



Home Office

Country Information Note

Honduras: Background Note

Version 1.0

March 2021

Preface

Purpose

This note provides a summary of and links to country of origin information (COI) for use by Home Office decision makers handling particular types of protection and human rights claims. It is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of a particular subject or theme.

It is split into two main sections: (1) general background to the country concerned, including demography and geography; and (2) issues which may be relevant to protection claims. Unlike country policy and information notes, it does **not** contain an assessment of risk, availability of protection or reasonableness of internal relocation.

Decision makers **must** consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case's specific facts.

Country of origin information

The country information in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), dated April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual, 2013](#). Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

The structure and content of the country information section follows a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to this note.

All information included in the note was published or made publicly available on or before the 'cut-off' date in the country information section. Any event taking place or report/article published after this date is not included.

All information is publicly accessible or can be made publicly available, and is from generally reliable sources. Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion.

Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information, and
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources.

Multiple sourcing is used to ensure that the information is accurate, balanced and corroborated, so that a comprehensive and up-to-date picture at the time of publication is provided of the issues relevant to this note.

Information is compared and contrasted, whenever possible, to provide a range of views and opinions. The inclusion of a source, however, is not an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a brief footnote; full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

Feedback

Our goal is to continuously improve our material. Therefore, if you would like to comment on this note, please email [the Country Policy and Information Team](#).

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support him in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

Contents

Country information	6
1. History	6
2. Geography and demography	6
2.1 Country snapshot	6
2.2 Map	7
2.3 Administrative divisions	7
2.4 Main population centres	7
2.5 Transportation	8
3. Constitution	8
4. Political system	8
5. Economy	9
6. Media and telecommunications	11
7. Citizenship and nationality	11
8. Official documents	12
8.1 Birth certificates	12
8.2 Identity cards	12
8.3 Passports	13
8.4 Fraudulent documents	13
9. Corruption	14
10. Health	15
10.2 Covid-19	16
Human rights issues relevant to protection claims	17
11. Human rights overview	17
12. Children	18
12.2 Education	18
12.3 Child labour	18
12.4 Early and forced marriage	18
12.5 Violence towards children	18
13. Civil society	19
14. Crime and security	20
15. Criminal justice system	22
15.1 Penal code	22
15.2 Security forces	22
15.3 Security forces: effectiveness	23
15.4 Security forces: human rights violations	24

15.5 Judiciary	26
15.6 Prison conditions	28
15.7 Death penalty	28
16. Ethnic/indigenous groups	29
17. Freedom of movement.....	30
18. Gangs	31
19. Media workers	31
20. Political opposition	32
21. Religious groups	33
22. Sexual orientation and gender identity and expression	34
22.2 State treatment.....	35
22.3 Societal treatment and attitudes	36
22.4 Civil society support	37
23. Women	37
Bibliography	40
Sources cited	40
Sources consulted but not cited.....	44
Version control.....	45

Country information

Section 1 updated: January 2021

1. History

- 1.1.1 [Britannica](#) provided a brief history of the country.
- 1.1.2 The BBC '[Honduras Profile-Timeline](#)' noted some important dates in the country's history.
- 1.1.3 The Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index [Honduras Country Report](#) provided a brief history of the country.

[Back to Contents](#)

Section 2 updated: January 2021

2. Geography and demography

2.1 Country snapshot

Full country name	Republic of Honduras ¹ .
Area:	112,090 sq km (land 111,890 sq km; water 200 sq km) ² . (England is 130,400 sq km ³)
Flag:	Image of, and information on the ' Flag of Honduras ' ⁴ .
Population:	9.9 million (2020 estimate) ⁵ .
Capital city:	Tegucigalpa ⁶ . Population 1.4 million (2020) ⁷ .
Other key places:	See Main population centres .
Position:	The CIA World Factbook noted Honduras was located in 'Central America, bordering the Caribbean Sea, between Guatemala and Nicaragua and bordering the Gulf of Fonseca in the North Pacific Ocean, between El Salvador and Nicaragua.' ⁸
Languages:	Spanish (official) and Amerindian dialects ⁹
Ethnic groups:	About 90% of the population is Mestizo (mixed European and Amerindian ancestry), while 7% are

¹ PCGN, '[Country Names](#)', last updated 11 December 2019

² CIA, '[The World Factbook-Honduras](#)' (Geography), last updated:10 September 2020

³ Mapfight, '[Website](#)', no date

⁴ The Flag Institute, '[Flag of Honduras](#)', no date

⁵ World Population Review, '[Honduras Population 2020](#)', 2020

⁶ World Data, '[Capital Cities](#)', no date

⁷ UN Data, '[Honduras](#)', no date

⁸ CIA, '[The World Factbook-Honduras](#)' (Geography), last updated:10 September 2020

⁹ CIA, '[The World Factbook-Honduras](#)' (People and Society), last updated:10 September 2020

	of American Indian descent and 2% 'declare themselves to be black.' ¹⁰
Religion:	Largely Christian: Roman Catholic 46%, Protestant 41%, atheist 1%, other 2%, none 9% ¹¹

[Back to Contents](#)

2.2 Map

- 2.2.1 A [map of the country](#) is available on the UN's Geospatial Information Section.
- 2.2.2 Further maps are available in the Perry Castaneda Library Map Collection for [thematic maps of Honduras](#),
- 2.2.3 OnTheWorldMap website provides [administrative and political maps of Honduras](#). And for maps on the [humanitarian situation](#) see the 'Maps and Infographics' section of Reliefweb.

[Back to Contents](#)

2.3 Administrative divisions

- 2.3.1 Honduras is divided into 18 departments (departamentos, singular - departamento); Atlantida, Choluteca, Colon, Comayagua, Copan, Cortes, El Paraiso, Francisco Morazan, Gracias a Dios, Intibuca, Islas de la Bahia, La Paz, Lempira, Ocotepeque, Olancho, Santa Barbara, Valle, Yoro¹².

[Back to Contents](#)

2.4 Main population centres

- 2.4.1 Most residents live in the mountainous western half of the country; unlike other Central American nations, Honduras is the only one with an urban population that is distributed between two large centres - the capital of Tegucigalpa and the city of San Pedro Sula¹³.
- 2.4.2 Cities with populations over 100,000:
- 'Catacamas 117 493
 - 'Choloma 231 669
 - 'Choluteca 152 519
 - 'Comayagua 144 785
 - 'Danlí 195 916
 - 'El Progreso 188 366
 - 'Juticalpa 124 828
 - 'La Ceiba 197 267
 - 'Olancho 104 609

¹⁰ World Population Review, '[Honduras Population 2020](#)' (Demographics), 2020

¹¹ CIA, '[The World Factbook-Honduras](#)' (Government), last updated:10 September 2020

¹² CIA, '[The World Factbook-Honduras](#)' (Religions), last updated 5 October 2020

¹³ CIA, '[The World Factbook-Honduras](#)' (Geography), last updated 5 October 2020

'Puerto Cortés 122 426
'San Pedro Sula 719 064
'Tegucigalpa 1 157 509
'Villanueva 149 977'¹⁴

[Back to Contents](#)

2.5 Transportation

2.5.1 Honduras has 103 airports, 13 of which have paved runways, 4 major seaports (La Ceiba, Puerto Cortes, San Lorenzo, Tela), 14,742 km of roadway, of which 3,367 km is paved, and 699 km of railway track¹⁵.

[Back to Contents](#)

Section 3 updated: January 2021

3. Constitution

3.1.1 See the [Constitution of Honduras](#) of 1982 with amendments in 2013.

[Back to Contents](#)

Section 4 updated: January 2021

4. Political system

4.1.1 The US Congressional Research Service (USCRS) report on Honduras of 20 April 2020 noted that 'The country's current Constitution... established a representative democracy with a separation of powers among an executive branch led by the president, a legislative branch consisting of a 128-seat unicameral national congress, and a judicial branch headed by the supreme court.'¹⁶

4.1.2 The Freedom House in their Freedom in the World report covering events in 2019 noted:

'The president is both chief of state and head of government, and is elected by popular vote to four-year terms. The leading candidate is only required to win a plurality; there is no runoff system.

'In a controversial 2015 decision, the Honduran Supreme Court voided Article 239 of the constitution, which had limited presidents to one term.

...Members of the 128-seat, unicameral National Congress are elected for four-year terms using proportional representation by department.'¹⁷

4.1.3 The Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (BTI) country report noted:

'The party system is relatively stable and socially rooted through clientelism, with moderate fragmentation, moderate voter volatility and moderate (albeit increasing) polarization. While the 2013 elections ended the long-standing two-party system between the National Party (Partido Nacional, PN) and the

¹⁴ UN Stats Demographic Yearbook, '[Honduras cities](#)', 2018

¹⁵ CIA, '[The World Factbook-Honduras](#)' (Transportation), last updated:5 October 2020

¹⁶ USCRS, '[Honduras: Background and U.S. Relations](#)' (page 3), 27 April 2020

¹⁷ Freedom House, '[Freedom in the World 2020-Honduras](#)' (sections A1 and A2), 4 March 2020

Liberal Party (Partido Liberal, PL) with the emergence of left-wing parties (e.g., the Partido Libertad y Refundación, Libre), the 2017 elections saw no further fragmentation and resulted in 3.07 effective parties in parliament.¹⁸

See also [Political opposition](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

Section 5 updated: January 2021

5. Economy

5.1.1 Economic snapshot:

Currency	Honduran lempira (HNL), one HNL = 100 Centavos ¹⁹ .
Exchange Rate	One GBP = 31.77 Honduran Lempiras (as of October 2020) ²⁰ .
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita	US\$2574.9 (2019) [=1885.32 GBP] ²¹ .
GDP growth rate	3.7 ²²
Inflation rate	3.82 percent ²³
Unemployment rate	5.2 percent of labour force ²⁴
Labour force by occupation	agriculture: 39.2% industry: 20.9% services: 39.8% (2005 est.) ²⁵
Poverty rate	48.3% of people live in poverty (2018) ²⁶

5.1.2 The CIA World Factbook noted:

‘Honduras, the second poorest country in Central America, suffers from extraordinarily unequal distribution of income, as well as high underemployment. While historically dependent on the export of bananas and coffee, Honduras has diversified its export base to include apparel and automobile wire harnessing.

