

# *Another Month in Honduras...*

## Human Rights Monitor – January 2023

What a horrible start into the new year. Four human rights defenders were murdered this month. Aly Domínguez and Jairo Bonilla from Guapinol, campesino leader Omar Cruz Tomé, and Garífuna defender Ricardo Arnául Montero. There was also the murder of television editor Carlos Gerardo Barahona and the femicides of three Garífuna women Janahira Aranda, Ana Castillo and Cristy Espinosa. President Xiomara started her second year in office. One key promise, to combat corruption, hinges on various things, one key aspect being the election of a new Supreme Court. At the end of the month, the Nomination Board presented its 45 candidates out of which Congress will elect the 15 new Supreme Court judges in February. The need for a new court was once again emphasized this month with the current court dropping important MACCIH-era corruption cases. Lastly some news from the US, JOH's drug trafficking trial was postponed to September 2023. Welcome to another month in Honduras.

In solidarity,

Daniel Langmeier

Honduras Forum Switzerland

## Table of Contents

Abbreviations.....	3
Human Rights and Their Defenders.....	4
Assassinations.....	4
Attacks, Criminalization and Harassment.....	5
Indigenous Peoples.....	7
Freedom of Expression and Journalists.....	7
Assassinations.....	7
Violence against Women.....	8
Extractive Industries.....	8
ZEDEs.....	9
Mining.....	9
Corruption and Its Enemies.....	9
CICIH.....	10
The Onslaught against the Anti-Corruption Bodies.....	10
Mobile Hospitals.....	11
Invest-H.....	11
IHSS.....	11
State Security Forces.....	11
Assassinations.....	12
Penitentiary System.....	13
International Community.....	13
US.....	14
Drug Trafficking.....	14
JOH.....	15
Varia.....	16
Supreme Court Election.....	16
Xiomara.....	18
Migration.....	19
Poverty.....	19
Education.....	20
2023 Budget.....	20
And Light at the End of a Month.....	21

# Abbreviations

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

# Human Rights and Their Defenders

## Assassinations

On January 7, devastating news came from Guapinol. "It is with great sadness and a cry for justice that we denounce today's murders of Guapinol community human rights defenders and fathers Aly Domínguez and Jairo Bonilla. Aly, brother of our comrade Reynaldo Dominguez, is also one of 32 people criminalized by the mining company Inversiones Los Pinares and the State of Honduras for defending the Carlos Escaleras National Park against their illegal mining project."<sup>1 2 3</sup> Their assassination was widely condemned in Honduras.<sup>4</sup> OACNUDH called for a swift and independent investigation.<sup>5</sup> So did UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders Mary Lawlor<sup>6</sup> as well as various embassies.<sup>7 8</sup> Joaquín Mejía explained how the Xiomara administration is also responsible for the murder of the two Guapinol defenders. "Because it has not suspended or declared null and void the concessions granted to Los Pinares, a company owned by Lenir Pérez and Ana Facussé".<sup>9</sup>

The Municipal Committee for the Defense of Common and Public Goods held a press conference on January 10. "The Municipal Committee for the Defense of Common and Public Goods, before the criminal act occurred against the neighbors of Guapinol; Aly Domínguez and Jairo Bonilla, murdered in the afternoon of Saturday, January 07, 2023, expresses consternation, indignation and pain, at the same time we are present to accompany and make public our solidarity with the Domínguez and Bonilla families, and the community."<sup>10</sup> Joaquín Mejía explained why the police and public prosecutor from Tocoa should not be allowed to participate in the investigation of the murders due to lack of independence.<sup>11</sup> A case in point, the police claimed that the two Guapinol defenders were murdered as part of a common robbery...<sup>12</sup> Even worse: "Karen Edith Martínez Guardado, do you remember her? She is the prosecutor who used illegal evidence to criminalize 8 Guapinol defenders who spent 2.5 years in prison. Now she is the prosecutor in charge of the case of 2 murdered defenders who says that the motive was robbery."<sup>13</sup> "Environmental leaders and communities in resistance against extractive projects in the department of Colón are demanding that the government of President Xiomara Castro appoint a high-level commission to independently and effectively investigate the murder of Aly Domínguez and Jairo Bonilla, two environmental leaders who defend the Guapinol River and the Carlos Escaleras National Park."<sup>14</sup>

ContraCorriente published an important investigation into the economic ties between Lenir Pérez and the State of Honduras. "Lenir Pérez, the businessman who owns the concessions in the Guapinol mine and the Palmerola airport, maintains his power intact despite the official discourse

---

1 <https://www.guapinolresiste.org/post/alerta-ante-asesinato-de-defensores-en-guapinol>  
2 <https://criterio.hn/asesinan-a-dos-defensores-del-rio-guapinol-y-parque-nacional-carlos-escaleras/>  
3 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/11/honduras-environmental-defenders-shot-dead-guapinol-mine>  
4 <https://twitter.com/RoqueNatalie/status/1612222083123003392>  
5 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDH/status/1612159041471483910>  
6 <https://twitter.com/MaryLawlor/status/1613206600944066562>  
7 <https://twitter.com/USAmbHonduras/status/1612265908017434624>  
8 <https://proceso.hn/espana-alemania-francia-y-la-ue-condenan-asesinato-de-3-mujeres-en-honduras/>  
9 <https://twitter.com/LawyersforHR/status/1612353530282622976>  
10 <https://www.guapinolresiste.org/post/manifiesto-publico-del-comit%C3%A9-municipal-ante-asesinato-de-defensores-del-agua-en-guapinol>  
11 <https://twitter.com/LawyersforHR/status/1612678580781056000>  
12 <https://criterio.hn/defensores-de-guapinol-descartan-asalto-como-movil-en-crimen-contra-aly-dominguez-y-jairo-bonilla/>  
13 <https://twitter.com/LawyersforHR/status/1613557214177894400>  
14 <https://radioprogreso.net/uncategorized/exigen-comision-de-alto-nivel-para-investigar-asesinato-de-dos-ambientalistas-de-guapinol/>

of President Xiomara Castro against these projects. Accused of benefiting from his relations with former president Juan Orlando Hernández to obtain irregular contracts and abuse the human rights of communities, Pérez could maintain privileged access to the new government through the legal work of Pamela Blanco Luque, partner and wife of Tomás Vaquero, Minister of Government, Justice and Decentralization."<sup>15</sup> The murder of the two defenders also led to renewed calls to cancel the licenses of extractive projects.<sup>16</sup>

The Agrarian Platform denounces that some 25 land defenders are on a list of possible assassination targets. "Lawyer Víctor Fernández, representative of a network of land defenders, argued that there is a campaign by economic groups linked to crime to stigmatize or discredit the struggle of environmentalists in Honduras. He said that the two murders in January in Guapinol were preceded by the crime of a peasant leader in the Tranvío cooperative. "The previous denunciation establishes that 25 leaders of the Aguán Valley are going to be assassinated in the next few days", he emphasized."<sup>17</sup>

On January 18, campesino leader and defender Omar Cruz Tomé was murdered "by hitman connected to a private security company 'SEC' that works w/ World Bank-financed Dinant corporation & paramilitary groups in the Aguan Valley".<sup>18</sup> <sup>19</sup> His assassination was widely condemned.<sup>20</sup> <sup>21</sup> Bufete Estudios Para la Dignidad wrote an open letter to president Xiomara.<sup>22</sup> The Human Rights Ministry published a press release condemning the assassination and recognizes that the protection mechanisms have been insufficient. The Security Ministry is responsible for their implementation and the Human Rights Ministry called on it to fulfill its duty.<sup>23</sup> <sup>24</sup> Just a day after the assassination, Alfredo Antunez Tomé, Omar's cousin, was followed by an assassin on a motorcycle.<sup>25</sup>

On January 29, OFRANEH condemned the murder of another Garífuna defender, Ricardo Arnaúl Montero, in Triunfo de la Cruz.<sup>26</sup> <sup>27</sup> <sup>28</sup> UN Permanent Resident Coordinator Alice H. Shackelford called for the protection of defenders and a halt to the killings.<sup>29</sup> OHCHR also sent a solidarity message to OFRANEH. "OHCHR joins the petition of OFRANEH and urges the State to conduct a thorough and rigorous investigation to clarify the causes of the death of the Garífuna defender."<sup>30</sup>

