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**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
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High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

Situation of human rights in Honduras

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights* **

Summary

The present report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, prepared pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 48/141, describes the human rights situation in Honduras from 1 January to 31 December 2024. The report highlights key areas of progress and challenges in the promotion and protection of human rights and concludes with recommendations to the State.

* The present report was submitted to the conference services for processing after the deadline so as to include the most recent information.

** The summary of this report is being circulated in all official languages. The report itself is contained in the annex and is being circulated in the language of submission and English only.



Annex

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Honduras

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to article V (4) of the agreement signed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Government of Honduras on 4 May 2015. The report and the analysis contained herein are based on information gathered by OHCHR in the country and information provided by State authorities, civil society and victims.

2. OHCHR continued to monitor the human rights situation on site in Honduras and to provide technical assistance for the promotion and protection of human rights. It conducted 156 missions to various parts of the country, including 21 visits to prisons, implemented 137 technical assistance and institutional strengthening processes aimed at State institutions, organized 27 workshops and training sessions and monitored 16 sets of judicial proceedings. It also provided technical support to more than 139 civil society organizations and conducted 24 communication campaigns to promote human rights.

II. Context

3. In 2024, Honduras took steps to promote and protect human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights. However, persistent challenges rooted in structural causes – including institutional weakness, poverty, inequality, violence, insecurity and social, environmental and agrarian conflict – undermine the exercise and enjoyment of human rights.

4. According to the National Institute of Statistics, the share of households in relative poverty decreased from 64.1 per cent in 2023 to 62.9 per cent in 2024, while the share of households in extreme poverty decreased from 41.5 per cent to 40.1 per cent.¹ In 2024, the extreme poverty rate stood at 32.5 per cent in urban areas and 50.5 per cent in rural areas.² Honduras has the lowest human development index in the region.³

5. In February 2024, the National Congress elected the Attorney General and the Deputy Attorney General and members of the Higher Court of Audit. In March, it selected the members of the National Electoral Council, the Electoral Court (for five years) and the National Registry Office. Regarding the election of the authorities of the Public Prosecution Service, in 2023 a nominations committee composed of different stakeholders, including civil society representatives, carried out a selection process; however, various actors expressed concern that the final election of candidates by the National Congress was not based on objective selection criteria and that there had been no open discussion of the candidates' merits or suitability. There were no public hearings and the participation of civil society was low.

6. The homicide rate fell by 9 percentage points from 34.4 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2023 to 25.3 in 2024,⁴ although it remains one of the highest in Latin America.⁵ In the first half of 2024, 72.2 per cent of violent killings were committed with firearms, with young people worst affected.⁶ In 2024, there were reports of forced displacement, extortion, sexual violence and other acts by criminal organizations.⁷

¹ See <https://ine.gov.hn/Documentacion/BoletinPobreza2024.pdf>, pp. 8 and 9.

² Ibid.

³ See <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/country-insights#/ranks>.

⁴ See <https://www.sepol.hn/sepol-estadisticas-honduras.php?id=138>.

⁵ See https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/gsh/2023/GSH23_Chapter_2.pdf.

⁶ See <https://iudpas.unah.edu.hn/dmsdocument/17613-boletin-especial-muertes-por-causa-externa-ene-jul-2024>.

⁷ See <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/informes/pdfs/2024/informe-honduras.pdf>, paras. 150–152.

7. In August, the Government announced its withdrawal from the 1909 extradition treaty between Honduras and the United States of America. This decision could have a significant impact on the fight against transnational organized crime, particularly drug trafficking, as not enough has been done to build national capacity for the effective and timely investigation and punishment of such crime.

8. The persistence of the long-running agrarian conflict in Bajo Aguán is of concern. The commission envisaged in the agreements signed in 2022 with Plataforma Agraria and Coordinadora de Organizaciones Populares del Aguán has yet to be established, which will be fundamental in moving towards a solution based on respect for human rights that includes reparation for victims and access to justice.

9. In December 2024, the State granted definitive land titles to 27 Miskito and Garifuna communities in the municipality of Juan Francisco Bulnes, Department of Gracias a Dios. These titles pertain to more than 9,000 hectares and benefit approximately 23,000 inhabitants of the Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve.⁸ Nevertheless, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Hondurans continue to face historical and structural barriers that result in inequality, discrimination, exclusion and rights violations. The failure to recognize traditional rights of ownership and possession over their ancestral lands and territories, and the inadequate regulation of business activities, have a serious impact on the exercise and enjoyment of their rights, including the loss of culture, ancestral knowledge and livelihoods.

III. Rule of law and accountability

A. Judicial independence

10. In 2024, the courts handed down several judgments that settled disputes related to Indigenous Peoples and human rights defenders in the light of international human rights standards, setting a precedent in the country.⁹ However, judicial independence continues to be undermined by the failure to adopt a law on judicial service that would establish the separation of administrative and judicial functions.¹⁰ The administrative bodies responsible for professional training, performance evaluation and disciplinary proceedings in the judiciary lack internal regulations; nor do they have sufficient technical and financial resources.

11. According to information gathered by OHCHR, in at least nine cases heard by regional courts, external actors may have exerted undue influence on the judicial authorities through threats, attacks, influence peddling and alleged bribes, with potential repercussions for the treatment of victims and even for the resolution of the matter before the court – including in cases pertaining to the rights of women, Indigenous Peoples and campesino communities. The Office has proposed measures to strengthen internal oversight mechanisms.