‘Honduras’s economy depends heavily on US trade and remittances. The US-Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement came into force in 2006 and has helped foster foreign direct investment, but physical

¹⁸ BTI, [‘2020 Honduras Country Report’](#) (page.17), 2020

¹⁹ XE.com, [‘Currency Encyclopaedia’](#) (HNL – Hondura Lempira), no date

²⁰ XE Currency Converter, [‘Live Market Rates’](#), 7 October 2020

²¹ World Bank, [‘GDP per capita - Honduras’](#), 2019

²² UN Data, [‘Honduras’](#), 2020

²³ Central Bank of Honduras, [‘Website’](#), November 2020

²⁴ UN Data, [‘Honduras’](#), 2020

²⁵ CIA, [‘The World Factbook-Honduras’](#) (Economy), last updated:18 November 2020

²⁶ World Bank, [‘Honduras overview’](#), last updated 9 October 2020

and political insecurity, as well as crime and perceptions of corruption, may deter potential investors; about 15% of foreign direct investment is from US firms... , Honduras faced rising public debt, but its economy has performed better than expected due to low oil prices and improved investor confidence. Honduras signed a three-year standby arrangement with the IMF in December 2014, aimed at easing Honduras's poor fiscal position.'²⁷

5.1.3 The World Bank Overview of Honduras of October 2020 noted that:

'During recent years, Honduras had registered the second highest economic growth rates in Central America, only behind Panama. The country's GDP growth reached 4.8 percent in 2017, 3.7 percent in 2018 and 2.7 percent in 2019, above the average in Central America and well above the average in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

'Honduras possesses multiple strengths with the potential for a faster growth and higher shared prosperity, with its strategic location, a growing industrial base, ongoing efforts to diversify its exports, and a young and growing population. The country has been facing high levels of poverty and inequality.

'... A 48.3 percent of people live in poverty in the country (2018, with updated official poverty lines) and the percentage of people living in poverty in rural areas (60.1 percent) is higher than those living in poverty in urban areas (38.4 percent). Inequality (GINI 52.1 in 2018, among the highest in the region and the world) has also resulted in one of the smallest middle classes in LAC (11 percent in 2015, compared with 35 percent regional average).

'... The COVID-19 pandemic is significantly impacting Honduras's economy. The country's GDP is expected to contract by 7.1 percent in 2020 due to a sharper than expected fall in trade, investment and consumption amid the global slowdown and prolonged containment measures.'²⁸

5.1.4 A report by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) of April 2020 noted that 'the social protection system remains inadequate.'²⁹

5.1.5 The US Office for Social Security provided useful background on social security programmes in the country³⁰.

5.1.6 More detail about the impact of and the government's policy response to Covid-19 see the [International Monetary Fund's Policy Tracker](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

²⁷ CIA, '[The World Factbook-Honduras](#)' (Economy), last updated:5 October 2020

²⁸ World Bank, '[Overview-Honduras](#)', last updated 9 October 2020

²⁹ UN OHCHR, '[Situation of Human Rights in Honduras](#)' (paragraph 11), 2 April 2020

³⁰ US Office for Social Security, '[Social Security Programs-Honduras](#)', 2019

6. Media and telecommunications

6.1.1 Key media/telecommunications points:

International dialling code:	504 ³¹
Internet domain:	.hn ³²
Broadcast media:	The BBC Media Profile noted that 'Most of the main media outlets are owned by a few powerful business interests which exert control over content.' ³³ 'Multiple privately owned terrestrial TV networks, supplemented by multiple cable TV networks.' ³⁴
News agencies	There is no national news agency. International agencies operate in the country via national reporters ³⁵
Newspapers	'El Heraldo - private daily La Prensa - private daily El Tiempo - private daily La Tribuna - private daily' ³⁶
Radio	'Radio Honduras is the lone government-owned radio network. There are roughly 300 privately owned radio stations' ³⁷ .

[Back to Contents](#)

7. Citizenship and nationality

7.1.1 Article 22 of the Constitution states 'Honduran nationality is acquired by birth or by naturalization.' Articles 23 to 29 set out the circumstances of how nationality is acquired and lost^{38 39}.

[Back to Contents](#)

³¹ Countrycode.org, '[Country Codes](#)', no date

³² Worldstandards, '[Internet country domains list](#)', updated: 21 August 2020

³³ BBC, '[Honduras profile - Media](#)', 6 March 2018

³⁴ CIA, '[The World Factbook-Honduras](#)' (Communications), last updated: 5 October 2020

³⁵ Media Landscapes, '[News agencies](#)', no date

³⁶ BBC, '[Honduras profile - Media](#)', 6 March 2018

³⁷ CIA, '[The World Factbook-Honduras](#)' (Communications), last updated: 5 October 2020

³⁸ CIRB, '[Honduras : Title II, Chapter I of the Constitution of ... Honduras, 2013](#)', 18 November 2013

³⁹ Constitute Project, '[Honduras's Constitution of 1982 with amendments through 2013](#)', May 2020

8. Official documents

8.1 Birth certificates

8.1.1 An Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada request response noted:

‘According to the website of the government of Honduras, the National Registry of Individuals (Registro Nacional de las Personas, RNP) is the organization responsible for registering Hondurans in the civil registry and for issuing identity cards (tarjetas de identidad) and all other documents attesting to a person's civil status.

‘The Public Accountant stated that the registration of a child's birth or a person's death are services offered free of charge by the RNP and that registrations can be made in municipalities throughout the country.’⁴⁰

8.1.2 The US Bureau of Consular Affairs Reciprocity Schedule noted the birth certificate was referred to as Birth Folio (Folio del Libro de Nacimientos). The same schedule noted:

‘Registration Criteria: If a child is not registered on 6 months after birth, parents will need a Resolution from the RPN’s [Registro Nacional de las Personas] “Oficialía Civil”. The procedure is called a “Reposición por Omisión”.

‘Procedure for Obtaining:

‘Applicants residing inside of Honduras: Walk-in at the RNP offices.

‘Applicants residing outside of Honduras: Applicants may send proxies in their stead to request official documents, but the offices have the right to request a notarized document from the applicant granting the proxy permission. Applicants may obtain these notarized statements at any Honduran Consulate and mail the certified forms to their proxies in Honduras.’⁴¹

8.1.3 Unicef data indicated 94% of births of children under age 5 were registered⁴².

[Back to Contents](#)

8.2 Identity cards

8.2.1 In correspondence with the Research Directorate of the CIRB, a representative of the National Registry of Individuals (Registro Nacional de las Personas, RNP), the government agency responsible for issuing identity cards in Honduras...provided the following information:

‘The identity card is issued to Honduran citizens when they reach the age of 18 years. In order to obtain the identity card for the first time, applicants must go to the RNP in person and provide their birth certificate. The RNP takes a photograph of the applicant and fingerprints both hands. The identity card is

⁴⁰ CIRB, '[Honduras: The procedure for obtaining a birth certificate...](#)', 29 January 2010

⁴¹ USSD, Bureau of Consular Affairs, '[Reciprocity Schedule-Honduras](#)', no date

⁴² Unicef, '[Honduras](#)', 2019

issued free of charge to first-time applicants. In order to obtain a copy of a lost or stolen identity card, applicants must go to the RNP in person and pay a fee of 200 Lempiras (HNL) [approx. C\$12]. The RNP will not re-take the fingerprints of the applicant, but if he or she wishes to change the photograph, a new one will be taken.⁴³

8.2.2 An earlier CIRB request response noted:

'...the information appearing on the front of the identity card includes the bearer's full name, their photograph, a 13-digit identity number, how the bearer acquired Honduran citizenship, the bearer's date of birth and gender, the date the card was issued, and a fingerprint...The information found on the back of the card includes the signature of the director of the RNP, the bearer's full name and 13-digit identity number, a unidimensional piled barcode, and the number of the municipality where the application was made.

'With regard to the identity number, the first four digits refer to the code of the department or municipality where the application was made, the four digits in the centre represent the year of registration, and the last five digits are the registration number.'⁴⁴

[Back to Contents](#)

8.3 Passports

8.3.1 The US Bureau of Consular Affairs Reciprocity Schedule noted:

'The two versions of the regular passport have soft blue covers and have either the Seal of Honduras or a map of Central America embossed in gold. It has 50 blue pages... Issuing Government Authority: Instituto Nacional de Migracion (INM)... Fees: L819.00 (USD \$35.00) for 5 years, L1169.00 (USD\$50.00) for 10 years... Procedure for Obtaining: Pay the fee at a Banco Atlantida and the bank will issue a receipt with an appointment date to go to Honduras' INS... Applicants over 21 need to present their Honduran ID card and, if younger than 21, they need to present their birth certificate and be accompanied by both parents.'⁴⁵

8.3.2 Images of Honduran passports can be seen on the [PRADO](#) (Public Register of Authentic Identity and Travel Documents Online) website.

[Back to Contents](#)

8.4 Fraudulent documents

8.4.1 An InSight Crime article noted:

'A network of identity traffickers in Honduras may have sold forged documents to hundreds of immigrants from other continents, taking advantage of the fact that Latin America is increasingly being used as a route for trafficking people to the United States.

'Two governmental agencies in Honduras, the Special Prosecutor for Transparency and the Fight Against Public Corruption (Fiscalía Especial

⁴³ CIRB, '[Honduras: Procedure for obtaining an identity card...](#)' 1 December 2015

⁴⁴ CIRB, '[Honduras: Procedure for obtaining an identity card...](#)', 4 January 2010

⁴⁵ USSD, Bureau of Consular Affairs, '[Reciprocity Schedule-Honduras](#)', no date

para la Transparencia y Combate a la Corrupción Pública – FETCCOP) and the Technical Agency for Criminal Investigation (Agencia Técnica de Investigación Criminal – ATIC), arrested two people who were part of a network that operated within the National Registry of Persons (Registro Nacional de Personas – RNP).

