



HONDURAS ACCOMPANIMENT PROJECT – PROAH

SUMMARY OF HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES AND EVENTS IN HONDURAS MAY 2014

On May 28, [a letter signed by 108 US Congress members](#), led by Jan Schakowsky, Democrat Representative for Illinois, was sent to Secretary of State, John Kerry, outlining **the deteriorating human rights situation in Honduras**, and urging him to press the Honduran government to protect human rights and ensure the rule of law. It also called on the State Department to evaluate US support and training for the Honduran police and military in the light of the human rights conditions in US budgetary legislation. The Congress members pointed to policies 'that threaten to make the human rights situation even worse' by promoting the militarization of public security, as well as to the impunity surrounding the targeted killings of members of vulnerable groups, such as LGBTI, indigenous and land rights activists, and the murders of 'dozens' of journalists and lawyers under the last administration. The letter, which gained coverage in the [New York Times](#), also expresses concern at reports that the elections in November were not free and fair, with murders of LIBRE activists both before and after.

The letter from members of the US House of Representatives criticizes **the repression of LIBRE legislators and activists at the Honduran Congress building**, on May 13, when police beat and tear-gassed them while they were protesting both inside and out, demanding that the Congress debate issues of national interest and that the government find a solution to the high levels of crime and violence in Honduras. As a result of the police's excessive use of force, several people were injured and a number hospitalized, including members of Congress.¹ LIBRE has lodged a [formal complaint](#) with the Public Prosecution Service on the basis of human rights violations.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) has published [its report on its 150th period of sessions](#), from March 20 to April 4. There are brief sections on the hearings on the general human rights situation in Honduras and on freedom of expression – the murder of journalists (see the annex to our [summary for March](#) for more details).

SPATE OF MURDERS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The IACHR was one of the international organizations which has expressed deep concern about the recent spate of killings of children and young people in Honduras, issuing a [statement](#) on three horrifying killings in the space of just two days.

On May 4, 2014, **four children between the ages of 2 and 13 years were hacked to death with a machete** in their own home, murders which have rocked the community of Limón, in Colón. The alleged perpetrator was a friend of the family who, it seems, took advantage of the short absence of the children's mother and grandmother to sexually abuse one of the children and then decided to silence them all.²

The other two incidents both took place in San Pedro Sula, and both appear to be associated with gangs.

On May 4, the same day as the murder of the children in Limón, [five adolescents, apparently members of the Mara 18 gang, were shot dead with high-caliber guns at El Carmen Pedagogical](#)

1 Radio Progreso and ERIC [Oposición es reprimida por reclamos de participación](#)

2 El Heraldó [Presunto asesino de niños se enfrenta a la justicia](#)

Center for Rehabilitation in San Pedro Sula. Three minors thought to be from rival group have been arrested in connection with the killings, in which grenades were also used. The authorities associated with the center have come under particular criticism as only last year, on October 2, 2013, there had been a previous gun attack on adolescents in Mara 18 at El Carmen by members of a rival gang, but in that case there were no fatalities. No lasting measures were taken to prevent a future incident - some inmates transferred to another center in Tegucigalpa because of the security situation were later returned.³

The following day, on May 5, 2014, **the corpses of two school-age children were found** in the La Pradera neighborhood, in San Pedro Sula. They had been kidnapped, tortured, and murdered. In the space of a month, from 10 April, a total of nine minors were found in such circumstances. The authorities and local residents believe they were killed for refusing to cooperate with gangs, and two (female) suspects, both gang members, have been arrested.⁴

The killings were condemned as 'absolutely unacceptable' by Marta Santos Pais, the UN Special Representative on Violence against Children, and [UNICEF in Honduras](#) also expressed concern, while Reina Rivera, director of CIPRODEH, has [stated](#) that they will have implications for the UN Human Rights Council's assessment of Honduras this year under the Universal Periodic Review. The [Violence Observatory of the UNAH](#) (National Autonomous University of Honduras) argued that the state needed to shift its focus from a militarized solution to the rampant violence in the country to one of prevention (see also last paragraph of P. 17 on the UNDP (UN Development Program)'s comments on policing models).

According to **Casa Alianza**, these murders have taken place against the background of **a general increase in killings of children and young people in recent months**. Its May 2014 report⁵ states that 102 were killed in May, as compared to 82 in April, bringing to 361 the total number killed in the first four months of Juan Orlando Hernández's presidency (January 27 to May 31). This represents an average of 90.2 such murders a month, as compared to 81.1 under Porfirio Lobo's presidency, itself at the time an unprecedentedly high figure. (As another point of comparison, during the first four months of Lobo's presidency, in 2010, 249 children and young people were murdered). Of the 102 children and young people killed in May, 36 were aged 0-17 and 66 were 18-23, with Cortés department (which includes San Pedro Sula) accounting for 52 of the murders, followed by Francisco Morazán (which includes Tegucigalpa) with 23. The perpetrator is only known in 23 cases, and of those 3 are attributed to the police, and 11 to gangs.

ATTACK ON CASA ALIANZA DIRECTOR

Casa Alianza's director, **José Guadalupe Ruelas**, has been outspoken in his criticism of the state for its complicity in some of the killings of children and young people, as well as for its more general failure to halt their relentless increase, on May 5 [blaming](#) 'bad policies' not only for this rise, but also for the increased brutality of such murders. These criticisms had already generated controversy in March, with the director being accused of political bias and irresponsibility by Nationalist politicians, including the president (see P.2 & 3 of our [March Summary](#)).

On May 8 at 11pm, three days after his latest statement criticizing the government, José Guadalupe Ruelas was driving the organization's car and wearing clothes with the organization's markings, when

3 La Prensa ["Masacre en El Carmen fue por falta de voluntad del Ihnfa"](#)

4 Estilo [Capturan a la "Pichetía", otra vinculada con crímenes de menores en La Pradera](#)

5 *Informe sobre la situación de derechos de los niños, niñas y jóvenes de Honduras, Mayo 2014* (not available on-line as at June 14).

he was signalled to stop at a military police checkpoint in front of the presidential residence in Honduras' capital, Tegucigalpa. He says that his car was stationary when a policeman on a motorbike collided with it. **José Guadalupe Ruelas was pulled out of the car by military police and beaten in the face, head, ribs and legs, and then dragged by the legs face down and kicked.** The police also took his belongings, including a laptop, before taking him to a police station. He was finally taken to hospital at 4.30 am for check-ups after local human rights organizations intervened. He was detained on the grounds of driving dangerously and under the influence of alcohol. However, the police were unable to prove that he was driving over the legal limit for alcohol, and the charges were dropped the next day.

A range of organizations have expressed concern at the incident, including the IACHR in its [statement](#) on the killings of the children, [Amnesty International](#), [Front Line Defenders](#), and the [FIDH](#). COFADEH has lodged a complaint on behalf of José Guadalupe Ruelas over his treatment with the human rights section of the Public Prosecution Service. He has received threatening messages telling him that if he did not withdraw the complaint, he would be defamed. The incident did spark smears, including the publication in El Heraldo newspaper of [details](#) of a 'compromising' video showing him drinking with two women – family friends – before the incident.⁶ Covenant House, the international headquarters of Casa Alianza, in the US, has [denounced](#) the attack on the Honduran director.