12. The Office has received information on at least 11 cases of threats against and harassment of justice officials (nine prosecutors and two judges) who were hearing cases related to abuses of authority, organized crime and crimes against human rights defenders in the Departments of Atlántida, Cortés and Francisco Morazán. It is reported that these acts of aggression were committed by employees of State institutions and individuals directly involved in the cases, and that effective protection measures were not made available to justice officials, who face risks in the performance of their duties.

⁸ See <https://sreci.gob.hn/node/2015>.

⁹ *Amparo* judgment No. SCO-1293-2022 of 14 June 2024; *amparo* judgment No. AA-1459-2021 of 7 May 2024; and cassation judgment No. SP 172-2020.

¹⁰ [A/HRC/55/22](#), paras. 12 and 95 (e); [A/HRC/56/62](#), para. 71 (a)–(c); and [A/HRC/38/38](#), paras. 93, 95–97 and 102.

B. Access to justice and effective judicial protection

13. Significant challenges that hindered access to justice,¹¹ mainly due to shortcomings in the investigation and prosecution of cases of human rights violations, persisted in 2024. Monitoring by the Office detected issues in at least five cases, including the lack of effective coordination between the competent special prosecutors' offices, a lack of thoroughness in investigations, the absence of appropriate context analysis, the prevalence of bias and stereotypes and the limited participation of victims. Moreover, prosecutors are not provided with technical tools, specialized training, incentives and other essential conditions for them to perform their work adequately.

14. The lack of due diligence in the investigation and prosecution of cases involving members of the security and defence forces, especially when the victims belong to Indigenous Peoples, is of concern. In three cases of alleged extrajudicial executions by the army in La Mosquitia (in Warunta in 2018, in Ibans in 2021 and in Brus Laguna in 2024), OHCHR documented procedural shortcomings that could affect the outcome of the investigations and undermine accountability, such as failures in the chain of custody, lack of on-site investigative measures, lack of participation of victims, lack of measures to shed light on possible involvement of the armed forces and unjustified delays in forensic procedures and in submitting applications for prosecution.

15. In April 2024, a bill on compliance with international human rights obligations in respect of victims of the national security doctrine (1980–1993) was submitted to the National Congress to address serious human rights violations committed in the past. The adoption of the bill, decades after the events, would provide victims with access to the rights to truth, memory, justice, reparation and non-repetition.¹²

16. At the time of writing, the deaths of five protesters in San Pedro Sula as a result of police and military repression during the 2017 post-election crisis remain unpunished, as the alleged responsibility of the colonel in charge of the operation, who was charged in February 2024, has not yet been examined. Likewise, the deaths of three people at the National Police Academy in 2022 remain under investigation, without significant progress in the proceedings.

17. In November 2024, the Criminal Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice upheld the convictions of seven of the eight persons accused of the murder of the Lenca human rights defender Berta Cáceres, reclassified the role of two of the accused and invalidated the aggravating factors. This resulted in the reduction of the sentences of two of the perpetrators, including a former member of the armed forces. The Court also convicted three defendants, including one of the perpetrators of the murder of Berta Cáceres, of corruption in the Gualcarque Fraud case, which represents a step forward in the punishment of acts of corruption that violate the human rights of communities.

C. Security and human rights

18. The Office is concerned about security policies and measures that lack a human rights approach and favour repressive responses, such as National Defence and Security Council Decision No. CNDS-003/2024 ordering the construction of two emergency detention centres in remote areas. The location of these centres – in the Swan Islands (Department of Gracias a Dios) and Olancho – would hamper prisoners' communication with their families and legal defenders, sufficient and timely access to medical care in emergencies, access to professional training programmes and attendance at hearings, among other things. The location of these centres could also be detrimental to the working and living conditions of prison staff.

19. The aforementioned decision also urges the National Congress to reform the domestic legislative framework so as to classify as terrorists persons linked to organized crime who commit offences such as contract killings, drug trafficking, extortion or kidnapping, and to provide for their collective prosecution. Such a reform could have negative repercussions in

¹¹ A/HRC/55/22, para. 14.

¹² A/HRC/57/75, paras. 23–26.

respect of the principle of legality,¹³ the right to a fair trial, the right of defence and the presumption of innocence.¹⁴

20. The state of emergency introduced in December 2022 to combat extortion and related offences has been extended 16 times and expanded to cover 226 municipalities.¹⁵ In 2024, the National Congress ratified only three out of eight state of emergency decrees,¹⁶ despite their ratification being a legal obligation, which caused uncertainty as to their legality and impaired the legislature's oversight of the suspension of constitutional guarantees. While extortion was cited as the main reason for the state of emergency, official sources reported that, between October 2023 and June 2024, only 0.8 per cent of arrests and only 92 applications for prosecution submitted by the Public Prosecution Service were for that offence. As of October, the Office of the National Commissioner for Human Rights reported 428 complaints of human rights violations by security forces.

21. According to the Public Prosecution Service, at least three enforced disappearances and 86 complaints of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment by the security forces or the military were under investigation in 2024. OHCHR received allegations of two enforced disappearances, seven extrajudicial executions, three arbitrary detentions with alleged planting of evidence and one case of abuse of authority during the search of a home, all of which occurred during the state of emergency. OHCHR also received allegations that the persons detained in these cases were pressured by the authorities, including through torture, to confess to crimes they did not commit. Although some of these cases were dismissed for lack of evidence, the Office noted irregularities in the investigations, such as possible false charges and a lack of judicial oversight of evidence produced by the Police Directorate for Combating Gangs and Organized Crime. According to the information received, in at least two cases there was evidence of unnecessary use of force by police and military personnel during searches and arrests carried out in homes during the early hours of the morning, which mainly affected males and young people from marginalized communities.

