁰ <https://contracorriente.red/2022/02/03/diputados-oficialistas-aprueban-amnistia-que-favorece-a-exfuncionarios-del-gobierno-de-manuel-zelaya/>

²¹¹ https://twitter.com/Luis_Santos_C/status/1489324945662488583?ctx=HHwWjCj51bbJkqspAAAA

²¹² <https://twitter.com/mundoorellana/status/1489266762189131778?ctx=HHwWjCjgqO-KopAAAA>

²¹³ <https://confidencialhn.com/como-un-nuevo-pacto-de-impunidad-califica-ministro-asesor-en-materia-de-transparencia-y-combate-a-la-corrupcion-la-amnistia-aprobada-por-el-congreso-nacional/>

²¹⁴ <https://www.defensoresonlinea.com/congreso-nacional-aprueba-amnistia-para-los-presos-politicos/>

to public demonstration in Honduras receive justice. The catalog of crimes was included because many defenders of property and nature were criminalized with the new penal code. COFADEH, together with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, can certify who are victims of this persecution. We have the files. Regarding the criteria to determine who are the politically persecuted, these last years we have been publishing who are the politically persecuted and why. We have those criteria clear and established."²¹⁵ "Ramón Barrios, legal professional and congressman of the Libertad y Refundación party (Libre) for Cortés, acknowledged this Friday that the Law that condemns the 2009 Coup d'Etat, could be taken advantage of by some officials who have committed irregular acts in the country and that have nothing to do with situations of a political nature. He pointed out that "I am sure that there will be officials who will want to take advantage of this first item but will not pass the test because their actions went beyond political crimes that have to do with bad performance or acts of corruption".²¹⁶ Other observers still called it an impunity pact - while the intention of some seemed legitimate,²¹⁷ it was just laughable when a Nationalist congressman stated that "never before has there been so great a blanket of impunity".²¹⁸

On February 5, the amnesty bill was published in La Gaceta, becoming law.²¹⁹ This did not put the discussions about the law to rest. Vice-president Doris Gutiérrez raised an additional point.²²⁰ The Redondo Congress should strive to be better than the Nationalist-controlled Congress that came before them. This is true, the expectations are higher, but not only in form, but also in substance. Given the attempts to undermine the Xiomara administration, the former is difficult to deliver without compromising on the first.

COFADEH requested the application of the amnesty law to five university students from Comayagua, criminalized since 2017 for defending public education, as well as for criminalized campesinos belonging to the Empresa Campesina 11.²²¹ They also requested its application to the cases of Faustino Enamorado Guillén and his brother Ovidio Enamorado Guillén, member of the Indigenous Council of Las Vegas.²²² Based on the law, COFADEH also prepared the return of exiled student leader Eduardo Urbina who had to flee Honduras in 2017.²²³ On February 24, COFADEH announced to have had a first successful case based on the new Amnesty Law, a judge ordered the liberation of political prisoner José Antonio Torres Meza.²²⁴

At the end of the month, the Amnesty Law was applied for the first time to a case linked to the Mel Zelaya administration, the former Minister Enrique Flores Lanza. This was met with criticism.²²⁵

²¹⁵ <https://canal6.com.hn/cofadeh-aclara-puntos-del-decreto-de-amnistia-no-es-para-defender-delincuentes.html>

²¹⁶ <https://confidencialhn.com/reconocen-que-algunos-politicos-podrian-aprovechase-de-la-ley-que-condena-el-golpe-de-estado-de-2009/>

²¹⁷ <https://criterio.hn/rechazo-total-a-pacto-de-impunidad-disfrazado-de-supuesta-amnistia-aprobado-por-congreso/>

²¹⁸ <https://confidencialhn.com/amnistia-era-innecesaria-ya-se-habia-aprobado-una-en-2010-nunca-se-habia-dado-un-manto-de-impunidad-tan-grande-marco-midence/>

²¹⁹ <https://criterio.hn/publican-en-la-gaceta-controvertida-ley-de-amnistia-politica-e-instauracion-de-comision-anticorrupcion/>

²²⁰ <https://confidencialhn.com/vicepresidenta-doris-gutierrez-lamenta-que-en-el-congreso-se-haga-lo-mismo-que-se-critico/>