AHUAS TRAGEDY: MIXED SIGNALS ON THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY

May 11 marked the second anniversary of the [Ahuas tragedy](#) in La Moskitia, in which four members of the Miskito indigenous group were killed and another four injured, three permanently, when the boat they were traveling in was fired upon by helicopters during a joint anti-drugs operation by the Honduran security forces and US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). **The initial reaction by both the US and Honduran authorities was to stigmatize the victims, none of whom have so far been compensated,** and the DEA blocked any attempt by the Honduran investigators to interview the agents involved. However, recently there have been hopeful signs of movement by the US government, no doubt due to constant political pressure both domestically and internationally. In May came the [announcement](#) that the Offices of the Inspector Generals of both the Department of Justice and the Department of State are conducting a **joint review of the State Department and the DEA's** post-incident responses to Ahuas, as well as to two other anti-drug missions in Honduras in 2012 involving the use of deadly force.⁷ It is hoped that this will finally open the doors to compensation for the victims of Ahuas, already seemingly contemplated in the **US budget appropriations law for 2014**, adopted in January, which talks of the conditions of aid to Honduras including 'assistance for innocent victims of [anti-narcotics] operations.'⁸

Meanwhile, **COFADEH**, which has been taking the case of the victims in Honduras, has published an [article](#) announcing that it is **appealing against the definitive dismissal, on March 1, of the case against three Hondurans implicated in the killings in Ahuas.** The accused, two policemen and an airforceman, had been charged with murder, attempted murder of the wounded survivors, as well as illegal detention, torture and cruel inhuman and degrading treatment. The latter charges related to a number of incidents after the helicopters responsible for the attack landed in Ahuas, when their crews

6 El Heraldo [Director de Casa Alianza se declara "víctima de ataque" del gobierno](#)

7 For more information and commentary see CEPR's article [Hank Johnson on the Two-Year Anniversary of the Ahuas Killings and the Launching of a Joint Inspector General Review of the Incident](#)

8 CEPR [US Congressional Appropriations Bill Would Impose New Restrictions on Honduras Support](#)

went through the village terrorizing the inhabitants. While accepting that the three Hondurans had fired the fatal shots, the judgment, issued at the court in Puerto Lempira in La Moskitia, stated that the personnel, both Honduran and DEA, were 'carrying out their legitimate activity of confiscating drugs using their regulation weapons, as ordered by their commanding officer, and thus were fulfilling their legitimate duties in legitimate self-defense'. In its appeal, COFADEH argues that the authorities had failed to prove that there had been any attack from the boat which would justify a response of self-defense, which was in any case disproportionate.⁹

COPINH: SAN FRANCISCO DE OPALACA

COPINH issued a [statement](#) about the **murder, on May 25, of Irene Meza**, who had been active in his support for this municipality's Indigenous Government, set up as an alternative by the Lenca people to the administration headed by Socorro Sánchez, the National Party mayor who they consider to have been elected fraudulently in November. Irene Meza was just leaving an indigenous assembly when he and his colleague Plutarco Bonilla, both prominent LIBRE supporters, were shot by Hugo Sánchez, an employee of the mayor. While Irene Meza, with bullet wounds to his stomach and chest, was being taken by his wife and a driver to hospital in La Esperanza, they were attacked again by a heavily armed group of men causing the vehicle to crash. The armed men then shot the victim six more times, also injuring his fellow passengers.

Every day since January 25, the Lenca people of this municipality have been maintaining a 24-hour blockade and vigil at the entrance to the mayoral building, thereby preventing Socorro Sánchez from taking office. On February 21, less than a month after their protest began, Justiniano Vásquez, the brother of Entimo, the 'legitimate' Mayor, was murdered on his way home from the blockade by Juan Rodríguez, who had previously threatened to kill Entimo. The people of Opalaca collectively detained him and turned him over to the police but, given his affiliations, prosecution is unlikely. Entimo Vásquez and other leaders continue to face death threats and intimidation, with government officials visiting Opalaca hinting that the alternative leaders could face legal charges such as sedition.¹⁰

COPINH: RIO BLANCO

Police Brutality follows Murder

At midnight on May 24, **William Jacobo Rodríguez, a member of COPINH who had been active in the campaign against the Agua Zarca dam, was murdered** in Rio Blanco. Although someone immediately confessed to his killing, the police used it as a pretext for raiding houses in the community. They entered the home of COPINH member Lindolfo Benítez, a friend of the victim, and detained him, taking him to the house from which the police operate, owned by a sympathizer of the dam project. Another COPINH member and friend of the victim, Salvador Sánchez, had also been taken there. **The police then subjected both young men to physical and emotional torture**, including beatings, holding their heads under water and putting rubber hoods on them to make them feel that they would suffocate. The police also issued death threats to minors when they raided a COPINH member's home, as well as threatening Francisco Javier Sánchez, President of the Río Blanco Indigenous Council and COPINH's Land and Territory Coordinator. Lindolfo and Salvador were held

9 For more background on the case, see [COFADEH's Preliminary Investigation Report](#)

10 Brigitte Gynther, Upside Down World ["Here the People Govern": Autonomy and Resistance in San Francisco Opalaca, Honduras. The article provides very good background on the situation there.](#)

overnight and released in the early hours of 26th.¹¹

Dutch Development Bank reacts to Unfavorable Press Coverage

On April 1, as reported in our [summary](#), the Lenca indigenous councils of Rio Blanco marked the first anniversary of their protest against the dam by writing a [letter](#) to the Dutch Development Bank [FMO](#),¹² [asking it not to provide loans for](#) the construction of the Agua Zarca dam. The contract was signed in late February. The Volkskrant, a Dutch newspaper, took up the story,¹³ stating that the Lencas were supported by international human rights organizations, and quoting COPINH's leader, Berta Cáceres, saying that the FMO was an accomplice to murder and human rights violations. The article refers to the death threats issued to COPINH's leaders, as well as the use of the police, military and private security guards to repress the community, resulting in the death of Tomás García and the severe wounding of his son in July last year. The FMO have reacted by [issuing a statement](#) arguing that its 'consultations and visits to the local communities show that the majority of the local population is supportive of the project and want to proceed as soon as possible with the project in order to reap the economic and social benefits', raising the question of who precisely the FMO consulted and visited, given that the hydroelectric scheme has been repeatedly rejected in *cabildos abiertos* (open council meetings), as stated in the Rio Blanco councils' letter.