## Attacks, Criminalization and Harassment

"New year, renewed hopes and struggles that persist. The community of Guapinol in the department of Colón, on the Caribbean coast of Honduras, begins 2023 renewing its spirit of courage and

15 <https://contracorriente.red/2023/01/10/bufete-del-actual-ministro-tomas-vaquero-representa-empresas-de-lenir-perez-empresario-senalado-de-vulneracion-a-ddhh/>

16 <https://criterio.hn/tras-asesinato-de-defensores-de-guapinol-aumenta-presion-para-cancelar-proyectos-extractivistas-en-tococa/>

17 <https://proceso.hn/al-menos-25-ambientalistas-en-lista-de-eventuales-asesinatos-denuncia-plataforma-agraria/>

18 <https://twitter.com/HondurasNow/status/1615949846166515712>

19 <https://cespad.org.hn/alerta-asesinar-a-presidente-de-cooperativa-campesina-del-bajo-aguan-en-honduras/>

20 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDHNN/status/1616155668796276753>

21 <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS/status/1616216134600081408>

22 <https://twitter.com/bufetedignidad/status/1616148497115275264>

23 <https://twitter.com/sedhHonduras/status/1616118160540811273>

24 <https://criterio.hn/plan-para-asesinar-a-lider-campesino-omar-cruz-tome-en-el-aguan-era-conocido-por-el-gobierno-de-honduras/>

25 <https://twitter.com/HondurasNow/status/1616178581083668483>

26 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1619650733875564545>

27 <https://proceso.hn/asesinan-otro-defensor-de-la-comunidad-garifuna-de-triunfo-de-la-cruz/>

28 <https://criterio.hn/tras-asesinato-de-joven-defensor-del-territorio-garifuna-ofraneh-exige-acciones-y-no-tuits-al-estado-de-honduras/>

29 <https://proceso.hn/no-mas-muertes-dice-representante-de-onu-ante-asesinado-de-otro-defensor-garifuna/>

30 <https://twitter.com/OACNUDHNN/status/1620179030392832000>

resistance in defense of the Montaña de Botaderos National Park, Carlos Escaleras."<sup>31</sup> "More than ten months after the eight Guapinol defenders regained their freedom, the wait for their definitive letters of release continues without any response from the judicial authorities. Due to the evident violation of due process against the defenders of the Montaña de Botaderos National Park, Carlos Escaleras, organizations have urged the authorities to expedite the delivery of the definitive letters of release for them."<sup>32</sup>

COFADEH sent out an alert on January 5: "The environmental defender, Marlon Calles, has once again been the target of threats for defending the forest and the natural commons in the department of La Paz. The attack occurred when the defender was going out to buy a refill in the street of the institution where he works, located in La Esperanza, Intibucá."<sup>33</sup>

Pasos de Animal Grande reported on the criminalization of ARCAH defenders by the company Pollos El Cortijo.<sup>34</sup> Another criminalization case, against the Reitoca defenders Wilmer Alonzo and José Orlando Rodas, was meant to go trial this month.<sup>35</sup> But on January, 10, it was postponed.<sup>36</sup>

"Members of the Honduran police & Dinant Corporation employees fire live rounds at campesino families of the El Chile cooperative wounding two people: Maynor Cruz & Karina. Both have been taken to the hospital."<sup>37 38 39</sup>

"In the midst of the mobilizations in commemoration of Honduran Women's Day and the election of the new Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ), period 2023-2030, there was a warning about the detention of the Mayan Chortí leader, María Santos González in western Honduras. According to data provided by the National Network of Women Human Rights Defenders, the indigenous leader was detained by members of the National Police, arguing an old arrest warrant for a process in which Gonzales was already granted final freedom in 2018. (...) After her arrest, the Mayan Chortí leader was transferred to the regional offices of the Police Directorate of Investigation (DPI) in the city of Copán Ruinas, more than 10 kilometers from the original point of detention, and was released at noon."<sup>40</sup>

On January 26, campesino leader and regional secretary of the CNTC, Abelino Sanchez, was seriously wounded in an armed attack.<sup>41 42</sup>

31 <https://criterio.hn/guapinol-mantiene-firme-su-lucha-en-2023-por-la-defensa-del-parque-nacional-carlos-escaleras/>

32 <https://criterio.hn/urgen-cartas-de-libertad-definitiva-para-los-ocho-defensores-de-guapinol/>

33 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/alerta-urgente-2/>

34 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/pag/index.php/articulos/denuncia/138-seggun-arcah-empresa-avicula-el-cortijo-estaria-reiniciando-acciones-de-criminalizacion-contr-personas-defensoras-de-el-rio-choluteca>

35 <https://radioprogreso.hn.net/aplicacion-movil/sigue-el-juicio-contr-defensores-del-agua-en-reitoca-francisco-morazan/>

36 <https://pasosdeanimalgrande.com/pag/index.php/articulos/denuncia/143-tribunal-de-sentencia-pospuso-hasta-octubre-juicio-oral-y-publico-de-ambientalistas-de-reitoca-2>

37 <https://twitter.com/HondurasNow/status/1612588442503741441>

38 <https://twitter.com/jolson321/status/1612585736032616448>

39 <https://twitter.com/ErickPinedaHNI/status/1612570487523102734>

40 <https://criterio.hn/en-dia-de-la-mujer-detienen-a-lideresa-maya-chorti-a-causa-de-sistema-judicial-obsolete/>

41 <https://twitter.com/hondurasol/status/1618843319332913153>

42 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/alerta-urgente-siguen-los-ataques-en-contr-de-los-defensores-de-la-tierra-el-territorio-y-el-medio-ambiente/>

## Indigenous Peoples

On January 12, the trial started against the army member Kevin Yasser Saravia accused of attempted murder against COPINH member Allan García.<sup>43</sup> COPINH accompanied the start with a mobilization.<sup>44</sup> The evidentiary hearing then took place on January 26.<sup>45 46 47 48</sup>

OFRANEH published a press release condemning the recent femicides of three Garífuna women (see below). "This is not an isolated event, this is part of the strategy for all the Garífuna people to abandon the communities, it is a strategy for the emptying of the Garífuna communities and the third banishment of the Garífuna people".<sup>49 50</sup>

"In the midst of questioning the Ministry of Education for the politicization in the appointment of positions, new allegations on the subject arise, this time from the Garífuna communities in the northern coast of Honduras. The Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras (Ofraneh) warned that it has received multiple communications from teachers, parents and mothers residing in ancestral territory throughout five departments, denouncing the lack of respect for the cultural, educational and linguistic rights of the Garífuna communities."<sup>51</sup>

## Freedom of Expression and Journalists

C-Libre is not hopeful about the state of freedom of expression in Honduras. "The closure of official sources, intolerance of criticism and intimidation of journalists, say journalists, is a constant feature of journalism in the country."<sup>52</sup>

"By municipal order the local channel Mundo Visión located in Tocoa, Colón, was closed. The order was executed by the personnel of the municipality who arrived at the media facilities in the early hours of the morning (6:30am) last Tuesday, January 17, 2023. According to the municipal notification, this closure responds to the delay in the payment of taxes by the owner, thus denying the normal operation of this media owned by journalist Elga Sosa. C-Libre's technical team made the necessary consultations and according to legal professionals in Honduras, the closure of this television channel constitutes a violation of Freedom of the Press and Freedom of Expression, as stated in the Constitution of the Republic of Honduras."<sup>53</sup>

## Assassinations

"Television media editor Carlos Gerardo Barahona was shot several times [and killed] at midnight on January 30 as he was about to park his car near his home in the Kennedy neighborhood of the Honduran capital, an area under a state of emergency declared by the government."<sup>54</sup>

43 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1614028783324913667>

44 <https://criterio.hn/con-movilizacion-exigiendo-justicia-inicia-juicio-contra-militar-acusado-de-tentativa-de-homicidio-contra-lider-lenca/>