²²¹ <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/cofadeh-solicita-que-se-aplique-amnistia-para-cinco-estudiantes-criminalizados-en-comayagua/>

²²² <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/cofadeh-solicita-amnistia-para-defensores-criminalizados-y-torturados-de-santa-barbara/>

²²³ <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/los-exiliados-volveremos-para-abrazar-a-nuestras-familias/>

²²⁴ <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/cofadeh-logra-primer-liberacion-tras-aplicar-a-amnistia-politica/>

²²⁵ <https://criterio.hn/flores-landa-el-primer-exfuncionario-del-derrocado-gobierno-de-manuel-zelaya-que-se-beneficia-con-amnistia/>

Debt

On February 15, Congress declared a fiscal and financial emergency.²²⁶ Economist Claudio Salgado sees it as the only option to move forward given that the new administration received a broke country after 12 years of dictatorship.²²⁷ Criterio reported on the problematic role the IMF played during the JOH regime whitewashing the real economic situation of the country.²²⁸ ContraCorriente also reported on this. "This declaration of emergency is important because we have insufficient resources to pay for everything, and the objective of declaring emergency is because this will allow us to obtain loans with the BCH, because in article 40 of its law, in order to lend us some of its funds, it is necessary to declare the fiscal and financial emergency in which we are already in and legalize it", the undersecretary continued explaining. The vice-president of the National Congress, Hugo Noé Pino, who was also president of the Central Bank and Minister of Finance in the country, agrees with this. The congressman pointed out in the legislative session that in the first quarter of this year, specifically in the month of March, the State of Honduras will have to pay sovereign bonds, which represent a large amount of internal debt resources."²²⁹

The Xiomara administration announced to decrease public spending by 12% saving 13 billion Lempiras. They dismissed the idea of raising taxes or creating new ones. FOSDEH's Ismael Zepeda suggested: "If the administration wants to reduce public expenditure, what it should do is to reduce the bureaucratic mass, reduce secretariats and lower the salaries of public officials and parliamentarians".²³⁰ "They earned substantial monthly salaries for a long time. They had privileges such as representation expenses, per diems and special bonuses. And their working hours were more flexible compared to private sector employees. And as if that were not enough, they were paid exorbitant amounts of money once they finished their time in their assigned positions; some finished early, while others did so until their term expired. The previous government presided by Juan Orlando Hernández allocated large amounts of national resources to liquidate its senior officials, including secretaries, undersecretaries, presidents and directors of central administration agencies, including decentralized entities, which ended up triggering the payment of labor indemnities at the end of last year. The State disbursed 1,156 million lempiras in benefits only in December 2021, which coincides with the departure of senior officials who received high severance payments, although the amount includes severance payments to all personnel canceled by the government."²³¹ The debate about salary reductions then became more real when Libre congressman Samuel Madrid presented a bill to reduce by 50% the salaries of public employees, members of Congress and magistrates when they earn more than 60'000 Lempiras per month.²³² This spurred a lively debate, even within Libre.²³³ According to an analysis by El Heraldito, in December 2021, under the JOH regime, at least 1516 public officials earned more than 60'000 Lempiras per month.²³⁴

226 <https://confidencialhn.com/cn-aprueba-declarar-estado-de-emergencia-fiscal-y-financiera-del-sector-publico/>

227 <https://ellibertador.hn/2022/02/17/honduras-quebrada-emergencia-fiscal-de-2000-millones-era-inevitable-economista/>

228 <https://criterio.hn/falsa-percepcion-del-representante-del-fmi-sobre-la-economia-heredada-por-joh/>

229 <https://contracorriente.red/2022/02/18/nuevo-gobierno-se-declara-en-quebra-y-entra-en-estado-de-emergencia-fiscal/>

230 <https://elpulso.hn/2022/02/20/gobierno-de-honduras-anuncia-una-sustancial-reduccion-de-12-por-ciento-en-gasto-publico/>

231 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/elheraldoplus/data/gobierno-honduras-prestaciones-diciembre-2021-YL5926100>

232 <https://elpulso.hn/2022/02/23/expertos-aplauden-mocion-para-reducir-el-salario-de-los-diputados-y-altos-funcionarios/>

233 <https://criterio.hn/reduccion-de-salarios-a-congresistas-y-altos-funcionarios-en-honduras-genera-desacuerdos-entre-diputados/>

