



# MONTHLY REPORT ON THE SITUATION OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN HONDURAS

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

November 2016



"The rehabilitation of juvenile offenders is not a privilege, nor a luxury, but an opportunity for the deprived of liberty and for society "  
Newspaper La Prensa, November 2016.

OBSERVATORY FOR THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN HONDURAS

COVENANT HOUSE HONDURAS



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## Letter from Covenant House's Honduras National Director

The national educational system shows signs of alarming degradation and institutional weakness.

As students protest, the Ministry of Education has literally met them by aggressively driving a tractor into the student population.

Institutional weaknesses are manifested on all levels. Today, it seems as if state authorities have more power than the law itself.

The authorities act as owners of institutions, rather than public officials. Thus, institutions are not at the service of the general population, much less at the service of children; Institutions serve their masters.

Consequentially, institutions in Honduras do not give benefits or services to the poor, but rather their owners: bureaucracy. This bureaucracy has lost its ability to understand the problems children face in this country.

Covenant House's Observatory for the Rights of Children and Youth in Honduras, presents the following report for November 2016, with the objective of keeping alive the collective consciousness that holds the State accountable for caring for children and youth in Honduras.

Any suggestions or observations on the subject matter addressed in this report can be sent to this institution's email address or telephone number.

Sincerely.



**José Guadalupe Ruelas**  
Director Nacional  
Casa Alianza Honduras

## Covenant House's Observatory for the Rights of Children and Youth in Honduras

Covenant House Honduras is a nongovernmental organization that has been a safe haven for children and youth facing extreme poverty, unemployment, violence, and human trafficking for over 25 years.

The Observatory for the Rights of Children and Youth was created to document the circumstances surrounding children and youth in our country and to promote research with an emphasis on human rights. The Observatory permanently verifies and analyzes human rights abuses based on the Honduras' fundamental laws and international conventions.

Through the Observatory, Covenant House continuously advocates and participates in public policy proposals to improve the government's response and secure fundamental rights for children and youth.

### 1. RIGHT TO EDUCATION

#### 1.1 Violence against University Students.

Minister of Education and Director of the National Agriculture University (UNA), Marlon Escoto Valerio, forcefully removed university students who were protesting the university's poor infrastructure.

A video on the Internet recorded a tractor pushing students against a fence, risking the lives of at least 10 university students. Photographs also showed masked armed men, thought to be the University's security personal, intimidating students.



This is a continuous problem, in which the student body demands Minister Escoto greater integration in the University's decision-making process.

In light of the recent confrontations, the Minister has delegitimized the student's claims by saying that he studied in the same conditions. Escoto has expelled multiple leaders of the movement; at first, 8 students, and later 78 and has fired 28 professors who have resisted his policies.

## 1.2 Limited Access to Post-High School Education

This year 75,000 high schoolers graduated, which leaves at least 60,000 without access to higher education.

Between the 20 accredited universities, six public universities (run by the state) and fourteen private only 14,000 openings are available.

The entity responsible for solving this problematic is the National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH), although its vice-director denies its existence.



## 1.3 Lack of Preschool Teachers



One of the most violated rights in Honduras is the right to an education, even according to the Ministry of Education. Every year, one million children do not have access to elementary education and 60,000 students to high school.

Additionally, 70,000 children do not attend preschool. In order to solvent the lack of teachers, the state would need to hire 2,000<sup>1</sup>, which would require L366 million lempiras.

Despite the noticeable necessity, the government continues to invest in security and defense, as demonstrated by its recent purchase of a 13,5 million dollars war ship as it continues to deduct from the Ministry of Education and Health's budget.

## 2. RIGHT TO HEALTH

### 2.1 Sicknesses that affect Children

Health services in Honduras continue to worsen as many public hospitals lack medicine and the government continues to privatize services that were previously offered for free. Children in Honduras are especially vulnerable to sicknesses.

<sup>1</sup>according to the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazán (UPNFM)

Several cases of Hepatitis A have been diagnosed in different cities. In the city of Nacaome, 20 children from the Elementary School Manuel Bonilla and Technical Institute Terencio Sierra, both located in the neighborhood Santa Clara in the north of the city, were diagnosed with Hepatitis.

Additionally, another 10 minors were treated in private clinics.



## 2.2 Health Center Infrastructure



Hospital and medical centers' around the country are in precarious conditions. In some cases, municipal and community organizations have repaired the problems due to the government's indifference.

In the colonia Pizatti, in La Ceiba, patients and community leaders continuously have demanded the government to fix the leakage problem in the roof of a medial center that treats a high number of tuberculosis patients.