GARÍFUNA PEOPLE

Puerto Castilla - Violent Crackdown on Demonstration

On May 23, police and soldiers broke up a demonstration in this community of 800 people in Colón using tear-and pepper-gas, hospitalizing 6 children and forcing others to be evacuated to a boat moored on the coast. According to reports, the tear-gas was fired into the kindergarten, as well as into people's homes where they had sought refuge. The community had been forced off land to which it had legal title in 1974 to make way for the National Port Company (ENP), and now it was demanding the return of land to relieve overcrowding, as well as for ENP to fulfil its commitments, which included giving members of the community a share of the jobs at the port.¹⁴

Triunfo de la Cruz – Case appears before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights

The case of Triunfo de la Cruz, taken to the IACHR by the Garífuna organization OFRANEH (Honduran Black Fraternal Organization) was heard at the Inter-American Court on May 21. Seventy members of the organization from various Garífuna communities traveled to Costa Rica to accompany the process. The Court heard how Triunfo de la Cruz's land, to which the community has collective title, was taken over by the municipality and sold off for tourist schemes (see P.11 of our [summary for October-December](#) for more details – the case of Punta Piedra, originally to be combined with the Triunfo case, will now be heard by the Court in October). OFRANEH regards the case as one of the starkest examples of the theft of Garífuna land with the complicity and in this case active involvement

11 COPINH statement [Murder and repression in San Francisco de Opalaca and Rio Blanco executed by the fascist forces of the National Party and the National Police](#)

12 FMO is a public-private partnership, with 51% of its shares held by the Dutch state, and 49% held by commercial banks, trade unions and other private sector representatives. It was founded in 1970 by the Dutch government 'with the aim of promoting sustainable economic growth in developing countries'.

13 Volkskrant [Nederlandse bank wekt woede Hondurese indianen](#). (Google Translate provides a serviceable translation).

14 ERIC and Radio Progreso [Desalojan de forma violenta a pobladores de Puerto Castilla](#)
Honduras Resists [Attacks on the Lenca and Garifuna Communities](#), a translation of [OFRANEH article](#)

of the state, contributing to migration, because of the lack of economic opportunities, and the erosion of Garífuna culture.¹⁵ PROAH accompanies the leaders of Triunfo de la Cruz who have suffered persecution because of their struggle to protect their territory. The judgment on the case will probably be issued in October or November.

Cayos Cochinos

Sandra Cuffe has recently published an [interesting article](#) on the situation in the Cayos Cochinos, islands off the north coast traditionally inhabited by Garífunas. In 2003, at the same time as the petition on Triunfo de la Cruz, OFRANEH submitted to the IACHR the [case](#) of the Cayos Cochinos, which is still being considered by the Commission. It concerns the imposition by the Honduran government of environmental protection organizations on the islands without any consultation with the communities living there. The organizations' programs have restricted the communities' access to the land and waters from which they traditionally gain their livelihood, threatening their survival. The restrictions have been imposed with sometimes brutal force by the Honduran navy – a parallel case before the IACHR concerns the 2001 shooting of a Garífuna fisherman from the Cayos, Jesús Flores Satuyé, which permanently affected the mobility of his hand.¹⁶

The problem of environmental schemes (some of which are dubious by any criteria) imposed without proper consultation is one that has affected other Garífuna communities, including [Triunfo de la Cruz](#).

Murder of Mayor of Irióna

On May 16, Aníbal Duarte, the Liberal mayor of Irióna, Colón, and a great supporter of the first Garífuna hospital,¹⁷ in Ciriboya, in the municipality, was shot dead at a hotel swimming pool in Jutiapa, near La Ceiba, in what was obviously a professional killing. The police have told reporters that they believed a personal dispute was behind the murder of the mayor, who is [much mourned](#). However, as the [New York Times points out](#), illegal logging and drug-trafficking are rampant in the sparsely-populated municipality, and Aníbal Duarte had spoken of the need for the authorities to change strategy to combat them. The NYT also points to the fatal shooting, on May 21, of José Alexander González Cerrosa, a government forester, as he got off a bus in La Ceiba. He worked in the Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve and had recently reported illegal logging in the area.¹⁸

The general vulnerability of mayors in Honduras has led to [increases in life insurance premiums](#) for them.

Torture and Forced Confession of OFRANEH Ex-President in Mexico

COFADEH has published an [article](#) on Ángel Amílcar Colón Quevedo, ex-president of OFRANEH, whose situation is a [case-study](#) in Amnesty International's Stop Torture campaign, launched in May. He was in Mexico en route to the USA, where he hoped to earn money to pay for cancer treatment for his son. In March 2009, he fled the house in Tijuana where he had been asked to stay by his 'coyote' when it was stormed by armed men, and was later arrested by the police. Ángel states that he was viciously beaten and then blindfolded and taken to a military base, where he could hear the screams of other detainees. He was forced to perform humiliating acts, such as licking clean the shoes of other detainees and was repeatedly called a 'fucking nigger' (*pinche negro*). He was prosecuted on charges of

15 Prensa Latina [Despojo de tierras, terror e impunidad sobre los garífunas hondureños](#)

16 [Report No. 93/13](#), Petition 1063-07, Jesús Flores Satuyé et al

17 The makers of the film 'Revolutionary Medicine' about the hospital have edited together footage of an unused interview with him in his memory – see <https://vimeo.com/95763412>

18 New York Times [Lawmakers Ask State Dept. to Review Support for Honduras](#)

belonging to a criminal gang after signing a confession under duress. He remains in a high-security prison, although a human rights group is working on his case.

STATE APOLOGIZES OVER MURDER OF ENVIRONMENTALIST CARLOS LUNA

On May 19, **Rigoberto Chang Castillo, Minister for Human Rights, Justice, Governance and Decentralization, apologized formally on behalf of the Honduran government to the family of Carlos Antonio Luna López**, a day after the 16th anniversary of his murder in Catacamas, Olancho. Acceptance of responsibility under international law by the state and a public apology was one of the forms of reparation ordered by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in its judgment on the case in October last year.¹⁹ Carlos Luna, a town councillor, was murdered in 1998 after exposing corruption in the Municipal Corporation regarding logging permits and alleged illegal logging. He publicly and repeatedly stated that he had received threats from different sources, including public officials, and filed a complaint with the Public Prosecution Service. The state was criticized in the Court's judgment for failing to investigate the death threats and to put in place protection measures for him.

Carlos Luna's relatives have been pressing for all those involved in his murder to be brought to justice, in a legal process dogged with difficulties, as outlined by the Court's judgment. Many people involved in the case, including the victim's family, received death threats, as a result of which a prosecutor and two judges resigned from the case. Oscar Rodríguez Molina, one of the hitmen, and a key witness, was murdered in a high security prison where he had been transferred for his 'safety' after receiving death threats from others he had implicated in the killing. The other hitman charged was extradited from the US in 2008, put on trial and after a series of appeals was finally definitively sentenced to imprisonment in January 2013. However, the arrest warrant against him has still not been implemented. Of the two people charged with hiring the killers, both businessmen involved in logging, one had the case against him dismissed in 2006, while the other was murdered outside his home in 2008 while legal proceedings against him were still in progress.