234 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/elheraldoplus/data/honduras-1-500-funcionarios-ganan-arriba-60-mil-lempiras-GK6084866>

On February 21, President Xiomara tasked the Finance Minister Rixi Moncada to present to the public a report on the dire financial situation inherited by the JOH regime.²³⁵ About half the budget is used for servicing Honduras' debt.²³⁶ On February 24, the report was presented which revealed that the JOH regime stole 168 billion Lempiras during its time in office. Just one day before Xiomara took office, 400 million Lempiras were withdrawn from state finances.²³⁷ ²³⁸ A day later, Minister of Finance Rixi Moncada "presented a palliative plan to address the crisis, including salary reductions, sale of the presidential plane, elimination of trusts and criminal actions against those responsible for acts of corruption".²³⁹

Electricity

According to Pedro Barquero, head of the Ministry of Economic Development and Social Inclusion, the electricity subsidy for poor households approved by Congress²⁴⁰ would cost some 300 million Lempiras. Economists propose to finance this by getting rid of tax exemptions which cost Honduras some 43 billion Lempiras.²⁴¹ Apart from electricity prices, the question about the fate of the National Electric Energy Company (ENEE) is also on the table. "Mario Zelaya, an expert in energy issues, assured that the National Electric Energy Company (ENEE) can recover in seven years, by making the right decisions, placing the right people and approaching friendly countries to help solve this problem."²⁴²

And regarding electricity, "[t]he National Anti-Corruption Council (CNA) unveiled a report revealing that Honduran politicians and businessmen benefited from amnesties and debt cancellations with the National Electric Energy Company (ENEE), which caused a multi-million dollar damage to the state-owned electric company".²⁴³

Education

The new Minister of Education Daniel Sponda inaugurated the school year 2022 on February 2 and announced semi-face-to-face classes in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health.²⁴⁴ But by mid-February, this had not materialized and a teacher leader even spoke of April as a new possible date for pupils returning to class.²⁴⁵ At the same time, only 355,000 children were enrolled in the national education system, with more than 2 million still needed.²⁴⁶

"The Central American Bank for Economic Integration (BCIE) approved a loan for 73 million dollars to improve schools and colleges in poor condition in the country, informed [on February 5] the head of Education, Daniel Sponda."²⁴⁷ La Prensa reports on the abysmal conditions of rural

²³⁵ <https://twitter.com/XiomaraCastroZ/status/1495633647919116290>

²³⁶ <https://elpulso.hn/2022/02/21/unos-50-de-cada-100-lempiras-es-invertido-en-el-pago-de-la-deuda-externa-hondurena/>

²³⁷ <https://criterio.hn/gobierno-de-xiomara-castro-expone-saqueo-de-las-finanzas-durante-gobiernos-nacionalistas/>

²³⁸ <https://www.expedientepublico.org/honduras-u-68-mil-millones-representa-supuesta-corrupcion-del-gobierno-de-juan-orlando-herandez/>

²³⁹ <https://criterio.hn/gobierno-de-honduras-contempla-ejecutar-plan-de-alivio-para-enfrentar-crisis-financiera-y-economica/>

²⁴⁰ <https://criterio.hn/congreso-de-honduras-aprueba-subsidio-energetico-y-rebaja-de-l-10-a-los-combustibles/>

²⁴¹ <https://ellibertador.hn/2022/02/01/subsidio-de-energia-a-poblacion-en-pobreza-costara-300-millones/>

²⁴² <https://criterio.hn/enec-podria-recuperarse-en-siete-anos-al-ejecutar-decisiones-idoneas-ahora-dice-experto/>

²⁴³ <https://criterio.hn/politicos-y-empresarios-fueron-beneficiados-con-amnistias-que-ocasionaron-multimillonario-perjuicio-a-la-enee/>

²⁴⁴ <https://ellibertador.hn/2022/02/02/salud-y-educacion-apuntan-a-reinsertar-dos-millones-de-escolares-excluidos/>

²⁴⁵ <https://proceso.hn/magisterio-extiende-hasta-abril-posible-retorno-a-clases-presenciales/>

²⁴⁶ <https://proceso.hn/honduras-355-mil-ninos-matriculados-en-sistema-educativo-faltan-mas-de-2-millones/>

