



# Honduras

## Climate Change, Human Rights Violations, and Forced Displacement

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Center for Gender &  
Refugee Studies

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report offers an analysis of the profound impacts of the climate emergency in Honduras, underscoring the intricate links between human-caused climate change, human rights violations, and governmental policies. It draws attention to the disproportionate effects these issues have on marginalized groups, such as Indigenous peoples and women.

The analysis reveals that Honduras is grappling with devastating consequences of climate change, such as increased frequency and intensity of hurricanes, droughts, and rising sea levels. These disasters, worsened by inadequate State preparation and response, have resulted in the loss of lives, mass displacement, and extensive destruction of infrastructure and crops.

Further exacerbating this crisis, the report finds that Honduran government policies promoting mega-industrial projects — including monocultures, mining operations, and hydroelectric dams — have led to significant environmental degradation. These policies, often supported by foreign investment from countries like the U.S. and Canada, not only intensify the climate crisis but also lead to widespread human rights violations, impacting vulnerable populations and contributing to displacement.

Particularly at risk are Indigenous communities and women. Indigenous peoples face forced displacement from their ancestral lands, loss of cultural heritage, and violence against their leaders and environmental defenders. Women, meanwhile, are increasingly subjected to gender-based violence, health crises, and displacement due to the escalating climate emergency.

Concluding with a set of policy recommendations, the report calls on the U.S. Government to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, enhance collaboration with Honduran communities, ensure human rights are respected in foreign investments, and address climate-related displacement. For the Honduran Government, it urges the ratification of international environmental agreements, protection of environmental defenders, respect for land rights of Indigenous and Afro-Honduran communities, and bolder environmental and anti-corruption measures. These recommendations aim to mitigate the impact of the climate emergency while prioritizing human rights, environmental protection, and the empowerment of local communities.

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## **CREDITS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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The **Center for Gender & Refugee Studies** is a national organization that provides legal expertise, training, and resources to advocates representing asylum seekers, litigates to expand protections for refugees, advances refugee law and policy, and uses domestic, regional and international human rights mechanisms to address the root causes of persecution and displacement.

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Honduras is currently grappling with severe impacts from climate change, leading to significant human rights violations. This report highlights that the intensifying climate emergency in Honduras is not simply a series of natural events, but rather a crisis instigated by human-caused factors and State policies.

Often perceived as natural phenomena, the root causes and devastating effects of the climate emergency worldwide are deeply intertwined with human actions. In fact, the intensity and frequency of natural events, such as hurricanes, increase due to human-induced climate change.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, these events are transformed into larger-scale disasters through inadequate State responses and policies that fail to protect the most vulnerable. They intensify existing social and economic inequalities and act as catalysts for broader societal challenges,<sup>2</sup> underscoring the crucial role of a range of State policies in mitigating their impact.

The direct relationship between environmental policies and human rights is exemplified by the way environmental degradation, including threats to a healthy environment, endangers a broad spectrum of human rights.<sup>3</sup> It is in the context of human-induced environmental degradation and compounded societal inequalities that the necessity for rights-based interventions targeting State behavior becomes starkly apparent.

This report sheds light on the far-reaching effects of the climate emergency in Honduras. It then delves into governmental decisions exacerbating environmental degradation and forced displacement, with a particular focus on the hardships endured by marginalized groups such as Indigenous peoples and women. Our analysis concludes with recommendations directed at both the U.S. and Honduran governments, urging decisive action to address these challenges, protect the environment, and safeguard the human rights of those affected.

## **II. CLIMATE CHANGE HAS WROUGHT PROFOUND DAMAGE IN HONDURAS**

Honduras is highly vulnerable to the impacts of the climate emergency, which has already proved to be a grave and escalating threat to the lives, health, and safety of Hondurans. First, climate change affects the frequency and intensity of hurricanes and floods, claiming lives and destroying crops, homes, and key infrastructure.<sup>4</sup> For example, Hurricane Mitch, which struck in October 1998, killed over 10,000 people, and destroyed over 70 percent of the country's infrastructure and crops. In November 2020, Hurricanes Eta and Iota, marked

by rapid intensification, high peak wind speeds, and a deceleration before landfall – distinctive signs of climate change’s influence – had devastating consequences. Over one hundred lives were lost, more than 300,000 people were displaced, and the agricultural sector suffered a nearly 80 percent loss in output.<sup>5</sup>

Second, climate change affects the magnitude and severity of droughts; rainy seasons are shorter and less frequent.<sup>6</sup> The southern and western regions of Honduras are part of Central America’s Dry Corridor,<sup>7</sup> and are particularly affected by extended droughts and irregular rainfall patterns.<sup>8</sup> As an example of the increasing impacts of climate variability, two years of consecutive drought starting in 2014 led to a loss of 96 percent of the corn crop and 87 percent of the bean crop in the Dry Corridor.<sup>9</sup>