22. In 2024, the Office documented the failure to conduct diligent investigations and effective searches in cases of enforced disappearance occurring since the beginning of the state of emergency, as in the case of the transgender rights activist Cristina Portillo in November 2023. The main obstacles are the absence of a search protocol, the lack of a separate criminal offence of enforced disappearance,¹⁷ the lack of participation and protection of victims and witnesses, and the shortage of resources and specialized teams of the Office of the Special Prosecutor for Human Rights.

D. Prison system and persons deprived of liberty

23. The prison system remained in a state of emergency and under the supervision of the Public Order Military Police, whose intervention was extended first until December 2024 and then until December 2025¹⁸ on the grounds that it was necessary to ensure security and protect the lives of persons deprived of liberty. At the time of writing, there is no plan for the gradual handover of prison administration to the civilian authorities.

24. OHCHR noted improvements in prison infrastructure, such as the refurbishment of some units and the adaptation of social reintegration facilities in the National Women's Prison for Social Adaptation. However, challenges persist in relation to conditions of detention, treatment of persons deprived of liberty, contact with the outside world, access to healthcare and judicial guarantees. Prisoner classification procedures that would allow for

¹³ A/HRC/45/27, paras. 17 and 18.

¹⁴ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 14.

¹⁵ Executive Decrees No. PCM-52-2023, No. PCM-06-2024, No. PCM-09-2024, No. PCM-13-2024, No. PCM-19-2024, No. PCM-24-2024 and No. PCM-30-2024.

¹⁶ Legislative Decrees No. 12-2024, No. 45-2024 and the Executive Decree ratified by the National Congress on 27 November 2024, at its thirty-fifth ordinary session, without having ratified the previous ones: https://x.com/Congreso_HND/status/1861918035575267460.

¹⁷ A/HRC/54/22/Add.2, para. 76 (a).

¹⁸ Executive Decrees No. PCM 28-2023, No. PCM 18-2024 and No. PCM 41-2024.

prison management with a focus on human rights and social reintegration have not been adopted.

25. The capacity of the national prison system increased from 14,780 in 2023 to 15,774 in 2024 with the construction of new facilities. However, as of 11 December 2024, the prison population stood at 19,292 persons, including 1,148 women, in 25 prisons.

26. OHCHR recorded 6 violent deaths of persons deprived of liberty in 2024, compared with 56 in 2023. The cases included the death of a woman in a prison transport unit in Copán. At the time of writing, no preventive measures have been taken. There has been no significant progress in the investigation into the circumstances of these deaths.

27. OHCHR is concerned about excessive use of force and the lack of protocols for the prevention and control of incidents inside prisons. In 2024, the Office documented the disproportionate use of force in three serious incidents at the Támara prison that resulted in three violent deaths, two of which could constitute extrajudicial executions, and 161 victims of ill-treatment. These incidents took place during control and search operations.

28. In practice, the lack of confidential, accessible and effective institutional mechanisms for submitting petitions and complaints hinders access to justice and protection for persons deprived of liberty. Although the law provides for such mechanisms, prison regulations do not establish clear standardized procedures, with proper safeguards, for their effective implementation.

29. The work of the technical committee on reducing prison overcrowding led to the conditional release of 603 people upon serving the maximum period of pretrial detention or for humanitarian reasons, following inter-institutional review processes. According to the enforcement courts, interviews were conducted and 10,116 prisoner files were reviewed, thus identifying priority cases and the main challenges for the protection of judicial guarantees and the right to liberty of person.

30. In August, a representative of the executive branch was appointed to the National Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, bringing an end to a five-month period in which it had operated with only one of the three members foreseen by law. The appointment of the civil society representative is still pending owing to the lack of clarity in the election procedures and in the absence of a decision on the challenges that were brought against the process in 2023. Both situations have weakened the functioning of the mechanism.

E. Corruption and human rights

31. Corruption and related impunity continue to be serious structural problems¹⁹ that undermine the foundations of the rule of law and the enjoyment of human rights. The establishment of an international anti-corruption mechanism continues to face challenges, as there has been no progress in the legislative reform recommended by the international experts appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.²⁰ In December 2024, the memorandum of understanding signed in 2022 between Honduras and the United Nations on the establishment of an international commission against corruption and impunity in Honduras was renewed for the fourth time.

32. Regarding accountability in corruption cases, the Trial Court with National Jurisdiction over Organized Crime, the Environment and Corruption handed down notable judgments on 15 November 2024 in the Gualcarque Fraud case against former employees of the company responsible for the Agua Zarca hydroelectric project,²¹ and on 24 June 2024 against a former employee of Inversión Estratégica de Honduras in a case concerning the

¹⁹ See <https://news.un.org/es/story/2024/03/1528062>.

²⁰ See <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/note-correspondents/2023-05-04/note-correspondents-international-independent-impartial-and-autonomous-mechanism-against-corruption-and-impunity-honduras>.

²¹ See <https://www.mp.hn/publicaciones/mp-obtiene-condena-de-5-anos-de-carcel-para-involucrados-en-caso-fraude-sobre-el-gualcarque-causa-relacionada-con-lucha-que-libro-la-ambientalista-berta-caceres/>.

fraudulent purchase of masks during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.²² Appeals against both judgments have been filed with the Supreme Court.