²⁴⁷ <https://proceso.hn/sponda-anuncia-prestamo-por-73-millones-del-bcie-para-mejorar-escuelas/>

schools in Honduras.²⁴⁸ On February 9, "[t]he interim teachers reached an agreement with the Education authorities and suspended the sit-ins they were holding in the departmental directorates at the national level".²⁴⁹

A bill by Libre's Rasel Tomé spurred a widespread debate this month. The bill seeks to eliminate the admission test or Academic Attitude Test (PAA) for admission to study at the National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH), considered by many to be exclusive and arbitrary. Criterio had a summary of the debate.²⁵⁰ So did ContraCorriente. "Academics, experts in educational quality, leaders and former student leaders of the UNAH, agree that the Academic Aptitude Test (PAA) does generate exclusion; however, some argue that the National Congress does not have the power to eliminate it and, on the other hand, the debate on the PAA reveals other aspects, such as supply and demand at the higher level, as well as the exclusion and privatization of education that starts in primary and secondary school."²⁵¹

Public Health

The new Minister of Health José Matheu had a rough start under pressure by health workers demanding fixed contracts. They had been promised by the JOH regime for months but it never delivered. This month, the National Party suddenly changed gear and demanded an immediate employment of them by the new administration further trying to undermine its work. Libre congressman Sergio Castellanos offered words of support for Matheu explaining that change needs time and he welcomed some of the actions already taken by Matheu, e.g. that the National Anti-Corruption Council (CNA) will be the main auditor of the Ministry of Health.²⁵² ²⁵³ And regarding the health workers, Matheu then offered a three-month contract to use the time to get an overview of the situation and clean up irregularities.²⁵⁴ On February 8, "[t]he Ministry of Health informed (...) that the process of appointment agreements has been halted due to the detection of personnel who are not in the first line of care against the pandemic. The Minister of Health, José Manuel Matheu, read a communiqué from the institution detailing that among the eight thousand agreements that are being processed by the Secretariat and the Civil Service Directorate, personnel that do not belong to the first line were detected. In this sense, the Ministry of Health argued that in order to comply with the law and to be fair, it stops the delivery of all the agreements in its possession. It announced the integration of a multisectorial commission with representatives of legally constituted professional, labor and trade union organizations. He also informed that the National Anti-Corruption Council (CNA) will be in charge of reviewing each agreement and issuing an opinion as to which candidates meet the indispensable requirements."²⁵⁵

²⁴⁸ <https://www.laprensa.hn/premium/escuelas-rurales-clases-semipresenciales-honduras-DA5651173>

²⁴⁹ <https://confidencial.hn.com/maestros-interinos-llegan-a-un-acuerdo-provisional-con-autoridades-de-educacion-y-suspenden-protestas/>

²⁵⁰ <https://criterio.hn/polemica-entre-la-unah-y-el-congreso-genera-decreto-que-pretende-eliminar-prueba-de-admision/>

²⁵¹ <https://contracorriente.red/2022/02/26/propuesta-de-eliminar-paa-de-la-unah-desnuda-exclusion-educativa-desde-la-primaria/>

²⁵² <https://elpulso.hn/2022/02/02/diputado-de-libre-respalda-labor-del-secretario-de-salud-y-pide-que-lo-dejen-trabajar/>

²⁵³ <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1511171-466/equipo-cna-acompa%C3%B1a-revision-acuerdos-otorgados-personal-sanitario>

²⁵⁴ <https://elpulso.hn/2022/02/02/salud-dara-contratos-temporales-mientras-depura-los-salarios-excesivos-y-plazas-dobles/>

²⁵⁵ <https://proceso.hn/salud-detiene-proceso-de-nombramiento-por-deteccion-de-empleados-que-no-est-an-en-primera-linea/>

On February 11, Matheu denounced that the JOH regime left them with expired drugs worth 215 million Lempiras.²⁵⁶ The MP announced an investigation.²⁵⁷

On February 13, the mobile hospital in San Pedro Sula reported a 100% occupancy rate with corona patients.²⁵⁸ Doctor Carlos Umaña feared an imminent collapse of the public health system.²⁵⁹

Honduras received 108'000 vaccine doses meant for children on February 1.²⁶⁰ Only 35% of Hondurans had received three shots against COVID-19 by the start of the month.²⁶¹