‘The arrests took place as part of Operation Dragon IV, aimed at tackling a series of crimes across the country.

‘One of the individuals apprehended was Jorge Adalberto Discua Mejía, a former RNP employee from the city of Siguatepeque in Comayagua department. According to news outlet Proceso, at least 100 Palestinian and Syrian citizens had been entered into Siguatepeque’s municipal registry in an irregular manner and had paid “large sums of money” to obtain their Honduran identity cards.

‘Authorities also arrested Víctor Antonio Andrade, who worked at the RNP in La Ceiba, in the department of Atlántida. La Prensa reported that Andrade used information from death certificates to create false birth certificates and then sold them to immigrants.

‘Honduran authorities began noticing anomalies in the RNP in November 2017, according to Proceso. The irregularities led them to suspect that a network of registry employees was falsifying identification documents.

‘The investigations revealed that the birth certificates of deceased Honduran citizens and of those who did not claim their IDs were being used by immigrants from Africa, Asia and the Middle East to obtain Honduran passports. During Operation Dragon IV, authorities conducted inspections and followed up on the investigation.

‘According to Proceso, the FETCCOP and the ATIC are still investigating 60 cases associated with this identity trafficking network with the aim of eventually prosecuting them.

‘...A report by El País in 2016 found that immigrants from Africa were paying between \$5,000 and \$10,000 for human smugglers to transport them through Central America to the United States.

‘The discovery of a criminal network in Honduras that sells false identification documents comes at a time when demand for them has surged, which is precisely what such networks could be taking advantage of to increase their profits.’⁴⁶

8.4.2 No other information was found in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

[Back to Contents](#)

Section 8 updated: January 2021

9. Corruption

9.1.1 The Transparency International 2019 [Corruption Perceptions Index](#) ranked Honduras 146th from a list of countries going up to 180. The higher the ranking in the list means higher perceived corruption in that country.

⁴⁶ InSight Crime, [‘Honduras Criminals Feed ... Demand for Forged Documents’](#), 26 April 2018

- 9.1.2 The Freedom House in its Freedom in the World report covering events in 2019 noted that ‘Corruption remains rampant in Honduras, despite efforts to bolster its anticorruption mechanisms in recent years.’⁴⁷
- 9.1.3 An International Crisis Group (ICG) report of October 2019 noted ‘The erosion of checks and balances on executive power over the past decade – and particularly the weakening of judicial oversight – has created fertile ground in Honduras for corruption and state collusion with actors engaged in illicit activities. Corruption scandals have implicated politicians of every rank up to the president... “Corruption in Honduras has been normalised, socialised, and institutionalised”.’⁴⁸
- 9.1.4 A January 2020 InSight Crime article noted:
- ‘The announcement by the administration of President Juan Orlando Hernández that a regional anti-corruption commission in Honduras will not continue marks the coup de grace for a body that had little chance of retaining its power after getting in the way of the country’s elites, including the president.
- ‘The Organization of American States (OAS) also confirmed the end of the Mission to Support the Fight against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (Misión de Apoyo Contra la Corrupción y la Impunidad en Honduras – MACCIH) after negotiators with OAS and the Honduran government failed to reach an agreement to renew the MACCIH’s mandate.
- ‘...Last December, congress voted to recommend that the MACCIH be discontinued, claiming that the mission had exceeded its powers and had violated the constitution. Several congressmen who voted in favor of disbanding had come under investigation by the Attorney General’s Office, with assistance from the MACCIH.’⁴⁹

[Back to Contents](#)

Section 10 updated: January 2021

10. Health

10.1 General provision of medical care

- 10.1.1 The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) Travel Advice noted that ‘Standards of medical treatment vary. State-funded hospitals are under-funded and medicines are in short supply.’⁵⁰ The USSD’s Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) March 2020 Honduras Crime and Safety Report noted that ‘Medical care is limited. Emergency services, even in Tegucigalpa, generally are basic.’⁵¹

⁴⁷ Freedom House, '[Freedom in the World 2020-Honduras](#)' (section C2), 4 March 2020

⁴⁸ ICG, '[Fight and Flight: Tackling the Roots of Honduras' Emergency](#)' (p.6), 25 October 2019

⁴⁹ InSight Crime, '[A Death Foretold: MACCIH Shuts Down in Honduras](#)', 22 January 2020

⁵⁰ FCDO), '[Honduras Travel Advice-Health](#)', last updated 17 November 2020

⁵¹ OSAC, '[2020 Crime and Safety Report-Honduras](#)', 31 March 2020

10.1.2 The British Embassy in Guatemala City provided a list of medical facilities/practitioners⁵², while the US Embassy in Honduras provided a list of public and private hospitals in the country⁵³.

10.1.3 MedCOI sources indicated the availability of in and outpatient treatment by a psychiatrist in public facilities in Tegucigalpa⁵⁴. See also the World Health Organisation [Mental Health Atlas 2017 Honduras Profile](#).

10.1.4 A June 2020 [Redlac](#) report about health in Central America provided further information on health in Honduras. The report noted:

‘In Honduras, 9 out of 10 people do not have health coverage and close to 18% of the population (more than 1.5 million Hondurans) do not have access to health services. The Honduran health system provides private and public services. The latter includes the Ministry of Health (SESAL), which regulates and provides services and the Honduran Social Security Institute (IHSS), which collects and manages fiscal resources and mandatory contributions from workers and employers.

‘The public sector is limited in its capacity, and is characterized by high levels of social exclusion and corruption. Some public facilities were built at the beginning of the last century and require urgent investments in infrastructure and equipment to provide services in optimal conditions and to mitigate risks. The absence of qualified medical personnel is another deficiency in the public response.’⁵⁵

[Back to Contents](#)

10.2 Covid-19

10.2.1 A May 2020 UN OCHA report noted:

‘Honduras receives the coronavirus pandemic in the midst of one of the most severe dengue emergencies on record in the country. During 2019, more than 112,000 cases were recorded, causing the death of 180 people. That emergency revealed the low response capacity of the integrated medical care networks, as a result of insufficient human resources (doctors, nurses and health promoters), their deficient and inadequate distribution in primary care, low percentage of drugs and supplies in health care facilities, and poor availability of tools and equipment for timely diagnosis and treatment.

...The health care system is limited and not prepared to respond effectively to the coronavirus emergency. There are also logistical constraints for health personnel to perform activities in health facilities.

...The health system has about 8,000 beds and 37 Intensive Care Units (ICUs) with occupancy of over 70 per cent in the network of public and private hospitals.’⁵⁶

See the World Health Organisation [Covid-19 Dashboard-Honduras](#).

⁵² British Embassy in Guatemala City, [‘List of Medical facilities/practitioners ...’](#), updated 28 June 2019

⁵³ USSD, Embassy in Honduras, [‘Hospitals’](#), revised 20 February 2018

⁵⁴ MedCOI, 13 November 2020

⁵⁵ Redlac, [‘The impact of violence on the right to health...’](#) (page 13), June 2020

⁵⁶ UN OCHA, [‘Humanitarian Needs Overview...Honduras...Impact of Covid-19’](#) (p.28-29), May 2020

Human rights issues relevant to protection claims

The issues below are not meant to be exhaustive; rather the key topics which may be relevant to protection claims.

Section 11 updated: January 2021

11. Human rights overview

11.1.1 The US State Department (USSD) Human Rights Practices Report covering events in 2019 noted:

‘Significant human rights issues included: unlawful or arbitrary killings, including extrajudicial killings; torture; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest or detention; killings of and threats to media members by criminal elements; criminalization of libel, although no cases were reported; widespread government corruption; and threats and violence against indigenous, Afro-descendent communities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons.’⁵⁷

11.1.2 Human Rights Watch in its report covering events in 2019 that

‘Violent crime is rampant in Honduras. Despite a recent downward trend, the murder rate remains among the highest in the world. Poverty, violence, and insecurity cause significant outflows of migrants and asylum-seekers. Human rights groups reported unjustified lethal force and other excessive use of force by security forces during a police and military crackdown on public protests between March and July. The crackdown left several people dead and many more injured. It was not clear how many of those killed or injured were victims of excessive force by authorities.

‘Journalists, environmental activists, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals are vulnerable to violence. Efforts to reform public-security institutions have stalled. Marred by corruption and abuse, the judiciary and police remain largely ineffective. Impunity for crimes and human rights abuses is the norm.’⁵⁸

11.1.3 See the Amnesty International [Honduras 2019 Report](#).

11.1.4 See the [Annual Report of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights 2019](#).

11.1.5 See the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Honduras](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

⁵⁷ USSD, [‘2019 Honduras Human Rights Report’](#) (executive summary), 11 March 2020

⁵⁸ HRW, [‘World Report 2020’](#) (Honduras), January 2020

12. Children

- 12.1.1 A report by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) of April 2020 noted:

‘Children in Honduras represent 40 per cent of the population and are disproportionately affected by poverty and insecurity. Violence against children in its various forms, including physical and sexual violence, is widespread. The poor quality and lack of inclusiveness of the education system remains a major obstacle to the development of the child. Ten per cent of children of primary school age and 70 per cent of children aged 15 to 17 do not attend school. Poverty, lack of parental support and insecurity are major causes for dropout.’⁵⁹

[Back to Contents](#)

12.2 Education

- 12.2.1 See UNESCO [‘Honduras-Education’](#) from 2020 for more information.

- 12.2.2 See also Unicef [‘Honduras Country Profile’](#), from November 2019 and [‘Only quality education and an end to violence can offer hope and better opportunities for children in Honduras’](#), from April 2019.

[Back to Contents](#)

12.3 Child labour

- 12.3.1 See The US Department of Labor (USDOL) report [‘2019 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor-Honduras’](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

12.4 Early and forced marriage

- 12.4.1 See The Girls Not Brides website page for [‘Honduras’](#).