Third, progressive sea level rise caused by climate change exacerbates land erosion. This phenomenon destroys homes and contaminates water and soil.<sup>10</sup> As a result of the impacts of the climate emergency, many people in Honduras suffer from water scarcity, lack of food security, and loss of livelihood.<sup>11</sup> Hundreds of thousands have been forced into internal displacement or exile over the past decade.<sup>12</sup>

### **A. Governmental Policies Exacerbate the Climate Emergency by Increasing Environmental Degradation**

The climate emergency, largely driven by developed nations including the United States, disproportionately affects countries in the Global South. In Honduras, development policies and the government’s inadequate response to the effects of climate change have significantly intensified the country’s environmental crisis, primarily through widespread environmental degradation. The expansion of mega-industrial projects—such as intensive agriculture (monocultures), mining operations, and hydroelectric projects—demonstrates this trend, as these projects have not only exacerbated the effects of climate change, but have actively contributed to it.

The rapid development of these industrial projects was chiefly made possible by (1) enacting land reforms that allowed corporations to appropriate large swaths of land, impacting peasant cooperatives, Indigenous collective lands, and small landowners;<sup>13</sup> (2) granting concession permits to multi-national companies without meaningful consultation with or participation from local communities;<sup>14</sup> and (3) brutally repressing any opposition.<sup>15</sup> These systemic practices necessitate a closer examination of how such developments have compounded environmental issues and led to grave human rights abuses.

## **1. Persecution of Defenders and Lax Environmental Oversight**

Opposition to industrial projects is met with violence perpetrated by corporate actors with the direct or indirect participation of State officials.<sup>16</sup> Existing laws and mechanisms to protect environmentalists and land defenders<sup>17</sup> are not enforced or are plagued with corruption and lack of resources.<sup>18</sup> Consequently, Honduras is one of the most dangerous countries for land and environmental defenders.<sup>19</sup>

The State's failure to properly regulate, monitor, or control activities that cause environmental damage has aggravated the situation. Environmental licenses and permits are granted without any environmental assessments, with a near-total lack of transparency.<sup>20</sup> Generally, State agencies responsible for conducting environmental impact studies neglect their duties. Even when these studies are conducted, companies often disregard environmental regulations, as it is more cost-effective to pay fines rather than to implement the required measures.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, State authorities fail to investigate or pursue legal action against illegal projects that cause environmental harm, including mines, palm oil plantations, and logging.<sup>22</sup>

## **2. Environmental Degradation and Increased Vulnerability**

As a result of these practices and the insufficient enforcement of environmental regulations, mega-industrial projects amplify the adverse effects of climate change, heightening Honduras' pre-existing vulnerability to floods.<sup>23</sup> For example, expansive monocultures such as palm oil plantations damage riverbanks and soil, and increase sedimentation in rivers, increasing the area's susceptibility to inundations.<sup>24</sup>

Mega-industrial projects also diminish the country's resilience to drought. They considerably reduce access to potable water by contaminating and/or drying up the rivers, and increase food insecurity by destroying the ecosystem and monopolizing arable lands. For instance, mining contaminates water supplies with toxic heavy metals, including lead, mercury, and cyanide, causing severe health problems in the communities where mining companies operate.<sup>25</sup> Mining also requires an extraordinary amount of water in a region already suffering from water scarcity, and has, in some places, completely dried up water sources.<sup>26</sup> People in communities where these mega-projects operate have been forced to leave in search of water, food, and safety.<sup>27</sup>

## **3. Responsibility of Outside Actors**

The development of mega-industrial projects in Honduras has been significantly influenced by foreign investment. Foreign banks have been instrumental in financing environmentally harmful initiatives, leading to land monopolies by select corporations.<sup>28</sup> The Honduran

military and police, infamous for their aggressive stance against activists, have benefitted from considerable U.S. financial support.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, a significant portion of dominant industrial enterprises, especially within mining and palm oil, are owned by U.S. and Canadian entities.<sup>30</sup>

In sum, Honduras' environmental crisis is worsened by policies that have facilitated unchecked industrial activity benefiting elites and foreign interests at a high cost to locals and the environment. This pattern exacerbates the effects of the climate emergency, including an increase in human rights violations, and underlines the State's negligence of its most vulnerable populations. The next section will address the acute and disproportionate impact of this crisis on marginalized groups.

