



# Handling the Risks of Honduras' High-stakes Poll

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**What's new?** Honduras will hold presidential and legislative polls in late November amid political polarisation and a humanitarian crisis. With the president due to step down and face possible judicial investigation, and untested, recently instituted changes to electoral institutions, the country risks repeating the destabilising protests that followed its disputed 2017 elections.

**Why does it matter?** Humanitarian crises and instability have plagued Honduras since the 2009 coup that shook up its political establishment. A disputed vote could bring post-election turmoil and fuel the outflow of migrants and asylum seekers toward Mexico and the U.S.

**What should be done?** The main party candidates should publicly commit in advance to respect the elections' outcome and to use appropriate legal and institutional channels to resolve any disputes. The EU, OAS and other international observation missions should coordinate their messaging. Outside actors should facilitate dialogue if needed to defuse tensions.

## I. Overview

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Four years after disputed polls sparked mass protests, Honduras is approaching another tense vote on 28 November. Despite saying he will leave office, President Juan Orlando Hernández is reportedly looking into ways to protect himself from possible prosecution in the U.S. on drug trafficking charges. He and the ruling National Party thus have a huge stake in polls that will elect the next president and a legislature charged with appointing a new attorney general and Supreme Court. Meanwhile, new electoral bodies appear ill prepared to deal with disputes in what could be a tight contest. To reduce risks of post-election unrest, the main parties' representatives on those bodies should take decisions by consensus, if at all possible. Political leaders should pledge to respect the outcome, look to institutions to address challenges to results and keep protests by supporters peaceful. The U.S., European Union (EU), UN and Organization of American States (OAS) should press for a transparent vote, urge candidates to refrain from groundless accusations of fraud and prepare to back emergency talks if Honduran institutions are unable to resolve disputes.

Honduras' political crisis has roots in both the 2009 coup that ousted the left-wing government of President Manuel Zelaya and the tumultuous 2017 elections that installed President Hernández for a second term. The country has been led since 2010 by Hernández's right-wing National Party, which has asserted increasing control over state institutions as well as the judiciary. The electorate is highly polarised. After crowds took to the streets to protest perceived unfairness in the contested 2017 elections, the UN and other outside actors stepped in. They brought together key political actors and brokered a set of agreed-upon reforms intended to restore faith in the electoral process. These reforms have, however, yet to be fully enacted, much less tested.

The biggest potential danger with the untested system lies in the newly established National Electoral Council, which organises the poll and declares results, and the Tribunal of Electoral Justice, which settles any dispute about the tally that may arise. Since the composition of these bodies is split equally among the three main parties, they will be hard pressed to agree on solutions if results are contested. Given the closeness of opinion polls, the intensity of the race and the National Party's win-at-all-costs disposition, such a dispute is entirely possible. In October, opposition candidate Xiomara Castro – wife of ousted President Manuel Zelaya – received the endorsement of Salvador Nasralla, the candidate who narrowly lost to Hernández in the 2017 polls. She added him to her ticket as vice presidential candidate, increasing the likelihood of a close finish. (Looking ahead, this union of opposition forces also raises the prospect that control of the presidency and Congress could end up in the hands of opposing parties, potentially generating a legislative deadlock that could give rise to protracted political tensions.)

The forthcoming poll will take place as Hondurans lose faith in governing institutions and endure overlapping crises. Many distrust the political class so much, and despair so deeply of the country's future, that they see migration as the only option. According to one recent survey, confidence in the executive, Congress and electoral institutions stands among the lowest in Latin America. Outflows of migrants and asylum seekers have risen sharply over the past decade, above all after the 2017 polls, with the first mass caravan taking shape the following year. Since then, the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown hundreds of thousands into poverty, while Hurricanes Eta and Iota in late 2020 are estimated to have affected 4 million Hondurans. When borders were reopened in Central America shortly before the storms, the number of northbound migrants skyrocketed: around 320,000 Hondurans, or more than 3 per cent of the population, were apprehended at the U.S. southern border between October 2020 and September 2021, up from 43,000 in the 2020 fiscal year, and more than 2019, when the previous record was set.

Honduran political leaders, the country's institutions and foreign partners should take steps to prevent an electoral dispute from triggering another round of unrest and instability. To lower the temperature, in the remaining time before 28 November, the major party candidates should publicly commit that they will respect the outcome and look to appropriate institutional and legal channels to resolve any disputes. Meanwhile, foreign partners, namely the U.S., EU, OAS and UN, should engage with party heads and security forces to stress the importance of safe and credible polls. International observation missions should coordinate among themselves to ensure the fullest possible territorial coverage, while observers and diplomats should all aim

for consistent messaging. Outside actors should also be prepared to react more rapidly than they have during previous elections to mediate between the main contenders if controversies look set to escalate.

## **II. High Stakes, High Risks**

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The 28 November elections risk becoming a flashpoint. Public trust in the country's main political parties has flagged, most recently due to a series of corruption scandals affecting all levels of government.<sup>1</sup> Opinion polls point to tight races for both the presidency and Congress. It is unclear whether the recently reformed electoral system will effectively ensure transparency or resolve disputes.

### *A. The 2009 Coup and Its Aftermath*

Memories of both the June 2009 coup and the turbulence in the wake of the 2017 presidential election remain fresh in Honduras. In June 2009, leftist President Manuel Zelaya was deposed and exiled abroad for allegedly seeking re-election in contravention of constitutional prohibitions. After a short period of de facto government marked by public outcry and harsh treatment of protesters by security forces, the conservative National Party won elections later that year. Since then, it has ruled the country continuously, appointed supporters to state and judicial institutions, and reportedly abused its power through corruption and criminal collusion.<sup>2</sup> Zelaya, who returned to Honduras in 2011, formed the leftist Libre party and for a time emerged as the main opposition figure, appealing to voters dissatisfied with public institutions and economic inequality. His wife, Xiomara Castro, is the leading opposition candidate in the 2021 campaign.

President Hernández, whose term is set to end in January 2022, first took office in 2014 and was re-elected in November 2017, after the Supreme Court overturned a constitutional prohibition that would have kept him from a second presidential term. Initial results showed opposition leader Salvador Nasralla, a TV presenter standing as the candidate of an alliance among the Anti-Corruption Party (then his party), Libre and the smaller Innovation and Unity Party, in the lead. Only after a few days of counting, interrupted by an outage of the computerised voting system, did electoral authorities place Hernández ahead, prompting the opposition to cry foul and its supporters to throng the streets. Security forces cracked down on demonstrations across the country, killing at least 23. Despite concerns about electoral malfeasance, as well as calls from the OAS to repeat the vote, Hernández was eventually confirmed as the victor.