Although there has been little or no investigation into other people named by Oscar Rodríguez Molina and others as implicated in the killings, including public officials, the Inter-American Court concluded that the state had conducted exhaustive investigations into the case, although there was scope for these to continue. As well as the apology, the Court ordered the Honduran government to provide psychological treatment for Carlos Luna's family, pay them damages, and implement an effective public policy for the protection of human rights defenders, particularly those seeking to protect the environment.²⁰

MINING: ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDER MURDERED IN EL NÍSPERO

The need for such a policy was highlighted by the murder of Rigoberto López Hernández, on May 3, 2014 in Santa Cruz, municipality of El Nispero in Santa Bárbara department. His death was condemned by the National Coalition of Environmental Networks in a [statement](#). His throat had been slit and his tongue cut out, which for the Coalition was a clear message that the perpetrators wished to silence those community leaders who, like Rigoberto López, have been vocal in their opposition to an iron oxide mine in the municipality because of its environmental and health impacts. It had already been the subject of a protest on March 24, when the Santa Cruz community set up a road block for

¹⁹ [Inter-American Court of Human Rights. Case of Luna López Vs. Honduras. Merits, Reparations and Costs.](#) Judgment of October 10, 2013. Series C No. 269. See also [press release on the judgment \(in Spanish only\)](#).

²⁰ See Proceso Digital article for more background [Condena por muerte de Carlos Luna, reivindica lucha ambientalista en Honduras](#)

several hours demanding the closure of the mine, blamed for causing health problems for 2,000 people in the area since it started operations in late 2013 (see P.9 of our [March summary](#)).

Quita Ganas, the mountain where the mine is located, has natural springs which provide water to several communities in El Nispero, including Santa Cruz, which are already affected. During visits to the area, CEHPRODEC (Honduran Center for the Promotion of Alternative Development) has also confirmed that large areas of farming land have been destroyed by landslides caused by the building of a road by the mining companies, and sediments from the mine are causing serious damage to El Nispero reservoir, which provides water for a hydroelectric scheme.

MINING: LOCOMAPA

The threats against members of the Tolupan indigenous community of Locomapa, Yoro, continue due to their peaceful opposition to illegal logging and antimony mining, a stand which has already claimed the lives of three of their number, murdered on August 25, 2013. As a result, a total of 38 people were granted precautionary measures²¹ by the IACHR in December. There has been no progress in arresting the killers, Selvin Fúnez Matute and Carlos Matute ('Los Matute'), the source of most of the threats, despite their being subject to arrest warrants.²²

Acts of intimidation by Los Matute have included turning up visibly armed to where beneficiaries of the precautionary measures are working in their fields and watching them, and issuing numerous threats by phone, stating that if they continue to report Los Matute to the authorities or the media, they will be dragged out of their houses along with their families. In one of the most brazen incidents so far, on May 18, Los Matute turned up at a community football field where they were again threatening people. When the police were phoned, they said that they could not arrest them in a public place as bystanders could be injured if there were a shoot-out, and that they could not arrest them at home either because there were children. At PROAH's visit to Locomapa in May, one of the excuses provided by the local police for not arresting Los Matute was that they did not know what they looked like (they also still did not have a full list of the people subject to the precautionary measures and so it was very difficult to see how they could implement them).

MADJ (Broad Movement for Dignity and Justice), which is supporting the community, wrote on May 29 to the Ministry of Security's Human Rights Office, responsible for the state's implementation of the precautionary measures, to complain at the lax attitude of the authorities to the situation, and in particular the constant excuses for the failure to arrest the killers after nine months, even though their identity and whereabouts were well-known. For MADJ, this indicated a lack of will to do so and complicity with the murderers and the interests they serve.²³

MINING: LA NUEVA ESPERANZA

There were similar concerns expressed about the implementation of the precautionary measures at a meeting on 27 May between the authorities and representatives of La Nueva Esperanza and of a further 11 of the 17 community councils (*patronatos*) which make up the Florida district. As well as around 80 representatives from the communities, the meeting was attended by MADJ, which is supporting them in their fight against mining, the local Prosecutor for Human Rights and a local representative of CONADEH. PROAH attended as observers. Notable by its absence was the Ministry of Security,

21 [IACHR precautionary measures – PM 416/13 of December 19, 2013 – 18 members of the Movimiento Amplio por la Dignidad y la Justicia \(MADJ\) and their Families, Honduras \(in Spanish only\)](#)

22 For more information on Locomapa and its situation, see Sandra Cuffe's article [“We came back to Struggle”](#)

23 Sources – MADJ letter of May 29 to Ministry of Security and PROAH visit.

ultimately responsible for the implementation of the precautionary measures which, like those for Locomapa, were granted to members of the communities and those supporting them by the IACHR in December 2013.²⁴ Nor had any of the security measures requested by them been implemented, such as protection by community police. (This is in contrast to the state's willingness to install a 10-strong police contingent, including four COBRAs, at the entrance to La Nueva Esperanza when Minerales Victoria was undertaking mining exploration there last year).

There has also still been no proper investigation into the threats issued to members of the community and their supporters, including members of MADJ and Padre César, the local parish priest, and which stretch back to August 2012, when Lenir Pérez, Miguel Facussés son-in-law and owner of Minerales Victoria, first had the mineral resources of La Nueva Esperanza in his sights.²⁵ He is believed to be directly responsible for some of these threats, as well as being complicit in others, particularly by security guards from the Orion company (implicated in killings of campesinos in the Bajo Aguán), who imposed a reign of fear on La Nueva Esperanza from early June 2013 until work stopped on the exploration works in November. It was security guards, as well as workers from the site, led by their foreman Wilfredo Funes, who were responsible for [holding two PROAH observers captive](#) for two-and-a-half hours in July last year. Although arrest warrants were finally issued in February for four of the security guards, none have been enforced. Wilfredo Funes, who had an arrest warrant issued in October, but was allowed to remain at his home in La Nueva Esperanza threatening mining opponents, was finally placed in pre-trial detention in February. At the assembly on May 27, the prosecutor announced that he would be sentenced to five years' imprisonment – without mentioning that a jail sentence of that length can be commuted to a fine, which would leave Funes free to continue persecuting the community.

MINING: CANADIAN MINING COMPANIES UNDER SCRUTINY

In Montreal, from May 29 to June 1, there were hearings of the [Permanent People's Tribunal sessions on the activities and impacts of the Canadian mining industry in Latin America](#). Goldcorp's San Martin mine in the Siria Valley is used as one of the emblematic cases demonstrating the detrimental health and environmental effects of this industry. The 'charges' also include the influence that Canada had on Honduras' controversial new mining law, taking advantage of what it calls the democratic deficit in the country post-coup.

