



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

### SUMMARY

December 2016



Students of the National University of Agriculture are attacked by university staff as part of the repressive actions to prevent the student's struggle for quality education. Photograph taken from a video posted on the student page called "UNAG Estudiantes" December, 2016.

OBSERVATORY FOR THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN HONDURAS

COVENANT HOUSE HONDURAS



## Letter from Covenant House's Honduras National Director

In 2016 students, environmentalists, peasants and indigenous people experienced increased repression from the state.

The levels of irregular child migration and deportations skyrocketed, again.

In 2016, thousands of boys and girls stopped attending school. In October, UNPFA reported that at least 5,000 ten-year-old girls dropped out of school. A month later, the Honduran government joyfully celebrated the completion of 200 days of classes without asking itself: for how many people and under what conditions?

Violence continues to plague the lives of girls and boys as the government continues to invest in warships and prisons.

We continue to lack enough schools... and a good government.

Covenant House's Observatory for the Rights of Children and Youth in Honduras, presents the following report for December 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 29 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 Continuous conflict at the National University of Agriculture

For decades, higher public education in Honduras has been in state of abandonment, and its quality has been deteriorating with the passage of time. In mid-2016, the University Student Movement (MEU) at the National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH) held a three-month national strike demanding greater quality education.

Students of the National University of Agriculture (UNA) when protesting its poor infrastructure, decreasing quality education and corruption were met with strong repression.

The National Congress set up a commission that verified and testified before Congress the student's complaints.

As a result, the High Education Council (ESC), headed by the director of the National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH), Julieta Castellanos, proceeded to appoint the current academic vice-rector as interim director. Marlon Escoto, the director of UNA and Minister of Education, opposed these actions.

Meanwhile, students continue to be violently attacked. One student was dragged by a car and violently thrown on the pavement and Emerson Martinez, Professor of Food Technology, assaulted a group of students with a wooden pole.



## 1.2 Parents demand more openings for failing students

Parents of students who have failed classes are waiting in long lines to ensure spots for their children in the make-up sessions that are only offered in certain schools.

This year, the number of failing students is higher than in previous years and the Ministry estimates that 3,000 to 5,000 will repeat the academic year.

The subjects with the highest failure rate are Mathematics and Spanish. Parents are expected to pay 550 lempiras and some have raised questions on the allocation of this money.

## 1.3 Teachers lack their December salary and vacation bonus

Despite being praised for accomplishing 200 days of school this year, some teachers in the public sector did not receive their December salary or holiday bonus.

This was confirmed by Elías Muñoz, the president of the Professional Association of Teachers (COLPROSUMAH), who monitored this issue nation-wide.



## 2. RIGHT TO HEALTH

### 2.1 Gunpowder burns

At least 21 boys and girls suffered burnings and/or mutilations during the holiday season as a result of the uncontrolled sales of fireworks and other explosives.

December 27th, at the Mario Catarino Rivas Hospital in San Pedro Sula, 17 individuals were treated, 15 of who were minors. Among the patients was an 11-year-old boy who lost all four fingers.

Although the statistics vary in the country, it is accurate to highlight the inability of the authorities to regulate the sale of such devices. Specialists indicate that these kinds of burns cost 21,000.00 lempiras to medicate properly, which would cost the state more than 300 thousand lempiras.

## 2.2 Health centers lack personnel and resources

The lack of medical personnel and resources is the norm in hospitals and public health centers around the country.

For example, the hospital San Isidro de Tocoa, in the department of Colón, is requesting 20 million lempiras to hire personnel and improve its infrastructure, which is needed to attend the 400 patients that arrive daily.



This hospital was built in 1993 is the only one in the entire Aguán Valley.

The so-called Peripheral Emergency Clinics (CLIPER), created to decongest hospitals, are in similar conditions. The CLIPERs in Las Crucitas and Hato de En medio, which receive patients from 10 neighborhoods, are in desperate need for updated medical equipment.

The Director of the CLIPERs, announced that a budget increase is needed in order to improve these services, which is highly unlikely.

## 2.3 Delayed payments affects the Honduran Institute of Social Security

The Honduran Social Security Institute (IHSS) was not only sacked by officials in the national party – who currently govern – but also lacks 6,000 million lempiras from private enterprises, who continue to deducted money from their employees for this service.

Employees' enrollment forms confirmed 22,000 unpaid employer contributions, meaning that employers continue to deduct the worker's quota but do not transfer it to the IHSS.