## **B. Climate Change and Environmental Degradation Disproportionately Impact Certain Populations**

Vulnerable and marginalized populations, notably including Indigenous communities and women, hold specific rights and protections under Honduran law, as well as under international and regional human rights instruments. These groups, due to their inherent vulnerabilities, are disproportionately affected by the repercussions of climate change and environmental degradation.

### **1. Indigenous Peoples**

The way of life of Indigenous and Garífuna peoples is deeply connected to their lands, with their survival relying on access to and the integrity of local ecosystems.<sup>31</sup> Development projects such as the San Andrés gold mine in the Province of Copán have wrought lasting devastation on local Indigenous communities. The mine commenced operations without the required proper consultation with communities,<sup>32</sup> adequate environmental impact assessments, or regulatory enforcement. This neglect resulted in air and water pollution that caused a host of health issues among locals, including respiratory, skin, and gastrointestinal conditions.<sup>33</sup> Mining activities led to the depletion of vital streams,<sup>34</sup> undermining the community's ability to sustain itself. The related destruction of an ancestral cemetery dealt a further blow to their cultural identity and connection to the land.<sup>35</sup>

Honduras formally recognizes many of the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples, including the right to environmental conservation and the significance of traditional practices.<sup>36</sup> Despite this, the State continues to impinge upon these rights by limiting Indigenous peoples' control over their territories.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, Indigenous peoples throughout Honduras are threatened, criminalized, disappeared, and forcibly displaced as a



consequence of their efforts to protect their lands and their opposition to policies and projects that harm the environment.<sup>38</sup> Entrenched racial biases and a legacy of social exclusion deny Indigenous peoples' access to the protection and justice they are due.<sup>39</sup>

Compounding these challenges is the State's failure to provide basic infrastructure and services in rural areas, predominantly inhabited by Indigenous groups. Such communities often lack developed roads, schools or health centers, and access to running water. Consequently, these populations are left out of post-disaster State relief efforts, making them particularly susceptible to devastation brought by the climate emergency.<sup>40</sup>

## **2. Women**

The impacts of the climate emergency and environmental degradation in Honduras place women's lives, personal integrity, and health at particular risk. This manifests in several ways, including increased displacement.

Honduras, like many other countries in the Americas, is dominated by patriarchal norms where women are relegated to the domestic or private sphere.<sup>41</sup> As one example, in most rural households, women and girls are responsible for collecting water.<sup>42</sup> Droughts caused by the climate emergency force women to travel further away from their homes in search of water.<sup>43</sup> This increases their risk of being sexually assaulted, raped, or kidnapped.<sup>44</sup> In addition, women are disproportionately affected by conditions such as cancers, skin diseases, and miscarriages,<sup>45</sup> due to their increasingly frequent and prolonged contact with water contaminated as a result of human-induced environmental degradation.

In the aftermath of environmental disasters like Hurricanes Eta or Iota, the incidence of gender-based violence surges. Many women, and even girls, are coerced by State authorities or other relief workers to exchange sex for emergency aid. Additionally, they face an escalated risk of sexual violence and other violent assaults in emergency shelters, where community safety structures have broken down.<sup>46</sup> Experts note that disasters precipitate a rise in early forced marriages or unions for girls.<sup>47</sup>

Within the scope of mega-industrial projects previously discussed, corporations have employed gender-based violence as a tactic to seize land or quell community resistance.<sup>48</sup> Women taking a stand to defend their territories against harmful environmental policies or large-scale projects often face brutal repression.<sup>49</sup>

Due to the climate emergency, individuals in Honduras, especially from marginalized or vulnerable populations, are experiencing a violation of their rights to life, health, personal integrity, and cultural identity. These human rights violations, in turn, contribute significantly to displacement and perpetuate a cycle of marginalization and vulnerability.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Honduras' struggles with climate change and human rights abuses are deeply interconnected, each exacerbating the impacts of the other, particularly for the most vulnerable. Addressing these dual crises necessitates concerted efforts, anchored in respect for human rights, protection of the environment, and the empowerment of local communities. The recommendations that follow are informed by these principles, calling on both the Honduran and U.S. governments to take meaningful actions that mitigate the risk of climate-related displacement and uphold the human rights of those impacted.