To prevent further strife, the UN – with backing from the Spanish embassy in Tegucigalpa – gathered representatives of several key political movements for a structured dialogue in 2018. The opposition was represented by Luis Zelaya (no relation to Manuel), leading one faction of the divided centrist Liberal party, and Nasralla. The talks also featured a representative of the National Party. The Libre party opted

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<sup>1</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, political analyst, 10 September 2021.

<sup>2</sup> "One Party, Many Crimes: The Case of Honduras' National Party", Insight Crime, 16 February 2021.

out, seeing the process as political theatre that benefited Hernández, but agreed to support the electoral reforms recommended in the talks, which Congress eventually enacted. These included the creation of new electoral bodies to resolve disputes and protect voting integrity, and the digitalisation of the voter registry, among other things. But implementation has lagged, and with polling day fast approaching, these reforms remain far from complete.

## B. *Political Rivals*

On 28 November, Hondurans are set to elect a new president, members of Congress and mayors from an array of candidates, many of them from parties that still nurture grievances that date back to the political cleavages arising from the 2009 coup. Fifteen parties will compete in the elections, the main contenders being President Hernández's conservative National Party, Castro's leftist Libre party, the centrist Liberal Party headed by Yani Rosenthal and Nasralla's Honduras' Saviour Party – now allied with Libre in the presidential race.

The National Party, and particularly President Hernández, have the most to lose in the balloting. After winning the first post-coup election in 2009, the party has established control over virtually all the main state institutions, including the judiciary and security forces.<sup>3</sup> But this concentration of power, as well as entanglement in corruption scandals and accusations in U.S. courts that Hernández was involved in a conspiracy to traffic cocaine to the U.S., have prompted traditional allies in the Catholic Church, parts of the business sector and media to distance themselves.<sup>4</sup> Without a win for the Nationalists at the polls, Hernández is likely to find himself isolated, legally exposed and with diminishing options for protecting himself from prosecution in the U.S.

Notwithstanding widespread concerns that Hernández himself might find a way to cling to power, the party claims it will respect the election results and insists that, one way or another, Hernández's term in office is coming to an end. "We will not allow Hernández to stay on", a high-level party figure stated. "His time is over".<sup>5</sup> Other influential players, like the capital's business sector and the U.S., confirm that any attempt by the incumbent to remain in power would face their opposition: according to a U.S. official, Washington will not accept any "extra-curricular ways for Hernández".<sup>6</sup> Yet sources from across the political spectrum still voice concern that the Nationalists will do anything to ensure victory and, with it, impunity for the incumbent

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<sup>3</sup> Crisis Group Latin America Report N°77, *Fight and Flight: Tackling the Roots of Honduras' Emergency*, 25 October 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Catholic Church and business representatives, San Pedro Sula, 25 October 2021. Crisis Group telephone interview, journalist, 12 October 2021. "One Party, Many Crimes: The Case of Honduras' National Party", op. cit.; "Former Honduran Congressman Tony Hernández Sentenced to Life in Prison and Ordered to Forfeit \$138.5 Million for Distributing 185 Tons of Cocaine and Related Firearms and False Statements Offenses", U.S. Department of Justice, 30 March 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Crisis Group interview, National Party representative, Tegucigalpa, 21 October 2021.

<sup>6</sup> Crisis Group interviews, business representative and U.S. official, Tegucigalpa, October 2021.

and his collaborators.<sup>7</sup> “As long as Hernández is in power, we don’t know what he might do”, a business leader said.<sup>8</sup>

A National Party victory would likely allow Hernández to shield himself from extradition to the U.S., where he was cited as co-conspirator in various drug trafficking trials, including that of his brother Tony Hernández, who in March was sentenced to life in prison.<sup>9</sup> The president has repeatedly proclaimed his innocence, arguing that the accusations against him come from criminals aggrieved by his government’s tough approach to law enforcement.<sup>10</sup> One way he could avoid extradition would be for Honduran prosecutors to open a case against him first.<sup>11</sup> Alternatively, a top prosecutor said, he could seek shelter in one of the Zones for Employment and Economic Development his government has fostered, which operate under a special jurisdiction enabled by a recent Supreme Court ruling.<sup>12</sup>

Claiming both the presidency and a majority in Congress could prove particularly important to Hernández, as it would ensure his party’s sway over legislation, resource allocation and appointment of public officials, all of which could be relevant to the disposition of an extradition request and to maintaining party control of institutions.<sup>13</sup> The next legislature will be called upon to name a new Supreme Court and a new attorney general in 2023, meaning that if a party wins the presidency and holds a qualified majority in Congress, it could gain “total control of the state”, as a political analyst put it.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Some politicians, businesspeople and civil society representatives fear that Hernández is seeking to trigger conflict with neighbouring El Salvador in order to postpone the elections. They also worry he could use the army – in charge of safeguarding polling stations and ballot storage centres – to manipulate votes or substitute himself for the party’s present candidate, Tegucigalpa Mayor Nasry Asfura, at the last minute. Crisis Group interviews, opposition party representatives, academics, political analysts, police officer, business representatives, Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, October 2021. “Honduras y Nicaragua firman acuerdo de límites marítimos”, *Deutsche Welle*, 27 October 2021.

<sup>8</sup> Crisis Group interview, business representative, San Pedro Sula, 25 October 2021.

<sup>9</sup> “Former Honduran Congressman Tony Hernández Sentenced to Life in Prison and Ordered to Forfeit \$138.5 Million for Distributing 185 Tons of Cocaine and Related Firearms and False Statements Offenses”, *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> “Honduran president denies drug trafficking accusations”, *Al Jazeera*, 11 March 2021.

<sup>11</sup> In the absence of a domestic norm regarding extradition, Honduras applies international treaty standards. Under the governing regional treaty, a person cannot be extradited to face criminal charges if that person is being investigated for the same crimes in the country that receives the extradition request. Crisis Group interview, prosecutor, Tegucigalpa, 21 October 2021. “Tratado centroamericano relativo a la orden de detención y extradición simplificada”, *Sistema de Integración Centroamericana*, 2 December 2005.

<sup>12</sup> Crisis Group interview, prosecutor, Tegucigalpa, 21 October 2021. The Zones were created in 2013, when Hernández was head of Congress. “Los pecados capitales de las ZEDE”, *CNA*, June 2021, p. 29. On the creation of the special jurisdiction, see “La Corte Suprema de Justicia crea la jurisdicción de las ZEDE”, *El Heraldo*, 14 June 2021.

<sup>13</sup> A qualified majority could also override presidential vetoes. Crisis Group interview, former legislator, San Pedro Sula, 26 October 2021.

<sup>14</sup> These appointments are usually decided by Congress, with selections often based on political affiliation. Crisis Group telephone interview, political analyst, 10 September 2021. Crisis Group telephone interview, former Mission to Support the Fight Against Corruption in Honduras (MACCIH) official, 14 October 2021.