IV. Economic, social and cultural rights, right to a healthy environment and right to development

33. The enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights continues to be undermined by inequality, high levels of poverty, the lack of equitable access to land and natural resources, particularly for Indigenous Peoples, Afro-Hondurans and campesinos,²³ and the impact of environmental degradation and climate change.²⁴ This prevents significant progress from being made in consolidating an equitable and sustainable development model.

34. In October 2024, the National Congress opened a debate on the tax justice bill submitted by the executive branch. However, the bill was not adopted owing to a lack of consensus. In this regard, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights expressed its concern about the low ratio of tax revenues to gross domestic product and the high dependence on indirect taxes.²⁵

A. Economic, social and cultural rights and right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment

35. In September 2024, the Supreme Court declared unconstitutional Decree No. 236-2012 amending articles 294, 303 and 329 of the Constitution and Decree No. 120-2013 containing the Organic Act on Employment and Economic Development Areas.²⁶ In its judgment, the Court declared the effects of these decrees to be null and void from the time of their adoption because they violated “immutable articles related to the structure of the national territory, the system of administration of justice and the planning of the economic system”. The declaration of unconstitutionality was an important step for the protection of human rights.²⁷

36. In 2024, at least six maquiladora companies shut down, resulting in the loss of approximately 24,000 jobs. The Office documented one closure, in the Department of Cortés, in which at least 1,200 people, mostly women, lost their jobs and reportedly did not receive their wages or proper severance pay, in contravention of the Labour Code. The Special Rapporteur on the right to development, on his visit to Honduras in 2024 stated in relation to the closure of the Delta Cortés company that “while the company benefited from the Government’s tax exemptions, it failed to respect workers’ rights, and the Government failed to protect those rights”.²⁸

37. In 2024, OHCHR provided the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment with technical assistance for the revision of the sections of the Environment Act on citizen participation, the right to consultation and the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous and Afro-Honduran Peoples and access to environmental justice, among others. The revised text is still awaiting submission to the National Congress. Support was also provided for the ongoing review of the environmental licensing system in accordance with the principles of administrative efficiency and sustainable natural resource management.

38. The application of Legislative Decree No. 18-2024²⁹ has led to the review, suspension and non-renewal of three mining concessions with a high impact on the environment and

²² See <https://www.mp.hn/publicaciones/mp-obtiene-fallo-condenatorio-contr-excontador-de-investh-por-la-compra-fraudulenta-de-mascarillas-durante-pandemia-del-covid-19/>.

²³ A/HRC/55/22, para. 5.

²⁴ A/HRC/56/46/Add.1, para. 6.

²⁵ E/C.12/HND/CO/3, paras. 16 and 17.

²⁶ See <https://www.poderjudicial.gob.hn/Noticias/SitePages/NPPJ20092024.aspx?web=1>.

²⁷ A/HRC/55/22, para. 38.

²⁸ See <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/development/sr/20241121-eom-honduras-sr-rtd-en.pdf>, p. 10.

²⁹ A/HRC/55/22, paras. 37 and 38.

surrounding communities. The aim of these measures is to ensure the conservation, protection and sustainable use of natural resources. However, the decree has yet to be implemented in relation to the decommissioning of the mining project in Montaña de Botaderos Carlos Escaleras Mejía National Park.

39. The Office welcomes the *amparo* judgment of the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court in the case of the Las Golondrinas mining project in Montaña de Botaderos Carlos Escaleras Mejía National Park, in which the Court ordered the review and cancellation of the environmental licence and mining concession, as the project could have had serious impacts on the rights to water and health of the community of Sabá. The judgment established a precedent by recognizing the right to community participation in the granting of environmental licences for mining concessions.³⁰

40. In 2024, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights expressed concern about the absence of a comprehensive regulatory framework on human rights due diligence, the lack of adequate consultation with communities, substandard environmental assessments and the impacts of extractive projects on the environment and the economic, social and cultural rights of disadvantaged groups.³¹ The Special Rapporteur on the right to development highlighted the lack of concrete measures by companies to respect human rights and urged the Government to develop a national action plan to require large companies to conduct human rights due diligence.³²

B. Access to land and natural resources

41. The High-level Intersectoral Commission for Compliance with International Judgments of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the cases relating to the Garifuna communities of Triunfo de la Cruz and Punta Piedra,³³ established in April 2024, began to delimit and demarcate part of the ancestral territory of the Punta Piedra community. However, measures to fully guarantee the right to communal and ancestral property of the Garifuna people are still pending.

42. OHCHR documented 34 cases of land and territorial conflicts, which continued to arise owing, in particular, to the insecurity of land tenure and a lack of clarity as to the applicable system of property ownership. In 2024, the ancestral territories of Indigenous and Afro-Honduran Peoples continued to be affected by private claims in Triunfo de la Cruz, alleged illegal sales and overlapping titles in Punta Piedra and gaps in the chain of title in Nueva Armenia. In addition, most of the agreements on land titling entered into by the competent authorities, including 12 commitments for the recognition and titling of territories, signed in July 2024 by the National Agrarian Institute and the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras, have yet to be fulfilled.³⁴

43. This situation also continued to affect campesino communities and organizations. In the case of Yoro, nine campesino businesses currently in possession of land whose ownership is disputed by an agro-industrial company filed a request with the National Agrarian Institute for the review of land titles, as they consider that the land in question is subject to agrarian reform. Despite this request, the State has not yet resolved the conflict, which led to four evictions documented by the Office in 2024, one of which involved the destruction of campesino homes and crops.