#### A. Recommendations for the U.S. Government

- 1. Drastically Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Support Global Efforts:** As one of the top contributors to these emissions, the United States should pioneer ambitious and comprehensive measures to mitigate the greenhouse effect and combat climate change. Additionally, to help support the developing countries most impacted by the climate emergency, the U.S. government should commit to providing substantial financial contributions above current levels to the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts, established under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.<sup>50</sup>
- 2. Strengthen Collaboration with Local Communities and Civil Society Organizations:** The administration should transparently collaborate with Honduran Indigenous and rural communities, along with civil society organizations, to actively shape its ongoing Root Causes Strategy.<sup>51</sup> This should especially include support for the development and implementation of mitigation and adaptation strategies that center the voices and knowledge of local communities.
- 3. Promote Transparency in U.S. Programs and Policies:** The U.S. should clearly outline the vetting processes for companies engaged in investment and development programs, notably within initiatives like Central America Forward<sup>52</sup> and Partnership for Central America.<sup>53</sup> By publicly disclosing the identities of participating companies and any associated privileges or exemptions they might receive, the U.S. can reinforce accountability and bolster public confidence in these efforts.
- 4. Prioritize Community and Human Rights in Investment Initiatives:** Ensure that U.S.-backed investments in Honduras and Central America are thoroughly assessed for their impact on human rights and the environment. It is crucial for companies to establish robust mechanisms for consulting with affected communities, especially Indigenous and Afro-descendent groups. These companies must adhere to and

actively enforce strict non-reprisal policies to protect human rights and environmental defenders. Furthermore, the U.S. should reinforce its oversight and regulation of imports, guaranteeing that all imported goods, products, and resources meet international human rights and environmental standards.

- 5. Monitor Compliance with Governance Pledges:** Clearly define and regularly review how U.S. initiatives – such as the Partnership for Central America and Central America Forward – monitor companies' effective adherence to good governance pledges. This oversight can prevent and address potential abuses or failures in governance.
- 6. Recognize and Support Environmental Defenders:** The U.S. should publicly acknowledge the critical role and immense risks environmental defenders face in Honduras. By doing so, the U.S. can raise international awareness and express solidarity.
- 7. Take Proactive Measures to Address Cross-Border Climate Displacement:** In alignment with the White House Report on Climate and Migration, the U.S. should announce the creation of the inter-agency policy process on climate migration, ensuring transparent engagement with civil society and other stakeholders. As a concrete operationalization of this inter-agency process, clear guidance should be issued to adjudicators within the asylum system and the Refugee Admissions Program, emphasizing the role climate change and disasters can play in refugee status and asylum determinations. Additionally, existing migration pathways, such as the parole program for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans, should be expanded to prioritize individuals most at risk, including those displaced due to climate change.<sup>54</sup> These efforts should be in addition to rescinding all policies that limit access to asylum at the border, notably the *Circumvention of Legal Pathways* rule (88 FR 31314).

## **B. Recommendations for the Honduran Government**

- 1. Ratify the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean:** By ratifying the 'Escazú Agreement,' Honduras can join other nations in the region committed to transparency and public participation in environmental decision-making, promoting environmental and human rights, and fostering public trust.
- 2. Ensure Justice for Defenders:** Given the escalating threats against environmental rights defenders, the government is obligated to thoroughly investigate, prosecute, and punish crimes committed against them. Additionally, it is essential to urgently reform laws that are currently being misused to persecute and wrongfully imprison

defenders, such as the Penal Code. The government must also implement and enforce robust protective measures, tailored with a gender lens, to guarantee the safety of environmental rights defenders.

- 3. Advance an Equitable Land Reform Program and Uphold Indigenous and Afro-Honduran Collective Land Rights:** The government must effectively implement a land reform program that ensures small landowners can build a resilient and sustainable livelihood without the threat of displacement. Additionally, it is crucial to legally protect the territories of Indigenous Peoples and the Afro-Honduran community, in line with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the International Labor Organization Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ILO Convention No. 169). This includes enforcing judicial rulings upholding collective ownership rights for Indigenous groups.<sup>55</sup>
- 4. Prioritize Meaningful Community Consultations and Respect for Ancestral Rights:** The government, in alignment with its obligations under the ILO Convention No. 169 and the Constitution, must ensure that Indigenous and ancestral communities are genuinely consulted and give their free, prior, and informed consent before initiating any projects affecting their territories. Upholding international and domestic mandates, consultations must be free of intimidation and conducted in local languages, respecting the communities' unique rights, cultural identity, and historical ties. Their voices should remain central in all discussions impacting their territories.
- 5. Strengthen Environmental Protections and Oversight:** Honduras must reassess and redesign its development strategies, including those aimed at building resilience and generating clean energy, to carefully consider their impact on the climate emergency. This should include a critical evaluation of the impact of hydroelectric dams, including on access to safe drinking water.<sup>56</sup> Mandatory independent environmental impact studies for all major projects, along with stringent enforcement of environmental regulations, are essential. Additionally, the government should actively work with Congress to fully abolish the 'Zones for Employment and Economic Development' (ZEDEs) due to their contribution to environmental degradation and infringement on the rights and territories of Indigenous and local communities.
- 6. Ensure Equitable Post-Disaster Relief:** The Honduran government must guarantee that post-disaster relief reaches all victims without discrimination. Efforts should be made to actively collaborate with local communities and ensure that aid reaches even the most rural and remote areas.