45 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1614336614473383938>

46 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1618640314448871427>

47 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1618655775056084992>

48 <https://twitter.com/COPINHHONDURAS/status/1618746118569099265>

49 <https://twitter.com/ofraneh/status/1615318538935496704>

50 <https://criterio.hn/triple-femicidio-de-mujeres-garifunas-no-es-un-hecho-aislado-advierte-ofraneh/>

51 <https://criterio.hn/garifunas-denuncian-irrespeto-a-derechos-culturales-educativos-y-linguisticos-en-nombramiento-de-maestros/>

52 <http://conexihon.hn/2023/01/01/cierre-de-2022-poca-voluntad-politica-para-garantizar-la-libertad-de-expresion-en-honduras/>

53 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/cl/index.php/portada-alertas/1570-por-orden-municipal-cierran-canal-mundo-vision-el-segundo-medio-en-menos-de-un-ano>

54 <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/cl/index.php/portada-alertas/1574-ultiman-a-balazos-a-editor-de-suyapa-medios>

## Violence against Women

On January 15, three Garífuna women were shot dead on a beach in Travesía, Puerto Cortés.<sup>55</sup> Their murder was widely condemned.<sup>56</sup> In total, 29 women were murdered in January.<sup>57</sup>

"A small light illuminates the lives of Honduran women, young women and girls, the Women's Network of the Atlantic Coast, managed to consolidate an ordinance that will punish sexual and verbal harassment of women in this municipality."<sup>58</sup>

## Extractive Industries

ConexiHon offers an overview of how extractive policies violently displace Honduran environmental defenders.<sup>59</sup>

"President Xiomara Castro launched (...) the environmental program "Andres Tamayo 2023", while assuring that the re-foundation of the country depends on stopping forest destruction. She said that forest destruction in recent years has resulted in the loss of more than 696,000 hectares, representing 10% of Honduran forests."<sup>60</sup> "The director of the Forest Conservation Institute (ICF), Luis Edgardo Soliz, announced the suspension of the forest management plan in the ancestral territory of the Tolupán people of San Francisco de Locomapa, in the municipality of Yoro. The announcement was made by the ICF director during the inauguration of Radio Dignidad Tolupán in San Francisco de Locomapa. The communities received the news expressing their desire for actions and not speeches or promises that do not materialize. "This plan is on hold until the legitimacy of the board of directors of Locomapa is demonstrated through a prior, free and informed consultation, which is the one that has to validate what you are going to do with the forest. No one else can impose on you what you are going to do with the forest, but it has to pass through popular legitimacy", said the official in his speech."<sup>61</sup>

CESPAD dedicated one of its weekly analysis to the distressing situation in the Aguán Valley (see above). "The last few weeks have been tragic for the social movement in Bajo Aguán due to the assassination of four social activists: Aly Domínguez and Jairo Bonilla, members of the Committee for the Defense of the Commons of Guapinol-San Pedro; Mauricio Esquivel (member of the Tranvío cooperative) and Omar Cruz Tomé (president of the Los Laureles cooperative and under protective measures), both members of the Agrarian Platform, and Sandy Martínez (father-in-law of Cruz Tomé). The common characteristic of these crimes is that they were executed by men in civilian clothes, with the classic method of paramilitary groups (firearms, hooded and in full public light) that have operated in total impunity in this area of the country for the last 13 years. In the first days of January, the Agrarian Platform and the Bufete de Estudios para la Dignidad publicly denounced the implementation of a plan that included actions of threats, harassment and selective

55 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2023/01/15/tres-mujeres-garifunas-fueron-asesinadas-en-una-playa-de-puerto-cortes/>

56 <https://elpulso.hn/2023/01/16/presidenta-castro-y-onu-condenan-femicidio-contra-tres-ciudadanas-garifunas/>

57 <https://proceso.hn/un-total-de-29-mujeres-fueron-asesinadas-en-enero/>

58 <https://criterio.hn/bajo-ordenanza-municipal-la-ceiba-sancionara-el-acoso-sexual-y-verbal-contra-las-mujeres/>

59 <http://conexihon.hn/2023/01/05/defensores-del-ambiente-desplazados-silenciosamente-por-la-industria-extractiva-en-honduras/>

60 <https://proceso.hn/presidenta-castro-lanza-programa-ambiental-y-dice-refundacion-pasa-por-detener-destruccion-forestal/>

61 <https://criterio.hn/anuncian-suspension-de-plan-forestal-en-tribu-tolupan-de-san-francisco-de-locomapa/>



assassinations against the leadership of the Cooperatives in possession of the disputed agrarian reform lands, holding responsible for these actions the Dinant Corporation, a Honduran company founded in 1960 by the late businessman Miguel Facussé, with the support of private banks and the National Investment Corporation."<sup>62</sup>

## **ZEDES**

"Florida Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart warned that Honduras faces "serious sanctions" if it illegally expropriates U.S. investments (...) Balart is referring to the statement by President Xiomara Castro's government threatening to expropriate the U.S. investment in the Prospera Employment and Development Zone (ZEDE), which recently filed a US\$10.775 billion lawsuit to get the Honduran government to respect the agreement."<sup>63</sup> (see last month) Human rights scholar Joaquín Mejía challenged the legality of the lawsuit.<sup>64</sup>

## **Mining**

"The human rights and environmental defender, Pedro Landa, asked President Xiomara Castro to adhere to and ratify the Escazú Agreement to stop the violence generated by extractive companies against environmentalists in Honduras."<sup>65</sup>

"Located in western Honduras is the indigenous Mayan Chortí population of Azacualpa in the municipality of La Unión, Copán, who are confronting the expansion of the company Minerales de Occidente S.A. (Minosa) within their ancestral territory. Not satisfied with the destruction of the historic cemetery of San Andrés, Minosa, a subsidiary of the transnational Aura Minerals, continues to affect the lives of the population by detonating dynamite every twenty-four hours, which not only disrupts their daily activities but also causes damage to the structures of their homes, soil and water sources."<sup>66</sup> Some community members traveled 400km to the capital to call on the Honduran government to comply with its promise to ban open-pit mining.<sup>67</sup>

## **Corruption and Its Enemies**

The National Anti-Corruption Council (CNA) published a book on corruption in Honduras.<sup>68</sup>

There were two cases in the courts this month involving former JOH officials. "The Court of Letters in matters of corruption in the hearing of the accused issued substitute measures to the former manager of the Empresa Nacional de Energía Eléctrica (ENEE), Jesús Mejía."<sup>69</sup> "The Criminal Court of Appeals, in a plea hearing, issued substitute measures to two former ministers of the now defunct Secretariat of Infrastructure and Public Services (Insep), Roberto Ordoñez and Roberto

62 <https://cespad.org.hn/analisis-semanal-la-reactivacion-de-la-violencia-paramilitar-en-el-bajo-aguan-urge-de-la-intervencion-estatal-para-resolver-las-causas-de-la-conflictividad-social-en-la-zona/>

63 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/congresista-advierte-serias-sanciones-expropiacion-inversiones-estados-unidos-zedes-honduras-DK11829864>

64 <https://twitter.com/LawyersforHR/status/1620652924979519492>

65 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/ambientalistas-piden-a-xiomara-castro-que-ratifique-el-acuerdo-de-escazu/>

66 <https://criterio.hn/cada-24-horas-minera-dinamita-cementerio-de-san-andres-denuncian-pobladores-maya-chorti-de-azacualpa/>

67 <https://criterio.hn/pueblos-victimas-de-la-mineria-en-la-union-copan-piden-respuestas-a-gobierno-de-castro/>

68 [https://www.cna.hn/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/LIBRO\\_Opticas-de-la-corrupcion\\_2022-OPCACNA\\_VersionWEB\\_compressed.pdf](https://www.cna.hn/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/LIBRO_Opticas-de-la-corrupcion_2022-OPCACNA_VersionWEB_compressed.pdf)

69 <https://proceso.hn/medidas-sustitutivas-a-exgerente-jesus-mejia-por-caso-de-proyecto-de-iluminacion-en-intibuca/>