- 12.4.2 See also A study in the Journal of Adolescent Health [‘Child Marriages and Unions in Latin America...’](#) from December 2018.

[Back to Contents](#)

12.5 Violence towards children

- 12.5.1 See the following for more information:

Together for Girls, [‘The Government of Honduras Launches first Violence Against Children and Youth Survey \(VACS\) Report in Latin America’](#) launched in May 2019.

Information on the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children [‘Corporal punishment of children in Honduras’](#) from March 2020.

[Back to Contents](#)

⁵⁹ UN OHCHR, [‘Situation of Human Rights in Honduras’](#) (para. 66), 2 April 2020

13. Civil society

13.1.1 The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) noted:

‘Civil society in Honduras has its roots in church groups and grassroots organizations (labor and peasant-based) that were established in the 1950s and began to flourish in the 1980s and 1990s when the concept of civil society in Honduras became part of popular social discourse.

‘Since the 1990s civil society has made progress despite a tradition of public indifference and the refusal of some in government to allow civil society to contribute to public policy discussions.

‘...The prevailing policy for regulating civil society appears to be focused on monitoring civil society’s actions, with few examples of coordination. The current administration headed by President Hernández has made several management changes to the Unit for Registering and Monitoring Civil Associations (URSAC), purportedly in an effort to modernize it.’⁶⁰

13.1.2 The Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (BTI) country report noted:

‘The degree of civil society organization is weak, despite a long tradition of civil society activism. Affiliation to organizations advocating human rights, or lobbying for peasants, indigenous people, communities or corporate interests, with political or economic objectives that conflict with the interests of the government or other power groups, is dangerous in Honduras. Civil society activism, which directly challenges the status quo, is met with an iron fist, and frequently murder or other types of violence. The structural difficulties confronted by civil society as a whole are enormous.’⁶¹

13.1.3 Freedom House noted in their report of events in 2019 that

‘NGOs and their staff, especially in the human rights and environmental fields, face significant threats, including harassment, surveillance, smear campaigns aimed at undermining their work, and violence. The IACHR [Inter-American Commission on Human Rights] reported that between January 2014 and August 2018, at least 65 human rights defenders were murdered, and over 1,232 attacks were documented between 2016 and 2017. Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that another three human rights defenders, two of whom were indigenous, were killed in 2019.’⁶²

13.1.4 However, the USSD in its human rights report covering events in 2019 stated: ‘A wide variety of domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials were somewhat cooperative and responsive to their views, but some human rights organizations criticized government officials for lack of access and responsiveness.’⁶³

⁶⁰ ICNL, '[Civic Freedom Monitor-Honduras](#)', last updated 5 May 2020

⁶¹ BTI, '[2020 Honduras Country Report](#)' (p.32 and 38), 29 April 2020

⁶² Freedom House, '[Freedom in the World 2020-Honduras](#)' (section E2), 4 March 2020

⁶³ USSD, '[2019 Honduras Human Rights Report](#)' (section 5), 11 March 2020

Also see the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [Visit to Honduras - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders](#) of January 2019.

[Back to Contents](#)

Section 14 updated: January 2021

14. Crime and security

- 14.1.1 The InSight Crime Honduras profile noted in a profile of Honduras updated in August 2018 that ‘Honduras, long one of the poorest countries in Latin America, is now also among the most violent and crime-ridden. The violence is carried out by local drug trafficking groups, gangs, corrupt security forces and transnational criminal organizations mainly from Mexico and Colombia.’⁶⁴ The same source noted ‘the primary gangs present in Honduras are MS13 and Barrio 18, which operate mainly in urban areas like Tegucigalpa or San Pedro Sula or in rural areas close to the border with El Salvador, where they find a safe haven. Both gangs are dedicated to extortion and micro-trafficking and maintain an important control within the country’s penitentiaries.’⁶⁵
- 14.1.2 The USSD human rights report for 2019 noted ‘Organized criminal elements, including local and transnational gangs and narcotics traffickers, were significant perpetrators of violent crimes and committed acts of homicide, torture, kidnapping, extortion, human trafficking, intimidation, and other threats and violence directed against human rights defenders, judicial authorities, lawyers, the business community, journalists, bloggers, women, and members of vulnerable populations.’⁶⁶
- 14.1.3 The USCRS paper of April 2020, based on a range of sources, observed: ‘Honduras struggles with high levels of crime and violence. A number of interrelated factors appear to contribute to the poor security situation. Widespread poverty, fragmented families, and a lack of education and employment opportunities leave many Honduran youth susceptible to recruitment by gangs such as the Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and Barrio 18. These organizations engage in drug dealing and extortion, among other criminal activities, and appear to be responsible for a substantial portion of homicides and much of the crime that affects citizens on a day-to-day basis...’⁶⁷
- 14.1.4 A Crisis Group November 2020 report noted: ‘Criminal groups in Mexico and the Northern Triangle of Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras) have been quick to absorb the shock of the COVID-19 pandemic and seize new opportunities provided by lockdowns, distracted states and immiserated citizens. Due to COVID-19 movement restrictions, violence fell briefly in Honduras and Guatemala. But it is now back to or above pre-pandemic levels, while extortion rackets in

⁶⁴ InSight Crime, '[Honduras Profile](#)', updated August 2018

⁶⁵ InSight Crime, '[Honduras Profile](#)', updated August 2018

⁶⁶ USSD, '[2019 Honduras Human Rights Practices Report](#)' (Executive summary), 11 March 2020

⁶⁷ USCRS, '[Honduras: Background and U.S. Relations](#)' (page 9), 27 April 2020

both countries appear set to intensify....In the case of Honduras, gangs have increasingly resorted to armed robbery and contraband.

'...In Honduras, dozens of minor gangs challenge the main outfits every day in the streets of San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa, even though the 18th Street and MS13 gangs remain the biggest players. Police officers and experts suggested that gangs large and small – particularly the MS-13 – found in the pandemic an opportunity to step up recruitment and attacks on rivals, particularly in areas controlled by minor gangs, such as the Rivera Hernández neighbourhood in San Pedro Sula.

...After remaining stable for a month, homicides in Guatemala and Honduras started to climb again from late April, while they did so in El Salvador from July. In all three countries, they are now back to pre-pandemic levels, though rates for now remain lower than in 2019... “Nothing has changed in terms of when, where and how murders take place in the country”, said a Honduran security expert.’⁶⁸

14.1.5 The Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) 2020 Crime and Safety Report noted that ‘The government lacks resources to investigate and prosecute cases; police often lack vehicles/fuel to respond to calls for assistance. Police may take hours to arrive at the scene of a violent crime or may not respond at all. As a result, criminals operate with a high degree of impunity.’⁶⁹

14.1.6 Detailed information about gangs and their activities is available in the following sources:

- Insight Crime’s, [‘Gangs in Honduras’](#), April 2016 which provides detail about gangs history, structure and activities focussing on the 2 main groups – Barrio 18 and Marasalvatrucha 13 – but also considering other minor gangs operating in the country.
- UNHCR’s [Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Honduras](#), April 2016, which provides information on the gangs’ background and activities, as well as the UNHCR’s assessment of risk of different profiles of people
- Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, [Honduras: Information Gathering Mission Report](#), published February 2018, based on a range of sources, provides information about the gangs territorial control and influence, and activities
- Crisis Group, [Virus-proof Violence: Crime and COVID-19 in Mexico and the Northern Triangle](#), 13 November 2020

[Back to Contents](#)

⁶⁸ ICG, [‘Virus-proof Violence: Crime and COVID-19 ...’](#) (p.i,7, 11, 12 and 13), 13 November 2020

⁶⁹ OSAC, [‘Honduras 2020 Crime & Safety Report’](#), 31 March 2020

15. Criminal justice system

15.1 Penal code

- 15.1.1 Honduras' new penal code [penal code](#) (in Spanish) took effect on 25 June 2020.
- 15.1.2 The Latin America Daily Briefing noted that the penal code '... which among other things will shorten sentences for some corruption-related crimes, has been heavily criticized by civic groups and international watchdogs. Among crimes receiving reduced sentences under the reforms are crimes involving the misuse of public funds, abuse of authority, influence trafficking, fraud and illicit enrichment.'⁷⁰
- 15.1.3 See the World Justice Project [Rule of Law Index 2020](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

15.2 Security forces

- 15.2.1 The CIA World Factbook listed the military forces:

'Honduran Armed Forces (Fuerzas Armadas de Honduras, FFAA): Army, Honduran Naval Force (FNH; includes marines), Honduran Air Force (Fuerza Aerea Hondurena, FAH), Honduran Public Order Military Police (PMOP); Ministry of Public Security and Defense: Public Security Forces (includes paramilitary units) (2019)

'Military service age and obligation: 18 years of age for voluntary 2- to 3-year military service; no conscription (2012).'⁷¹

- 15.2.2 The US State Department Human Rights Practices Report covering events in 2019 noted:

'The Honduran National Police (HNP) maintain internal security and report to the Secretariat of Security. The armed forces, which report to the Secretariat of Defense, are responsible for external security but also exercise some domestic security responsibilities in a supporting role to the HNP and other civilian authorities. Some larger cities have police forces that operate independently of the HNP and report to municipal authorities. The Military Police of Public Order (PMOP) report to military authorities but conduct operations sanctioned by civilian security officials as well as by military leaders. The National Interinstitutional Security Force (FUSINA) coordinates the overlapping responsibilities of the HNP, PMOP, National Intelligence Directorate, Public Ministry, and national court system. Although FUSINA reports to the National Security and Defense Council, it did not have an effective command and control infrastructure. As a result, civilian authorities at times did not maintain effective control over the security forces.'⁷²

- 15.2.3 A report of the OHCHR of April 2020 noted that 'The number of police officers increased by 1,079 in 2019, bringing the total number to 17,878. The

⁷⁰ Latin America Daily Briefing, '[Honduras' new penal code soft on corruption](#)', 26 June 2020.