- 7. Respond to Internal Climate-Related Displacement by Applying the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement:** Honduras should expand the scope of its recent landmark internal displacement law to explicitly include individuals displaced due to climate-related factors. This step is crucial for providing a holistic response to internal displacement, setting the stage for comprehensive support and protection for all displaced individuals, including those affected by violence or climate-induced displacement.
- 8. Combat Corruption and Establish an International Monitoring Body:** The Honduran government should finalize negotiations to create an independent international commission, backed by the United Nations, to address corruption. This commission's responsibilities would encompass investigating high-impact corruption cases, suggesting legislative reforms, training local officials, and collaborating with civil society. Measures must be implemented to guarantee its independence, protect its personnel, and ensure transparency and accountability.

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<sup>1</sup> See National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), *The Causes of Climate Change*, <https://climate.nasa.gov/causes/> (last visited Nov. 16, 2023); See, also, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Annual Report 6, Working Group II, Technical Summary at 42 (2022), [https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/ipcc\\_ar6\\_wgii\\_technicalsummary.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/ipcc_ar6_wgii_technicalsummary.pdf) (“[I]t is now an established fact that human-induced greenhouse gas emissions have led to an increased frequency and/or intensity of some weather and climate extremes since 1850, in particular for temperature extremes. Evidence of observed changes and attribution to human influence has strengthened for several types of extremes since AR5, in particular for extreme precipitation, droughts, tropical cyclones and compound extremes (including fire weather).”).

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change*, A/HRC/53/34, ¶¶ 11, 14, 16 (Apr. 18, 2023).

<sup>3</sup> Inter-Am. Ct. H.R., *Advisory Opinion on the Human Right to a Healthy Environment*, Advisory Opinion No. 23, Series A, (Nov. 15, 2017).

<sup>4</sup> United States Agency for International Development (USAID), *Climate Change Risk Profile Honduras* (2017), [https://www.climatelinks.org/sites/default/files/asset/document/2017\\_USAID%20ATLAS\\_Climate%20Change%20Risk%20Profile\\_Honduras.pdf](https://www.climatelinks.org/sites/default/files/asset/document/2017_USAID%20ATLAS_Climate%20Change%20Risk%20Profile_Honduras.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> International Federation of Red Cross, *Honduras: Hurricane Eta and Iota - Emergency Appeal n° MDR43007 Operation Update no. 2, 2*, (Jan. 21, 2021), <https://reliefweb.int/report/honduras/honduras-hurricane-eta-and-iota-emergency-appeal-n-mdr43007-operation-update-no-2>.

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<sup>6</sup> Georgina Gustin, *Ravaged by Drought, a Honduran Village Faces a Choice: Pray for Rain or Migrate*, Inside Climate News (July 8, 2019), <https://insideclimatenews.org/news/08072019/climate-change-migration-honduras-drought-crop-failure-farming-deforestation-guatemala-trump>.

<sup>7</sup> The Dry Corridor is a strip of land that covers nearly half of the surface of Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua; it is an ecological region vulnerable to long periods of drought, followed by intense rains.

<sup>8</sup> See Gustin, *supra* note 6.

<sup>9</sup> See USAID, *supra* note 4.

<sup>10</sup> María Celeste Maradiaga & Laura García, *Climate Crisis and Water Scarcity Sees Refugees Fleeing the Dry Corridor of Southern Honduras*, *Contra Corriente* (Feb. 11, 2022), <https://contracorriente.red/en/2022/02/11/climate-crisis-and-water-scarcity-sees-refugees-fleeing-the-dry-corridor-of-southern-honduras>.

<sup>11</sup> See e.g., International Water and Sanitation Centre, *Climate Change, Water Resources, and WASH Systems, Country Case: Honduras* (July 2021), 3,

[https://www.ircwash.org/sites/default/files/climate\\_change\\_wrm\\_and\\_wash\\_in\\_honduras\\_-\\_country\\_case\\_-\\_jul\\_2021.pdf](https://www.ircwash.org/sites/default/files/climate_change_wrm_and_wash_in_honduras_-_country_case_-_jul_2021.pdf);

PBS News Hour, *Climate Change Is Killing Crops in Honduras - And Driving Farmers North*, PBS (Apr. 2, 2019), <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/climate-change-is-killing-crops-in-honduras-and-driving-farmers-north>; see also Maradiaga & García, *supra* note 10.