Elections

CESPAD looked back at the work of the Electoral Justice Tribunal (TJE) during the electoral period and comes to the conclusion that it failed at its task.²⁶² As Eduardo Enrique Reina had left the Electoral Justice Tribunal (TJE) to become the new foreign minister, the electoral body is currently without the necessary number of magistrates. They are expecting Congress to nominate a replacement soon in order to continue with their work.²⁶³

After last November's general elections, the CNE ordered a repetition of the election in Duyure, Choluteca and Wampusirpi, Gracias a Dios (see last month). But to be executed, a ruling by the Supreme Court is needed which has not yet materialized.²⁶⁴

Poverty

"José Carlos Cardona, head of the Secretariat of Development and Social Inclusion (SEDIS), announced on Monday the elimination of the Vida Mejor and Guías de Familia programs, promoted in recent years by the administration of former President Juan Orlando Hernández. The elimination of these programs would give way to the project called "Red Solidaria" to fight extreme poverty in Honduras, one of the Central American nations most affected by this problem."²⁶⁵ Congress also plans to reduce the value added tax from 15% to 12%.²⁶⁶ But according to vice-president Salvador Nasralla, such a measure would take time to implement.²⁶⁷ The new head of the National Statistics Institute (INE), Eugenio Sosa, commented on the extremely concerning poverty levels in Honduras. Poverty reached 73.6% in the country.²⁶⁸

The prices of basic goods has increased by 600 Lempiras the last six months.²⁶⁹ "With a debt of 80 million Lempiras, the National Supplier of Basic Goods (Banasupro) will be handed over to the new authorities of the government of President Xiomara Castro, informed the general manager of the

²⁵⁶ <https://proceso.hn/ministro-de-salud-denuncia-l-215-millones-en-medicamentos-vencidos/>

²⁵⁷ <https://confidencialhn.com/ministerio-publico-abrira-investigacion-por-denuncia-de-l-215-millones-en-medicamentos-vencidos/>

²⁵⁸ <https://confidencialhn.com/al-100-ocupacion-de-pacientes-con-covid-19-en-el-hospital-movil-de-sps/>

²⁵⁹ <https://tiempo.hn/doctor-umana-colaso-sistema-salud-honduras/>

²⁶⁰ <https://proceso.hn/llegan-108-mil-dosis-de-vacunas-pediatricas-contr-la-covid-19-a-honduras/>

²⁶¹ <https://confidencialhn.com/solo-el-35-de-los-hondurenos-han-recibido-las-tres-dosis-de-vacuna-contr-la-covid-19/>

²⁶² <https://cespad.org.hn/2022/02/02/elecciones-politicas-2021-en-honduras-la-evidencia-del-fallido-tribunal-de-justicia-electoral/>

²⁶³ <https://confidencialhn.com/el-tje-espera-que-el-congreso-nacional-nombre-el-nuevo-magistrado-propietario-para-dictar-sentencias-pendientes/>

²⁶⁴ <https://proceso.hn/no-se-repetira-comicios-en-duyure-y-wampusirpi-mientras-fallo-de-la-csj-no-este-firme-kelvin-aguirre/>

²⁶⁵ <https://confidencialhn.com/sedis-eliminara-programas-vida-mejor-guias-de-familia-y-dara-paso-al-proyecto-red-solidaria/>

²⁶⁶ <https://elpulso.hn/2022/02/12/presentan-iniciativa-en-el-congreso-para-bajar-de-15-a-12-por-ciento-el-pago-por-iv/>

²⁶⁷ <https://confidencialhn.com/rebaja-del-iv-si-es-posible-solo-que-de-manera-gradual-asegura-designado-salvador-nasralla/>

²⁶⁸ <https://tiempo.hn/ine-en-honduras-siete-de-cada-diez-viven-en-pobreza/>

²⁶⁹ <https://www.laprensa.hn/premium/canasta-basica-subion-600-lempiras-seis-meses-honduras-JA5750038>

entity, Merlin Cárcamo."²⁷⁰ Labor unions will demand between a 7-12% increase in the minimum wage.²⁷¹