44. In the case of the Garifuna community of Nueva Armenia, Department of Atlántida, the community, having received no response from the State regarding the possibility that an agro-industrial company had been granted title over its ancestral territory, set up a camp as a

³⁰ Judgment No. AA-1459-2021.

³¹ E/C.12/HND/CO/3, para. 10.

³² See <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/development/sr/20241121-eom-honduras-sr-rtd-en.pdf>, p. 11.

³³ A/HRC/57/75, para. 46.

³⁴ See <https://copinh.org/2024/07/comunicado-n10-las-comunidades-lencas-organizadas-al-copinh-logran-acuerdos-con-el-ina-para-el-reconocimiento-y-titulacion-de-los-territorios/>.

way of “regaining” possession of the territory.³⁵ On 6 October 2024, armed individuals allegedly attempted to violently evict them, and two members of the community sustained gunshot wounds. Between October and December, members of the community were constantly threatened and harassed. The police reportedly declined to intervene, claiming that it was a private dispute. The situation is currently under investigation by the authorities.

45. The parties to the agreements signed in 2022 to address the historic agrarian conflict in Bajo Aguán held dialogues in 2024; however, the operationalization of the truth commission (or tripartite commission) was delayed by the lack of guarantees on access to information, protection and immunity and the lack of sufficient resources for the work of the independent commissioners.³⁶ The formal establishment of the commission, by executive or legislative decree, is still pending.

46. OHCHR documented 22 forced evictions of campesino, Indigenous and Afro-Honduran communities. Some of these evictions were carried out without a court order and involved the use of force, including firearms, and the participation of non-State actors. The communities were not provided with alternative occupations, and some evictions took place during a weather warning, which heightened the risks to vulnerable people. The evictions resulted in the destruction of homes in the communities of Jacalito and Dulce Nombre de Culm³⁷ and crops in Nueva Esperanza and El Bálsamo, seriously harming the livelihoods of community members and exacerbating their poverty.

47. In four evictions documented by the Office, the State used the so-called preventive eviction procedure,³⁸ without assessing the land tenure situation or the impact on the human rights of the affected communities. In these cases, the authorities apparently failed to respect the right of defence and the presumption of innocence of the evicted persons, who were neither notified prior to eviction nor summoned to a hearing at which they could have presented their arguments or given appropriate evidence.³⁹

48. Given the situation of social and environmental conflict, in 2024, the Supreme Court announced the establishment, with technical assistance from OHCHR, of a special tribunal for land and territory⁴⁰ to address these disputes in a way that prioritizes a human rights approach over a criminal justice approach.

V. Civic space and citizen participation

49. Despite the State’s willingness to create spaces for dialogue with civil society, obstacles to the protection of human rights persist, including undue restrictions on the right to freedom of expression, the right of access to information and the right to peaceful assembly and association, as well as other obstacles to participation in public affairs.

50. Attacks⁴¹ targeting human rights defenders and organizations, journalists and the media remained a recurrent problem in 2024. As of 31 December, OHCHR recorded 284 attacks against 319 victims, both individuals and organizations, of which 219 (68.65 per

³⁵ Fraternal Black Organization of Honduras, “Ataque armado de la Policía Nacional contra la comunidad garífuna de Nueva Armenia”, press release, 8 October 2024, available at <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=861696212760368&set=a.578902297706429>.

³⁶ A/HRC/57/75, para. 43.

³⁷ See <https://www.mp.hn/publicaciones/mp-dirige-medida-neutralizadora-en-la-zona-nucleo-del-parque-nacional-sierra-de-agalta-tras-descubrir-asentamientos-humanos-ilegales-en-esta-zona-prottegida/>.

³⁸ Preventive eviction, regulated by article 224-A of the Code of Criminal Procedure, is applied in cases of unauthorized occupation, even without a formal charge. It consists in removing the occupants from the property and handing it over to whoever the authorities consider to be the legitimate owner. Eviction orders must be issued within 24 hours of a request.

³⁹ E/C.12/HND/CO/3, para. 53.

⁴⁰ A/HRC/57/75, paras. 40–42.

⁴¹ The category of “attacks” used by OHCHR covers acts threats, attempted homicide, theft of information, violation of communications, damage to property, smear campaigns, deprivation of liberty and online attacks.

cent) were engaged in the defence of human rights and 100 (31.35 per cent) in journalism and social communication.

51. Most of the victims (120 men, 61 women and 138 organizations, groups, communities or media outlets) were subjected to acts of intimidation or harassment, smears or threats. Persons defending land, territory or the environment continued to face the greatest risk, accounting for 47 per cent of all victims. The departments where most attacks occurred were Francisco Morazán (95), Colón (45) and Choluteca (41). There were at least 39 attacks on Indigenous and Afro-Honduran defenders and/or journalists, who accounted for 12.3 per cent of victims.

52. The Office observed, in comparison with 2023, a 48.6 per cent increase (from 35 to 52 cases) in attacks aimed at discrediting the work of defenders, organizations, journalists and media, including social networks. These attacks included smear campaigns against the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras and the Comité Municipal de Defensa de Bienes Públicos y Comunes de Tocoa (Tocoa Municipal Committee for the Protection of Public and Common Property).⁴² OHCHR documented eight murders: five of defenders and three of journalists, media workers or social communicators. At least two of the victims were defenders of the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons.

