



MONTHLY REPORT ON CHILDREN AND YOUTHS' RIGHTS IN HONDURAS

SUMMARY

June 2017



The nine hundred students that attend “Edgardo Alanis Lagos” Elementary School located in Calpules, San Pedro Sula, have access to only two bathrooms in terrible conditions (pictured above).
Photograph by Diario La Prensa.

OBSERVATORY OF CHILDREN AND YOUTHS' RIGHTS IN HONDURAS

COVENANT HOUSE HONDURAS



Letter from Covenant House's Honduras National Director

According to the Honduran National Statistics Institute (INE), 40.2% of school-aged girls and boys do not attend school.

On the other hand, authorities state that for those who do, the education system and infrastructure are in poor conditions.

The current government desires to decrease the legal punishable age for children, even though many are subject to the traditional Honduran saying "enclosure, burial or exile."

To reverse this equation, we urgently need to increase access to education, in order to need fewer prisons.

Covenant House's Observatory of Children and Youths' Rights in Honduras, presents the following report for June 2017. Its objective is to keep alive a collective consciousness that holds the government 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 the email address or telephone number of this institution.

Sincerely,



José Guadalupe Ruelas
Director Nacional
Casa Alianza Honduras

Covenant House's Observatory of Children and Youths' Rights 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 30 years.

The Observatory of Children and Youths' Rights 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 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.

RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Officials are Unable to Resolve Conflict at the UNAH

The Fourth Court's ruling convicting the three university students Cesario Padilla, Sergio Ulloa and Moises Cáceres, aggravated the conflict at the National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH). Students immediately took control of the buildings and blocked the main access roads, which marked an end to the agreement signed between students and university leaders on July 20th, 2016.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the National Commissioner (CONADEH) jointly issued a statement against the criminalization of students. This has been a source of unease for the University Director, Julieta Castellanos Ruiz, who accused them of misrepresenting the information.

During a protest on June 16th, students clashed with Special Forces of the Police and were fired tear gas, which left a wounded cameraman and several damaged vehicles.

The conflict has escalated to such a degree that the father of one of the criminalized students, Roberto Antonio Gomez Nieto, a refrigeration technician, was shot dead 24 hours after showing his solidarity. In response to this situation, the Director Castellanos said that all parents of university students were exposed.¹

¹ Diario El Herald. 24/06/2017. Pg. 42.

Parents Protest at Elementary Schools

Officials have reported six cases of hepatitis among students and personnel at “Manuel Bonilla” Elementary School, located in the neighborhood Villeda Morales, Tegucigalpa, due to the release of contaminated water and sewage on to the school’s grounds. Parents and teachers have reported the terrible state of the septic tanks to the Autonomous National Water and Sewer Service (SANAA), but have not received a response.

In the case of “Jesus Aguilar Paz” Elementary School, located in the conflictive neighborhood of San Francisco, Tegucigalpa, parents and students took over the school’s facilities to complain about the Departmental Office’s decision to use two of its classrooms for unknown purposes, unrelated to the school.

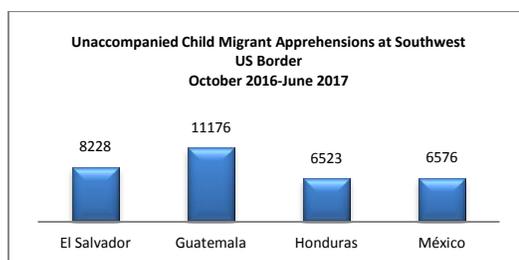
Schools Lacking Proper Sanitation

The Ministry of Education lacks the resources to provide 25 schools in San Pedro Sula, Cortes with proper sanitation. The Health Department reported 20,000 cases of gastrointestinal infections that can be attributed to poor sanitary conditions. Of this total, 50% of the cases are of children between ages 5 and 14. Schools located in Meredón, lack toilets and clean water. According to data from the Educational Infrastructure Planning System (SIPLIE): 61% of 336 schools in San Pedro Sula have proper sewage; 6.5% have no toilet, which means 25 schools rely on septic tanks; 3.7% have no access to drinking water; and 12.6% rely on sources such as wells and rivers.