The chief opposition parties, for their part, have taken significant steps to bridge longstanding divides.<sup>15</sup> Castro has emerged as the opposition's main presidential contender. As noted above, her party, the left-wing Libre, born of a post-coup schism in the once powerful Liberal Party, has recently formed an alliance with Nasralla's Honduras' Saviour Party.<sup>16</sup> Nasralla, now the candidate for vice president on Castro's ticket, is backed by important business interests but considered erratic.<sup>17</sup>

The Libre party draws its support from Liberals angered by the coup, social movements and labour unions. It has launched an audacious and eclectic plan for government in a largely conservative society, including legalising abortion in certain circumstances, and has proposed measures that could ring alarm bells in Washington, such as establishing formal relations with China, which it does not currently enjoy.<sup>18</sup> (At present, Honduras is one of the few countries that formally recognises Taiwan.) Its representatives have also proposed creating a Constituent Assembly as part of a remake of the political system. Many view this proposal as a reprise of the scheme that led Zelaya's opponents to accuse him of gaming the system to preserve his own power – ending in his overthrow. For his part, the ex-president has backtracked on his support for this initiative.<sup>19</sup>

The other political party of note, the Liberal Party, will also compete for the presidency, putting forward Yani Rosenthal, a former minister who served three years in a U.S. jail for money laundering. The Liberals are split, however, between national leaders who backed the 2009 coup and are eager to restore collaboration with the National Party, and local leaders who feel the need for a change in government.<sup>20</sup> The party's chances of winning the presidency are low, with Rosenthal polling below 10 per cent in all major surveys, but it is likely to secure a number of legislative and mayoral seats thanks to strong local organisation, potentially making it a congressional "kingmaker", according to a UN official.<sup>21</sup>

While the alliance with Nasralla certainly increases Libre's odds of winning the presidency, a favourable outcome for the opposition is far from certain. Before forming the alliance, Castro and Nasralla each polled at 18 per cent in a September CID

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<sup>15</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, political analyst, 6 October 2021. "La oposición hondureña sin alianza para sacar del poder al partido gobernante", EFE, 11 May 2021.

<sup>16</sup> The alliance flips the formula from 2017, when Castro yielded her candidacy to Nasralla. It includes Libre, Nasralla's party and the minor party PINU-SD. But since only Nasralla and PINU-SD had registered an alliance by the May deadline, their candidates to become deputies and mayors will run separately. Crisis Group telephone interviews, journalists and political analyst, 13 October 2021. "Oposición en Honduras conforma alianza electoral", AP, 13 October 2021; "Alianza opositora hondureña elige al polémico Nasralla como candidato presidencial", EFE, 21 May 2017.

<sup>17</sup> Crisis Group interviews, academic, business representatives, diplomats, Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, 18-27 October 2021. "Salvador Nasralla, el popular presentador de TV que por segunda vez se alía con la izquierda hondureña", ContraCorriente, 27 October 2021.

<sup>18</sup> Crisis Group interviews, academic, business representatives, diplomats, Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, 18-27 October 2021. "Ataques por inclusión del aborto y socialismo en propuesta de gobierno opacan campaña de Libre", ContraCorriente, 25 September 2021.

<sup>19</sup> Crisis Group interview, Libre representative, Tegucigalpa, 19 October 2021. "Expresidente Manuel Zelaya no ve 'factible' una Constituyente en el escenario político actual", *La Prensa*, 1 November 2021.

<sup>20</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Liberal Party representatives, Tegucigalpa, 20 and 21 October 2021. "Un precandidato opositor denuncia fraude en comicios primarios en Honduras", EFE, 19 March 2021.

<sup>21</sup> Crisis Group interviews, UN official, civil society figures and Liberal Party representatives, Tegucigalpa, October 2021.

Gallup survey that gave National Party candidate Nasry Asfura the lead with 21 per cent.<sup>22</sup> But the alliance may not result in simple aggregation of their respective supporters, as Nasralla voters are largely disillusioned Liberals and Nationalists as well as young people disenchanted with mainstream parties, with many of them regarding Libre with suspicion; in other words, whether they will vote for Castro is unclear.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, opinion polls have shown widely varying results when it comes to voter intentions, largely as a result of the partisan nature of these surveys.<sup>24</sup> In the words of a Liberal Party representative, “all the surveys at this stage are manipulated [by the three main parties] in one way or another”.<sup>25</sup>

Likewise, the main parties' estimates regarding legislative and municipal election results differ markedly, although all suggest that Libre is unlikely to gain a majority in Congress, which would require more than doubling its current share of deputies. Nasralla's party does not have sufficient territorial presence and campaign resources to gain many seats.<sup>26</sup> Most Liberal candidates are not aligned with the party's former president, Luis Zelaya, who supports the alliance, and so are likely to stray closer to the National Party in Congress.<sup>27</sup>

### C. *Partial Electoral Reforms*

Against this backdrop of fierce political competition, and given the unhappy experience of 2017, many Hondurans understandably worry about the possibility of fraud. Congress passed reforms to lessen this risk, but the process is incomplete.

As a result of their UN-backed dialogue, the three main contenders in the 2017 polls – the National Party, the Liberal Party and Nasralla, who back then spearheaded an opposition alliance with Libre – agreed in 2018 on the need for electoral reforms.<sup>28</sup> One was to clean up the voter registry, the alleged manipulation of which fed into allegations of miscounting in 2017, amid claims that “even the dead” voted.<sup>29</sup> Another

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<sup>22</sup> “CID Gallup: la mayoría cree que Nasry Asfura será el presidente”, *La Prensa*, 11 September 2021.

<sup>23</sup> Crisis Group interviews, politicians, political analyst and civil society representatives, Tegucigalpa, 18-22 October 2021.

<sup>24</sup> One polling agency, CESPAD, reported 38 per cent support for Castro on 27 October, followed by Asfura with 21 per cent, while another, HCH, put Asfura first with almost 28 per cent and Castro on 26 per cent. “Las trampas de las encuestas en las elecciones en Nicaragua: entre verdad e interpretación”, *Expediente Público*, 17 September 2021; “En encuesta del CESPAD: Si hoy fueran las elecciones, LIBRE, a través de la alianza pactada con el PSH, sería la fuerza política ganadora”, CESPAD, 27 October 2021; “En su última encuesta del proceso electoral actual, Paradigma declara empate técnico entre Nasry Asfura y Xiomara Castro”, HCH, 27 October 2021.

<sup>25</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, Liberal Party representative, 28 October 2021.

<sup>26</sup> Libre currently holds 30 of the 128 seats in Congress. Crisis Group interviews, academic and Honduras' Saviour Party's candidate, Tegucigalpa, October 2021.