Pineda. Both former officials are accused of abuse of authority to the detriment of the public administration and a citizen."<sup>70</sup>

On January 19, Energy Minister Erick Tejada announced that UFERCO will investigate the contract signed under the JOH regime with the Energy Company Honduras (EEH).<sup>71</sup> <sup>72</sup> The same day, EEH claimed a debt from the National Electric Energy Company (ENEE) for around 500 million dollars.<sup>73</sup>

## CICIH

At the beginning of the month, Foreign Minister Enrique Reina announced that the Xiomara administration is in contact with other countries to pay its share for the installation of the CICIH. The financing of the anti-corruption body was hotly debated at the end of last year, with some fearing a lack of independence if funds come from the Honduran government.<sup>74</sup> On January 15, the Minister of Transparency, Edmundo Orellana stated that they were awaiting the next steps from the UN for the installation of the CICIH.<sup>75</sup> The next day, Foreign Minister Enrique Reina said that the administration is preparing terms of references to send to the UN.<sup>76</sup>

## The Onslaught against the Anti-Corruption Bodies

There was another setback in a key MACCIH-era corruption case. "Deputies and former deputies accused in the Open Chest Case, accused of embezzlement of public funds, were notified this Thursday, January 12, 2023, through Judge Reinaldo Hernández, that they are definitively free after the precautionary measures were revoked."<sup>77</sup> In another case, "[t]he Court of Appeals for Corruption ratified the definitive dismissal of the former Undersecretary of Health, Nery Cerrato, and the former head of the Permanent Contingencies Commission (Copeco), Gabriel Rubí"<sup>78</sup>. With these setbacks, UFERCO's Luis Santos reiterated that a derogation of Decree 116-2019 would allow to reopen these cases.<sup>79</sup> And more bad news on January 20. "The Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ) admitted a writ of amparo with suspension of the challenged act against the resolution issued by the Anti-Corruption Court of Appeals in the case against Reynaldo Ekónimo, former Nationalist congressman for Cortés."<sup>80</sup> Followed by this a day later. "Several communicators who received bribes from the corruption scandal, known as "Hermes", were included in the slate, and the pro-government slate headed by Osman Reyes was reelected by acclamation in the College of Journalists of Honduras (CPH), in an episode in which the opposition was not allowed to propose candidates."<sup>81</sup> And at the end of the month, a ruling ratified the

70 <https://proceso.hn/medidas-sustitutivas-para-exministros-de-insep-acusados-de-abuso-de-autoridad/>

71 <https://tiempo.hn/denuncia-irregularidades-en-contrato-de-eeh/>

72 <https://criterio.hn/enee-interpone-denuncia-ante-la-uferco-contra-eeh-por-corrupcion-en-adjudicacion-de-contrato/>

73 <https://proceso.hn/eeh-reclama-deuda-de-500-millones-a-la-enee-y-amenaza-acciones-judiciales-en-el-exterior/>

74 <https://criterio.hn/gobierno-hondureno-comienza-a-buscar-fondos-para-financiar-a-la-cicih/>

75 <https://proceso.hn/honduras-a-la-espera-de-documentos-firmados-de-la-onu-para-seguir-instalacion-de-cicih-dice-orellana/>

76 <https://tiempo.hn/canciller-preparando-terminos-para-cicih/>

77 <https://criterio.hn/impunidad-de-arca-abierta-vuelve-urgente-llegada-de-la-cicih-al-pais/>

78 <https://elpulso.hn/2023/01/10/justicia-ratifica-sobresimiento-definitivo-para-dos-exfuncionarios-de-joh/>

79 <https://elpulso.hn/2023/01/13/uferco-la-derogacion-del-decreto-116-2019-reactivaria-casos-de-corrupcion/>

80 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2023/01/20/sala-constitucional-admite-recurso-de-amparo-con-suspension-del-acto-reclamado-a-favor-de-reynaldo-ekonomo/>

81 <https://criterio.hn/con-planilla-integrada-por-senalados-en-caso-hermes-se-reelige-junta-directiva-del-colegio-de-periodistas/>

resolution to have all the charges dropped against the former deputy president of Congress, the Nationalist Lena Gutiérrez, in the Astropharma corruption case.<sup>82</sup>

The outgoing Supreme Court president and JOH-ally Rolando Argueta has allegedly violated the Judicial Career Law and the Constitution of the Republic, in order to place people related to him in the judgeships of the Civil Court of Appeals of Francisco Morazán, according to allegations made by judges of that circuit.<sup>83</sup>

## Mobile Hospitals

"The Special Prosecutor's Office Against Organized Crime (FESCCO) attended this Tuesday the hearing for the presentation of evidence in the case of definitive deprivation of ownership of assets of illicit origin, through which the restitution in favor of Honduras of more than 100 million lempiras (L.101,777,602 ), equivalent to more than four million dollars, which, as part of the International Legal Assistance promoted in the case of the Mobile Hospitals, were secured in the U.S. financial system to Axel Gamaliel López Guzmán, who has an arrest warrant with an international red alert and extradition request."<sup>84</sup>

## Invest-H

"Sixteen months after the preliminary hearing was opened and after six postponed dates, the Special Prosecutor's Office for Transparency and Fight against Public Corruption (FETCCOP) is still waiting for the opening of the trial in the case against Marco Antonio Bográn Corrales (former director of INVEST-H) and Alex Alberto Moraes Girón (former administrator) for presuming them responsible as perpetrators of the crime of embezzlement of public funds to the detriment of the Public Administration."<sup>85</sup> They were found guilty on on January 27.<sup>86</sup>

## IHSS

The presentation of the evidence took place on January 5 in one of the bigger IHSS corruption cases involving 14 accused and 158 million Lempiras stolen.<sup>87</sup>

## State Security Forces

Jeff Ernst reported for the Guardian on the state of exception in Honduras (see last month). "But like any war, it isn't just a battle against an enemy, but also for control of the popular narrative – in this case, an attempt to counter allegations that the government has not done enough to combat rampant crime. This perception has grown despite a slight reduction in homicides this year, according to preliminary data, and a significant drop over the past decade since Honduras held the ignominious title of the world's most violent country. There is only anecdotal evidence of the scale

82 <https://tiempo.hn/ratifican-fallo-de-inocencia-astropharma/>

83 <https://criterio.hn/magistrados-de-corte-de-apelaciones-denuncian-a-rolando-argueta-por-nombramientos-irregulares/>

84 <https://www.mp.hn/publicaciones/el-14-de-febrero-a-juicio-de-privacion-mas-de-100-millones-de-lempiras- incautados-a-axel-lopez/>

85 <https://www.mp.hn/publicaciones/mp-a-la-espera-de-auto-de-apertura-a-juicio-contra-marco-bogran-y-alex-moraes-por-malversacion-de-fondos-de-invest-h/>

86 <https://www.mp.hn/publicaciones/unaf-logra-nueva-condena-por-fraude-contra-ex titular-de-invest-h-marco-bogran/>

87 <https://www.mp.hn/publicaciones/mp-propondra-casi-100-medios-de-prueba-para-el-juicio-contra-14-involucrados-en-fraude-de-158-millones-de-lempiras-en-el-ihss/>

of the problem because so few extortion victims report the crime, making a statistical analysis impossible. Security experts are divided on how much the perception is the result of sensationalist media coverage, a real rise, a little of both – or simply the continued expansion of a problem that has metastasized for two decades."<sup>88</sup>

On January 6, the state of exception was extended for 45 days. It included over 70 more municipalities in Comayagua, Atlántida, Colón and Copán.<sup>89</sup> Congressional vice-president Hugo Noé Pino announced the same day that the new 2023 budget would include an additional 1 billion Lempiras to fight extortion.<sup>90</sup> Radio Progreso critically covered the prolongation and warned of human rights abuse.<sup>91</sup> A report by CONADEH found that some 60% of the arrests during the state of exception were made outside the determined localities.<sup>92</sup> "Those called upon to bring order in Honduras are the state security forces: the National Police and the Armed Forces. However, police and military elements are often mentioned and questioned for committing all kinds of crimes and human rights violations against the Honduran population."<sup>93</sup>