Three million beneficiaries depend on the IHSS. Employers are required to pay monthly 712.14 lempiras per worker (415.00 of which are deducted from the worker's pay check).

Currently there is no penalization for employers who do not pay the corresponding fee.



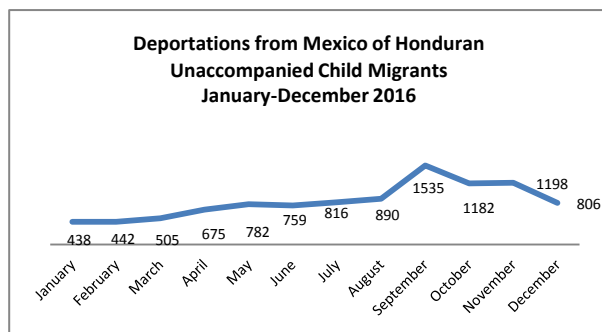
### 3. RIGHT TO PROTECTION

#### 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.

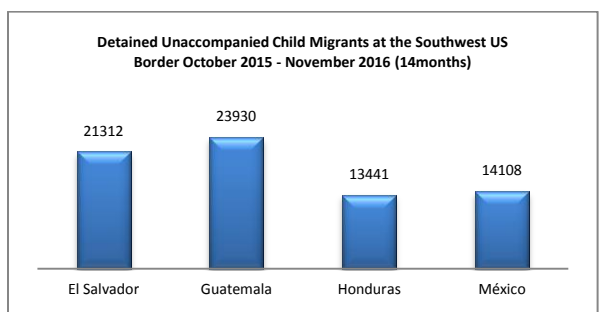
In 2016, between January and December 10,028<sup>1</sup> unaccompanied child migrants were deported from Mexico via terrestrial and received at the Attention Center for Child and Family Migrants "El Belén," in San Pedro Sula.

This year we have experienced a 41% increase in deportations of child migrants, in comparison to 2015, when the figure reached 7,109 deportations.



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

Between October 2015 and November 2016, 72,791 unaccompanied child migrants from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras were detained at the Southwest US border. Of that total, 13,441 (18%) are of Honduran origin.



Source: www.cbp.gov

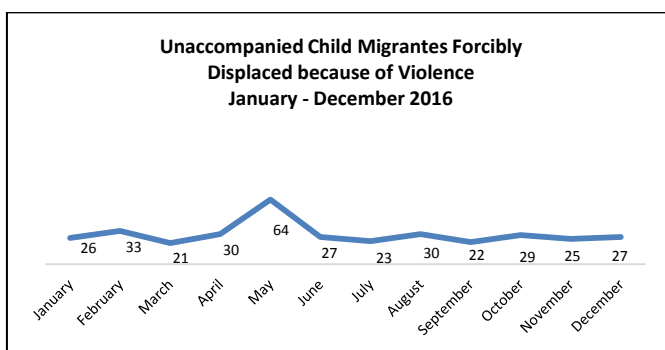
<sup>3</sup>Fiscal year 2016 runs from October 1, 2015 to September 30, 2016 (12 months) and fiscal year 2017 runs from October 1 to November 30, 2016.

### 3.2 Forced Internal Displacement 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 UNHCR, 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, **357 children have been displaced due to violence.**



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 Penal Justice System for Juvenile Offenders

The justice system for juvenile offenders in Honduras is in crisis due to - among several factors - a punitive model that focuses on punishing the child, disregarding them as vulnerable individuals immersed in contexts of extreme violence.

The precarious situation in the juvenile criminal system has become more evident in recent months, leading the national and international community to raise questions about the precarious conditions of internment centers, the lack of governability and the violation of juvenile offenders' fundamental rights, including cases of youth who have been killed inside the internment centers.

At a national level, there are 468 children distributed in five detention centers for juvenile offenders. One of the main problems they face is indefinite internment in absence of a judicial sentence.

Covenant House Honduras, in partnership with USAID, is implementing "Proponte Más," which is a project focused on strengthening the capacities of the DINAF (the Honduran Child Protective Agency) in planning and managing government and civil society services, in order to offer alternative measures for adolescents immersed in the juvenile justice system.

Covenant House will support the DINAF, public institutions in the social sector, public defenders, courts, as well as civil society organizations to provide comprehensive care and to support the process of rehabilitation and social reintegration for adolescents.

We strive to prevent vulnerable adolescents from becoming victims, participating in violent acts and re-engaging in unlawful conduct. We will advocate and promote alternative measures as an effective way for rehabilitation and reintegration of adolescents.