<sup>27</sup> The National Party is likely to hold its seats, having the strongest capacity to mobilise voters throughout the country, with an assist from the patronage it can dole out as the ruling party. Crisis Group interviews, Libre, Liberal, National and Honduras Saviour parties' representatives, Tegucigalpa, 19-21 October 2021.

<sup>28</sup> Libre refused to participate in the talks. Crisis Group Report, *Fight and Flight: Tackling the Roots of Honduras' Emergency*, op. cit.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., Section II.D. Crisis Group interview, civil society representative, Tegucigalpa, 19 October 2021; “La nueva identificación de los hondureños evitará que los muertos ‘voten’”, EFE, 8 October 2020.

was to replace the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, accused of tilting the 2017 results toward Hernández for partisan reasons, with two new institutions intended to restore confidence in elections.<sup>30</sup> The first of these, the National Electoral Council, is meant to organise and oversee the electoral process, as well as to announce results. The second, the Tribunal for Electoral Justice, is tasked with settling election-related disputes.

To make good on these agreements, in 2019 Congress enacted laws that created both the new Council and the new Tribunal, while also agreeing to renew the composition of the National Registry of People, the body responsible for collecting population data, and tasking it with carrying out a new, digitalised census of voters.<sup>31</sup> Congress appointed representatives from the three main parties to sit in the decision-making bodies of each of these institutions (each of which has three members).<sup>32</sup> In parallel, the head of Congress, Mauricio Oliva, also requested OAS support in drafting an electoral reform bill.<sup>33</sup>

But the reforms came late, are incomplete and, in some cases, have yet to be implemented.<sup>34</sup> A new electoral law – drawing partly on an OAS proposal – was passed in May 2021, only a few days before authorities officially scheduled the new polls.<sup>35</sup> The law made some reforms, such as redistributing more evenly parties' representatives in polling stations and reducing incentives for creating “briefcase parties” that allegedly take part in elections mainly to seek economic rewards.<sup>36</sup> But it omitted certain changes that civil society and opposition groups had urged in order to avoid a repeat of 2017 – such as requiring a second round of voting in cases where no candidate commands a first-round majority (as was the case with Hernández in 2017 and 2013) and mandating that non-partisan officials be appointed to run polling stations.<sup>37</sup> Additional budget allocations for the National Electoral Council and the National Registry of People were not approved until August, delaying their procurement processes and the delivery of new voter identity cards.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Crisis Group Report, *Fight and Flight: Tackling the Roots of Honduras' Emergency*, op. cit.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> “Juramentos en el legislativo: asumen funcionarios del CNE, TJE y RNP”, *La Prensa*, 10 September 2019. “The interests of the parties prevailed”, a political analyst said, referring to the three-way redistribution of seats in the new bodies. Crisis Group telephone interview, 1 October 2021.

<sup>33</sup> “OEA dará asesoría al Congreso para la reforma electoral en Honduras”, *El Heraldo*, 24 September 2018.

<sup>34</sup> Crisis Group telephone interviews, political analysts and academic, October 2021.

<sup>35</sup> “El Congreso de Honduras aprueba la nueva Ley Electoral al límite del plazo para convocar próximas elecciones”, *Europa Press*, 26 May 2021; “Honduras: reformas electorales sin consenso”, *VOA*, 9 October 2020.

<sup>36</sup> Each polling station will now be overseen by five officials, three from the Libre, National and Liberal parties, and two chosen randomly from other parties. Crisis Group interview, member of the Unit of Clean Politics, Tegucigalpa, 20 October 2021. “Partidos de maletín en Honduras: ¿Negocios políticos o pluralismo democrático?”, *Expediente Público*, 29 September 2021.

<sup>37</sup> Given the slim margin of victory in the 2017 presidential election (in which Hernández commanded 42.95 per cent of the vote to Nasralla's 41.42 per cent), opposition parties and civil society representatives argue that a second-round run-off would produce a fairer result. Crisis Group interviews, civil society, Libre and Liberal Party representatives, Tegucigalpa, 18-22 October 2021.

<sup>38</sup> The procurement process for equipment required for the digital transmission of temporary results, for example, was only finalised in late September. “Honduras, con nueva Ley Electoral pero con pocas reformas”, *Expediente Público*, 27 May 2021; “Boicot del partido oficialista al presupon-

On top of that, the new law does not specify if new electoral authorities are requested to take decisions on results and complaints unanimously or by majority.<sup>39</sup> In particular, the workings of the new Tribunal – the body tasked with dealing with complaints – have not yet been fully worked out through an electoral justice law. For now, the only thing that is clear is that appeals of rulings by the electoral tribunal can still be made to the Supreme Court if the grounds for the case are constitutional in nature.<sup>40</sup>

As for the voter registry, the new electoral census determined that 5.1 million Hondurans will be able to cast a ballot, down from the 6 million who figured in the voter registry in 2017.<sup>41</sup> But due to the above-mentioned delays, more than 350,000 people had to receive their new identity cards by mid-November.<sup>42</sup> Congress recently took the important decision not to extend the validity of the old ID documents after 15 November. According to one prominent Liberal Party deputy, reintroducing almost a million extra voters to the rolls would have risked fuelling public mistrust in the process.<sup>43</sup>

#### D. *The Threat of Escalation*

Against the backdrop of high stakes, ill-prepared and politicised new institutions, public distrust and the absence of a clear favourite, the forthcoming polls have raised the prospect of either another, potentially violent electoral dispute or protracted political turmoil.<sup>44</sup> “It is really hard to see a scenario without conflict”, said a Honduran political analyst, referring to the likelihood that disputed results will prompt street protests.<sup>45</sup> A businessman agreed: “If the National Party wins [the presidency], there will be an unprecedented wave of popular outcry. If Libre wins, there will be political conflict, with a Congress likely controlled by the National Party”.<sup>46</sup>

Libre and National Party representatives, in each case confident of victory, insist that they would recognise the results of free and fair elections. But each doubts the other will play fairly.<sup>47</sup> A result based on a slender margin could trigger a heated dispute, first of all in the National Electoral Council, which even in its short history has rarely reached consensus on the matters that have come before it, with divisions

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to electoral inquieta elecciones en Honduras”, *Expediente Público*, 2 August 2021; “CNE aprueba contrato de empresa a la que se adjudicó el TREP”, *Proceso Digital*, 29 September 2021.

<sup>39</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, electoral expert, 15 November 2021.

<sup>40</sup> “TJE maniatado, con raquítico presupuesto y sin ley de justicia electoral”, *Criterio*, 14 September 2021.

<sup>41</sup> “Casi 700 mil electores menos para las votaciones en Honduras”, *Expediente Público*, 10 September 2021.