<sup>12</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC), COUNTRY PROFILE: HONDURAS, <https://www.internaldisplacement.org/countries/honduras> (last visited Nov. 16, 2023) (reporting over one million climate disasters-related internal displacements in Honduras between 2008 and 2022); see also UNHCR, REFUGEE DATA FINDER: HONDURAS, ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES, 2008-2022, <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=efR9P7> (last visited Sept. 20, 2023) (showing that over 400,000 Hondurans applied for asylum between 2008 and 2022).

<sup>13</sup> See Interview by Refugee and Human Rights Clinic (RHRC) and Center for Gender for Refugee Studies (CGRS) with Elvin Hernandez, Equipo de Reflexión, Investigación y Comunicación SJ (ERIC-SJ), San Pedro Sula, Hond. (Oct. 29, 2022) (on file with CGRS); see also Andres Leon Araya, *The politics of dispossession in the Honduran palm oil industry: A case study of the Bajo Aguán*, 71 *J. Rural Stud.* 134 (2019), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S074301671730623X>.

<sup>14</sup> See Interview by RHRC/CGRS with Elvin Hernandez, ERIC-SJ, *supra* note 13; see also Interview by RHRC/CGRS with Donald Hernandez, Director of Honduran Centre for the Promotion of Community Development (Centro Hondureño de Promoción para el Desarrollo Comunitario, CEHPRODEC), Tegucigalpa, Hond. (Nov. 2, 2022) (on file with CGRS); See Interview by RHRC/CGRS with Kenia Olivia, Bufete Jurídico, Tegucigalpa, Hond. (Oct. 31, 2022) (on file with CGRS); Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *Statement at the end of visit to Honduras by the United Nations*, (Aug. 29, 2019), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2019/08/statement-end-visit-honduras-united-nations>.

<sup>15</sup> Marlon Gonzalez, *Answers Sought in Killings of 2 Honduran Environmentalists*, Associated Press, (Jan. 19, 2023), <https://apnews.com/article/crime-homicide-caribbean-honduras-c013c376c9e7ab39543f1d029dcaa060> (stating that “Honduras is considered one of the world’s most dangerous countries for environmental activists”).

<sup>16</sup> DANA FRANK, *THE LONG HONDURAN NIGHT: RESISTANCE, TERROR, AND THE UNITED STATES IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE COUP*, 105 (2018); Ian Fry, *Statement at the conclusion of the country visit to Honduras by the special rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change* (Sept. 27, 2023), <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/climatechange/statements/eom-statement-honduras-sr-climate-2023-09-27-en.pdf> (“People still live in fear from corrupt officials and

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companies that allegedly use crime gangs to intimidate and attack people who are trying to defend their human rights to a healthy and sustainable environment. Much more needs to be done to protect these people.”).

<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., *Ley de Protección para las y los Defensores de Derechos Humanos, Periodistas, Comunicadores Sociales y Operadores de Justicia (Law for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Journalists, Social Communicators, and Justice Operators)*, Decree No. 34-2015 (May 15, 2015) (Hond.), [https://www.tsc.gob.hn/web/leyes/Ley\\_Proteccion\\_defensores\\_der\\_humanos\\_periodistas\\_op\\_just.pdf](https://www.tsc.gob.hn/web/leyes/Ley_Proteccion_defensores_der_humanos_periodistas_op_just.pdf); and the *Mecanismo de Protección (Protection Mechanism)* which issues restraining orders.

<sup>18</sup> See e.g., Interview by RHRC/CGRS with Donald Hernandez, *supra* note 14; Interview by RHRC/CGRS with Elvin Hernandez, *supra* note 13; See also Interview by RHRC/CGRS with Kenia Olivia, *supra* note 14.

<sup>19</sup> Global Witness, *Standing Firm: The Land and Environmental Defenders on the Frontlines of the Climate Crisis* (Sept. 2023), <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/standing-firm/> (reporting that Honduras is in the top five most deadly countries for land defenders).

<sup>20</sup> See Interview by RHRC/CGRS with Kenia Olivia, *supra* note 14.

<sup>21</sup> Juan Pablo Duron, *Impactos del Extractivismo en la Vida de las Mujeres Indígenas y Campesinas Defensoras de Derechos Humanos y de los Territorios*, (Dec. 12, 2022) (on file with CGRS).

<sup>22</sup> See e.g., Max Radwin, ‘It’s Getting Worse’: National Parks in Honduras Hit Hard By Palm Oil, Mongabay, (Apr. 11, 2019), <https://news.mongabay.com/2019/04/its-getting-worse-national-parks-in-honduras-hit-hard-by-palm-oil/>; Earthsight, *No Respite For Honduras’ Protected Forests As Illegal Oil Palm Continues To Advance*, (June, 14, 2019), <https://www.earthsight.org.uk/news/idm/no-respite-honduras-protected-forests-illegal-oil-palm-continues>.