On January 29, the National Police announced that the homicide rate dropped by 50% in January compared to last year as a result of the state of exception.<sup>94</sup> At the same time, the Security Ministry announced new changes to the police hierarchy. "He also informed about the creation of four new units within the institution, which will be oriented to social welfare, health and industry and judicial defense. The names of the new units are: Directorate of Social Welfare (DBS), Directorate of Police Industry (INPOL), Directorate of Police Health (DSP), and the Directorate of Police Legal Defense (DDJP)."<sup>95</sup>

"The Public Prosecutor's Office executed seizures and confiscations of 13 real estate, movable and financial assets of the former general commissioner of the National Police, Héctor Iván Mejía Velásquez."<sup>96</sup>

## Assassinations

A 37-year old Honduran died in police custody after having been arrested on December 31 for public indecency.<sup>97</sup>

"The veil of impunity continues fifteen months after the attack by members of the Armed Forces against the Miskito population of Ibans in Gracias a Dios, on the northeastern coast of Honduras, in which one person was killed, at least twenty were wounded and two more died from the terror caused by the aggression."<sup>98</sup>

88 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/04/honduras-gangs-crackdown-xiomara-castro>

89 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2023/01/07/gobierno-extiende-estado-de-excepcion-por-45-dias-en-tegucigalpa-san-pedro-sula-y-anade-73-municipios/>

90 [https://twitter.com/Congreso\\_HND/status/1611459461763239937](https://twitter.com/Congreso_HND/status/1611459461763239937)

91 <https://radioprogressohn.net/portada/ampliacion-del-estado-de-excepcion-huele-a-peligro-y-esta-asociado-a-posibles-excesos-policiales/>

92 <https://criterio.hn/alertan-que-el-60-de-las-detenciones-durante-el-estado-de-excepcion-se-presentan-fuera-de-los-sitios-intervenidos/>

93 <https://criterio.hn/elementos-de-la-policia-nacional-continuan-siendo-sindicados-en-muertes-violentas-en-honduras/>

94 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2023/01/28/en-un-50-por-ciento-se-han-reducido-los-homicidios-por-el-estado-de-excepcion-afirma-la-policia-nacional/>

95 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/anuncian-cambios-autoridades-policia-creacion-nuevas-direcciones-honduras-secretaria-seguridad-KM11950965>

96 <https://elpulso.hn/2023/01/31/ministerio-publico-incauta-los-bienes-del-exjefe-policial-hector-ivan-mejia/>

97 <https://proceso.hn/investigacion-muerte-de-ciudadano-por-presunto-abuso-policial-en-voro/>

98 <https://criterio.hn/en-impunidad-permanece-caso-de-misquitos-abatidos-por-las-ff-aa-en-ibans-gracias-a-dios/>

## Penitentiary System

Three inmates broke out of the Danlí prison on January 2.<sup>99</sup>

"Organizations denounce a series of irregularities and human rights violations that are occurring inside the National Women's Penitentiary of Social Adaptation and demand urgent action by the Human Rights Commission of the National Congress."<sup>100</sup> "The spokeswoman of the National Penitentiary Institute (INP), Digna Aguilar, announced this Monday that around 2 thousand inmates will enjoy pre-release and parole in the country's prisons. The official said that INP authorities, together with the Judicial Power and through the execution courts, will begin in the next few days to review the files in the 25 prisons of the country."<sup>101</sup>

## International Community

"Although for now there is only talk of trade relations, Honduras could be on the verge of establishing diplomatic relations with Mainland China after Vice Foreign Minister Eduardo Enrique Reina met with the Vice Foreign Minister of the Asian country, Ma Zhaoxu. (...) In an interview with Honduran media, who are accompanying Castro on his trip to Brasilia, Reina said that in his meeting with Ma Zhaoxu they discussed business investment, particularly the construction of hydroelectric dams to strengthen the National Electric Energy Company (ENEE) and the generation of clean energy."<sup>102</sup> A day later, Miguel Navarro, coordinator of the National Loss Reduction Program of the National Electric Energy Company (ENEE), called for the building of two complementary dams at Patuca III. This would mean a \$43 million investment.<sup>103</sup>

President Xiomara announced that Honduras will sign a bilateral cooperation agreement with Brazil at the end of the month.<sup>104</sup>

CABEI approved \$485 million in loans for Honduras in 2022.<sup>105</sup>

"The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) reported that after its special "Diplomacy in the Shadows", an investigation in which Contracorriente participated together with the Latin American Center for Investigative Journalism (CLIP), several governments announced the termination or revision of honorary consulates. The Government of Jordan announced the termination of the diplomatic position of Honduran businessman Shucrí Kafie, who served as honorary consul of Jordan in Honduras since 1984."<sup>106</sup>

99 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2023/01/02/jefe-de-la-policia-nacional-confirma-la-fuga-de-tres-privados-de-libertad-del-centro-penal-de-danli-el-paraiso/>

100 <https://criterio.hn/denuncian-aislamiento-prolongado-y-otras-formas-de-violencia-contra-mujeres-privadas-de-libertad/>

101 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2023/01/30/mas-de-2-mil-presos-podrian-quedar-en-libertad-al-ser-beneficiados-con-la-figura-de-preliberacion/>

102 <https://criterio.hn/honduras-busca-apoyo-para-proyectos-energeticos-con-china/>

103 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2023/01/03/urge-construccion-de-dos-represas-adjuntas-a-patuca-iii-considera-coordinador-del-plan-nacional-de-reduccion-de-perdidas/>

104 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/xiomara-castro-lula-da-silva-firmaran-convenio-bilateral-DM11591057>

105 <https://proceso.hn/bcie-aprobo-al-pais-485-millones-en-el-2022/>

106 <https://contracorriente.red/2023/01/26/shucri-kafie-ya-no-es-consul-honorario-de-jordania/>

## US

National Party representatives met with US ambassador Laura F. Dogu. Criterio reports on this: "Ironically, three of the congressmen who voted to expel MACCIH from the country now sit down with U.S. Ambassador Laura F. Dogu to talk about transparency and the fight against corruption."<sup>107</sup>

On January 9, "a high-level delegation (...) o discuss human rights, migration and the fight against corruption" traveled to Honduras.<sup>108</sup> The group was led by US Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights Uzra Zeya.<sup>109</sup> <sup>110</sup> SOUTHCOM's Commander Gen. Laura Richardson was also part of the delegation.<sup>111</sup> As part of the visit, investments for \$33 million in education and \$10 million in agriculture were announced.<sup>112</sup> The Xiomara administration and the US published a joint statement after the visit.<sup>113</sup> ContraCorriente interviewed Urza Zeya during her visit.<sup>114</sup>

US Senator Merkley published a press release on the occasion of the visit. "As Under Secretary Zeya arrives in Honduras for the U.S.-Honduras Strategic and Human Rights Dialogues this week, I condemn the recent murders of human rights and water defenders in Honduras who are key components of civil society in a pluralistic democracy. Even as the Castro government seeks to reject the repressive policies of her corrupt predecessor Juan Orlando Hernandez, without major reforms, the security establishment remains beholden to powerful special interests. Indeed, the targeting of land and water defenders is driven by the same elite criminal, corporate, military, and paramilitary structures that the previous government left in place. "Nothing will change in Honduras until the structures of criminality—which are deeply embedded in both the military and police—are investigated and the perpetrators of human rights abuses are held accountable. The U.S. must support President Castro's efforts to root out corruption and protect human rights in Honduras. This includes encouraging the Castro government to strengthen judicial independence and uphold the rule of law by ensuring that the Honduran Supreme Court selection process embodies transparency and credibility. "I applaud President Castro and her administration for signing a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations to establish an anti-corruption commission and righting wrongs perpetrated by the Hernandez administration more broadly, and I urge the U.S. State Department to remain a steadfast partner in these efforts, which undoubtedly grow more challenging with ever deeper and substantive reforms."<sup>115</sup>