Children's Rights

"The Supreme Court of Justice of Honduras recognizes the violations of the rights of children living in the streets. This legal action was filed in 2020 at the beginning of the pandemic by 6 organizations and is another step towards the vindication of rights."^{272 273}

Migration

Over 6000 Hondurans were deported back to the country in January, that is more than double than in January 2021.²⁷⁴ "According to the report cited by Coiprodén, as of February 6, 1,332 children have already returned from Mexico and the United States, with a 25% increase in the participation of Honduran girls in the migratory route."²⁷⁵ The Honduran Foreign Minister Enrique Reina, in the US this month, asked for a new Temporary Protection Status for Hondurans suffering the impacts of the two hurricanes Eta and Iota in 2019 and the pandemic.²⁷⁶

Violence

The first month of 2022 had seen a 100% increase in violent deaths compared to 2021. Migdonia Ayestas, coordinator of UNAH's Violence Observatory, called on the new government to tackle the structural roots of the violence.²⁷⁷ The nomination last month of Ramón Sabillón was a first hopeful sign that things may change. This month, the Xiomara administration additionally nominated the former head of the forensic medicine unit at the MP, Julissa Villanueva, as the deputy minister of security.²⁷⁸

Coup d'état

"The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) admitted the complaint filed after the 2009 coup d'état by the victims of the systematic violation of human rights, which included deaths, torture, imprisonment, persecution, among others. The communication was sent in December to the previous government but was not disclosed."²⁷⁹

²⁷⁰ <https://confidencialhn.com/con-una-deuda-millonaria-entregaran-banapro-al-gobierno-de-presidenta-xiomara-castro/>

²⁷¹ <https://elpulso.hn/2022/02/14/obrerios-pedir-an-aumento-de-12-a-salario-minimo-es-elevado-dicen-empresarios/>

²⁷² <https://twitter.com/MovAmplioHn/status/1496658483244109827>

²⁷³ <https://confidencialhn.com/sala-de-lo-constitucional-admite-que-derechos-humanos-de-ninos-que-viven-en-las-calles-son-violentados/>

²⁷⁴ <https://proceso.hn/eeuu-mexico-y-paises-centroamericanos-deportaron-a-6094-hondurenos-en-enero/>

²⁷⁵ <https://criterio.hn/ninez-migrante-de-honduras-un-problema-en-ascenso-cuya-solucion-es-compartida-con-ee-uu/>

²⁷⁶ <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/cancilleria-solicita-nuevo-tps-catastrofe-economica-honduras-AM6086046>

²⁷⁷ <https://criterio.hn/honduras-la-violencia-es-estructural-nuevo-gobierno-debe-reforzar-politicas-de-seguridad/>

²⁷⁸ <https://proceso.hn/nombran-a-julissa-villanueva-como-vice-ministra-de-seguridad/>

²⁷⁹ <https://confidencialhn.com/cidh-admite-denuncia-por-violaciones-de-derechos-humanos-tras-el-golpe-de-estado-de-2009/>

And Light at the End of a Month

"Honduran scientist Maria Elena Bottazzi was nominated Tuesday for the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize for her work to develop and distribute a low-cost covid-19 vaccine to people around the world without patent limitation."²⁸⁰

"The Supreme Court of Justice of Honduras declared unconstitutional the Law for the Protection of Plant Varieties, also known as Monsanto Law, approved by the Congress of the Central American country in 2012. Based on this legislation, it was prohibited to save seeds, give them away and exchange them. This initiative occurred within the framework of the advance of the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV), an organization that, as GRAIN explains, "works exclusively and explicitly for the privatization of seeds worldwide, through the imposition of intellectual property rights on plant varieties." The Honduran State is one of the signatories to the UPOV Convention."²⁸¹

And of course this: After over 900 days illegally held in pre-trial detention, the Guapinol defenders were freed.²⁸²

280 <https://elpulso.hn/2022/02/01/nominan-a-la-cientifica-hondurena-maria-elena-bottazzi-al-premio-nobel-de-la-paz/>

281 <https://www.biodiversidadla.org/Agencia-de-Noticias-Biodiversidadla/Semillas-en-manos-campesinas-un-fallo-a-favor-de-la-soberania-alimentaria-en-Honduras>

282 <https://www.radiohrn.hn/honduras-justicia-liberacion-defensores-guapinol-oacnudh>

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