53. In September 2024, Juan López, an environmentalist, member of the Comité Municipal de Defensa de Bienes Públicos y Comunes and prominent defender of the Guapinol River against extractive projects, was murdered. His killing occurred in a context in which human rights defenders are subjected to constant attacks, threats, intimidation and criminalization.⁴³ He and his organization were beneficiaries of precautionary measures granted by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights⁴⁴ and implemented through the National System for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Journalists, Social Communicators and Justice Officials. Due to the risk that he and his organization faced, the competent authorities of the National Protection System twice revised their protection plans in 2024; however, no substantive progress was made in implementing the measures until after Mr. López's death. While an investigation led to the capture of the suspected perpetrators, the instigators have yet to be identified, which will be essential in order to ensure the rights to justice, to the truth and to reparation and guarantees of non-repetition.

54. The effective investigation of offences committed against human rights defenders and journalists continues to pose a challenge. The vast majority of the 131 violent deaths documented since the establishment of the OHCHR country office in Honduras in 2015 have not been explained, while the perpetrators and instigators have escaped punishment. The Office of the Special Prosecutor for Offences against Life maintains open investigations in at least 19 cases of murders and disappearances that occurred in 2023 and 2024, including possible enforced disappearances of human rights defenders and journalists (13 cases are at the investigation stage, and applications for prosecution have been submitted in 6 cases).⁴⁵ As of November 2024, the Office of the Special Prosecutor for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Journalists, Social Communicators and Justice Officials had received 27 complaints, mostly of threats, none of which has yet led to a prosecution.

55. Obstacles include the absence of a due diligence protocol for the investigation of crimes against human rights defenders, despite this being a measure of redress ordered by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in 2018.⁴⁶ This shortcoming makes it difficult to conduct adequate investigations that take into account the profile of the human rights defender and the offence's possible connection with his or her advocacy work.

56. In order to strengthen the National Protection System, the Government adopted Executive Decision No. SEDH-004-2024 in November 2024, authorizing direct procurement

⁴² A/HRC/WGAD/2020/85, paras. 12 and 13.

⁴³ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/09/honduras-murder-environmentalist-juan-lopez-criminalisation>.

⁴⁴ Precautionary measure No. 137-23.

⁴⁵ In December, three suspects were arrested for the murder of the activist Erlin Blandin in July 2024. See <https://www.mp.hn/publicaciones/allanamientos-y-capturas-contra-presuntos-autores-del-crimen-de-comunicador-social-y-miembro-de-la-comunidad-lgtbiq/>.

⁴⁶ *Escaleras Mejía et al. v. Honduras*, judgment of 26 September 2018.

by the Ministry of Human Rights to expedite protection measures. In addition, for the first time since the creation of the National Protection System in 2015, staff were recruited by the Advisory, Planning and Information Office of the Directorate General of the Protection System, the agency responsible for implementing the protection afforded to beneficiaries. OHCHR welcomes the creation by civil society organizations, with technical advice from the Office, of a coordination network for the protection of human rights defenders and a broad group for strengthening the National Protection System, in order to support the State in this regard.

57. Notwithstanding these measures, the National Protection System continues to undergo an institutional crisis that precludes it from fully discharging its prevention and protection mandate. The main challenges relate to staff turnover, technical tools, institutional responsibility-sharing and the budget for hiring technical staff and implementing protection measures. The lack of participation and involvement of the heads of the institutions that comprise the National Protection Council, with a view to strategic decision-making by the State and civil society so that the National Protection System can fulfil its prevention and protection mandate, is worrying.

58. The continued use of criminal law against human rights defenders and journalists to hinder their legitimate work is also of concern. The Office documented the improper use of criminal law against defenders from the Lenca Indigenous councils *Alianza* and *Unidos por el Trabajo*, the Garifuna community of Nueva Armenia, the *Asociación por el Desarrollo de la Península de Zacate Grande* (the defenders Santos Hernández and Abel Pérez), the defender Nolvía Obando, a member of the campesino women's movement *Las Galileas*, and a defender from the Nueva Palestina Lenca Indigenous council.

59. With technical support from OHCHR, the Ministry of Human Rights, the Office of the National Commissioner for Human Rights, the National Congress and other authorities made progress in drafting amendments to criminal laws and procedural rules that are often misused against human rights defenders and journalists.⁴⁷

60. In 2024, OHCHR recorded 10 cases in which defenders who previously had been acquitted, whose cases had been dismissed or who had been granted alternative measures to pretrial detention, were subjected to arbitrary detention because the systems of the National Police are not updated in accordance with the decisions of the judiciary. This situation persists, despite the signing of an agreement by the Supreme Court and the Ministry of Security to improve computer systems in relation to arrest warrants.

61. The Office notes with concern the continued practice by some senior government officials of stigmatizing, on social networks or in the media, those who express opinions critical of the public administration or the Government. The Office notes that this practice has encouraged self-censorship and created a permissive environment for possible attacks.

62. Persistent challenges relate to access to public information. Decision No. 001-SG-2024, adopted in March 2024, allows "essential information related to international negotiations" to be declared confidential, which could undermine the exercise of some human rights, such as the right of access to information, as well as public scrutiny and accountability. The Office has found that the National Congress lacks transparency when it comes to publishing, through its official channels, accessible information regarding, inter alia, bills, voting results and the formation of legislative committees, which would allow it to publicize parliamentary activities and facilitate citizen oversight.