## Drug Trafficking

"Police Commissioner Miguel Pérez Suazo, head of the National Directorate of Special Forces (DNFE), announced that the first extradited person of the year on drug trafficking charges will be handed over to U.S. authorities on Friday, January 27. Pérez Suazo explained that at the moment

<sup>107</sup> <https://criterio.hn/diputados-que-expulsaron-a-la-maccih-se-reunen-con>

<sup>108</sup> <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2023/01/07/eeuu-enviara-una-delegacion-a-honduras-para-discutir-sobre-derechos-humanos/>

<sup>109</sup> <https://twitter.com/UnderSecState/status/1612577679714258951>

<sup>110</sup> <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2023/01/11/honduras-y-delegacion-de-eeuu-acuerdan-ampliar-colaboracion-para-combatir-el-narcotrafico-impunidad-corrupcion-y-migracion/>

<sup>111</sup> <https://twitter.com/Southcom/status/1612594909328084992>

<sup>112</sup> <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/eeuu-dara-43-millones-educacion-agricultura-honduras-PP11696911>

<sup>113</sup> <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-the-u-s-honduras-strategic-and-human-rights-dialogues/>

<sup>114</sup> <https://contracorriente.red/2023/01/12/los-estados-de-excepcion-son-dificiles-de-sostener-uzra-zeya-subsecretaria-de-estado-de-ee-uu/>

<sup>115</sup> <https://www.merkley.senate.gov/news/press-releases/ahead-of-us-honduras-strategic-human-rights-dialogue-merkley-issues-statement-denouncing-human-rights-abuses-and-urging-us-to-strengthen-anti-corruption-pro-rights-agenda>

there are five Hondurans with extradition processes in custody at the Marco Aurelio Soto National Penitentiary, at the First Infantry Battalion and at the DNFE. In this sense, he informed that the extradition of Michael Derringer Powery, also known as "El Caracol", 40 years old, was set for next Friday, January 27."<sup>116</sup>

"Fredy Nájera Montoya, former Liberal Party deputy, filed an appeal before a U.S. court, seeking to reverse his 30-year prison sentence after being found guilty of drug trafficking."<sup>117</sup>

"On Monday, January 30, a judge of first instance sent to the Ministry of Security the final certification ordering the surrender of former Mayor Arnaldo Urbina Soto to the United States government. (...) Urbina was awaiting extradition on charges related to drug trafficking, but due to the fact that he was facing legal proceedings in Honduras, he had not been extradited."<sup>118 119</sup>

## JOH

Both JOH's defense and the US Attorney's Office asked judge Kevin Castel to postpone the trial against JOH.<sup>120</sup> He denied the request, it is maintained at April 24. But he called for an additional hearing on January 10.<sup>121</sup> US prosecutor further requested confidentiality for the evidence presented during the trial.<sup>122</sup> On January 10, Castel seemed to have changed his mind and postponed the trial to September 18.<sup>123</sup> Honduran news outlet reports that the judge further combined three Honduran-related cases, the one against JOH together with the one against his former his former police chief Juan Carlos "El Tigre" Bonilla Valladares and the one against JOH's cousin Mauricio Hernández Pineda.<sup>124</sup> JOH's defense requested to separate the cases.<sup>125</sup> In the midst of this, JOH's legal team presented a new member, Sabrina Shroff.<sup>126</sup>

News outlet link the arrest of El Chapo's son Ovidio Guzmán with the case of JOH. "The arrest of Guzman, one of the top drug lords of the 2020s, was preceded by those of two key players in the South-to-North American drug trade, already extradited to the United States for prosecution for conspiring to ship cocaine to the U.S. market: former Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez Alvarado, alias "JOH," who went down in Honduras in 2022, and Colombian Dairo Antonio Usuga David, alias "Otoniel," in 2021 in Colombia."<sup>127</sup>

116 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2023/01/17/el-27-de-enero-sera-extraditado-el-hondureno-michael-derringer-powery-wood-a-eeuu-primero-del-2023/>

117 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/fredy-najera-apela-condena-30-anos-prision-estados-unidos-EN11856064>

118 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/remiten-secretaria-seguridad-notificacion-extraditar-excalcalde-arnaldo-urbina-estados-unidos-BO11975859>

119 <https://twitter.com/P.deHonduras/status/1620264701610573825>

120 <https://proceso.hn/fiscalia-de-eeuu-pide-posponer-juicio-contr-expresidente-herandez/>

121 <https://criterio.hn/fecha-de-juicio-de-joh-se-mantiene-y-juez-convoca-a-audiencia-el-10-de-enero/>

122 <https://proceso.hn/fiscalia-de-eeuu-pide-al-juez-castel-ordenar-la-proteccion-de-evidencia-en-juicio-contr-joh/>

123 <https://www.univision.com/univision-news/united-states/drug-trafficking-trial-of-former-honduran-president-juan-orlando-hernandez-postponed-until-september>

124 <https://criterio.hn/juez-kevin-castel-consolida-en-un-mismo-juicio-casos-de-joh-su-primero-y-el-tigre-bonilla/>

125 <https://proceso.hn/defensa-pedira-separar-juicio-de-joh-con-el-de-exoficiales-de-la-policia/>

126 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2023/01/10/sabrina-shroff-conocida-defensora-en-caso-wikileaks-es-la-nueva-abogada-de-juan-orlando-hernandez/>

127 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/juan-orlando-hernandez-pieza-clave-reciente-captura-narco-ovidio-guzman-AD11659339>

## Varia

### Supreme Court Election

At the beginning of the month, Proceso Digital reported that the too representatives of the Judicial Power at the Nomination Board have abstained from reading the complaints made against the candidates seeking reelection because they are "hierarchical superiors".<sup>128</sup> In total, over 180 complaints were filed out of which the Nomination Board admitted 136.<sup>129</sup> Among all the candidates are six current Supreme Court judges seeking reelection. In total, they received 49 complaints against them during the process.<sup>130</sup>

Those candidates who received complaints last month had to defend themselves in hearings before the Nominating Board between January 4 and 7.<sup>131</sup> <sup>132</sup> CESPAD highlighted some important points regarding the public hearing of the Supreme Court candidates. They highlight that over half of the interviews took too much time and that male candidates were given more time than female ones.<sup>133</sup>

19 candidates did not make it to the next round as they did not find adequate answers to the complaints filed against them.<sup>134</sup> <sup>135</sup> Among them were 6 current judges which shows again the problems with the current judicial power.<sup>136</sup>

On January 18, the Convergence against Continuity (CCC) published a press release on the upcoming Supreme Court elections. "4- On the burning issue of the process that will culminate with the election by the National Congress of the new Supreme Court of Justice, we recognize the responsible and honest work done by the Nominating Board, while we demand that the same practice of transparency be the one that characterizes the National Congress at the time of electing the 15 magistrates of that branch of the State. 5- We urge the members of the National Congress to elect a Supreme Court of Justice that responds to the anxieties of Honduran society to dismantle the criminal structure that has characterized the judiciary, to be independent of other powers, factual or formal, that is based on the institutionality of the rule of law and that listens and attends to the clamors for justice of Honduran society and especially of the broad sectors that have been victims of impunity and corruption. We insist, we demand that in this election the reduced groups that have historically manipulated the Honduran justice system be left out."<sup>137</sup> <sup>138</sup> UN Permanent Resident Coordinator Alice H. Shackelford tweeted: "With the upcoming election of magistrates for the Supreme Court of Justice, we must maintain confidence in the process of the Nominating Board, which has carried out an objective and transparent process. Let us all participate in the change today by supporting the process. We hope that the Congress continues to develop a transparent,

128 <https://proceso.hn/dos-integrantes-de-la-jn-se-abstuvieron-a-conocer-tachas-contra-magistrados-de-la-csj/>

129 <https://tiempo.hn/junta-nominadora-admite-136-denuncias/>

130 <https://criterio.hn/magistrados-de-la-csj-que-buscan-reelegirse-acumulan-49-denuncias-y-tachas/>

131 <https://criterio.hn/en-audiencias-de-descargo-se-defenderan-las-y-los-postulantes-a-la-csj-tachados-o-denunciados/>