A medial center in Sabá, located in the department of Colón, has not been renovated in 10 years. They need three million lempiras in order to continue treating the 130 patients that come daily. This health center is one of two that serves a population of 20,000.

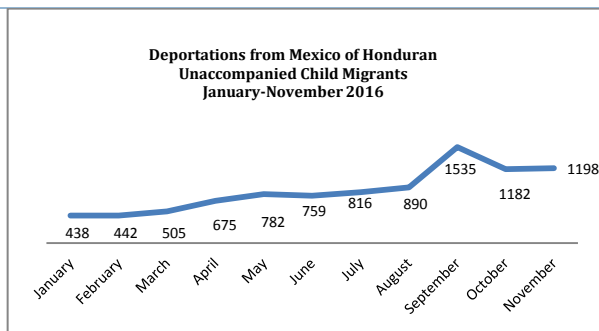
## 3. RIGHT TO PROTECTION

### 3.1 Child Migration

The amount of unaccompanied and accompanied children and youth migrants continues to increase exponentially, as well as the dangers they encounter as they migrate north.

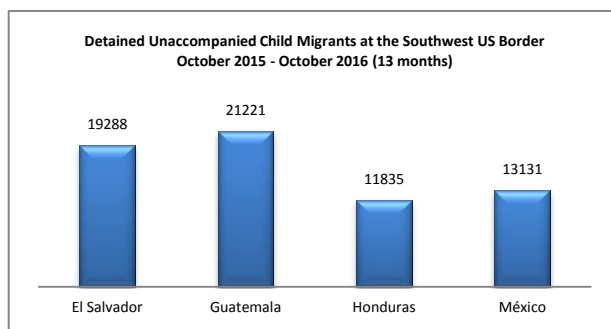
In 2016, between January and November (11 months), 9,222<sup>2</sup> unaccompanied child migrants were deported from Mexico via terrestrial and received at the Attention Center for Child and Family Migrants "El Belen," in San Pedro Sula.

<sup>2</sup>The number of deported child migrants in August (890), September (1,182) and November (1,198) is based of on the data collected by Covenant House's Border Project because the Honduran Government's Child Protection Agency (DINAF) has not shared official data since July 2016.



Source: data collected by Covenant House's Border Project

Between October 2015 and October 2016 (13 months) 65,475 unaccompanied child migrants from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras were detained at the Southwest US border. Of that total, 11,835 (18%) were Honduran<sup>3</sup>.



Source: www.cbp.gov

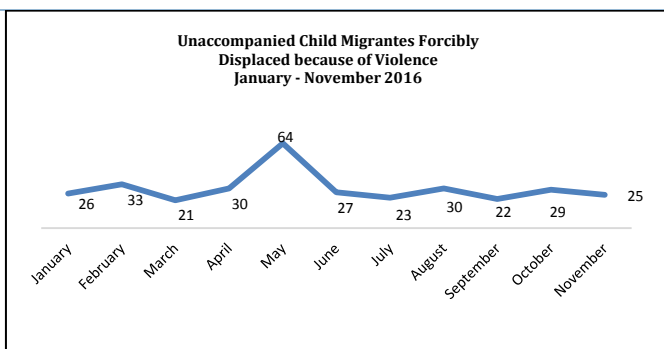
### 3.2 Internal Displacement due to Violence and Children

Internal displacement due to violence is a problem that increases daily in the conflictive neighborhoods of our country. Initial displacement occurs within country, from one neighborhood to another, between municipalities and lastly between departments. If the threat continues, families decide to migrate to another country.

Covenant House Honduras, with the support of ACNUR, identifies repatriated children, youth and their families upon arrival to the Attention Center “El Belen” who have been victims of forced displacement because of violence.

According to the data from the Border Project of Covenant House Honduras, between January and October 2016, **330 children have been displaced due to violence.**

<sup>3</sup>Visto en: <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-border-unaccompanied-children/fy-2017>. December 5th, 2016.



Source: Data collected by Covenant House's Program for Returned Unaccompanied Child Migrants.

These children also are victims of the physical and verbal mistreatment by migration authorities in Mexico. They describe the precarious conditions of the detention centers, lack of food, frustration due to the long waiting period, and lack of information about the alternative options, for example, the possibility of acquiring asylum if fleeing violence.

### 3.3 Gendered and Sexual Violence

According to the National Violence Observatory (ONV) at the UNAH preliminary data indicates that between January and October 2016, 388 women died violently. 68.8% of these were women between the ages 15 and 39.

Between the ages 0 and 19, there were 77 cases of violent deaths of girls and adolescents, which represents 19% of the total victims.