RIGHT TO PROTECTION

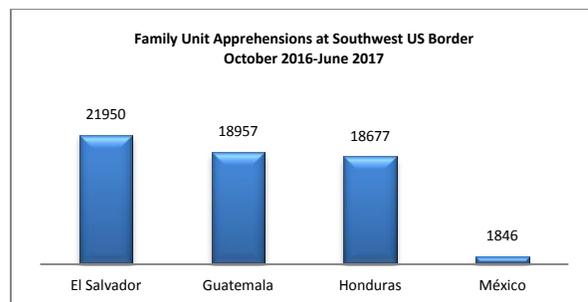
Child Migration

Between October 2016 and June 2017 (eight months), 32,503 unaccompanied child migrants from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, were detained at the US Southern Border. Of this total, 6,523 (20%) were of Honduran origin.²



² <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/usbp-sw-border-apprehensions>.

Between October 2016 and June 2017, 61,430 family units from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, were detained at the US Southern Border. Of this total, 18,677 (30%) were of Honduran origin.



Migrant children and youth are a highly vulnerable group due to the severe abuses they suffer on the route. In many cases, criminal groups traffic, sexually abuse and expose this population to endless dangers.

Concern about the Future of the Temporary Protection Status (TPS) Program

86,000 Hondurans in the US have been granted Temporary Protection Status (TPS) since Hurricane Mitch in 1999, which caused severe damage and destruction to the economy and national infrastructure. US Secretary of Homeland Security, John Kelly, proposed cutting the program, which could end in deportation for Hondurans in the program.

According to a study by the National Alliance TPS, the labor force participation rate of immigrants with TPS is greater than that of the general population of the United States and other immigrant populations with or without legal status. 94% of the male population works, 84% of them work more than 40 hours a week and 7% have more than two jobs. In the case of females, 82.1% work, 55% work more than 40 hours a week and 10% have more than two jobs.³

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 19,749 Hondurans have been deported from Mexico and United States in the first 165 days of 2017, of these: 15,472 men, 2,337 women, 1,273 boys and 667 girls. This represents a 37.7% decrease in comparison to last year.⁴

New Legislation Seeks to Increase Sentences for Minors

The Inter-institutional Commission of Criminal Justice appointed by the President Juan Orlando Hernández, retrieved in their stance to reduce the punishable age for minors. Instead, they are

³ <http://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1076650-410/tps-inmigrantes-eua-honduras>

⁴ Diario El Heraldo. 13/6/2017. Pg. 2.

proposing to reform article 205 of the Children and Adolescents Code, which would increase the length of penalties for child offenders.

"If a minor, between the ages 12 and 18, commits a heinous crime, the penalty must be based on the atrocity, the level of perversity, or the high impact of the crime," says Juan Orlando Hernández.⁵

If followed through, minors ages 12 and 13 could serve up to 5 years in prison; ages 14 and 15, up to 10 years and ages 16 and 18, up to 15 years.

The Child Agency has expressed concern for the level of investment and cost of this new model, since they consider it more cost effective to invest in prevention. This topic will be further discussed as soon as the National Congress returns from its break.

Militarization of Schools

Between June 23rd and 27th, two students, Rebeca Abigaíl Velásquez Torres (15) and Olman Adalid Castillo Calderón (18), from "Vicent Cáceres Central" High School were violently murdered. Since then, military and education officers have decided to place military police at the entrances of various schools. This policy has been implemented since last year and it is aimed at preventing drug trafficking and consumption among the students.⁶

UNICEF and Jaime Rodriguez, President of COPEMH, warned that militarization of education centers will not solve the state's long-term neglect that has caused the problem to escalate.

Rodriguez says, "Students are victims of violence in the streets, in their neighborhoods, homes and now they will be repressed inside schools."⁷

To date, 48 schools have been intervened militarily nationwide: 33 in Tegucigalpa, 9 in Cortés and 5 in Atlantida.

⁵ Diario El Herald. 12/6/2017. Pg. 8.