⁷¹ CIA, '[The World Factbook-Honduras](#)' (Military), last updated January 2020

⁷² USSD, '[2019 Honduras Human Rights Report](#)' (executive summary), 11 March 2020

Government has set a target of 26,000 police officers by 2022.⁷³ However, Insight crime noted in its profile of Honduras updated in August 2018 but referencing an article in the Spanish language newspaper, El Heraldo, in an article dated 11 February 2020, that the HNP had 18,770 agents in 2020⁷⁴.

- 15.2.4 The Global Fire Power website provided 2020 data on [Honduras' Military Strength](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

15.3 Security forces: effectiveness

- 15.3.1 The Human Rights Watch 2021 World Report (covering 2020) noted:

'The government relies heavily on the military for public security.

'Efforts to reform public-security institutions have stalled. Marred by corruption and abuse, the judiciary and police remain largely ineffective. In June 2020, a new criminal code came into effect. It included provisions that appeared aimed at reducing penalties for politicians linked to organized crime, by lowering sentences for corruption and related offenses. The new code also includes alternatives to detention for low-level crimes, including partial prison sentences and penalties that allow for conditional release.'⁷⁵

- 15.3.2 An InSight Crime profile of the country updated in August 2018 noted:

'The National Police...consists of the National Preventive Police and different special units focused on anti-gang and anti-narcotics operations, investigations, intelligence and community police.

'...Honduran police have been known as know of the most corrupt forces in the region. Honduran police agents have been accused of...the greatest varieties of criminal activities, that include corruption, passing information to criminal groups, letting drug shipments pass through without inspection, protecting drug trafficking activities and participating in violent criminal operations, and in some cases even directing them. At the beginning of 2016, Honduras created a commission for purging the police following revelations that leading members of the police had participated in the 2009 murder of the country's drug czar. Unlike previous efforts to purge the police force, the commission made some early progress, reviewing hundreds of senior officials and discharging thousands of agents from the institution. The commission's mandate remains in force and by January 2020 more than 6,000 agents had been removed. Nevertheless, scandals involving relations between organized crime and police leadership have put the commission's legitimacy into question.'⁷⁶

- 15.3.3 A report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in April 2020 noted:

'Reform of the national police and the Ministry of Security progressed, albeit slowly... The Directorate of Police Disciplinary Affairs under the Ministry of

⁷³ OHCHR, '[Situation of human rights in Honduras](#)' (p.6), 2 April 2020

⁷⁴ InSight Crime, '[Honduras Profile](#)', updated August 2018

⁷⁵ Human Rights Watch, '[World Report 2021-Honduras](#)', 13 January 2021

⁷⁶ InSight Crime, '[Honduras Profile](#)', 2020

Security is in place and functioning but is seriously understaffed. By July, it reported that it was investigating 1,500 disciplinary complaints. It is unclear how this body coordinates with the Police Verification Commission, which has a mandate of civilian oversight of investigative and disciplinary bodies and processes.

‘Working conditions within the national police remained an issue of discontent. In June, sectors of the police special forces declared a strike, protesting against poor labour conditions and low salaries. An agreement brokered by the Office of the National Commissioner for Human Rights not to adopt disciplinary measures against officers who had participated in the strike was reached on 20 June with the Ministry of Security. By September, however, disciplinary actions were being pursued against 92 officers and the Police Disciplinary Affairs Department had announced in an official communication that it was not bound by the agreement.’⁷⁷

15.3.4 See also:

- Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, [Honduras: Information Gathering Mission Report](#), published February 2018, for information about the criminal justice system generally and specifically with regard to women and LGBTI persons
- USSD [Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs: Honduras Summary](#), no date (circa 2017/18)
- [USCRS paper of April 2020](#)
- USSD Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, [2020 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, Volume I: Drug and Chemical Control](#), 2 March 2020

[Back to Contents](#)

15.4 Security forces: human rights violations

15.4.1 The Human Rights Watch 2021 World Report (covering 2020) noted:

‘Impunity for human rights abuses, violent crime, and corruption remains the norm, even as the prison population has mushroomed.

‘Security forces committed abuses while enforcing a nationwide Covid-19 lockdown that President Juan Orlando Hernández imposed in March.

‘...Excessive use of force by police and deployment of the military in public security operations continued in 2020.

‘The media and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) reported several cases of abusive police enforcement of the Covid-19 lockdown. In April, Public Order Military Police (PMOP) officers severely beat three brothers and shot two of them – one fatally – for allegedly violating a curfew in El Paraíso in order to sell bread.

‘In June, police detained and beat bus drivers who were allegedly protesting not being able to work due to lockdown restrictions.’⁷⁸

⁷⁷ OHCHR, ‘[Situation of human rights in Honduras](#)’ (p.6 and 7), 2 April 2020

⁷⁸ Human Rights Watch, ‘[World Report 2021-Honduras](#)’, 13 January 2021

15.4.2 A report of the OHCHR in April 2020 noted:

'OHCHR is concerned about the ongoing impunity in cases of violations perpetrated by members of the defence and security forces.

'By the end of October, only a fraction of the perpetrators of the serious human rights violations committed by the defence and security forces in the context of the protests against the results of the 2017 presidential elections had been brought to trial. OHCHR documented eight cases being prosecuted, but these concerned only 2 of the 22 homicides of civilians it had documented: a case against a police officer for the killing of a child aged 16 on 4 December 2017 in Agua Blanca, department of El Progreso; and another against a sergeant of the Public Order Military Police for the homicide of David Octavio Quiroz Urrutia on 15 December 2017 in Villanueva, department of Cortés. As at October, the Office of the Attorney General reported that investigations were ongoing in relation to the other cases, including deaths, injuries and one case of enforced disappearance. By that time, it had brought charges related to assassination, attempted homicide, physical assault, torture and ill-treatment, unlawful detention and abuse of authority against 28 members of the security and defence forces. By September 2019, the judiciary had dismissed seven cases in the preliminary investigation phase.

'...Regarding past human rights violations, impunity is pervasive, as shown by the insignificant progress made in the prosecution and trial of members of the security forces for the human rights violations committed after the coup d'état in 2009.'⁷⁹

15.4.3 The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) Concluding observations noted:

'While the Committee acknowledges the efforts made by the State party to bolster the legislative and institutional framework that provides protection for human rights defenders, it is seriously concerned about the high rates of violence against human rights defenders...the Committee...is concerned about the continuous difficulties that human rights defenders who have been subjected to attacks encounter in obtaining access to justice, as well as the persistence of high levels of impunity for violations of their rights. Furthermore, the Committee is concerned that the measures adopted to provide them with protection are not sufficiently effective, partly owing to the failure to allocate sufficient resources for their implementation.'⁸⁰

15.4.4 The Freedom House Freedom in the World Report noted that 'Antigovernment protests were held nationwide for much of the year, prompted by President Juan Orlando Hernández's announcement of unpopular health and education reforms in April. Protests continued despite their suspension, and authorities responded with excessive force; at least six people were killed in clashes by the end of the year.'⁸¹

15.4.5 The USSD Human Rights report covering 2019 noted:

⁷⁹ OHCHR, '[Situation of human rights in Honduras](#)' (paragraphs 45, 46, 49), 2 April 2020

⁸⁰ UN CERD, '[Concluding observations on the combined 6th to 9th ...](#)' (para 24), 14 January 2019

⁸¹ Freedom House, '[Freedom in the World 2020-Honduras](#)' (section F1), 4 March 2020

‘There were several reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings. In general the killings took place during law enforcement operations or were linked to other criminal activity by government agents. Civilian authorities investigated and arrested members of the security forces accused of human rights abuses. Impunity, however, remained a serious problem, with significant delays in some prosecutions and sources alleging corruption in judicial proceedings... Although the law prohibits such practices, government officials received complaints and investigated alleged abuse by members of the security forces on the streets and in detention centers... The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention and provides for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of his or her arrest or detention in court. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) reported that authorities at times failed to enforce these requirements effectively... The Public Ministry reported 19 cases of alleged illegal detention or arbitrary arrest as of September, and the National Human Rights Commission of Honduras (CONADEH) reported 80 cases of arbitrary or illegal arrests by security forces.’⁸²

[Back to Contents](#)

15.5 Judiciary

15.5.1 The ‘[Report of the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers](#)’, June 2020, and the International Commission of Jurists webpage, ‘[Honduras: Court structure](#)’, April 2015, describe the judicial and court system.

15.5.2 The Human Rights Watch 2021 World Report (covering 2020) noted:

‘The criminal justice system regularly fails to hold those responsible for homicides to account.

‘Judges continue to face interference, including political pressure, threats, and harassment, from the executive branch, private actors with connections to government, and organized crime. Prosecutors and whistleblowers have received death threats. The Supreme Court, particularly its president, exerts excessive control over the appointment and removal of judges, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights reported in 2019, and career instability limits judges’ independence.

‘In January 2020, the government shut down the Mission to Support the Fight against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH). Established in 2016 by the government and the Organization of American States (OAS), the MACCIH contributed to the prosecution of 133 people, including congresspeople and senior officials, 14 of whom faced criminal trials.’⁸³

15.5.3 The Freedom House Freedom in the World Report noted:

‘Political and business elites exert excessive influence over the judiciary, including the Supreme Court. Judicial appointments are made with little transparency, with the IACHR reporting that the Supreme Court exerts excessive control over appointments. Judges have been removed from their

⁸² USSD, ‘[Human rights report for 2019](#)’ (sections 1a, 1c, 1d, and 1e), 11 March 2020

⁸³ Human Rights Watch, ‘[World Report 2021-Honduras](#)’, 13 January 2021

posts for political reasons, and a number of legal professionals have been killed in recent years. Prosecutors and whistleblowers handling corruption cases are often subject to threats of violence.’⁸⁴

15.5.4 The US State Department Human Rights report noted:

‘The law provides for an independent judiciary, but the justice system was poorly funded and staffed, inadequately equipped, often ineffective, and subject to intimidation, corruption, politicization, and patronage. Low salaries and a lack of internal controls rendered judicial officials susceptible to bribery, although the Supreme Court did significantly raise salaries during the year and was making improvements in transparency. Powerful special interests, including organized criminal groups, exercised influence on the outcomes of some court proceedings.