During the first half of the year, Forensic Medicine Department reported 1,498 cases of aggression against women, of which 1,288 were between the ages 15 and 39. Additionally, 1,375 cases of sexual assault were registered.

Between January and October, 2,500 cases of domestic abuse were reported in San Pedro Sula, a decrease from the 4,468, reported last year. 1,574 reports have been filed for sexual assault and to date there are 1,574 missing women. 95% of the above mentioned cases end in impunity.

### 3.4 Penal Justice System for Juvenile Offenders.

The crisis in the penal justice system for juvenile offenders is increasing daily. Investigations carried out by nationally circulated media have highlighted the inhumane conditions of the five centers around the country that house 468 juvenile offenders<sup>4</sup>. 243 of the child and adolescent offenders (52%) are detained in the Centro Renaciendo.

<sup>4</sup> Diario La Prensa, lunes 28 de noviembre de 2016. Pg. 18

In 2012, Covenant House Honduras published a report on the precarious conditions of these centers. The children and youth experience abuse, excessive physical punishment, live under poor conditions, and are kept without a sentence. Since then, the situation has only aggravated to the point where kids have been violently murdered inside the state-run facilities.

A recently circulated investigation has resurfaced the topic. In August 2015, three young inmates, between the ages 15 and 18, were murdered and mutilated after a confrontation with inmates from rival criminal groups.

In January of 2015, two corpses were discovered in a clandestine grave inside the Renaciendo Center. It was later revealed that members of a rival gang assassinated them. In November 2014, three minors disappeared from the Center, which had been interpreted as an escape until an inmate confessed that they too were dismembered and brutally killed.

The crisis in the juvenile detention system has exceeded the State's capacities, reaching the point where agreements have been made between the inmates and those responsible for administering the centers, as detailed by a nationally circulated newspaper.

In a secret agreement reached between 53 adolescent inmates and the authorities in charge of the detention center, juvenile offenders denounced the center's harsh circumstances, detailing living in small metal cells, without ventilation and exposed to extreme temperatures.

The State of Honduras, in its responsibility as the guarantor of rights for children and adolescents, must drastically alter their approach, currently punitive and repressive, to a model that is based on restorative justice, with a focus on human rights.

#### 4. Statistical Analysis of Violent Deaths and/or Homicides.

During November, the written press in Honduras **reported 210 violent deaths, which indicates an average of 7 violent deaths daily.**

Of this total, 189 were male and 21 female. The ages of the victims varied between 3 and 70 years old and 46% of the victims were younger than 30 years old.

According to the press, in November, a total of 25 people died violently in 6 massacres. 67.6% of the cases were done with firearms.



In November, the written press reported **60 violent deaths of children and youth between the ages 0 and 23**. Of this total, 57 were male and 3 female. **Between the ages 0 and 17, 15 violent deaths were reported**, of which 13 were male and 2 female.

The departments with the largest percentage of violent deaths, representing 86% of cases, are Cortes (27 cases) and Francisco Morazán (25 cases).

Violent deaths and/or arbitrary executions of children and youth between the ages 0 and 23 Department and Municipality November 2016					
Department	Municipality	# of cases	Department	Municipality	# of cases
Atlántida	La Ceiba	1	Colón	Santa Rosa de Aguan	1
Cortés	Choloma	9	Comayagua	Siguetepeque	1
	La Lima	3	Copán	La Entrada	1
	Puerto Cortés	1		Cucuyagua	1
	San Pedro Sula	12	Francisco Morazán	Distrito Central	21
Villanueva	2	Talanga		4	
La Paz	La Paz	1	Lempira	Lepaera	1
Yoro	El Progreso	1			

#### 4.1 Alleged Offenders

Based on the collected information, 90% of the cases determine the culprit as “unknown,” which means impunity for the perpetrator. The people in Honduras operate under the assumption that the investigative police’s job consists of collecting the body and giving it to the family. They believe that a violent death only becomes a document in the police’s archive.

#### 4.2 Violent Deaths in the Last 18 Years

During the last 18 years, between February 1998 and November 2016, there have been 11,844 cases of violent deaths and/or arbitrary executions of children and youth ages 0 to 23.

During the two years and ten months of Juan Orlando Hernandez’s presidency, there have been 2,550 violent deaths and/or arbitrary executions of children and youth ages 0 to 23.

By calculating the monthly averages of violent deaths and/or arbitrary execution of children and youth of previous administrations, it is evident that the number of violent deaths has increased. Currently, the monthly average of violent deaths is 75, which has almost doubled since 1998, when the monthly average was 50.

**Comparative graph of monthly averages of violent deaths and/or arbitrary executions of each administration since 1998.**