<sup>42</sup> “Unos 150 mil DNI no serían reclamados porque las personas salieron del país o murieron, reconoce el RNP”, *Proceso Digital*, 15 November 2021.

<sup>43</sup> “A partir de este martes solo el nuevo DNI es válido en Honduras”, *Tiempo*, 15 November 2021.

<sup>44</sup> Crisis Group interviews, National Party, Libre and Liberal Party representatives, academics, political analysts, police officer, business representatives, Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, October 2021.

<sup>45</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, political analyst, 1 October 2021.

<sup>46</sup> Crisis Group interview, business representative, San Pedro Sula, 25 October 2021.

<sup>47</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Libre and National Party representatives, Tegucigalpa, 19 and 22 October 2021.

between its Libre and Liberal representatives, on one side, and its member from the National Party on the other.<sup>48</sup> The same problem could hamper the Tribunal for Electoral Justice, rendering it unable to resolve disputes. Even if the tribunal were to function as intended, disputes may be appealed to the Supreme Court, which could generate controversy, as the Court is considered close to the ruling Nationalists.<sup>49</sup>

To make matters worse, the two parties with the greatest chances of winning the presidency (Libre and the National Party) also seem ready to challenge adverse results in the streets, if they deem it necessary because of a supposedly unfair poll.<sup>50</sup> Some are concerned that they may use street protests to press authorities into ruling in their favour or to increase their leverage in possible negotiations.<sup>51</sup> Fiery invective has already inflamed an electoral campaign plagued by rising political violence: the National University Violence Observatory has reported at least 31 politically motivated murders of candidates or their relatives.<sup>52</sup>

Civil society groups, meanwhile, are wary of new legislation restricting freedom of expression and criminalising protest, as well as the risk of a crackdown in the event of a new protest wave. Under a change to the penal code, authorities may choose to consider protests a form of “usurpation” of public space, or even a means of extortion, offences that will now carry longer prison sentences.<sup>53</sup> The revised code also reintroduces sanctions against owners of communications outlets who spread information in support of such protests.<sup>54</sup> One officer said he expected the police response to any unrest to be harsher than in 2017, perhaps including checkpoints and other constraints on movement to “prevent roadblocks” from happening again.<sup>55</sup> The government could also make use of the pandemic-related state of emergency, in place until 31 December, to restrict citizens’ liberties and reimpose a curfew it lifted only recently.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> But a diplomat fears the Liberal Party representative could actually shift position if the party decides to align with the Nationalists, which seems to have happened with the obstruction of Roberto Contreras’ candidacy for mayor of San Pedro Sula on the Libre ticket. Crisis Group interview, diplomat, Tegucigalpa, 21 October 2021. “CNE deniega la inscripción de Roberto Contreras a la Alcaldía de SPS”, *La Prensa*, 3 November 2021.

<sup>49</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, political analyst, 12 August 2021.

<sup>50</sup> Crisis Group interviews, party representatives, Tegucigalpa, October 2021.

<sup>51</sup> Crisis Group interviews, civil society organisations and academia representatives, Tegucigalpa, October 2021.

<sup>52</sup> Prior to the 2017 election, the Observatory counted twelve deaths related to political activity. Crisis Group interview, academic, Tegucigalpa, 21 October 2021. “Elecciones en Honduras, marcadas por asesinatos y narcotráfico”, *France 24*, 17 November 2021.

<sup>53</sup> Crisis Group interview, political analyst, Tegucigalpa, 18 October 2021. “Congreso de Honduras se blinda de impunidad tras revelaciones de Pandora Papers”, *Plaza Pública*, 8 October 2021.

<sup>54</sup> Similarly, in the aftermath of the 2009 coup, the de facto government issued a decree authorising the National Telecommunications Commission and security forces to interrupt the transmissions of any radio or television outlet that “offended human dignity, public servants or attack the law and government resolutions”. “¡Retraso para la libertad de expresión! Desde el CN pretenden poner un ‘bozal a los medios de comunicación’”, *Tu Nota*, 11 October 2021; “Honduras: Human Rights and the Coup d’état”, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 30 December 2009.

<sup>55</sup> Crisis Group interview, police officer, Tegucigalpa, 22 October 2021.

<sup>56</sup> Crisis Group interview, political analyst, Tegucigalpa, 18 October 2021. “Extienden declaratoria de emergencia hasta el 31 de diciembre de 2021”, *Tiempo*, 8 January 2021; “Se suspende toque de queda en Honduras”, *Proceso*, 1 October 2021.

### III. Humanitarian Emergency, Migration and Politics

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The forthcoming elections will occur against the backdrop of a humanitarian crisis. More and more Hondurans have been fleeing the country to seek better living conditions or asylum abroad. COVID-19 and the impact of two back-to-back hurricanes in 2020 have increased the numbers further. Critics accuse the government of lacklustre and politically motivated responses to both crises. Past elections have also been followed by a notable rise in emigration.

#### A. *The Pandemic, Natural Disasters and the Aid Response*

Honduras' elections come amid dire economic and humanitarian conditions. The government's management of the COVID-19 pandemic focused on enforcing a strict lockdown, with more than 80,000 people detained for violating a curfew that was lifted only in October.<sup>57</sup> Authorities offered to alleviate the economic and humanitarian impact of these restrictions by providing credit to small enterprises, though many business owners did not receive any support, and by delivering food bags to around one million households.<sup>58</sup> These measures were tainted by scandal: the National Anti-Corruption Council has filed more than 120 complaints of graft in the government's pandemic response, with the emblematic case being the purchase of seven overvalued and ill-equipped mobile hospitals, three of which never arrived.<sup>59</sup> Congress has nevertheless passed legislation to shield corruption suspects from investigation.<sup>60</sup> Meanwhile, the vaccine rollout is among the slowest in Latin America, with only roughly 36 per cent of the population fully vaccinated as of 12 November.<sup>61</sup>

Two back-to-back hurricanes also devastated the country in late 2020, affecting more than four million people and causing damage assessed at \$1.9 billion.<sup>62</sup> Although the 2021 rainy season has been mercifully benign, much of the damaged infrastruc-

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<sup>57</sup> "Se reportaron seis arrestos por hora en el toque de queda en Honduras", *El Herald*, 23 October 2021.

<sup>58</sup> Most of the funds made available were channelled to food distribution rather than economic reactivation. Crisis Group interviews, business and shop owners, Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, October 2021. "Honduras Solidaria: la pandemia del asistencialismo", *Criterio*, 26 October 2020. For pandemic-related funds, see the ministry of finance's dedicated website.

