

World Report 2025



Honduras

Events of 2024

Civil society organizations demand justice for the murders of environmentalists Berta Caceres, killed in March 2016 in La Esperanza, department of Intibuca, and Juan López, killed in September 2024 in the municipality of Tocoa, department of Colón.

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The administration of President Xiomara Castro has made little progress in fighting corruption and restoring democratic institutions. Honduras continues to struggle with widespread corruption, a compromised judiciary, high levels of violence, and attacks against environmental defenders.

Judicial Independence and Corruption

In [September](#), President Castro presented to the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres a second draft agreement to create an International Commission against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (CICIH). The revised proposal would ensure CICIH's independence and autonomy, allow it to independently prosecute cases, investigate high-profile cases, propose legislative changes, and train personnel to fight corruption. However, progress on establishing the CICIH remains slow.

As of September, [UN experts](#) have [visited](#) Honduras four times to provide technical assistance and assess the legal system and anti-corruption capabilities. They identified [several laws](#) that hinder investigations into corruption. Congress abrogated some of such laws, but a law prohibiting sanctions against legislators for actions taken “in the exercise of their duties” remained in place at time of writing.

In [September](#), Carlos Zelaya, Castro's brother-in-law and a congressional leader, resigned after admitting to [meeting](#) with drug traffickers in 2013. Zelaya's son, who was minister of defense, also resigned.

A few days before Zelaya's resignation, Castro annulled an extradition treaty with the United States, which had allowed for the extradition of Honduran nationals accused of drug trafficking, including former President Juan Orlando Hernández, who was sentenced to 45 years in prison by a US federal court [in March](#).

Human Rights Defenders

Attacks on human rights defenders intensified in 2023. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Honduras [reported](#) that 453 human rights defenders and journalists were harassed, threatened, or intimidated in 2023 and 15 were killed.

According to OHCHR, at least four human rights defenders were killed between January and September, including [Juan López](#), an environmental defender, who was murdered in September, in the municipality of Tocoa, Colón department. [Three activists](#) working for the same environmental organization as [López](#) were killed in 2023.

The mechanism [Honduras](#) created in 2015 to protect journalists, human rights defenders, and justice officials has serious flaws: It lacks financial autonomy, qualified staff experienced in human rights issues, and trust from defenders.

Land Rights

Land rights and natural resource disputes remain a pressing issue in Honduras, with Indigenous peoples, Afro-Honduran communities, and peasants disproportionately affected by violence, illegal land seizures, and forced displacement.

In [September](#), Honduras' Supreme Court declared unconstitutional the laws permitting the creation of so-called Areas of Employment and Economic Development (ZEDEs), geographic areas in which private companies were granted broad governance powers, including to establish their own courts. Human Rights Watch [criticized](#) ZEDEs and called for their repeal. The court ruled that the ZEDE framework violated human rights.

[Honduras Próspera Group Inc.](#), a company which owns a ZEDE in Honduras, brought a case against Honduras before the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) for the repeal of the legal framework for special economic zones. Próspera filed for damages of US\$10.7 billion, approximately 30 percent of Honduras' [2023](#) GDP. [In February](#), Honduras denounced the ICSID Convention.

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

According to government data, in 2023, 64 percent of the population lived below the poverty line (down from 73.6 percent in 2021), and 41.5 percent lived in extreme poverty (down from 53.7 percent in 2021). Honduras maintains one of the highest levels of income inequality in Latin America with a Gini index of 0.52 in 2023.

Illiteracy is a significant problem in Honduras. Over 31 percent of people aged 60 and older and over 13 percent of people over 15 years old could not read or write in 2023. Only 56 percent of children between 12 and 14, and 28 percent between 15 and 17, were attending school. School attendance rates are significantly lower in rural areas.

In July, Honduras co-sponsored a UN Human Rights Council [resolution](#) establishing a working group that would draft a new optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the rights to early childhood education, free pre-primary and secondary education.

Public Security

Honduras has been for years among one of the most violent countries in the world, with police [reporting](#) 3,035 murders in 2023, a homicide rate of 31 per 100,000 people. Between [January and September](#), preliminary police data indicated 1,854 murders, a 26 percent drop compared to the same period in 2023.

[According to the latest data](#) from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Honduras has the highest rate of femicides in Latin America and the Caribbean, with approximately 7 femicides per 100,000 women.

A state of emergency, adopted in December 2022 to fight extortion and related crimes, was [extended](#) 15 times and remains in place. It suspends the rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly and to be informed of the reason for arrest, among others. [OHCHR](#) and the [UN Human Rights Committee](#) expressed concern about the extended use of the emergency without a comprehensive, rights-based security policy, saying it resulted in abuses.

Structural problems in the penitentiary system persist, including overcrowding and inadequate infrastructure. [As of September](#), prisons held over 19,000 detainees, 21 percent more than their capacity. Almost half of the people were in pretrial detention, [official statistics show](#). [In June](#), Castro announced the creation of a new “megaprison” for 20,000 people.

Migration, Asylum, and Internal Displacement

[As of 2023](#), there were 216,000 Honduran asylum seekers abroad, mostly in the United States and Mexico, with 84,000 others recognized as refugees.

Gang violence and other factors, including climate change, caused the internal displacement of about 247,000 people between 2019 and 2024, government [data shows](#).

Access to Abortion and Emergency Contraception

Abortion in Honduras is banned in all circumstances, including when the life of a woman, girl or pregnant person is in danger. People who have abortions, and those who provide them, face up to six years in prison.

In December 2022, President Castro approved a protocol to guide health centers in caring for survivors of sexual violence, including access to emergency contraception. The president signed an executive order in March 2023 lifting the ban on the use and sale of emergency contraception, but the Strategic Group on Emergency Contraception (Grupo Estratégico PAE), a reproductive rights group, reported that emergency contraception remains unavailable in the public health system, access is not free, and the protocol for survivors has yet to be implemented.

[In April](#), the Center for Reproductive Rights and Centro de Derechos de la Mujer, two women’s rights organizations, brought a case before the UN Human Rights Committee on behalf of Fausia, an Indigenous Honduran woman who became pregnant after being raped in retaliation for her human rights work. Under Honduras’ total ban on abortion and, at the time, emergency contraception, she was forced to proceed with her pregnancy and faced threats while seeking medical assistance.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people in Honduras continue to suffer high levels of violence and discrimination in all areas of life, forcing some to flee. Honduras has failed to comply with key measures ordered by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in 2021, including to create a legal gender recognition procedure for transgender people. Honduras does not allow same-sex marriage and lacks comprehensive anti-LGBT discrimination legislation.