⁶ Diario El Herald. 30/6/2017. Pg. 3.

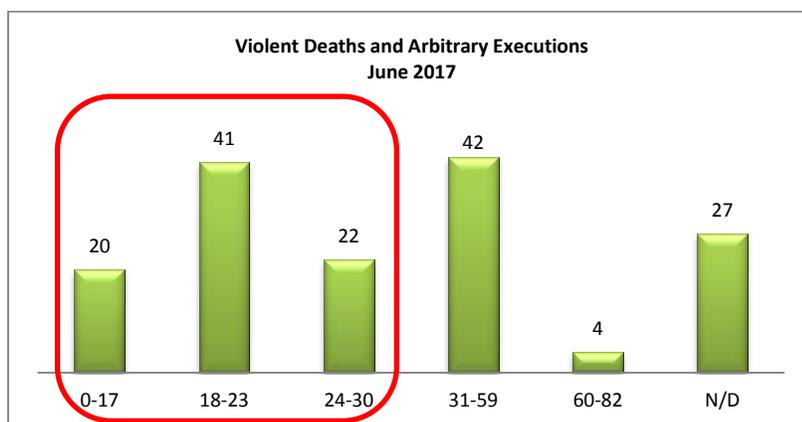
⁷ <http://confidencialhn.com/2017/06/30/militarizacion-no-resolvera-la-violencia-en-centros-educativos-copemh/>

VIOLENT DEATHS AND/OR HOMICIDES

In June, the Honduran written press reported **156 violent deaths, which represents an average of 5 deaths daily**. Of this total, 129 of the victims were male and 27 female.

According to the press, 83 cases, equivalent to 53.2%, correspond to children and youth under the age of 30.

In June 17 people were killed in 5 massacres and 64.7 % of the violent deaths were done with firearms.



Between ages 0 and 23, 61 violent deaths were reported. Of which, 49 of the victims were male and 12 female.

Between ages 0 and 17, 20 violent deaths were reported. Of which, 16 of the victims were male and 4 female.

In comparison to May, there was an increase of **20 violent deaths in June**.

Violent Deaths and/or Homicides, by Department and Municipality

The departments with the largest percentage of violent killings of children and youth under the age of 23 are: Francisco Morazán (20 cases) and Cortes (18 cases). These departments combined represent 62% of cases nationwide.

Violent Deaths and/or Arbitrary Executions of Children and Youth between Ages 0 and 23 Department and Municipality June 2017						
Department	Municipality	# Of Cases	Department	Municipality	# Of Cases	
Cortés	Choloma	9	Comayagua	Comayagua	2	
				Siguatepeque	1	
	Puerto Cortés	2	Atlántida	La Ceiba	3	
				Tela	1	
	San Pedro Sula		6	Intibucá	Jesús de Otoro	1
				Lempira	Colomoncagua	1
Francisco Morazán				Distrito Central	19	
La Lima		1		Valle de Ángeles	1	
Choluteca	Apacilagua	1	Yoro	Yoro	1	
Olancho	Catacamas	1		El Progreso	2	
El Paraíso	Moroceíl	1	Ocotepeque	La Labor	1	
Copán	Corquín	1	Colón	Trujillo	1	
	Santa Rita	4	La Paz	Marcala	1	

Alleged Offenders

Based on the collected information, 68.8% of the cases determine that the culprit is “unknown,” meaning that the perpetrator is granted impunity. 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 a violent death only becomes an archive in the national police’s collection.

Violent Deaths in the Last 18 Years

During the last 18 years, between February 1998 and June 2017, there have been **12,045 cases of violent deaths and/or arbitrary executions** of children and youth ages 0 to 23.

During the forty-one months of Juan Orlando Hernandez’s presidency, there have been **2,931 violent deaths and/or arbitrary executions** of children and youth between the ages 0 and 23.

By calculating the monthly average of violent deaths and/or arbitrary execution of children and youth during previous administrations, it is evident that the number of violent deaths has increased. Currently, the **monthly average of violent deaths is 72**, 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