<sup>59</sup> Two former executives of the state-owned agency Honduras Strategic Investment, Marco Bográn and Alex Moraes, are on trial for fraud and malfeasance. "CNA documenta 120 denuncias relacionadas con la COVID-19 a un perjuicio de 894.5 millones de lempiras", Universidad Nacional Autónoma Honduras, 10 May 2021. "Honduras: Fiscalía acusa a exfuncionarios de fraude por hospitales móviles", *Deutsche Welle*, 19 June 2021.

<sup>60</sup> Reforms to the penal code ordered that banks keep the account details of suspects accused of corruption-related crimes secret, marking another setback in the fight to curb corruption, already weakened by the shutdown of the OAS-backed MACCIH in early 2020. Crisis Group interview, prosecutor, Tegucigalpa, 21 October 2021. "A Death Foretold: MACCIH Shuts Down in Honduras", *Insight Crime*, 22 January 2020.

<sup>61</sup> "Timeline: Tracking Latin America's Road to Vaccination", AS/COA, 12 October 2021; "Gobierno Honduras bajo presión por demora en compra vacunas COVID-19 de COVAX", *Reuters*, 4 March 2021.

<sup>62</sup> "Evaluación de los efectos e impactos causados por la tormenta tropical Eta y el huracán Iota en Honduras", Inter-American Development Bank and Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, May 2021.

ture has yet to be repaired, and thousands of people who lost all their possessions in the mud opted to migrate north, including members of the massive caravan that set off from San Pedro Sula in early 2021.<sup>63</sup>

As a result of the pandemic and the hurricanes, the Honduras Social Forum of External Debt and Development estimated that three of every four Hondurans may have fallen into poverty by the end of 2021, up from 59.3 per cent in 2019.<sup>64</sup> Meanwhile, criminal gangs took advantage of the chaos created by the hurricanes and school closures to intensify their turf wars, extort inhabitants of temporary shelters, occupy abandoned houses and lure youngsters into collaborating with them as lookouts.<sup>65</sup> As economic difficulties grew, children were forced to work, sometimes becoming the most important breadwinners in their families. “A child being a lookout for the gangs may be earning more than their father”, a Catholic Church representative explained.<sup>66</sup>

Critics maintain that the government has sought to extract political benefits from its responses to the pandemic and the hurricanes.<sup>67</sup> According to organisations active in the hurricane relief effort, the government centralised aid through its humanitarian agency, COPECO, in a bid to improve its public image.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, the government has continued distributing food bags and bonuses during the electoral campaign, which critics say is a way to buy votes.<sup>69</sup> At least at first, the distribution of vaccines was also politicised, with National Party affiliates reportedly given priority. Jobs were also distributed at campaign rallies.<sup>70</sup> According to a political analyst, the pandemic and the hurricanes were “a gift” for the government, in that “it managed to lock up the opposition, obtain international resources and use them to do electoral campaigning”.<sup>71</sup>

## B. *Migration and Elections*

Over the past two decades, the number of Hondurans emigrating north to the U.S. has steadily risen, first driven by Hurricane Mitch, which left wreckage in its path in 1998, and later by a lack of economic opportunity and soaring rates of criminal vio-

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<sup>63</sup> Crisis Group interviews, civil society and UN representatives, San Pedro Sula, Choloma and El Progreso, 25-27 October 2021. “Desperation grows in battered Honduras, fueling migration”, AP, 11 February 2021.

<sup>64</sup> “La pobreza en Honduras podría aumentar de 70 a 75 % en 2021 por la covid-19”, EFE, 12 July 2021.

<sup>65</sup> Crisis Group interviews, civil society representatives, San Pedro Sula, Choloma and El Progreso, 25-27 October 2021.

<sup>66</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Catholic Church and civil society representatives, San Pedro Sula, Choloma and El Progreso, 25-27 October 2021.

<sup>67</sup> Crisis Group telephone interviews, academic and journalist, 6 and 12 October 2021.

<sup>68</sup> Centralisation also hindered the effectiveness of the response, with food donated by El Salvador reportedly rotting. Crisis Group interviews, humanitarian workers, Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, October 2021.

<sup>69</sup> Crisis Group interviews, business and civil society representatives, San Pedro Sula and by telephone, October 2021. “Observadores critican proselitismo del oficialismo en Honduras con fondos públicos”, *Expediente Público*, 18 October 2021; “En antesala a las elecciones, gobierno entrega “bono climático” con préstamo del BCIE”, *Criterio*, 2 November 2021.

<sup>70</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, doctor, 14 October 2021. “Candidatos oficialistas de Honduras hacen proselitismo electoral con vacuna Covid-19”, *Expediente Público*, 31 August 2021.

<sup>71</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, political analyst, 1 October 2021.

lence.<sup>72</sup> Since the 2009 coup, and particularly in the restive aftermath of the 2013 polls and even more turbulent 2017 elections, the outflow of Hondurans, particularly those seeking asylum, has skyrocketed.<sup>73</sup> The UN refugee agency reports that between 2009 and 2019, Honduras' asylum requests in the U.S. rose from 850 to 41,468 per year.<sup>74</sup> For at least eight consecutive years, Hondurans have also filed more asylum requests in Mexico than people of any other nationality, reaching more than 33,500 in 2021 alone (as of 1 November).<sup>75</sup> Hondurans also travel in family units more than migrants from any other nation, according to U.S. border authorities.<sup>76</sup> "Emigrating with the whole family means having lost all hope", a human rights defender said.<sup>77</sup>

Journalists, politicians, civil society representatives and political analysts consulted by Crisis Group argue that the last two elections worked in combination with a perception of worsening corruption in contributing to these outflows, including by prompting formation of the first migrant caravans.<sup>78</sup> After the 2017 election dispute, a political analyst said, "many people came to the conclusion that elections had ceased to be an option to escape from the country's crisis".<sup>79</sup> Speaking of the forthcoming vote, a Honduran doctor argued that "this election is our last hope", adding that if it does not bring change, many more people will feel compelled to try emigration.<sup>80</sup> Others pointed to the fact that not only are the poorest fleeing, but also increasingly middle-class and wealthy people who can afford to travel by plane, including to Europe, particularly Spain.<sup>81</sup> The desire to depart is particularly common among youth: almost six of ten interviewees in a secondary school survey said they intend to leave the country as soon as they complete their studies.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> "Migración en Honduras 1998-2015", Honduras National University, 2016, p. 54. Crisis Group Report, *Fight and Flight: Tackling the Roots of Honduras' Emergency*, op. cit.

<sup>73</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, migration expert, 12 August 2021. "La caravana de migrantes centroamericanos en Tijuana 2018", El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 13 December 2018, p. 3.

<sup>74</sup> See the figures on the UNHCR Refugee Data Finder page.