63. OHCHR recorded at least 160 protests, mostly linked to social, economic, environmental and political demands. The most prominent example occurred in Choluteca, where protests against the construction of a private transport terminal broke out in March. The Office documented acts of repression and the unnecessary and disproportionate use of force by the security forces, resulting in the injury of at least eight protesters and journalists in April. Although no subsequent acts of physical violence have been reported, the Office has confirmed that those who continue to oppose the project have been subjected to threats, harassment, and smear campaigns.

⁴⁷ [A/HRC/52/24](#), paras. 68 and 70; and [A/HRC/55/22](#), para. 54.

VI. Equality and non-discrimination

A. Rights of women

64. Between January and October 2024, 230 violent deaths of women were recorded, a 44 per cent reduction compared with the same period in 2023.⁴⁸ The 911 national emergency system recorded 14,510 reports of violence against women; and, as of November, the 114 hotline of the National Police, reactivated this year in response to the high rates of violence and designed to address gender-based violence cases, received 20,898 calls, leading to the arrest of 246 assailants.⁴⁹

65. Major challenges persist when it comes to mainstreaming a gender perspective in investigations and prosecutions in connection with violent deaths and other types of violence against women. OHCHR documented at least three cases of gender-based violence, including femicides and rapes,⁵⁰ in which it observed a lack of due diligence on the part of the authorities responsible for investigation and prosecution, and a lack of participation and protection of victims and their families. Allegations of possible corruption, including influence peddling, were also received.

66. The Inter-Agency Commission for Monitoring the Investigation of Violent Deaths of Women and Femicides took steps to strengthen coordination between institutions involved in investigations. However, it has failed to implement the measures identified as a priority in January 2024, such as drawing up an intervention plan for high-risk areas.⁵¹

67. The Act on Shelters for Women Victims and Survivors of Violence in Honduras was adopted in April 2024. However, it is necessary to adopt implementing regulations to ensure its effective application. A bill on purple alerts for the search and location of missing women and girls, which the Inter-Agency Commission submitted to the National Congress in July, is awaiting adoption. Honduras continues to lack an adequate regulatory framework to protect women and guarantee them a life free from violence.

68. In 2024, OHCHR provided technical assistance for training activities aimed at judges, magistrates, prosecutors and social workers, on applying a gender perspective.⁵² Between March and October 2024, the San Pedro Sula Trial Court and Court of Appeal issued seven decisions in which a gender perspective was applied,⁵³ in cases related to violence against women, including femicide and sexual violence. In such rulings, the courts accord greater weight to the victim's testimony, the social context and the structural inequality that women experience.

69. Despite the authorization of the sale, purchase and use of the emergency contraceptive pill and its designation as an essential medicine, OHCHR has been informed that the pill's availability and use are undermined by a lack of resources, of training for health personnel and of broad awareness-raising campaigns, with a negative impact on sexual and reproductive health, especially that of vulnerable women. The Office is also concerned that this authorization could be reversed, as a lawsuit filed by an association against the pill's

⁴⁸ See <https://iudpas.unah.edu.hn/dmsdocument/18199-infografia-muerte-violenta-mujeres-ene-dic-2024-ed18>.

⁴⁹ National Police, 27 November 2024, available at https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=896506542672323&id=100069389551656&mibextid=WC7FNe&rdid=mWeViZ0oSV6NEn9U# and https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=896572235999087&id=100069389551656&mibextid=WC7FNe&rdid=goy2JWFKNgKngiGX.

⁵⁰ Two femicides (in Tocoa and Intibucá) and two cases of rape by public officials (in Tegucigalpa and La Ceiba).

⁵¹ Position statement of the Inter-Agency Commission for Monitoring the Investigation of Violent Deaths of Women and Femicides, 11 January 2024.

⁵² *A/HRC/57/75*, paras. 30 and 31.

⁵³ Cases No. 308-23, No. 0501-2019-0090, No. 0501-2022-00518, No. 0501-2023-00632, No. 0501-2021-00534, No. 156-24 and No. 0501-2019-00875.

approval is pending before the administrative courts.⁵⁴ The absolute prohibition of abortion remains in force in Honduras, contrary to international human rights norms and standards.⁵⁵

B. Rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons

70. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons continued to face a worrying context of violence and structural discrimination. In 2024, the Violent Deaths Observatory run by the organization Cattrachas recorded 15 violent deaths thought to be connected to sexual orientation or diverse gender identity or expression,⁵⁶ and the KAI+ observatory of violence towards LGBTI+ persons recorded 38 deaths. According to the latter, in 87 per cent of the cases, the authorities did not proceed beyond the initial investigation stage.⁵⁷ Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons face barriers to effective access to justice, owing to discriminatory practices and attitudes, among other reasons.⁵⁸ Furthermore, there are no specialized protocols for the investigation of violent crimes perpetrated against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex persons because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity or expression.

71. As a result of a friendly settlement agreement before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, on 30 November 2024 the Government adopted Executive Decision No. 002-2024, amending the 1999 technical standard for the management of blood and blood components, which “permanently” excluded homosexual and bisexual persons from donating blood.

C. Persons in situations of human mobility

72. The National Institute of Migration recorded 369,258 irregular entries by persons in mixed migratory movements, significantly fewer than in 2023. In terms of the main nationalities, Cubans, Ecuadorians and Venezuelans accounted for 72 per cent of entries.⁵⁹ Forty-six percent of persons interviewed indicated that they were travelling with persons with specific protection needs.⁶⁰ The number of Honduran returnees was 39,632, most of whom were returned from the United States (21,442), Guatemala (11,758) and Mexico (5,408).⁶¹

73. In 2024, the Inter-Institutional Commission for the Protection of Forcibly Displaced Persons drafted the implementing regulations of the Act for the Prevention of Internal Displacement and the Protection and Care of Internally Displaced Persons, which are awaiting adoption by the Government.