‘The law provides for the right to a fair and public trial; however, the judiciary did not always enforce this right.

‘...Credible observers, including Peace Brigades International, noted problems in trial procedures, such as a lack of admissible evidence, judicial corruption, widespread public distrust of the legal system, witness intimidation, and an ineffective witness protection program.’⁸⁵

15.5.5 The Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) September 2019 report on Honduras’ justice system noted:

‘Widespread impunity and the lack of effective investigations lead to both decreased public trust in authorities and poorer administration of justice.

‘...The small number of resolved cases is due to the following: limited logistical and material resources available to investigators, excessive workloads, understaffed police units, the need to complete work shifts for other investigative units, the exhausting working days to which system officials are subjected, and a lack of inter-institutional coordination, especially for the investigation of common crimes.¹⁰ This limited investigative capacity has often been identified as one of the principal causes of the high level of lawlessness in Honduras.’⁸⁶

15.5.6 The UN Special Rapporteur on independent judges and lawyers in a report dated June 2020 stated:

“The independence of the judicial system and other crucial democratic principles, such as the separation of powers, remain a great challenge in Honduras...it is not enough to guarantee the independence of the justice system. The country needs a new law on the Council of the Judiciary and the judicial profession to be implemented urgently, guaranteeing the independence of judges and magistrates... Transparency and public scrutiny should guide the selection process of senior judicial officials and prosecutors through transparent procedures that guarantee the participation of society with a view to carefully examining the independence, competence and integrity of the candidates”.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Freedom House, '[Freedom in the World 2020-Honduras](#)' (section F1), 4 March 2020

⁸⁵ Human Rights Watch, '[World Report 2021-Honduras](#)', 13 January 2021

⁸⁶ WOLA, '[Honduras' Justice System](#)' (pages 20, 21) September 2019

⁸⁷ OHCHR, '[Honduras needs urgent action ...](#)', 22 August 2019

15.6 Prison conditions

15.6.1 The World Prison Brief Honduras profile from 2019 noted that the country had 27 institutions housing 21,629 prisoners (with a capacity for 10,600, making it a 204 percent occupancy). Over half of those incarcerated were pre-trial detainees or remand prisoners, with 5.7 percent being female and 3 percent being juvenile offenders or minors⁸⁸.

15.6.2 The Human Rights 2021 World Report noted:

‘Honduras’s prison population has doubled over the past decade, partly due to a 2013 reform that greatly expanded the use of mandatory pre-trial detention. As of August 2020, more than 21,000 people were detained in prisons with capacity for just under 11,000. More than half of detained men and two-thirds of detained women were in pretrial detention.

‘Overcrowding, inadequate nutrition, poor sanitation, beatings, intra-gang violence, and detainee killings are endemic in prisons.

‘After a 2019 wave of gang violence that killed 37 detainees, President Hernández declared a state of emergency and put prisons under military control. Between December 2019, when prisons were placed under military control, and September 2020, 54 people died in eight prison incidents, the IACHR and OHCHR report.

‘To reduce overcrowding in response to the pandemic, the legislature approved alternatives to pretrial detention in June and judges released more than 1,600 people. As of August, prisons had reported 1,700 confirmed Covid-19 cases and 38 deaths. In September, the OHCHR and IACHR expressed concern regarding the continued spread of the virus in prisons.

‘The new criminal code that came into effect in June 2020 includes new alternative sanctions to detention for some minor crimes that could help reduce the prison population.’⁸⁹

15.6.3 The USSD Human Rights Practices Report noted that ‘Prison conditions were harsh and sometimes life threatening due to pervasive gang-related violence and the government’s failure to control criminal activity within the prisons. Prisoners suffered from overcrowding, insufficient access to food and water, violence, and alleged abuse by prison officials.’⁹⁰

15.6.4 An Insight Crime August 2020 article noted [‘Honduras Unable to Curb Rising Violence Inside Prisons’](#).

15.7 Death penalty

15.7.1 A Latin News article referred to the death penalty having been abolished in Honduras in 1957⁹¹.

⁸⁸ Institute for Crime and Justice Policy Research, [‘World Prison Brief-Honduras’](#), 2019

⁸⁹ Human Rights Watch, [‘World Report 2021-Honduras’](#), 13 January 2021

⁹⁰ USSD, [‘2019 Honduras Human Rights Report’](#) (section 1b), 11 March 2020

⁹¹ Latin News, [‘Honduras: Death penalty proposal provokes rare unanimity’](#), 21 September 2004

16. Ethnic/indigenous groups

16.1.1 The Minority Rights Group (MRGI) noted:

‘Discrimination and marginalization are ongoing challenges for the country’s indigenous and Afro-descendant populations. Both continue to suffer social exclusion, poverty and intimidation. Access to healthcare and education lags behind the general population: the Garifuna community, for example, has some of the highest rates of HIV in the country, placing them in a situation of particular vulnerability. 19 per cent of the indigenous population in Honduras is illiterate, compared to 13 per cent of the general population.’⁹²

16.1.2 The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Concluding observations noted:

‘The Committee is concerned that the indigenous and Afro-Honduran peoples in the State party face persistent structural discrimination, which is reflected in the inequality gap in the exercise of human rights between these peoples and the rest of the population. While the Committee takes note of the data provided by the delegation concerning the results of the implementation of the Better Life Platform, it is concerned at the high rates of poverty and social exclusion that continue to affect the indigenous and Afro-Honduran peoples, particularly those living in rural and remote areas.

‘...The Committee is concerned about the multiple forms of racial discrimination that indigenous and Afro-Honduran women continue to endure in the State party, and which are reflected in impediments to their access to work, education and health, particularly sexual and reproductive health. It is also concerned about the limited political participation of indigenous and Afro-Honduran women. It is seriously concerned about the high rate of violence against women, which is also a wide-ranging phenomenon among indigenous and Afro-Honduran women.

‘...The Committee reiterates its concern regarding the persistence of stereotypes and prejudice in society against indigenous and Afro-Honduran peoples, which continues to be an impediment to the building of a multicultural society.’⁹³

16.1.3 See also:

The Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index [‘Honduras Country Report’](#)

The US State Department [‘2019 Honduras Human Rights Report’](#).

⁹² MRGI, [‘World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples-Honduras’](#), May 2018

⁹³ UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, [‘Concluding observations on the combined sixth to eighth periodic reports of Honduras’](#) (paragraphs 16, 36, 40), 14 January 2019

17. Freedom of movement

17.1.1 The USSD Human Rights Practices Report noted that 'The law provides for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights.

'In-country Movement: There were areas where authorities could not assure freedom of movement because of criminal activity and a lack of significant government presence.'⁹⁴

17.1.2 The Freedom House Freedom in the World report covering events in 2019 noted that 'While authorities generally do not restrict free movement, ongoing violence and impunity have reduced personal autonomy for the country's residents. Those living in gang-controlled territories face extortion, and dangerous conditions limit free movement and options for education and employment.'⁹⁵

17.1.3 A March 2019 Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) report noted that 'persistent insecurity means that repeated displacements, freedom of movement restrictions and cross-border flight are common. The situation is aggravated by worsening poverty, inequality and political repression.'⁹⁶

17.1.4 The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (CIRB) Honduras Information Gathering Mission Report from February 2018 noted:

'In addition to learning that displacement is prevalent in Honduras, the mission learned that causes of displacement include generalized violence, threats, extortion, forced recruitment of minors by gangs, poverty, especially in rural areas, and land/house-grabbing. People are also displaced by violence caused by criminal organizations, particularly gangs. State agents are also accused of causing displacement, often acting in collusion with criminal organizations and enterprises. The mission learned that internal displacement also occurs due to family feuds, the construction of megaprojects, and the exploitation of natural resources. PMH [Pastoral de Movilidad Humana (Human Mobility Pastoral)] has documented cases of people being threatened so that they leave their area of residence and megaprojects can be built.'⁹⁷

17.1.5 The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) noted in a January 2020 article that 'In Honduras, an estimated 247,000 people have been displaced by violence within their own country.'⁹⁸

[Back to Contents](#)

⁹⁴ USSD, '[2019 Honduras Human Rights Practices Report](#)' (section 3d), 11 March 2020

⁹⁵ Freedom House, '[Freedom in the World 2020-Honduras](#)' (section G1), 4 March 2020

⁹⁶ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), '[Crime, corruption and displacement in Honduras](#)' (page 47), March 2019

⁹⁷ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (CIRB), '[Honduras Information Gathering Mission Report](#)' (section 3), February 2018

⁹⁸ UNHCR, '[UNHCR welcomes new law in El Salvador to help people internally displaced by violence](#)', 10 January 2020

18. Gangs

18.1.1 An Open Democracy article noted:

'The emergence of hyper-violent street gangs happened relatively quickly in Honduras. In the late 1990s, following legislation in the United States that led to increased deportation of ex-convicts, numerous MS13 and Barrio 18 members arrived in the country. By the early 2000s, these two gangs, along with several local groups, had begun a bloody battle for territory – and the extortion revenue and drug markets that goes with it – that continues to this day. The government responded by passing so-called “iron fist” legislation and arresting thousands of suspected gang members. Instead of slowing the growth of gangs, however, the policy allowed them to consolidate their leadership within the prison system, expand their economic portfolios and make contact with other criminal organizations.'⁹⁹

18.1.2 See InSight Crime report '[Gangs in Honduras](#)' for more information on particular gangs, including Barrio 18, MS13 and others.

18.1.3 See BBC article, '[Honduras violence: Gunmen storm court building to free MS-13 leader](#)' and Aclad [Honduras data](#) for recent gang-related developments.