Among the actions to be implemented an Individual Care Plan, which would provide personalized interviews, comprehensive care and legal counseling, according to each case.

Between October and December 2016, 10 juvenile offenders (3 girls and 7 boys), who were granted non-custodial measures, received comprehensive care in their process of rehabilitation and social reintegration.

### 3.4 Gendered and Sexual Violence

Between January and June 2016, 1,570 tax requirements were requested for medical evaluations dealing with cases of sexual abuse, according to data from the Violence Observatory at the National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH)<sup>3</sup>.

Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, have the highest number of sexual violence related crimes, in which boys and girls are a large percentage of the victims. Between October and November, in San Pedro Sula, according to the Public Ministry, 13 rape crimes and 8 crimes related to acts of lust that involved children were reported.

At a national level, an average of 35 girls and boys are victims of abuse each month, according to the e Public Ministry and non-governmental organizations.

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<sup>3</sup> Cited from: <http://www.laprensa.hn/sucesos/1025703-410/en-6-meses-1570-personas-sufrieron-abuso-sexual>. January 10, 2017.



According to the Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights (CLADEM), between 900 and 1,000 girls are raped each year in Honduras, and are forced to be teenage mothers.

The majority of rape crimes are not reported because family members are the perpetrators. Most commonly, hospitals document the cases at the time of birth. According to Leila Díaz, representative of CLADEM, 907 minors have given birth out of rape but the number could increase when considering rural areas, where no doctors or medical centers are present.

According to the Center for Women's Rights (CDM) "there is no response, no justice and above all, [women] are forced to maintain their pregnancy in the family environment, even though 80 percent of these abuses are carried out by a relative."

Human rights organizations, specially those working with women and adolescents, require the Honduran State to grant girls the right to a life free of violence, and the fulfillment of the commitments established in the Inter-American Convention to prevent, punish and eradicate violence against women.

Likewise, it is necessary to promote measures that address the specific needs of indigenous girls, who due to structural, historical, economic factors, are in a situation of greater vulnerability of sexual violence and forced pregnancy, and have less access to public services.

It is necessary to allocate and secure public funding to promote State policies of prevention as well as to punish those responsible for such abuses.

### **3.5 Children victims of stray bullets**

During the last two months of the year, the media reported four violent deaths of children and adolescents by stray bullets fired during clashes between criminal groups.

In November, a disabled 16-year-old adolescent died from a bullet fired during a shoot-out in the neighborhood El Progreso, in Tegucigalpa.

Three cases of stray bullets were recorded in December. In the neighborhood Brisas del Bosque of San Pedro Sula, a three-year-old boy died while sleeping in his bedroom.

Similarly, a 13-year-old boy died after being hit by a bullet in the neighborhood Guadalupe, in San Pedro Sula.

In southern Honduras, a 12-year-old boy died of a stray bullet near a soccer field in the city of Choluteca.

#### 4. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF VIOLENT DEATHS AND/OR HOMICIDES.

During December, the written press in Honduras reported 212 violent deaths, which indicates an average of 7 violent deaths daily.

Of this total, 180 were male and 32 female. The ages of the victims varied between 3 and 77 years old and 48.5% of the victims were younger than 30 years old.

According to the press, in December, a total of 17 people died violently in 5 massacres. 64.1% of the cases were done with firearms.

In December, the written press reported 57 violent deaths of children and youth between the ages 0 and 23. Of this total, 42 were male and 15 female. Between the ages 0 and 17, 12 violent deaths were reported, of which 8 were male and 4 female.

The departments with the largest percentage of violent deaths, representing 82.4% of cases, are Cortes (27 cases) and Francisco Morazán (20 cases).

Violent deaths and/or arbitrary executions of children and youth between the ages 0 and 23 Department and Municipality December 2016					
Department	Municipality	# of cases	Department	Municipality	# of cases
Choluteca	Orocuina	1	Cortés	Baracoa	1
	Concepción de María	1		Choloma	7
Comayagua	Siguatepeque	1		Cofradía	2
	Lajamaní	1		La Lima	4
Colón	Tocoa	1		San Pedro Sula	12
Francisco Morazán	Amarateca	3		Santa Cruz de Yojoa	1
	Distrito Central	16		Santa Bárbara	1
	Santa Lucía	1	Yoro	El Progreso	4

#### Alleged Offenders

Based on the collected information, 87.7% 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.

## Violent Deaths in the Last 18 Years

During the last 18 years, between February 1998 and December 2016, there have been 11,721 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 2,607 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.*