74. The Decree on Migrant Amnesty, which exempts persons who enter the country irregularly from paying an administrative fine of US\$ 236, was extended until December 2025.⁶² The necessary amendments to the Migration Act to continue ensuring the safe transit of migrants through the country are pending. In 2024, the first protocol for locating missing migrants was presented; it sets out a comprehensive framework for the search and identification of missing migrants, including cooperation with families and international organizations.

⁵⁴ Administrative Court of First Instance, case No. 0801-2023-00543.

⁵⁵ E/C.12/HND/CO/3, paras. 60 and 61; A/HRC/31/57, para. 72 (b); general recommendation No. 24 (1999) of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; and the abortion care guideline of the World Health Organization.

⁵⁶ See <https://www.cattrachas.org/sistemas>.

⁵⁷ See <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KyLsbUeoHbEoYoZZWHq5mnyEfZmHrZ94/view>.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ See <https://inm.gob.hn/migracion-irregular.html>.

⁶⁰ See <https://reliefweb.int/report/honduras/honduras-monitoreo-de-proteccion-en-movimientos-mixtos-septiembre-2024>.

⁶¹ See <https://inm.gob.hn/retornados.html>.

⁶² Legislative Decree No. 106-2024 of 31 December 2024.

VII. Recommendations

75. The Office reiterates the recommendations contained in its previous reports and urges the authorities to implement them.⁶³ OHCHR reiterates its commitment to providing ongoing support for the efforts of Honduras to guarantee and strengthen respect for human rights and recommends that it:

(a) Implement a public security policy with a human rights approach that addresses the structural causes of violence and insecurity in Honduran society, prioritizing prevention and the leadership of civilian institutions. Declarations of states of emergency and the suspension of rights must be exceptional and in strict compliance with international human rights law;

(b) Revise the Organic Act on the Judiciary and the Judicial Service Act and adopt a new law establishing the Council of the Judiciary, with the aim of ensuring that these laws guarantee judicial independence;

(c) Take the necessary measures to ensure that justice officials from the Public Prosecution Service and the judiciary can perform their functions adequately, effectively and free from interference, including the strengthening of institutional protection mechanisms;

(d) Take the necessary measures to improve coordination between public prosecutors' offices, accompanied by technical and financial capacity-building to ensure thorough, independent and impartial investigations, including in respect of crimes that constitute human rights violations and acts of corruption;

(e) Adopt the bill on compliance with international human rights obligations in respect of victims of the national security doctrine;

(f) Adopt a plan for the gradual handover of the prison system to civilian authorities and a prison management model with a human rights and dynamic security approach,⁶⁴ ensuring prevention and accountability for human rights violations and abuses;

(g) Formally establish the technical committee on reducing prison overcrowding in order to strengthen inter-institutional coordination between the criminal justice and prison systems, facilitate the release of individuals who are eligible to be freed, and reduce overcrowding;

(h) Ensure the autonomy of the National Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Office of the National Commissioner for Human Rights and provide them with the necessary financial and technical resources to fulfil their role in the promotion and protection of human rights;

(i) Take the necessary steps to ensure the full implementation of Legislative Decree No. 18-2024, finalize the review of the environmental licensing system and adopt a new regulatory framework to ensure that extractive activities are properly controlled and supervised;

(j) Adopt the monitoring and accountability measures necessary to ensure that national and transnational corporations respect human rights in accordance with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights;

(k) Adopt effective measures to reduce land-related social conflicts by establishing a legal and institutional framework that provides for land titling, recognizing the ancestral rights of Indigenous and Afro-Honduran Peoples and the right of access to land for campesino groups and other historically excluded groups;

(l) Ensure the functioning of the High-level Intersectoral Commission for Compliance with International Judgments of the Inter-American Court of Human

⁶³ A/HRC/52/24, A/HRC/49/21, A/HRC/46/75, A/HRC/43/3/Add.2, A/HRC/40/3/Add.2, A/HRC/34/3/Add.2 and A/HRC/57/75.

⁶⁴ See https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/UNODC_Handbook_on_Dynamic_Security_and_Prison_Intelligence.pdf

Rights in relation to the Garifuna communities of Triunfo de la Cruz, Punta Piedra and San Juan;

(m) **Establish the truth commission of Bajo Aguán and ensure the legal and administrative conditions for its functioning, thus adopting a structural approach to the agrarian conflict;**

(n) **Make progress in establishing the special national tribunal for land, territory and the environment;**

(o) **Strengthen the National System for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Journalists, Social Communicators and Justice Officials to ensure its effective operation and to foster a sense of joint responsibility among the different State agencies that comprise it;**

(p) **Adopt effective measures to prevent the misuse of criminal law against human rights defenders and journalists;**

(q) **Develop and adopt a due diligence protocol for the investigation of crimes committed against human rights defenders;**

(r) **Adopt suitable public policies to safeguard the human rights of women and girls, including the right to a life free from all forms of violence, and ensure that effective investigations are conducted into acts of violence against women and girls, including cases of violent deaths, and that perpetrators are punished appropriately;**

(s) **Establish a legal framework and public policies that ensure the right of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons to a life free from violence and discrimination and eliminate biases and prejudices that limit access to rights, including in the justice, health and labour systems;**

(t) **Implement legal and institutional measures to ensure the consultation and the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples in connection with projects that affect them.**