<sup>75</sup> Only Haitians have outnumbered Hondurans in 2021 so far, with almost 38,000 asylum requests. "México alcanza un nuevo máximo histórico de solicitudes de asilo: más de 100.000 hasta octubre", *El País*, 2 November 2021. Find Mexico's Refugee Aid Commission statistics for 2021 and previous years on its website.

<sup>76</sup> See the figures on the Nationwide Encounters page of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection website.

<sup>77</sup> Crisis Group interview, human rights defender, Tegucigalpa, 19 October 2021.

<sup>78</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Tegucigalpa and by telephone, October 2021.

<sup>79</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, political analyst, 6 October 2021. According to the Latinobarómetro, Hondurans' support for democracy has decreased between 2009 and 2020 from 53 to 30 per cent, while in 2021 Honduras obtained its lowest score in eight years regarding perceptions of corruption. "Informe 2021", Corporación Latinobarómetro, 7 October 2021; "Honduras registra su puntuación más baja en ocho años en el índice de percepción de corrupción de transparencia internacional", Asociación para una Sociedad más Justa, 28 January 2021.

<sup>80</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, doctor, 14 October 2021.

<sup>81</sup> Hondurans are already the third largest Latin American population in Spain, with around 128,000 migrants residing there as of January 2021. Crisis Group interviews, Catholic Church representatives, diplomats, politicians and human rights defenders, Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, October 2021. Figures from Spain's National Statistics Institute website.

<sup>82</sup> "El 55.9% de la juventud hondureña tiene la intención de migrar al terminar sus estudios de secundaria: Flacso-Honduras", National University of Honduras, 8 June 2021.

#### IV. Avoiding Turmoil

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Given the risk that the forthcoming elections could culminate in a disputed outcome, with serious implications for the country's political stability and humanitarian predicament, domestic players and foreign partners should prepare to prevent a repeat of 2017.

A first step in this direction would be for the main party candidates to commit themselves publicly before the election to respect the outcome, or at least to use the appropriate legal and institutional channels for resolving any disputes that may arise. They should likewise pledge not to claim victory before the final results have been confirmed by the National Electoral Council. Admittedly, similar agreements have proven futile in the past, but it is still worth seeking another: such a pact could be a starting point for defusing tensions and pave the way for a peaceful resolution of any electoral disputes.<sup>83</sup>

On election day and during the ensuing vote count, the messaging of the National Electoral Council will be particularly crucial. Its representatives should strive to put aside their partisan political affiliations and, if at all possible, reach consensus among themselves before making public statements (the electoral law does not specify how the Council should make decisions – unanimously or by majority – only that it should announce results). Such consensus may be helpful in managing a surge of resentment or mistrust on one side or the other in reaction to an announcement. Should disagreements over the results trigger public protests, political leaders should call for these to be peaceful, and the government should not crack down on demonstrators through excessive use of force.

Foreign partners can also play an active role in helping prevent electoral turmoil. The U.S., which has strong influence with Honduran political figures – though its clout is waning due mainly to intermittent engagement, with no ambassador for the past four years – should make use of its ties with the armed forces to ensure that they do not act in any political party's favour.<sup>84</sup> Besides domestic and foreign civil society organisations, the OAS and the EU will send electoral observation missions, although smaller than those in 2017, when their differing messages regarding the vote count contributed to the confusion and distrust.<sup>85</sup> Given the controversy in that election, as well as its disputed role in Bolivia's 2019 polls, the OAS is likely to be

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<sup>83</sup> "Hernández y Nasralla se comprometen con la OEA a respetar los resultados de los comicios", *El Diario*, 30 November 2017.

<sup>84</sup> President Joe Biden recently nominated Laura Farnsworth Dogu as ambassador to Honduras, but she is unlikely to be confirmed before the election. Crisis Group interviews, politicians and diplomats, Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, October 2021. "President Biden Announces Additional Members of His Diplomatic and Homeland Security Teams", The White House, 5 November 2021.

<sup>85</sup> In 2017, both the EU and OAS observation missions reported several irregularities. The OAS used the findings to suggest that the election be repeated, while the EU argued that, despite technical shortcomings, opposition parties did not provide sufficient evidence to justify claims of fraud, thereby giving de facto validation to the results. Crisis Group interviews, diplomats, Tegucigalpa, 19 and 21 October 2021. "Final Report on the General Elections", EU Election Observation Mission to Honduras 2017, 25 February 2018; "Statement by the OAS General Secretariat on the Elections in Honduras", OAS, 17 December 2017.

more cautious this time.<sup>86</sup> Sharing information and coordinating with each other and other missions who will be covering which polls – particularly in rural areas, where political patronage is more common – will be crucial to encouraging the integrity of the vote and preventing unrest afterward. So, too, will be speaking with one voice, to the extent possible.

With elections imminent, it appears increasingly unlikely that the remaining ambiguities in the electoral system, and above all in its electoral dispute mechanisms, will be resolved by polling day. Should there be a controversy, it could very well find its way to the Supreme Court, which would fulfil the role of ultimate arbiter of an electoral dispute. Given widespread perceptions of the Court's alleged bias toward the National Party, its involvement could catalyse discontent if it rules for the ruling party, even if it does so in good faith. In general, to mitigate possible concerns about bias, both electoral and judicial authorities should seek to establish firm evidence-based grounds for any eventual decision, including by paying careful heed to the initial findings of election observers.

In the event of a serious dispute, foreign partners should stand ready to support dialogue between the parties more quickly than they did after the last polls, when discussions started only in August 2018 after a nine-month gap. The UN could play a coordinating role in such a process.<sup>87</sup> Whether or not they are part of such a process, and regardless of the electoral outcome, political leaders should agree that the next government will need to address some of the structural issues that drive electoral disputes. Among other things, they should complete and augment the electoral reform efforts begun over the last few years.<sup>88</sup>

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## V. Conclusion

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Many national and international observers fear the recurrence of an electoral dispute in Honduras, where no side appears ready to accept the consequences of defeat, particularly in the event of a tight race fraught with allegations of fraud. The risk is compounded by the central role that new and untested electoral institutions will play in analysing the results and adjudicating disputes. Because poverty, gang violence, natural disasters and the pandemic have deepened discontent in Honduran society, contested polls similar to those of four years ago could spark unrest in the streets and even larger outflows of migrants. Domestic leaders and foreign powers should draw on lessons from the last elections to help prevent a repeat of such turmoil, above all by putting the channels to the relevant parties in place before polling day. If required, they will need to be in a position to help contain unrest through urgent negotiations among the country's main political forces.

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<sup>86</sup> Crisis Group interviews, political analyst, Tegucigalpa, 20 October 2021. Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°43, *Bolivia Faces New Polls in Shadow of Fraud Row*, 31 July 2020.