<sup>23</sup> See Radwin, *supra* note 22; see also Interview by RHRC/CGRS with Donald Hernandez, *supra* note 14; Leonardo Guevara & Lesly Frazier, *Palm Oil, Fire Pushing Protected Areas in Honduras to the ‘Point of no Return,’* Mongabay (Dec. 30, 2019), <https://news.mongabay.com/2019/12/palm-oil-fire-pushing-protected-areas-in-honduras-to-the-point-of-no-return/>; see also Interview by RHRC/CGRS with Yolanda Rodriguez, ERIC-SJ, Zoom (June 22, 2022) (on file with CGRS).

<sup>24</sup> See, e.g., Interview by RHRC/CGRS with Elvin Hernandez, *supra* note 13.

<sup>25</sup> *Id.*; see also Interview by RHRC/CGRS with Donald Hernandez, *supra* note 14.

<sup>26</sup> See e.g., Environmental Network for Central America (ENCA), *A Two Sided Story – Mine-Affected Communities tell their Stories of Destruction and Death outside Honduras’ “First International Mining Congress”*, (Jul. 19, 2015), <https://enca.org.uk/blog/2015/07/19/a-two-sided-story-mining-honduras/> (reporting on the Martin mining project in Valle de Siria, owned by Canadian mining corporation Goldcorp, which dried up 17 out of the 21 water sources of the local area).

<sup>27</sup> Peace Brigades International, *Update Guatemala, Mexico, Honduras (Aug. 15 to Oct. 21, 2022)*, 28 (2022) (on file with CGRS).

<sup>28</sup> RHRC/CGRS interview with Elvin Hernandez, ERIC-SJ, San Pedro Sula (Hond.) (Oct. 29, 2022), *supra* note 13.

<sup>29</sup> See Jared Olson, *Palm Oil and Blood In Honduras’ Ongoing Conflict*, New Lines Magazine (Aug. 10, 2022) <https://newlinesmag.com/reportage/palm-oil-and-blood-in-honduras-ongoing-conflict/>.

<sup>30</sup> RHRC/CGRS interview with Elvin Hernandez, ERIC-SJ, San Pedro Sula (Hond.) (Oct. 29, 2022), *supra* note 13.

<sup>31</sup> See e.g., Interview by RHRC/CGRS with Donald Hernandez, *supra* note 14; Interview by RHRC/CGRS with Elvin Hernandez, *supra* note 13.

<sup>32</sup> Karen Spring, *Mining in a State of Impunity*, Honduras Solidarity Network & MiningWatch Canada 4, (June 28, 2016) [https://issuu.com/karenspring/docs/mining\\_in\\_a\\_state\\_of\\_impunity\\_june](https://issuu.com/karenspring/docs/mining_in_a_state_of_impunity_june).

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<sup>33</sup> See e.g., Jessica Sherman, *Honduras: Open Pit Mines Threaten San Andrés Communities*, Global Greengrants Fund (Jan. 28, 2005), <https://www.greengrants.org/2005/01/28/honduras-open-pit-mines-threaten-san-andres-communities/>; Anna Cody, *Presentation to the Committee on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights (CESR): Gold Mining in Honduras*, CESR, <https://www.cesr.org/sites/default/files/downloads/CESCR%20presentation%20on%20Honduras%20by%20CESR.pdf>; Spring, *supra* note 32; Rory Carroll, *Gold Giant Faces Honduras Inquiry Into Alleged Heavy Metal Pollution*, *The Guardian* (Dec. 9, 2009), <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2009/dec/31/goldcorp-honduras-pollution-allegations>.

<sup>34</sup> See Maxwell Radwin, *Mining Company Destroys Indigenous Cemetery During Expansion in Honduras*, *Mongabay* (revised June 21, 2022), <https://news.mongabay.com/2022/06/mining-company-destroys-indigenous-cemetery-during-expansion-in-honduras/>; Carroll, *supra* note 33.

<sup>35</sup> See Radwin, *supra* note 34.

<sup>36</sup> G.A. Res. 61/295, *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (Oct. 2, 2007), <https://www.refworld.org/docid/471355a82.html>.