132 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2023/01/05/junta-nominadora-continua-en-fase-de-entrevistas-a-postulantes-a-magistrados-de-la-csj/>

133 <https://cespad.org.hn/algunos-aspectos-de-la-etapa-de-entrevistas-publicas-en-la-eleccion-de-la-nueva-corte-suprema-de-honduras/>

134 <https://tiempo.hn/los-seis-candidatos-excluidos-por-la-jn/>

135 <https://proceso.hn/denuncias-y-tachas-dejan-fuera-del-proceso-a-19-postulantes-a-magistrados/>

136 <https://proceso.hn/los-seis-actuales-magistrados-quedan-fuera-para-otrar-a-la-reeleccion/>

137 <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/ccc-ante-los-ultimos-acontecimientos-y-desafios-en-el-comienzo-del-ano/>

138 <https://proceso.hn/convergencia-contra-el-continuidismo-pide-estar-vigilantes-para-que-cn-mantenga-transparencia-en-la-eleccion-de-la-csj/>



participatory, peaceful and respectful process within the framework of human rights and representative of the diversity of Honduran society."<sup>139</sup>

Just four days before Congress was scheduled to elect the new Supreme Court judges, ContraCorriente discussed four possible scenarios for the election. "A first scenario, according to Father "Melo", is that the Libre Party makes an alliance with the National Party, therefore, the two parties would achieve the qualified majority for the election of the magistrates. "That is a possible scenario, evidently, if that scenario occurs, the National Party and the Libre Party are somehow tied, because then they will have to continue towards the election of the Attorney General and make other types of agreements in Congress", he said. (...) The second scenario, raised by Father "Melo", is that the Libre Party, Liberal Party and the Saviour of Honduras Party (PSH) form an alliance of their own until to reach the number 86 needed, including a negotiation with some two or three deputies of the National Party. "I believe that this scenario commits more political parties than only the first scenario and opens more possibilities for future negotiations; more open and not closed", he affirmed. For Father "Melo", the Honduran people lose less with the second scenario, since there are inter-party agreements where the National Party has less capacity and fewer political positions in its favor. "I believe that this second scenario is not ideal, but it would be the desirable scenario to advance towards governability", he explained. (...) A third scenario, Father "Melo" continues, is the chaos inside the National Congress, where neither Libre nor the National Party reach agreements or where Libre does not reach agreements with the other political forces. "In this case, the sectors that seek more impunity, as is the case of the National Party, can advance in the sense that an election is not achieved and the current administration of the Supreme Court of Justice continues, is prolonged", expressed the priest. (...) The fourth scenario is proposed by Luis Daniel León, who, despite praising the work of the Nominating Board, maintains that the process will enter into another logic once the list passes to the hands of the National Congress. Politicians will be the ones in charge of seeing who are on the list to choose from a partisan and biased vision; therefore, according to León, by choosing these candidates under partisan criteria, the technical quality will be lost and "politicking" will remain."<sup>140</sup>

On January 23, the Nomination Board presented its final list of 45 candidates.<sup>141</sup> For the first time ever, the proposed candidates are composed of more women (23) than men (22).<sup>142</sup> Radio Progreso praised the work of the Nomination Board.<sup>143</sup> Still, the final list also contained questionable candidates. "Among the 45 nominees, there are also the current Deputy Attorney General of the Republic, Daniel Arturo Sibrián Bueso, and the Inspector General of the Courts, Anny Belinda Ochoa Medrano. Four and eight complaints had been filed against both persons, respectively, however, the Nominating Board issued resolutions "without merit"."<sup>144</sup> CESPAD published an overview of the 45 final candidates. Out of the 45, 23 received complaints during the process.<sup>145</sup> Criterio reported that 39 candidates are close either to the National Party, Liberal Party or Libre.<sup>146</sup>

139 <https://twitter.com/aliceshackel/status/1615833166282989573>

140 <https://contracorriente.red/2023/01/20/cuatro-posibles-escenarios-en-el-congreso-nacional-para-elegir-a-la-corte-suprema-de-justicia/>

141 <https://radioprogreso.hn/aplicacion-movil/junta-nominadora-revela-su-lista-de-45-aspirantes-a-la-corte-suprema-de-justicia/>

142 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/honduras-seleccion-aspirantes-csj-equidad-genero-primera-vez-corte-suprema-justicia-paridad-NP11874944>

143 <https://radioprogreso.hn/aplicacion-movil/alaban-trabajo-de-la-junta-nominadora/>

144 <https://criterio.hn/claroscuros-candidatos-a-la-csj-nominados-ante-el-congreso-nacional/>

145 <https://cespad.org.hn/en-datos-asi-se-conforma-la-lista-de-candidatos-y-candidatas-a-magistrados-de-la-csj/>

146 <https://criterio.hn/el-86-67-de-los-aspirantes-a-la-csj-son-afines-a-partido-nacional-partido-liberal-y-libre/>

OHCHR published a press release on the ongoing Supreme Court election. "The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Honduras (OHCHR) welcomes the delivery of the final list of candidates by the Nominating Board to the National Congress for the election of the 15 magistrates of the Supreme Court of Justice. OHCHR calls on the deputies to evaluate the candidates under the principles of legality, equality and non-discrimination, gender equity, publicity, transparency and accountability, objectivity, ethics, responsibility and due diligence, as provided in the Special Law on the Organization and Functioning of the Nominating Board for the Nomination of Candidates for the Supreme Court of Justice. (...) In order to comply with ethical minimums in the election, for OHCHR it is crucial that the deputies commit to 1) consider only the candidates included in the list presented by the Nominating Board and under no circumstances violate the Law to include people who have not passed the entire process followed by this ad hoc body, 2) to scrupulously respect the gender quota established by law, electing at least 7 women as judges of the new Supreme Court of Justice, and 3) to guarantee that members of the benches who have a conflict of interest in this election, particularly those deputies who have pending criminal proceedings under the special procedure for the prosecution of senior state officials, will not vote, 3) to guarantee that the members of the benches that have a conflict of interest in this election will not vote, particularly those deputies who have criminal proceedings pending under the special procedure for the prosecution of high state officials, as established by Article 50, numeral 1 of the Organizational Law of the Legislative Branch, 4) to comply with the assumption of Article 311 of the Constitution, renouncing the secret vote, doing so in a nominal, public, reasoned, express and with names, promoting the trust and credibility of the process."<sup>147</sup>

The day the election process started in Congress, its members voted in favor of a public vote.<sup>148</sup> But at the same time, the first attempts to elect the 15 new judges failed. Libre, the Liberal Party and the National Party could not agree on a distribution of the judges among them.<sup>149 150 151</sup>

## Xiomara

This month, President Xiomara Castro looked back on one year in government.<sup>152 153</sup> On this occasion, Amnesty International wrote to her an open letter. "Since you formed your government, just a year ago, Amnesty International has seen some timely progress, such as steps towards a complete repeal of the Employment and Economic Development Zones Act (ZEDE), which raised concerns about potential threats to human rights; progress in discussions regarding the creation of an International Commission against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (CICIH), which reverses the weakening of cooperation with regional and international bodies and mechanisms; as well as statements recognizing the importance of the work of human rights defenders, enhancing their protection and investigations into attacks against them. However, the organization regrets that no progress has been made on other human rights issues which are urgent – and which you

147 <https://oacnudh.hn/oacnudh-saluda-la-entrega-de-la-nomina-de-personas-candidatas-a-magistrada-os-de-la-corte-suprema-de-justicia-2023-2030-y-llama-al-congreso-nacional-a-elegir-a-personas-idoneas-capaces-e-integras/>

148 <https://tiempo.hn/cn-mocion-votos-para-elegir-csj-sean-publicos/>

149 <https://radioprogreso.hn/aplicacion-movil/no-hay-consenso-para-elegir-la-corte-suprema-de-justicia/>

150 <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/eleccion-15-magistrados-corte-suprema-justicia-congreso-nacional-L11912229>

151 <https://contra corriente.red/2023/01/26/fracasa-primer-nomina-propuesta-por-libre-para-eleccion-de-csj/>