Goldcorp's San Martin mine is also one of the 22 case-studies in the report [The impact of Canadian Mining in Latin America and Canada's Responsibility](#), by the Working Group on Mining and Human Rights in Latin America, a coalition of 7 NGOs including CEHPRODEC. As well as looking at its environmental and health impacts, the report talks of the criminalization of the mine's opponents, the Siria Valley Environmentalist Committee. The Working Group examined the conditions in Canada and host countries that give rise to conflicts and human rights violations, and presented a number of recommendations for the IACHR, Canada and host countries. The report follows the presentation of evidence by the Working Group to the IACHR at a hearing in November 2013 (see P.24 of our summary for October to December).²⁶

24 IACHR precautionary measures – [PM 195/13 of December 24, 2013 – Leaders and Human Rights Defenders of the Community of La Nueva Esperanza and of Florida Regional Community Council, Honduras](#) (in Spanish only)

25 See PROAH article [Mining project in La Nueva Esperanza: Alarming escalation in intimidation of the community](#) for more background.

26 For more background, see Sandra Cuffe's article in Upside Down World [Digging up the Dirt on Canadian Mining in Latin America](#)

MINING: PROTESTS INCREASE ALONG WITH CONCESSIONS

Despite the impacts already suffered by the Siria Valley, Pedro Landa of CEHPRODEC has [warned](#) that there are two more mining projects planned for that area, and **a total of 200 full operating (as opposed to exploration) concessions already granted in the country**, details of which INHGEOMIN (Honduran Geology and Mines Institute) does not wish to publish. He expressed concern at the lack of consultation with affected communities, particularly as clashes between them and mining companies had, by May 14, already led to the deaths of 11 people this year.

The extent to which the Honduran government is committed to mining was highlighted on May 22 by the signing of an [agreement](#) between INHGEOMIN and two German companies, **M&P Geo Nova and Geo-Expert, for them to map the country's mineral resources**, focusing on precious metals and rare earth. The initiative will take three years, and is funded by GIZ, the German Cooperation Agency.

On May 18, there was a peaceful protest against mining organized by the Catholic Church in the department of Valle, in the south of the country, where there are problems with mining in most of its nine municipalities, as well as in two El Corpus and El Triunfo in the neighboring department of Choluteca. After a march, the participants held **a demonstration in the community of El Jícaro Galán**, where the speakers included various priests, the Bishop of Choluteca, Guido Charbonneau, and members of communities already affected by mining.²⁷

As if the communities of the **Bajo Aguan** did not have enough to contend with, OPDHA (Bajo Aguan Permanent Human Rights Observatory) has reported that [mining has been approved](#) in almost all the region's municipalities, including Santa Fe, Trujillo, Tocoa, Sonaguera, Saba, and Sico, with a total of 19 mines approved so far.

LAND DISPUTES: MURDER OF COMMUNITY LEADER OF CERRITO LINDO

The IACHR issued a [statement](#) condemning **the murder, on May 4, of Orlando Orellana, the president of the patronato (community council) of Cerrito Lindo**, in San Pedro Sula. The Commission had ordered precautionary measures for him and the other members of the community in April 2005, a order which was revalidated in April 2012. Orlando Orellana, who was 75 years old, was on his way to a neighbor's home to take care of community-related matters when two men got out of a taxi and shot him dead. The Cerrito Lindo community are involved in a dispute over the ownership of parcels of land they bought from a local company. When they discovered that the sale was illegal, they launched legal actions and protests to settle the property dispute. As a result, several members of the community have been victims of various acts of violence such as violent evictions, death threats, and killings. **A total of seven people from the community have been killed, four of them since the granting of the precautionary measures**, including Orfilia Figueroa, Orlando Orellana's immediate predecessor as president of the *patronato*, who was murdered on March 26, 2012. All of the killings are so far in impunity.

Resolution of the land dispute is in the hands of the **Property Institute, accused of over 20 cases of corruption** in complaints filed with the Public Prosecution Service by three organizations in early June. The Jesuit organization ERIC (Reflection, Investigation and Communication Team) cited Orlando Orellana's murder as a prime example of the way in which the Property Institute's failure to resolve land disputes, because of corruption and inefficiency, is serving to fuel violence and killings.²⁸

27 Radio Progreso and ERIC [En el sur de Honduras rechazan explotación minera y exigen consulta previa](#)
La Tribuna [Pobladores protestan contra explotación minera](#)

28 Radio Progreso and ERIC [Corrupción en el IP está provocando asesinatos contra líderes comunitarios](#)

LAND DISPUTES: BAJO AGUAN

IACHR grants precautionary measures to campesino leaders

On May 8, the IACHR asked for precautionary measures²⁹ to be adopted for a total of 123 people, leaders of campesino movements in the Bajo Aguán - MOCRA (Campesino Movement to Regain the Aguán), MCRGC (Gregorio Chávez Refoundation Campesino Movement), MUCA (Aguán Unified Campesino Movement) and MARCA (Authentic Land Recovery Campesino Movement of the Aguan). MUCA alone accounts for 83 of the leaders covered. The precautionary measures were granted on the basis that since 2010 campesinos from these organizations had been subject to killings, disappearances, kidnappings, torture, threats, violent evictions, persecution, and accusations, to force them to sell their lands.³⁰

Violent Eviction of El Despertar and La Trinidad

Less than a fortnight later, at dawn on May 21, **315 soldiers and policemen and around 40 private security officers took part in the forced eviction of a total of 300 families** in two MARCA campesino communities in Trinidad and El Despertar, using tear gas, pepper spray and shooting into the air. In both cases the authorities refused to show eviction orders, and in the case of Trinidad they began the eviction without any explanation. In El Despertar the violence of the eviction resulted in two campesinos being hospitalized, and there was **a total of 50 campesinos and 8 members of the security forces injured. 14 people were arrested including 5 minors**, with the 9 adults (4 of them women, one of them pregnant) held in custody for several days. They included Jaime Adaly Cabrera Del Cid, President of the Regional Agrarian Plataform, Walter Ernesto Cárcamo Lezama, President of MARCA, and Antonio Rodríguez, all three beneficiaries of the precautionary measures granted by the IACHR on May 8. When the detainees were released from jail, the judges imposed alternative measures to prison upon them, making it more difficult for them to defend land rights, particularly for the two leaders. Following the evictions, the military and police formed a cordon around the two farms, preventing the campesinos from retrieving their belongings. They were eventually allowed to do so only after domestic and international human rights institutions intervened.

There has been considerable outcry over the evictions and the manner they were carried out, with COFADEH issuing an [urgent action](#) and international organizations working on Honduras publishing a [joint statement](#) urging an end to the violence and evictions in the Aguán. They described the land conflict there as the most serious situation, in terms of the degree of violence against campesino communities, to have emerged in Central America in the last 15 years. The Human Rights Coordinator of the Public Prosecution Service [visited the area](#) two days after the evictions to hear testimony, particularly from the injured and from beneficiaries of precautionary measures who had received death threats from the security forces at the time of the eviction.