[Back to Contents](#)

19. Media workers

19.1.1 The Reporters without Borders (RSF) press freedom index ranked Honduras at 148 out of 180 countries (1 being the most free press environment, 180 the least) and recorded 3 deaths of journalists in 2020. The index noted on the country:

'President Juan Orlando Hernández, who secured a second term in 2017, has stepped up control over news and information and taken a range of initiatives to silence the most outspoken journalists. The security forces, especially the military police and army, are responsible for most of the abuses and violence against media personnel. The situation of the media has worsened steadily for more than a decade, ever since the 2009 coup d'état. In this country racked by violence, organized crime and corruption, the impunity rate is among the highest in the western hemisphere.'¹⁰⁰

19.1.2 Freedom House's Freedom in the World report covering events in 2019 noted:

'Authorities systematically violate the constitution's press freedom guarantees. Reporters and outlets covering sensitive topics or who are perceived as critical of authorities risk assaults, threats, blocked transmissions, and harassment. A 2017 reform to antiterrorism provisions in the Penal Code justified the jailing of journalists for inciting terrorism or hate, but the law was annulled in 2018.

⁹⁹ Open Democracy, '[Gangs in Honduras](#)', 10 December 2015

¹⁰⁰ Reporters without Borders, '[2020 World Press Freedom Index](#)', 2020

‘Journalists are also targeted with antidefamation laws. In March 2019, the Supreme Court upheld the 2016 defamation conviction of Globo TV host David Romero Ellner, and he was taken into custody to serve a 10-year prison sentence later that month. Ellner was taken despite an Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) request for Honduran authorities to delay his detention while it considered a petition filed on the case.

‘In March 2019, television host Leonardo Gabriel Hernández was killed in the southern city of Nacaome. Police believed that Hernández was targeted after criticizing organized criminal groups on the air, and two members of the MS-13 criminal group were later detained in connection with his murder. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) reported that Hernández was the first journalist to be killed for their work in Honduras since 2010.’¹⁰¹

19.1.3 The Human Rights Watch (HRW) World Report noted that ‘International press freedom organizations report that journalists continue to be targets of threats and violence, both by individuals and state agents. The Honduran human rights ombudsman, CONADEH, reported that as of September 2019, 79 journalists had been killed since October 2001, and that 91 percent of those killings remained unpunished.’¹⁰²

19.1.4 The 2019 report of Annual Report of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) noted:

‘During 2019, at least 6 murders of communicators were reported that could be linked to the exercise of journalism, and that their material or intellectual authors have not yet been identified. In addition, numerous communicators and journalists left the country due to threats received. Also of particular concern was the persistence of the use of criminal law to punish communicators, the sentence of 10 years imprisonment against a journalist for the commission of crimes of libel being particularly serious.’¹⁰³

19.1.5 See the US Library of Congress article from March 2020 [‘Freedom of Expression during COVID-19’](#)

19.1.6 See Media Landscapes website on [‘Opinion Makers’](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

Section 20 updated: November 2020

20. Political opposition

20.1.1 The US State Department Human Rights Practices Report noted that ‘The law provides citizens the right to choose their government in free and fair periodic elections held by secret ballot and based on nearly universal and equal suffrage.’¹⁰⁴

20.1.2 The Freedom House Freedom in the World report noted

‘Political parties are largely free to operate, though power has mostly been concentrated in the hands of the PL [Liberal Party] and the PN [National Party] since the early 1980s. In 2013, LIBRE [Liberty and Refoundation

¹⁰¹ Freedom House, [‘Freedom in the World 2020-Honduras’](#) (section D1), 4 March 2020

¹⁰² HRW, [‘2020 World Report-Honduras’](#), 14 January 2020

¹⁰³ IACHR, [‘Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression Annual Report’](#) (p.182), February 2020

¹⁰⁴ USSD, [‘2019 Honduras Human Rights Practices Report’](#) (section 3), 11 March 2020

Party] and the Anti-Corruption Party (PAC) participated in elections for the first time, winning a significant share of the vote and disrupting the dominance of the PL and the PN. PAC lost all but one of its seats in 2017, but LIBRE maintained its position as the second-largest party in the parliament.

'...Opposition parties are competitive, and in 2017, opposition candidates took a significant portion of the vote in both the legislative and presidential elections. However, the many serious irregularities surrounding the TSE's administration of the 2017 presidential election prompted EU and OAS election monitors to question the validity of the vote count, and the opposition insisted that a PN-aligned TSE had denied the opposition candidate victory in the presidential race.'¹⁰⁵

20.1.3 The Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (BTI) report noted:

'Political polarization has increased sharply over the last two years. This trend has been accompanied by violent protests against the highly questionable re-election of the current president and against the many cases of corruption involving politicians from the ruling National Party. High levels of impunity, brutal repression and the use of force are serious obstacles to promoting dialog between the opposition and the current government.

'...In principle, political representatives, including President Hernández, have considerable power to govern, with the caveat that Hernández's election cannot be considered regular. Otherwise, the current president has been extremely effective in essentially controlling all levers of power, including the judiciary that has been increasingly and deliberately politicized. In contrast, opposition politicians and those not linked to the traditional elites have, at best, very limited chances to influence policy-making to any significant extent, especially since power has been increasingly concentrated around the president.'¹⁰⁶

20.1.4 The Varieties of Democracy Project classified the country as an 'electoral autocracy.'¹⁰⁷

[Back to Contents](#)

Section 21 updated: January 2021

21. Religious groups

21.1.1 The Freedom House Freedom in the World Report noted that 'Religious freedom is generally respected in Honduras.'¹⁰⁸

21.1.2 The USSD International Religious Freedom Report noted 'The constitution provides for the free exercise of all religions as long as that exercise does not contravene other laws or public order.'¹⁰⁹

[Back to Contents](#)

¹⁰⁵ Freedom House, '[Freedom in the World 2020-Honduras](#)' (sections B1 and B2), 4 March 2020

¹⁰⁶ BTI, '[Honduras Country Report](#)' (p.10 and 33), April 2020

¹⁰⁷ V-Dem Institute, '[Varieties of Democracy Report](#)' (p.26), March 2020

¹⁰⁸ Freedom House, '[Freedom in the World 2020-Honduras](#)' (section D2), 4 March 2020

¹⁰⁹ USSD, '[2019 Report on International Religious Freedom](#)', 10 June 2020

22. Sexual orientation and gender identity and expression

22.1.1 The USSD human rights report for 2019 noted:

'The law states that sexual orientation and gender identity characteristics merit special protection from discrimination and includes these characteristics in a hate crimes amendment to the penal code. Nevertheless, social discrimination against LGBTI persons persisted, as did physical violence. Local media and LGBTI human rights NGOs reported an increase in the number of killings of LGBTI persons during the year. Impunity for such crimes was a problem, as was the impunity rate for all types of crime. According to the Violence Observatory, of the 317 cases since 2009 of hate crimes and violence against members of the LGBTI population, 92 percent had gone unpunished.'¹¹⁰

22.1.2 The HRW annual report on events in 2019 noted:

'Violence based on gender identity or sexual orientation is widespread in Honduras. Several United Nations agencies working in Honduras have noted that violence against LGBT individuals forces them into "internal displacement" or to flee in search of international protection. The Honduras government keeps no data on killings based on sexual orientation or gender identity, but the Lesbian Network Cattrachas reported that between January and August 2019, at least 26 LGBT people had been killed. In one case documented by Human Rights Watch in June 2019, a transgender woman was killed and mutilated near San Pedro Sula in an apparent hate crime.

'In March, a new adoption law that prohibits same-sex couples from adopting children went into effect.'¹¹¹

22.1.3 The OHCHR report of April 2020 observed:

'Many gaps and shortcomings hampered the recognition of sexual orientation and gender identity and the protection of the rights of lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual and intersex persons. Lack of public awareness, prejudices and misconceptions contributed to continued discrimination in all areas of life and to violence. In the course of 2019 at least 31 lesbian, gay transgender, bisexual and intersex persons were killed... No progress was made in the adoption of a law on gender identity and a law against discrimination, despite the efforts of civil society groups. Appeals filed in 2018 against the constitutionality of the prohibition of same-sex marriages remained pending before the Supreme Court... In May, the Constitutional Chamber dismissed an appeal alleging discrimination in the requirement to present a marriage or civil union certificate to allow conjugal visits for a lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual or intersex couple in a detention centre because such certificates are not issued for such couples. Religious groups continued to play a critical role in preventing advances in protection of the rights of lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual and intersex persons. The Ministry of Human Rights has reported on training sessions for the armed

¹¹⁰ USSD, '[2019 Honduras Human Rights Practices Report](#)' (section 5), 11 March 2020

¹¹¹ HRW, '[World Report 2020](#)' (Honduras), January 2020

and security forces on the registration and detention of lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual and intersex people.’¹¹²

See The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) State-Sponsored Homophobia report '[State-Sponsored Homophobia Report](#)' from 2019¹¹³.

See October A 2020 Human Rights Watch report '[Violence and Discrimination Against LGBT People in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras](#)'.

See the Immigration & Refugee Board of Canada report, '[Honduras: Information Gathering Mission Report](#)' from February 2018.

See the Organization for Refuge, Asylum and Migration (ORAM) report, '[COI Report: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression in Honduras](#)'.

[Back to Contents](#)

22.2 State treatment

22.2.1 A 2019 Stakeholder report by the Advocates for Human Rights noted:

‘...discrimination against LGBTI individuals is illegal under the Honduran Penal Code, yet LGBTI individuals in Honduras continue to report discrimination from both State and non-State actors.

‘...According to the coordinator of the LGTB Rainbow Association, a Tegucigalpa-based LGBTI advocacy organization, LGBTI individuals have been “victims of discrimination” and violence by Honduran state agents such as the national police, municipal police, and armed forces. The National Human Rights Commission (CONADEH) found that police officers and security guards constitute a large portion of the “attackers” and “violators” of LGBTI rights.

‘LGBTI individuals fear reporting abuse or harassment to the police due to a culture of impunity and fear of reprisal. Karen Spring, coordinator for the Honduran Solidarity Network, described Honduras as a “mafia state” where the institution of policing is systematically intertwined with organized crime. Individuals who report to the police often find themselves extorted or threatened by gangs, if not harmed by the police themselves.