152 <https://confidencial.hn.com/blog/2023/01/31/en-cadena-nacional-presidenta-xiomara-castro-detalla-logros-del-primer-ano-de-su-gobierno/>

153 <https://confidencial.hn.com/blog/2023/01/27/xiomara-castro-cumple-este-27-de-enero-su-primer-ano-de-gestion-en-el-ejecutivo-hondureno/>

highlighted in your human rights agenda: the protection of women's sexual and reproductive rights, the effective protection of human rights defenders, and the creation of a strategy for the demilitarization of public security."<sup>154</sup> Criterio looked back on "the sweet and the bitter" of her first year.<sup>155</sup> MADJ wrote an open letter to her.<sup>156</sup>

## Migration

"During the 12 months of last year, Mexico received 118,478 petitions from migrants requesting recognition of refugee status, the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance (Comar) reported on Tuesday. Unlike previous years when applicants from Haiti were the most numerous, in 2022 petitioners from Honduras were the first with 31,086 requests."<sup>157</sup> Almost 95'000 Hondurans were deported last year, 27,5% more than in 2021.<sup>158</sup> According to COIPRODEN, 13'700 Honduran children were deported to Honduras in 2022.<sup>159</sup>

"The entry of irregular migrants to Honduras grew by 973.7% in 2022 compared to 2021, and reached 188,858, according to data from the National Institute of Migration (INM) consulted Monday by EFE."<sup>160</sup>

## Poverty

"The new United Nations (UN) report Food and Nutrition Security Overview (FNS) 2022 revealed that 49.9% of the population in Honduras is moderately food and nutrition insecure."<sup>161</sup> Honduras received a record amount of almost \$8.7 billion in remittances, 17.8% more than in 2021.<sup>162</sup> According to a UNAH study, Honduras has the second most expensive basket of basic foods in Central America, \$383 per month.<sup>163</sup>

Criterio reports on the situation of poor children in Honduras. "Children in street situations who seek to move the conscience of the common citizen when they ask for money to satisfy their hunger or to take to their homes to contribute to the precarious family economy. This is one of the many scenarios that are experienced, not only in the most important cities of Honduras, but in a large part of the national territory and that generates concern in society. Casa Alianza de Honduras, a non-governmental organization with a track record in the care and protection of children and young people living in serious situations, reports that an average of 20,000 children are in conditions of abandonment."<sup>164</sup>

"Honduras faces structural problems that historically have not been on the agenda of the current rulers, nor have they worked to improve the living conditions of hundreds of Honduran men and women who, in the absence of opportunities, many decide to leave the country with the sole

154 <https://www.amnesty.org/es/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/AMR3763822023SPANISH.pdf>

155 <https://criterio.hn/lo-dulce-y-lo-amargo-del-primer-ano-de-gobierno-de-xiomara-castro/>

156 <https://madj.org/2023/01/28/carta-publica-a-xiomara-castro-a-un-ano-de-su-gobierno-hay-que-pasar-del-discurso-a-la-accion/>

157 <https://proceso.hn/honduras-lidero-las-peticiones-de-asilo-en-mexico-en-2022/>

158 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2023/01/09/honduras-recibio-94339-deportados-en-2022-un-27-5-mas-que-en-2021/>

159 <https://criterio.hn/honduras-registra-altos-indices-de-migracion-de-ninos-y-ninas/>

160 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2023/01/16/la-entrada-de-migrantes-a-honduras-crecio-un-9737-en-2022-hasta-188-858/>

161 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2023/01/19/omu-49-9-de-la-poblacion-esta-en-inseguridad-alimentaria/>

162 <https://proceso.hn/honduras-recibio-8686-2-millones-de-dolares-en-remesas-en-2022/>

163 <https://confidencialhn.com/blog/2023/01/30/la-canasta-basica-de-honduras-es-la-segunda-mas-cara-de-centroamerica/>

164 <https://criterio.hn/ninez-en-condicion-de-abandono-olvidados-por-el-estado-de-honduras/>

purpose of improving their lifestyle and generating income for their households. In addition, there is a gap in the country that has not been broken, Honduran women continue to be excluded from important jobs, despite the fact that the country is currently governed by a woman."<sup>165</sup>

## Education

The Honduran education sector lived through tense weeks. "Almost a month before the beginning of the school year, there are conflicts over the interim appointment of departmental directors in the Ministry of Education headed by Daniel Esponda. The President of the Republic herself, Xiomara Castro, ratified that there is a conflict within the Secretariat of Education, and at the same time requested that Esponda, Secretary of State in this office, "be an example of dialogue and respect for the law and non-violence".<sup>166</sup> <sup>167</sup> At the same time, USAID and the Honduran Ministry of Education set up a tripartite alliance with "the Honduran private sector in support of education reform and improvements to school infrastructure".<sup>168</sup>

"The 2023 school year starts [on February 1] in a new year with many expectations and challenges for the country at a time when the pandemic continues to decline and also waiting for an effective response from the Government to improve educational quality, coverage and inclusion. The Undersecretary of Education, Jaime Rodríguez, said in Radio Progreso that for this school year 2023 they expect an enrollment of more than 2.3 million children and young people nationwide."<sup>169</sup>

## 2023 Budget

Congress approved the 2023 budget. "The budget, which amounts to 392 thousand 519.7 million lempiras, will be 80% financed by the national treasury. The central administration will receive 234,540.9 million lempiras, an increase of 10% compared to the 2022 Budget, while the decentralized administration will receive 157,978.9 million lempiras, an increase of 7.3%."<sup>170</sup> There was some criticism regarding a possible confidential part in the 2023 budget. Both Finance Minister Rixi Moncada and Transparency Minister Hugo Noé Pino denied this.<sup>171</sup> Criterio additionally reported that the 2023 budget still contained the problematic left-overs of the JOH-era Departmental Funds. "A budgetary allocation of L950,000,000.00, which appears consigned within the General Budget of Income and Expenditures and which will be destined to the development of minor infrastructure and social works, has aroused suspicion. Its purpose would be closely related to the activation of the Community Social Funds which, months ago, was announced by the ruling party within the National Congress."<sup>172</sup>

---

165 <https://criterio.hn/vaticinan-que-en-2023-el-desempleo-en-honduras-continuara-siendo-un-problema-sobre-todo-para-las-mujeres/>

166 <https://criterio.hn/presidenta-castro-reprende-a-ministro-de-educacion-por-conflictos-internos-de-esa-secretaria/>

167 <https://twitter.com/XiomaraCastroZ/status/1613262877170737156>

168 <https://proceso.hn/eeuu-y-honduras-firman-alianza-por-la-educacion/>

169 <https://radioprogressohn.net/aplicacion-movil/matricula-de-2-3-millones-de-estudiantes-esperan-autoridades-educativas/>

170 <https://radioprogressohn.net/aplicacion-movil/aprobado-presupuesto-general-2023-asciende-a-392-mil-millones-de-lempiras/>

171 <https://proceso.hn/rix-moncada-y-hugo-noe-pino-defienden-que-no-hay-partida-confidencial/>

172 <https://criterio.hn/diputados-gestaran-proyectos-de-infraestructura-menor-tras-aprobacion-del-presupuesto-2023/>

## And Light at the End of a Month

Edwin Espinal & Raúl Álvarez, political prisoners criminalized during the 2017 electoral crisis were freed from all charges this month. It took 14 months after they were absolved for the court to give them their written final sentence.<sup>173</sup>

---

173 <https://twitter.com/HondurasNow/status/1611549029313257472>

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

Past Activities:

-

Upcoming Activities:

-

Subscribe to this monthly report: [foro\\_honduras\\_suiza@riseup.net](mailto:foro_honduras_suiza@riseup.net)

Subscribe to our daily press overview: [daniellm@bluewin.ch](mailto:daniellm@bluewin.ch)

Become a member: [info@honduras-forum.ch](mailto:info@honduras-forum.ch)

Support our work: IBAN: CH54 0900 0000 8003 3036 3

<http://honduras-forum.ch/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Honduras-Forum-Schweiz-753337355053820/>