La Trinidad and El Despertar were two of the three farms, along with San Isidro, that the lawyer **Antonio Trejo** had succeeded in regaining for the campesinos of MARCA in June 2012, after an 18-year legal battle. He was murdered on 22 September 2012, a month after the (illegal) reversal of the ruling,³¹ and his brother, José who was seeking justice for his death, was himself murdered in February 2013.³² The San Isidro cooperative has already been evicted, on September 3, 2013, and the farm re-

29 IACHR precautionary measures PM 50/14 - Campesino Leaders of Bajo Aguán, Honduras
<http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/decisions/precautionary.asp> Resolution in Spanish only

30 For more details see Hondudiario [CIDH ordena al Gobierno hondureño protección a 123 dirigentes campesinos del MUCA](#)

31 Honduras Laboral [Asesinato de Abogado Antonio Trejo Defensor](#)

32 Amnesty International Press Release [Honduras must investigate killing of murdered activist's brother](#)

occupied by Empresa Exportadora del Atlántico, an oil palm company owned by **Dinant**.³³ OPDHA had issued an [alert](#) in April warning that an eviction of La Trinidad was imminent, implementing an order granted in February to the Salvadoran René Morales, proprietor of the palm company Oleopalmas de Centroamerica.

Protest at El Mochito farm

On May 19, a couple of days before the evictions from La Trinidad and El Despertar, a group of 100 to 120 campesinos from Ocotes Altos, Trujillo, staged a [protest](#) consisting of a road block and land occupation of the nearby El Mochito farm, and were peacefully evicted the following day by the security forces and private security guards. They were demonstrating to demand answers from the landowner, Reynaldo Canales, and the authorities concerning the **killings and disappearances of four people on the farm in 2011**. The first to disappear were Tarín Daniel García and Carlos Alberto Canales, on April 16, 2011. They were found dead three days later, with signs of torture, and Tarín Daniel García had been decapitated. Only a month later, on May 28, 2011, Olvin Gallegos and Segundo López went to the farm as they had been told that there would be a land takeover, but it was a trap. According to witnesses, they were taken away by private security guards and they have not been seen since.

Occupation of Paso Aguán farm

From May 5, **at least 200 families** from the MCRGC occupied the Paso Aguán farm, in Panamá, Trujillo municipality. According to a [press release by MUCA](#), the families were surrounded by Miguel Facussé's security guards, from the Dinant Corporation, as well as security forces under the command of Colonel René Jovel Martínez, and Colonel German Alfaro Escalante, whom Colonel Martínez had theoretically replaced. Colonel Alfaro had been appointed head of the PMOP (Public Order Military Police) based in San Pedro Sula, but had been in the Aguán once more in recent weeks, 'persecuting small producers and visiting some campesino communities to deepen divisions and crisis in campesino organizations,' according to MUCA's press release, and once again [smearing the campesino movements](#)). **The Paso Aguán farm has been used as a clandestine cemetery by Dinant security guards** - Gregorio Chávez was kidnapped on July 2, 2012, and found buried seven days later, while José Antonio López Lara from Rigores disappeared on April 29, 2012 and was [exhumed](#) on April 25, 2013. According to MUCA, there are other campesinos still missing on this land.

Dinant and the World Bank

Meanwhile, **Dinant [announced](#) on May 10 that the company had recently removed all firearms from its security staff** at all of its African palm plantation sites in Honduras. It stated that the move was designed to 'mitigate the potential for conflict in the Bajo Aguán' and was in recognition of the fact that governments and their security forces have sole responsibility for enforcing law and order.

The press statement also expresses pride in the fact that **Dinant is fully implementing the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights**, which govern how it vets, recruits and trains its security staff, and how they engage with the community. According to Dinant, it is the first to adopt this initiative in Honduras and throughout the global agribusiness sector. It adopted the Principles in November 2013, just before the publication of the [damning report](#) on Dinant by the World Bank's Compliance Advisor Ombudsman (CAO). One wonders whether it therefore did so as a kind of 'pre-

33 Conexihon [Aguán: Por fallo de la Corte desalojan a campesinos de la finca San Isidro](#)

emptive strike'. At all events, compliance with the Voluntary Principles is part of the [Enhanced Action Plan](#) for Dinant adopted in response to the CAO's report, so they are in effect compulsory for the company if it wishes to continue receiving World Bank loans.

The international organizations, in their recent [joint statement](#), welcomed the move to disarm the security guards, while pointing out that the company was responding to international pressure and was implicitly admitting that their guards had been implicated in acts of violence. They also expressed concern at **Dinant's [announcement](#) that it was building barracks to accommodate soldiers from Operation Xatruch on the Paso Aguán farm**, thus confusing roles of the state and of a private corporation (already thoroughly confused in the case of Operation Xatruch and Dinant – see for example, Annie Bird of Rights Action's [article](#) which refers to Xatruch forces harvesting the palm fruit on the Paso Aguán farm, apparently as payment in kind).

Somewhat bizarrely, given its notorious record, Dinant was [invited to speak on security and human rights matters](#) at the IFC Sustainability Exchange, the World Bank's [annual conference](#) on sustainable business practices, held on May 21 and 22.

JOURNALISTS

World Press Freedom Day

On May 3, a number of organizations issued reports or statements marking World Press Freedom Day. **C-Libre** launched its [2013 annual report](#) which, as well as dealing with legislative developments and other issues, focused on the murders of journalists, and impunity. It pointed out that of 38 journalists killed from 1993 to 2013, 31 of those killings (82%) were committed under the 4-year presidency of Porfirio Lobo. While most are automatically attributed by the authorities to common criminality, C-Libre regards both the dramatic increase in such killings in this post-coup period, as well as the sudden drop in 2013 (to 'only' three) as evidence of an active strategy to intimidate and silence journalists, as it was largely within the government's gift to prevent such killings if it so chose – reacting last year to international pressure, particularly from the US State Department.

The continuing impunity for such murders, as well as other attacks on journalists, was the focus a statement by [PEN International](#), according to which impunity was running at 90% for the 38 killings of journalists from 2003 to early May 2014. It welcomed the recent convictions for the murders of journalists Aníbal Barrow and Alfredo Villatoro Rivera, while noting that only one of at least six suspects in the Barrow case had been convicted, and those who ordered both murders have yet to be found. It also pointed to the continuing lack of progress in the investigation into the December 2013 murder of radio station owner and reporter Carlos Argeñal Medina.

In the [ratings of the US-based Freedom House](#), the Honduran press is already classified as 'not free', but slipped a further two places, from 62 to 64 this year, in part due to heightened self-censorship, especially regarding issues such as corruption and possible links between local government officials and organized crime. Conditions in Honduras 'remained challenging due to high levels of violence and intimidation against the media'.