<sup>37</sup> See, e.g., Interview by RHRC/CGRS with Donald Hernandez, *supra* note 14; see also *Case of the Garífuna Community of Triunfo de la Cruz and its Members v. Honduras*, Judgment, Inter-Am. Ct. H.R. (ser. C), ¶ 259-260 (Oct. 8, 2015), [https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec\\_305\\_ing.pdf](https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec_305_ing.pdf) (IACtHR decision in favor of the Garífuna community of Triunfo de la Cruz, which orders the State of Honduras to grant the community a title of collective property over the territories they inhabit. The Court concluded that the State of Honduras had violated the right to collective ownership of ancestral territory, and the right to prior, free and informed consent).

<sup>38</sup> See e.g., Anastasia Moloney, *Honduran Minority Fears for Survival After Leaders Abducted*, *Reuters* (July, 31, 2020); Oficina del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos (OACNUDH), *Sobre la Situación de los Derechos Humanos en Honduras*, 10, (Mar. 6, 2023), <https://reliefweb.int/report/honduras/situacion-de-los-derechos-humanos-en-honduras-informe-del-alto-comisionado-de-las-naciones-unidas-para-los-derechos-humanos-sobre-la-situacion-de-los-derechos-humanos-en-hondura-ahrc5224-advance-unedited-version> (Although Indigenous and Garífuna people represent only about 10 percent of Honduras' population, almost 40 percent of the attacks against human rights defenders in Honduras in 2022 were directed at them).

<sup>39</sup> See OACNUDH, *supra* note 38, at 13; See also International Service for Human Rights, *El Rol de las Empresas y los Estados en las Violaciones Contra los Defensores y las Defensoras de los Derechos de la Tierra, el Territorio y el Ambiente*, CEHPRODEC (Oct. 2015), 42, [https://cehprodechn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Civil-society-organization-joint-reoprt\\_defensoras-del-medio-ambiente\\_2015.pdf](https://cehprodechn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Civil-society-organization-joint-reoprt_defensoras-del-medio-ambiente_2015.pdf).

<sup>40</sup> See e.g., Series of Interviews by RHRC/CGRS with Donald Hernandez, Director of Honduran Centre for the Promotion of Community Development (CEHPRODEC) (Nov. 2022 to Sept. 2023) (on file with CGRS).

<sup>41</sup> Claudia Herrmannsdorfer, Honduran Attorney and Women's Rights Expert, Expert Declaration (June 28, 2023) (on file with CGRS).

<sup>42</sup> See Interview by RHRC/CGRS with Donald Hernandez, *supra* note 40.

<sup>43</sup> *Id.*

<sup>44</sup> *Id.*

<sup>45</sup> *Id.*

<sup>46</sup> *Id.*

<sup>47</sup> *Id.*



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<sup>48</sup> *Id.*

<sup>49</sup> See Duron, *supra* note 21.

<sup>50</sup> UNFCCC, *Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts (WIM)*, (Nov. 2013), <https://unfccc.int/topics/adaptation-and-resilience/workstreams/loss-and-damage/warsaw-international-mechanism>

<sup>51</sup> The White House, *U.S. Strategy for Addressing the Root Causes of Migration in Central America* (July, 2021), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Root-Causes-Strategy.pdf>.

<sup>52</sup> See U.S. Department of State, *Central America Forward* (Aug. 2023), <https://www.state.gov/central-america-forward/>.

<sup>53</sup> See Partnership for Central America, <https://www.centampartnership.org/> (last accessed on December 12, 2023).

<sup>54</sup> See CGRS, *Climate Change and Cross-Border Displacement: What the Courts, the Administration, and Congress Can do to Improve Options for the United States* (Oct. 2023), <https://cgrs.uclawsf.edu/our-work/publications/climate-change-and-cross-border-displacement-what-courts-administration-and-0>.

<sup>55</sup> See OFRANEH, *Pueblo Garífuna: A Siete Años De Emitidas Las Sentencias De La Corte IHD, Y Dos Años De Los Desaparecidos* (Aug. 9, 2022), <https://ofraneh.wordpress.com/2022/08/09/pueblo-garifuna-y-cumplimiento-de-sentencias-ciorte-idh/>.

<sup>56</sup> Hydroelectric dams, once seen as sustainable climate solutions, are now recognized for their substantial greenhouse gas emissions and a host of human rights violations, including the forced relocation of Indigenous groups and the destruction of their cultural heritage. See International Rivers, *10 Reasons why Hydropower Dams are a False Climate Solution* (2022), <https://www.internationalrivers.org/news/10-reasons-why-hydropower-dams-are-a-false-climate-solution/>; and Business & Human Rights Centre, *Investor Snapshot Hydropower & Human Rights* (2018), [https://media.business-humanrights.org/media/documents/files/Hydro\\_-\\_Investor\\_snapshot\\_0.pdf](https://media.business-humanrights.org/media/documents/files/Hydro_-_Investor_snapshot_0.pdf).