<sup>87</sup> The UN secretary-general appointed a resident coordinator in mid-2020. Crisis Group telephone interview, UN official, 15 October 2021. "Secretary-General appoints Alice Shackelford of Italy UN Resident Coordinator in Honduras", UN General Secretariat, 13 July 2020.

<sup>88</sup> Crisis Group interviews, former MACCIH official, prosecutor, civil society representatives, Tegucigalpa, October 2021. Crisis Group Report, *Fight and Flight: Tackling the Roots of Honduras' Emergency*, op. cit.

Preoccupied by campaigning and inclined to triumphalism, the main contenders in these polls – a party that has governed Honduras for the past twelve years and an alliance led by the wife of the president toppled in 2009 – are unlikely to come to a pre-electoral agreement on recognising the eventual victor, let alone feel bound to honour any such deal after the vote count. Even so, they should publicly acknowledge the importance to the country's precarious stability of staging an election that is as transparent as possible, wait until final results are confirmed before claiming victory and refrain from stirring up violent confrontations at polling stations or elsewhere. Even though their sway may have waned in recent years, foreign powers, the U.S. foremost among them, should do their utmost to urge Honduran politicians to resolve their differences peacefully, lest the country again be engulfed in turmoil.

**Tegucigalpa/Bogotá/Brussels, 23 November 2021**



## Appendix B: Reports and Briefings on Latin America and the Caribbean since 2018

### Special Reports and Briefings

*Council of Despair? The Fragmentation of UN Diplomacy*, Special Briefing N°1, 30 April 2019.

*Seven Opportunities for the UN in 2019-2020*, Special Briefing N°2, 12 September 2019.

*Seven Priorities for the New EU High Representative*, Special Briefing N°3, 12 December 2019.

*COVID-19 and Conflict: Seven Trends to Watch*, Special Briefing N°4, 24 March 2020 (also available in French and Spanish).

*A Course Correction for the Women, Peace and Security Agenda*, Special Briefing N°5, 9 December 2020.

*Ten Challenges for the UN in 2021-2022*, Special Briefing N°6, 13 September 2021.

*Containing the Shock Waves from Venezuela*, Latin America Report N°65, 21 March 2018 (also available in Spanish).

*Mexico's Southern Border: Security, Violence and Migration in the Trump Era*, Latin America Report N°66, 9 May 2018 (also available in Spanish).

*Risky Business: The Duque Government's Approach to Peace in Colombia*, Latin America Report N°67, 21 June 2018 (also available in Spanish).

*The Missing Peace: Colombia's New Government and Last Guerrillas*, Latin America Report N°68, 12 July 2018 (also available in Spanish).

*Building Peace in Mexico: Dilemmas Facing the López Obrador Government*, Latin America Report N°69, 11 October 2018 (also available in Spanish).

*Saving Guatemala's Fight Against Crime and Impunity*, Latin America Report N°70, 24 October 2018.

*Friendly Fire: Venezuela's Opposition Turmoil*, Latin America Report N°71, 23 November 2018 (also available in Spanish).

*A Road to Dialogue After Nicaragua's Crushed Uprising*, Latin America Report N°72, 19 December 2018 (also available in Spanish).

*Gold and Grief in Venezuela's Violent South*, Latin America Report N°73, 28 February 2019 (also available in Spanish).

*A Way Out of Latin America's Impasse over Venezuela*, Latin America Briefing N°38, 14 May 2019 (also available in Spanish).

*The Keys to Restarting Nicaragua's Stalled Talks*, Latin America Report N°74, 13 June 2019 (also available in Spanish).

*A Glimmer of Light in Venezuela's Gloom*, Latin America Report N°75, 15 July 2019 (also available in Spanish).

*Calming the Restless Pacific: Violence and Crime on Colombia's Coast*, Latin America Report N°76, 8 August 2019 (also available in Spanish).

*Venezuela's Military Enigma*, Latin America Briefing N°39, 16 September 2019 (also available in Spanish).

*Containing the Border Fallout of Colombia's New Guerrilla Schism*, Latin America Briefing N°40, 20 September 2019 (also available in Spanish).

*Fight and Flight: Tackling the Roots of Honduras' Emergency*, Latin America Report N°77, 25 October 2019 (also available in Spanish).

*Peace in Venezuela: Is There Life after the Barbados Talks?*, Latin America Briefing N°41, 11 December 2019 (also available in Spanish).

*A Glut of Arms: Curbing the Threat to Venezuela from Violent Groups*, Latin America Report N°78, 20 February 2020 (also available in Spanish).

*Imagining a Resolution of Venezuela's Crisis*, Latin America Report N°79, 11 March 2020 (also available in Spanish).

*Broken Ties, Frozen Borders: Colombia and Venezuela Face COVID-19*, Latin America Briefing N°42, 16 April 2020 (also available in Spanish).

*Mexico's Everyday War: Guerrero and the Trials of Peace*, Latin America Report N°80, 4 May 2020 (also available in Spanish).

*Miracle or Mirage? Gangs and Plunging Violence in El Salvador*, Latin America Report N°81, 8 July 2020 (also available in Spanish).

*Bolivia Faces New Polls in Shadow of Fraud Row*, Latin America Briefing N°43, 31 July 2020 (also available in Spanish).

*Leaders under Fire: Defending Colombia's Front Line of Peace*, Latin America Report N°82, 6 October 2020 (also available in Spanish).

*Virus-proof Violence: Crime and COVID-19 in Mexico and the Northern Triangle*, Latin America Report N°83, 13 November 2020 (also available in Spanish).

*Disorder on the Border: Keeping the Peace between Colombia and Venezuela*, Latin America Report N°84, 14 December 2020 (also available in Spanish).

*Venezuela: What Lies Ahead after Election Clinches Maduro's Clean Sweep*, Latin America Report N°85, 21 December 2020 (also available in Spanish).

*The Exile Effect: Venezuela's Overseas Opposition and Social Media*, Latin America Report N°86, 24 February 2021 (also available in Spanish).

*Deeply Rooted: Coca Eradication and Violence in Colombia*, Latin America Report N°87, 26 February 2021 (also available in Spanish).

*The Risks of a Rigged Election in Nicaragua*, Latin America Report N°88, 20 May 2021 (also available in Spanish).

*Electoral Violence and Illicit Influence in Mexico's Hot Land*, Latin America Report N°89, 2 June 2021 (also available in Spanish).

*The Pandemic Strikes: Responding to Colombia's Mass Protests*, Latin America Report N°90, 2 July 2021 (also available in Spanish).

*Haiti: A Path to Stability for a Nation in Shock*, Latin America and Caribbean Briefing N°44, 30 September 2021 (also available in French and Spanish).

*A Broken Canopy: Preventing Deforestation and Conflict in Colombia*, Latin America Report N°91, 4 November 2021 (also available in Spanish)



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