Murder

Sadly, the figure of 38 murders soon became 39, with the killing of **Hernán Cruz Barnica**, a coordinator of LIBRE and radio broadcaster in San Juan de Opoa, Copán, shot dead on May 28. He was a part-time taxi-driver, and the last time he was seen alive was at around 4pm in Santa Rosa de Copán, when he picked up a man in his cab. His body was found in it about an hour later, on the road to Dulce Nombre, a town about 5 miles from Santa Rosa. The motive for his death is not known. He

had his own weekday radio program *Otro Nivel* (Another Level).³⁴ His murder was condemned by the [Director-General of UNESCO](#) and [Reporters without Borders](#).

Threats

[Reporters without Borders](#) also expressed concern at increased acts of intimidation against **Alex Sabillón**, presenter of TV program *Hechos de Choloma* (Happenings in Choloma), with a person photographing his home on May 23 and the broadcaster himself in the street on 27th, as he was working. He stated that a month before, there had been an increase in intimidation of him by text message, phone calls, and photographing. He had been granted special security measures by the former Human Rights Secretariat, but had been without protection for two months, when the police officer assigned to him was killed. He has now been reassigned police protection. C-Libre has recorded 12 attacks against the journalist since 2011, including a lawsuit against him for 'sedition' by the Choloma water company.³⁵

On May 29, International PEN [called on the IACHR](#) to issue precautionary measures to protect the freedom of expression of Radio Globo's **Julio Ernesto Alvarado**. He was tried in December 2013 essentially for giving air-time in 2006 to two lecturers at UNAH (National Autonomous University of Honduras) who accused Belinda Flores, a dean there, of corruption, allegations already published. While they were exonerated, he was found guilty of defamation, and sentenced to 16 months imprisonment and a ban on practising journalism. Alvarado decided not to appeal against his conviction, due to a lack of faith in the justice system, instead opting to pay a fine. At a hearing on April 28, the judge also lifted the work ban, but this was appealed against on May 2 by Flores' lawyer. **Flores has also reportedly indicated that she intends to launch civil defamation proceedings against the journalist** through which, if successful, she could be awarded large damages leading to Alvarado's imprisonment, if he fails to pay them. PEN's submission calls on the Honduran state to prevent implementation of his sentence and to provide him with police bodyguards, given the series of acts of intimidation, both before and after the verdict, including death threats to himself and his family.

Censorship

[Reporters Without Borders](#) has condemned the **censorship of *Suelta la lengua*** (Talk Freely), a program that *Canal 6* (Channel 6) has not broadcast since May 15 without any explanation from its CEO, Paul Misselem. The program is openly critical of President Juan Orlando Hernández's government, and its presenters, **Jorge Burgos** and **Emy Padilla**, have repeatedly been censored by *Canal 6*'s own management. Their program, which has often linked banks and commercial enterprises to corruption, has upset some of the TV station's shareholders. Emy Padilla has stated that, in the middle of recording one program, she was passed a note from the *Canal 6* production staff ordering her not to mention a certain subject. *Suelta la lengua* often has guests who involved in human rights, especially the heads of NGOs and grass-roots organizations, including recently José Guadalupe Ruelas of Casa Alianza. Jorge Burgos states that he has seen many independent programs canceled or about to be canceled under the current government, and accuses Hilda Hernández, Minister of Strategy and Communications (and Juan Orlando Hernández's sister), of buying media bosses' silence and complicity by awarding them advertizing contracts.³⁶

34 C-Libre [Asesinan a Comunicador social de radio comunitaria en Honduras](#)

35 Conexihon [Persiste la intimidación y el aseo en contra de reportero de televisión](#)

36 C-Libre Alert [Periodista denuncia cancelación arbitraria de su espacio informativo](#)

Zacate Grande

It has been a mixed month for the broadcasters of Voice of Zacate Grande (*La Voz de Zacate Grande*), the community radio station set up by ADEPZA³⁷ in 2010 as part of their struggle to recover and maintain their land and access to the sea in the face of appropriation by Miguel Facussé and other powerful interests. Under the new Telecommunications Law, **CONATEL (National Telecommunications Commission) has assigned it a [radio frequency](#)** which, being at 500 watts instead of the current 50, which will considerably expand its coverage. This is a dramatic change given that, until recently, the conditions for registration meant that it was almost impossible for community radios to gain licenses, which then gave the authorities a pretext for persecuting them, as was the case with ADEPZA.³⁸

ADEPZA estimates that, since Voice of Zacate Grande was established, **90 of its members have been charged with offenses and 45 have received death threats.**³⁹ As a result of persecution from private individuals and agents of the state, the journalists at the radio station were granted precautionary measures by the IACHR in April 2011.⁴⁰

The [latest incident](#), on May 31, involved **Miguel Ángel Vasquez, one of the radio presenters. He was detained for two-and-a-half hours by the police** who said that he had refused to be searched at the bus station in the mainland town of San Lorenzo while, they claimed, they were carrying out an operation to apprehend someone believed to be a gang member, who happened to exactly match Miguel's description. It seems that his treatment was in direct retaliation for his objecting to the local police chief, Inspector Duarte, turning up at the radio station the day before and taking photos without permission. Miguel stated that when he got off the bus in the mainland town of San Lorenzo, he was followed by eight police and soldiers in a patrol car, who demanded to see his papers, which he handed over. A policeman then jumped off the patrol car, pushed him and told him to go behind a truck. Miguel ran off but was caught and detained. During his detention, where he was threatened by police officers, Inspector Duarte came to the cell but pretended not to recognize him, instead asking him questions about the radio and its presenters. Miguel was released when COFADEH intervened.

LGBTI

In mid-May, representatives of the LGBTI community met with Roberto Herrera Cáceres, the new National Human Rights Commissioner (CONADEH) to demand the promotion of respect for their human rights, particularly the right to life, and a halt to the hate crimes against them. According to [CONADEH](#), 92% of crimes committed against members of the LGBTI community go unpunished, and the police are among the main aggressors and violators of their rights. It is not clear what period this relates to. Although the press statement from CONADEH focuses (for some reason) on 2012, it fails to mention the dramatic increase in killings of members of the LGBTI community since the coup, which accounted for 99 of the 118 such murders recorded by the Cattrachas Media Monitoring Center from 1994 to May 2013⁴¹. (According to [press accounts](#) of CONADEH's statement, at least 150 LGBTI people were killed between 2005 and 2014).

37 Association for the Development of the Zacate Grande Peninsula

38 See article from June 2011 by Reporters without Borders [Community radio stations still denied access to air-waves](#)

39 Conexihon [Radio La Voz de Zacate Grande, el brazo derecho en la lucha por la tierra](#)

40 IACHR IACHR precautionary measures - PM 115/11 – Journalists at La Voz de Zacate Grande, Honduras <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/decisions/precautionary.asp>

41 Report presented by Cattrachas, a feminist lesbian organization, to IACHR Commissioner Robinson during her visit to Honduras on May 14-18, 2013. (Cited in the [IACHR 2013 Annual Report](#)).