‘...The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has noted that the Police and Social Coexistence Act of Honduras facilitates police abuse and arbitrary detention of transgender individuals by granting security forces the authority to arrest anyone who “violates modesty, decency or public morals” or who “by their immoral behavior disturbs the tranquility of the neighbors.” In effect, this law leaves transgender individuals at a higher risk of police abuse.

‘...a transgender Honduran woman, reported that she had been persecuted by police officers based on her gender-identity. In October 2018, police officers detained her as she was leaving work and took her to a desolate

¹¹² OHCHR, '[Situation of human rights in Honduras](#)' (paragraphs 68 and 69), April 2020

¹¹³ ILGA, '[State-Sponsored Homophobia Report](#)', March 2019

area, where officers severely beat and tortured her. They initially planned to murder her, but ultimately gave her 15 minutes to flee, and threatened to kill her and her mother if she was ever found again. The attack was motivated by the police officers' ties to the MS-13 gang, which Ms. R refused to join.¹¹⁴

22.2.2 A 2020 Human Rights Watch (HRW) report noted:

'Of...25 interviews with LGBT people in or from Honduras, eight recounted violations by state security agents. These security agents included the National Police as well as the Military Police, a special command of the Armed Forces that was created by former president Porfirio Lobo Sosa in 2013 to fight organized crime, but that works with the National Police to combat common crime. Four reported being sexually or physically assaulted, while others said the National or Military police had humiliated, sexually harassed, or discriminated against them. Only one person...reported filing a complaint about violence by members of the security forces, and in his case it led to reprisals, ultimately leading him to seek asylum.'¹¹⁵

[Back to Contents](#)

22.3 Societal treatment and attitudes

22.3.1 A 2019 Stakeholder report by the Advocates for Human Rights noted that 'Marcela Laitano, Head of Public Policy at the Honduran Human Rights Ministry, cited a widespread and entrenched "machismo culture" and "conservative religious values" as nationwide conditions that fuel discrimination and prejudice against LGBTI individuals.'¹¹⁶

22.3.2 A 2020 Human Rights Watch (HRW) report noted:

'Negative experiences in the family, at school, and during everyday interactions on the streets and in public accommodations contribute to the stigma and discrimination experienced by LGBT people in Honduras.

'Lucía P., a 25-year-old transgender woman originally from Comayagüela, told Human Rights Watch that she left home at age 16 because her family did not accept her gender expression. "My parents always criticized homosexual people ... they always said things to me like 'You have to be like a man,'" she said.

'Nina G., a 26-year-old lesbian from Tegucigalpa, said that when she was a teenager, her father expelled her older half-brother from the home after he came out as gay: "My father said to him, 'You're not going to contaminate my daughter.'" When Nina herself told her parents she was a lesbian at age 19, "My father insulted me, got angry, and said it was my brother's fault." Nina G.'s mother told her that she was possessed by a demon.'¹¹⁷

22.3.3 A report by The Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice noted:

¹¹⁴ The Advocates for Human Rights, '[Stakeholder Report for the United Nations Universal Periodic Review of Honduras](#)' (paras 14 to 17), 3 October 2019

¹¹⁵ HRW, '[Violence and Discrimination Against LGBT People in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras](#)' (p.106 and 107), 7 October 2020

¹¹⁶ The Advocates for Human Rights, '[Stakeholder Report for the United Nations Universal Periodic Review of Honduras](#)' (para 12), 3 October 2019

¹¹⁷ HRW, '[Violence and Discrimination Against LGBT People in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras](#)' (p.100 and 101), 7 October 2020

‘According to Cattrachas [Red Lésbica Cattrachas (Cattrachas Lesbian Network)], violent murders of LGBTI people have steadily risen since they began keeping track in 2004. But in 2009, following the coup d’état, violent murders of LGBTI people sharply increased—from five in 2008 to 26 in 2009. Between 2009 and 2013, Cattrachas recorded 120 violent deaths of LGBTI people based on their gender identity and sexual orientation: 56 gay men, 10 lesbians and 54 Transgender women. The assailants were prosecuted and sentenced in only nine of the 120 cases.’¹¹⁸

- 22.3.4 A 2018 Latin American Working Group Education Fund report noted that ‘The Worldwide Movement for Human Rights denounced that between June 2015 and April 2017, at least seven members of the Rainbow Association (Asociación Arcoiris), a Honduran LGBTI advocacy group, were murdered.’¹¹⁹

[Back to Contents](#)

22.4 Civil society support

- 22.4.1 A Honduran Equality Delegation referred to some support organisations in a [report](#)¹²⁰.
- 22.4.2 A November 2020 [Human Rights Watch](#) article referred to other human rights organisations, including Cattrachas and RFK Human Rights.

[Back to Contents](#)

Section 23 updated: January 2021

23. Women

- 23.1.1 Honduras was ranked 132 out of 189 countries in the UN’s gender inequality index for 2019 (a lower ranking indicating relative to other countries a higher rate of inequality)¹²¹.
- 23.1.2 In an article of 14 November 2018 following their visit to Honduras, the UN Human Rights Council Working Group noted the government has introduced a number of laws and policies relevant to women’s rights and gender equality.

‘However, the solid legal and political framework is not systematically implemented in practice and there is a need for a better coordination between the relevant actors. ...The Government has created a solid institutional framework on women’s rights, although the machinery still does not receive sufficient budget. We welcome the considerable efforts deployed by the National Institute for Women (INAM), which is responsible for the promotion and coordination of the implementation of the National Policy on Women and the integration of women in sustainable development.’¹²²

¹¹⁸ The Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, [‘Honduras LGBTI: Landscape Analysis of Political, Economic and Social Conditions’](#) (p.8), 2015

¹¹⁹ Latin American Working Group Education Fund, [‘Left in the Dark: Violence Against Women and LGBTI Persons in Honduras and El Salvador’](#) (p.5), 7 March 2018

¹²⁰ Honduran Equality Delegation, [‘The State of the LGBT Movement in Honduras’](#), 2013

¹²¹ UN data, [‘Gender Inequality Index’](#), no date

¹²² UN OHCHR, WG, [‘Human Rights Council Working Group on the issue...’](#), 14 November 2018

- 23.1.3 A 2020 Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights noted that:
- ‘Structural inequality persisted and women continued to experience discrimination in all spheres of life. Women in conditions of poverty, indigenous women and AfroHondurans, as well as transgender and lesbian women experienced multiple forms of discrimination. Numerous important initiatives remained pending in Congress, such as the draft laws on domestic work, on violence against women in politics, on shelters for victims of violence and a comprehensive draft law on violence against women. The State of Honduras has not ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, thereby partially excluding women from the international protection system.’¹²³
- 23.1.4 The US State Department Human Rights Practices Report noted ‘Although the law accords women and men the same legal rights and status, including property rights in divorce cases, many women did not fully enjoy such rights. Most women in the workforce engaged in lower-status and lower-paying informal occupations, such as domestic service, without the benefit of legal protections. By law women have equal access to educational opportunities.’¹²⁴
- 23.1.5 The USSD human rights report for 2019 State Department Human Rights Practices Report noted that ‘The law criminalizes various forms of sexual harassment... all forms of rape of men or women, including spousal rape... domestic violence...’¹²⁵ However, the USSD observed that ‘The law was not effectively enforced, and weak public institutional structures contributed to the inadequate enforcement of the law. Due to impunity rates of up to 90 percent in the courts, women often did not report the crime, or withdrew the case, because they feared or were economically dependent on the aggressor.’¹²⁶
- 23.1.6 According to an article in The Intercept, ‘Honduras consistently ranks among the worst countries for violence against women.’ The report indicated a lack of state protection and poor law enforcement¹²⁷.
- 23.1.7 An Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) March 2019 report noted:
- ‘...violence against women and girls is widespread and systematic in Honduras, and “a climate of fear, in both the public and private spheres, and a lack of accountability for violations of human rights of women are the norm, despite legislative and institutional developments”.
- ‘Honduras has one of the highest femicide rates in the world, and incidents of GBV and sexual violence, although under-reported, have risen by 390 per cent in the last decade. They include domestic violence, rape and sexual assault, human trafficking and the sexual abuse and exploitation of girls and adolescents. GBV is the second most common cause of death among

¹²³ OHCHR, [‘Situation of human rights in Honduras’](#) (para.64), 2 April 2020

¹²⁴ USSD, [‘2019 Honduras Human Rights Practices Report’](#) (section 6), 11 March 2020

¹²⁵ USSD, [‘2019 Honduras Human Rights Practices Report’](#) (section 6), 11 March 2020

¹²⁶ USSD, [‘2019 Honduras Human Rights Practices Report’](#) (section 6), 11 March 2020

¹²⁷ The Intercept, [‘Despite U.S. Asylum Ban...’](#), 8 October 2019

women of reproductive age. Levels of violence including femicide and sexual violence are particularly high in the maquila zone in Cholula.

'Levels of domestic and intrafamilial violence are also extremely high, to the extent that "domestic violence has been normalised". It is one of the most frequently reported crimes in Honduras, but like sexual crimes it is still under-reported. Victims' reluctance to report may stem from mistrust of the police and judicial system, economic dependence on the perpetrator, their role in caring for children, a lack of shelters, and fear of stigma, reprisals and more violence. Those who do report may be derided and re-victimised, and their cases are unlikely to be investigated or prosecuted.'¹²⁸

- 23.1.8 See the same IDMC report for information on women and gangs, ['A Web of Violence: Crime, corruption and displacement in Honduras'](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

¹²⁸ IDMC, ['A Web of Violence: Crime, corruption and displacement in Honduras'](#) (p.25), March 2019

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[Back to Contents](#)

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[Back to Contents](#)

Version control

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **1.0**
- valid from 9 March 2021

Changes from last version of this note

First version in this format.

[Back to Contents](#)