On May 20, Honduras received rare praise from the IACHR, which welcomed the appointment, in 2011 and 2012, of the special prosecutors to investigate and prosecute crimes based on sexual orientation and gender identity, in a [press statement](#) on recent developments in OAS member states to promote LGBTI rights. Although there has been some progress reported with prosecutions,⁴² it is all too apparent that there is a continuing failure in Honduras to investigate killings of LGBTI persons properly because they are dismissed as crimes of passion, an issue that has been raised with the IACHR.⁴³

Probably the most disturbing example is the case of the human rights defender [Walter Trochez](#), of APUVIMEH,⁴⁴ murdered in December 2009, only a week after he escaped an attempted kidnapping by four masked men, widely thought to be police officers, who had beaten him and asked him to give details of coup opponents. On December 13, 2009 he was shot through the chest while walking through the center of Tegucigalpa, in what was clearly a professional execution. Despite the circumstances surrounding his killing, his murder has been treated as a crime of passion, and a gay man arrested, despite evidence that he was in Mexico at the time of the murder.⁴⁵ It is deeply worrying that even this emblematic case, which has been taken up by Amnesty International and other organizations, has received such treatment and, as a result, the real killers have still not been brought to justice.

POLITICAL ACTIVISTS

On May 12, **Rafael Barahona**, LIBRE candidate for mayor of Tegucigalpa and current city councillor member, was [shot twice in the forearm and hand](#) as he was driving his car in the capital at about 9pm. His car was intercepted by another which blocked his path, and men inside got out and fired at least 10 shots at him. There are no reports of his receiving threats before the attack, and the motive is not known.

FEMICIDES

Demonstrating the widespread nature of impunity, the CDM (Center for Women's Rights) has [stated](#) that, since a special offense of femicide was introduced into the Penal Code a year ago, charges have only been brought in five cases, out of a total of 300 femicides committed. CDM pointed to the need for effective investigations.

JUDICIARY

On May 30, the plenary of the **Supreme Court voted to refer the legal challenge to lie detection tests for judges to its Constitutional Chamber** for consideration. The challenge has been brought by the AJD (Association of Judges for Democracy), who are opposed to lie detectors being used as part of the purge conducted by the Judiciary Council, in operation since October 2013. The use of lie detectors in this process, as well as the arbitrary nature of the purge in general, has also been criticized by a [member of the International Commission of Jurists](#), [CEJIL](#) (Center for Justice and International Law), and the IACHR (see P.15 of [our summary for March](#)). The tests will be suspended until the constitutional judges have reached a decision.⁴⁶ If it is decided to ban the polygraph tests for judges

42 See, for example, Para 432 of the [IACHR 2013 Annual Report](#),

43 Ibid Para 431.

44 Association for a Better Life for in Honduras for People with HIV and AIDS, which also advocates for LGBTI rights.

45 Adrienne Pine [LGBTI march in Tegucigalpa meets homophobic/transphobic military state](#) which also contains information on other attacks on the LGBTI community, particularly APUVIMEH

46 La Prensa [Corte pone alto al polígrafo en la DEI](#)

then, for consistency, they will also be banned from the police purge, where they have been in use for two years.⁴⁷

POLICING

The **purge of the police force** has again come under criticism, with the coordinator of the AJP (Alliance for Peace and Justice) questioning whether any senior-ranking officers were among the thousand police apparently 'purged' so far, and whether any such officers had been brought to justice for criminal activities. The former police commissioner María Luisa Borjas, pointed to the use by criminals of police guns and uniforms as an indication that such activity continued within the force.⁴⁸ The failure of the purge as well as the creeping militarization of public security also featured in a [survey](#) by Giorgio Trucchi of the first 100 days of the current presidency.

On May 27, the family of **Ebed Yanes**, one of the most notable victims of this militarization of police functions, held a demonstration outside the Supreme Court, demanding justice on the second anniversary of his death. The 15-year-old, who was on a motorbike, failed to stop at a military checkpoint in the early hours of the morning in a suburb of Tegucigalpa, and was then pursued by soldiers in a vehicle who shot him repeatedly. His family have stated that three soldiers fired at Ebed, but only one, a sergeant, has received a prison sentence – for homicide, abuse of authority and for failing in his duty as a public servant. The other two, a second lieutenant and a corporal, were charged with the latter two offenses and with perverting the course of justice (*encubrimiento*), and were handed non-custodial sentences, even though the second lieutenant was in command of the patrol which pursued Ebed and must have given the order to fire. COFADEH, which has taken the case, tried to get the charge of homicide extended to them, but without success. Due to the persistence of Ebed's parents and COFADEH, charges have also been brought against seven high-ranking officers for the same three crimes, but the legal proceedings against them have stalled since the initial hearing in June last year. The accusations against these officers, three of whom are colonels, include switching the weapons used in the killing and telling the soldiers involved to deny that they were at the scene at the time.⁴⁹

While the Honduran government sees militarization as the solution to the country's security crisis, the UNDP (UN Development Program), during the presentation of its [2013-14 Human Development Report for Latin America](#), pointed to Nicaragua as an exception within the region, in having both high levels of poverty and low crime rates, with a murder rate, at 8.7 for every 100,000 inhabitants, a tenth that of Honduras. Juan Pablo Gordillo of the **UNDP hailed Nicaragua's system for citizen security – which its authorities describe as 'preventive, community-based and proactive' – as an 'exportable model.'**⁵⁰

CARDINAL RODRÍGUEZ MENTIONED IN REPORT TO UN COMMITTEE AGAINST TORTURE

The Honduran Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez is cited in an [report](#) by the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) on sexual abuse by Catholic priests which it submitted to the UN Committee against Torture, which examined the Holy See in May. He is referred to in the case of Rev. Enrique Vásquez, which

47 La Tribuna [Homologarán las pruebas de confianza](#)

48 Radio Progreso and ERIC [Según Analista, la depuración policial no abarca a los altos mandos de esta institución](#)

49 Defensoresenlinea [“No nos cansaremos de alzar la voz hasta que se haga justicia”](#)

50 El Nuevo Diario [Destacan baja tasa de homicidios y de robos en Nicaragua](#)

CCR mentioned to illustrate how church authorities used their global presence as a network to help shield an admitted offender from prosecution. Rev. Enrique Vásquez had sexually abused an altar boy in Costa Rica in the mid-1990s which he confessed to his bishop. The day after being charged for the offense by the state child welfare agency in 1998 he fled the country, and worked as a priest elsewhere, being assigned by Cardinal Rodríguez to two remote parishes in Honduras in 2003 and 2004. Enrique Vásquez was eventually arrested in Tegucigalpa in 2007, by which time at least one of the charges against him had elapsed due to time delays. As with many others high in the Catholic hierarchy, Cardinal Rodríguez was strongly opposed to reporting priests to the civil authorities, quoted in the report as declaring 'I'd be prepared to go to jail rather than harm one of my priests'.

Proyecto de Acompañamiento internacional en Honduras (PROAH)

<http://proah.wordpress.com>

Honduras Accompaniment Project

<http://hondurasaccompanimentproject.wordpress.com>

Friendship Office of the Americas

<http://friendshipamericas.org>