



MONTHLY REPORT ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH'S RIGHTS IN HONDURAS

SUMMARY

January 2017



In 2017, the Secretariat of Education will implement a campaign titled "Taking Care of my Health and Life" to advocate for sexual education in order to prevent sexual violence and teenage pregnancy. La Tribuna, January 2017.

OBSERVATORY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH'S RIGHTS IN HONDURAS

COVENANT HOUSE HONDURAS



Letter from Covenant House's Honduras National Director

We are now beginning this administration's fourth year of government. Statistics reveal what is happening in the lives of Hondurans: more poverty and violence, fewer opportunities, and greater institutional weaknesses.

Thus, 2017 appears gloomy for children, youth and citizens alike who continue to be victims of a failed security strategy focused on militarization.

The government and the political elite are focused on the election season with their backs turned on the major problems the country faces.

Covenant House's Observatory for Children and Youth's Rights in Honduras, presents the following report for January 2017, with the objective of keeping alive the collective consciousness that holds the State accountable for caring for children and youth in Honduras.

Any suggestions or observations on the subject matter addressed in this report can be sent to this institution's email address or telephone number.

Sincerely,



José Guadalupe Ruelas
Director Nacional
Casa Alianza Honduras

Covenant House's Observatory for Children and Youth's Rights in Honduras

Covenant House Honduras is a nongovernmental organization that has been a safe haven for children and youth facing extreme poverty, unemployment, violence, and human trafficking for over 29 years.

The Observatory for Children and Youth's Rights was created to document the circumstances surrounding children and youth in our country and to promote research with an emphasis on human rights. The Observatory permanently verifies and analyzes human rights abuses based on the Honduras' fundamental laws and international conventions.

Through the Observatory, Covenant House continuously advocates and participates in public policy proposals to improve the government's response and secure fundamental rights for children and youth.

1. RIGHT TO EDUCATION

1.1 Deteriorated and Unattended Infrastructure

Distrito Central municipality has a student population of 300,000 and 800 schools, of which 43% lack the adequate infrastructure to ensure proper safety and student's basic needs.

The following criteria were considered in each school's evaluation: the conditions of its basic services, possible natural and/or social threats, over crowdedness, and its water supply network.



José Cecilio del Valle Institute is one of many schools that present the following conditions: 40% of its 52 classrooms require immediate attention due to a severely damaged roof that has raised concerns among parents and an electrical system that is out of date. In 2016, this school's student population was of 3,815 plus 800 students enrolled in their distance-learning program.

The school's computer science program has 19 outdated and unreliable computers for its 300 students. The coordinator of the program, Juan Pablo Guevara, explained that sometimes they rely on student's computers and those without one must collaborate with a classmate in order to acquire a grade.

1.2 Insecurity and Violence at Schools



High levels of violence and insecurity have affected schools for years. Faced with this situation, more than a hundred teachers have asked the Francisco Morazán Departmental Directorate of Education to transfer locations, exchange teaching assignments and leaves of absence.

One teacher, who for security reasons will remain unnamed, requested to be relocated after receiving extortion threats. The teacher's life is now in danger if he or she returns to the school.

This teacher indicated that many colleagues have experienced the same but prefer not to comment due to the danger.

In 2016, more than 300 teachers were relocated because of incidents of crime in the capital city. Supposed gang members who were students at the school abducted a teacher at the "Saúl Zelaya Jiménez" Institute.

This hostile environment has left vacant spots with very few opportunities for relocation. In 2017, approximately 2,000 teachers requested to be relocated but the Departmental office only has 200 openings.

1.3 Changes in the Secretariat of Education

This new school year initiated with changes amongst the highest authorities of Honduras' education system.

After the crisis at the National University of Agriculture (UNA), Mr. Marlon Escoto announced his resignation as Secretary of Education on social media, arguing that he would devote himself to address the issues at the UNA, despite being relegated from that responsibility as well.

After a few days of speculation as to who would succeed Escoto, the Honduran President - also making use of social networks - announced Dr. Rutílica del Socorro Calderón as the new Minister of Education.



Dr. Calderón was the academic vice-rector at the National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH) and one of the most reluctant officials to dialogue with Honduras' largest student population.

Dr. Rutilia del Socorro's trajectory of authoritarian leadership and denial of any sort of dialogue or collaboration with students at the UNAH, are strong indicators of possible conflicts the public education sector will soon confront.

2. RIGHT TO HEALTH

2.1 Impact of Health Epidemics on Children

The country's weak health system is constantly overwhelmed by the arrival of epidemics such as Zika, Dengue, and Chikungunya.

In December 2015 the first cases of Zika appeared and by February 2016 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared it a global emergency.



Since then there have been 32,113 cases of Zika nationwide, 22,725 of Dengue, and 15,858 of Chikungunya; in sum, reaching a total of 70,696 cases.

The consequences of Zika are more serious as it causes microcephaly and Guillain Barré Syndrome (GBS), which is a neurological condition that causes body paralysis and difficulty breathing. In 2016, 127 babies were born with microcephaly and 164 people were diagnosed with Guillain Barré.

In the first two weeks of January, the University School Hospital (HEU) in Tegucigalpa reported five cases of babies born with microcephaly, one of them died within minutes; and four cases of Guillain Barre Syndrome, three corresponding to children under the age of 15.

2.2 Teenage Pregnancy

Between January and November 2016, the San Pedro Sula hospitals Leonardo Martínez and Mario Catarino Rivas Hospitals reported 18,273 and 6,047 births, respectively.

During this same time frame, the Leonardo Martínez hospital reported 4,053 births by girls between the ages 14 and 17, 3,274 of which delivered vaginally and 779 by cesarean.

This care center attends patients from San Pedro Sula, Valley of Sula, Yoro and in some cases Siguatepeque and Comayagua. Dr. Yelba Cuadra, an epidemiologist at the maternity ward of Leonardo Martínez, indicated a 25% increase of childbirths amongst adolescents.

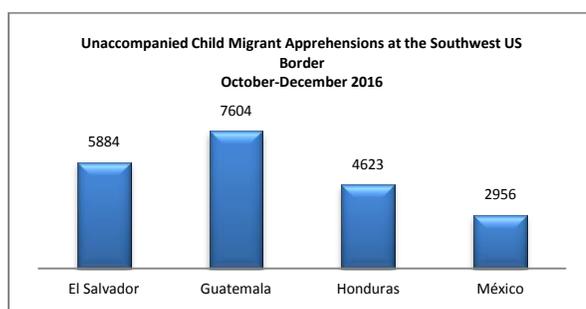
3. RIGHT TO PROTECTION

3.1 Child Migration

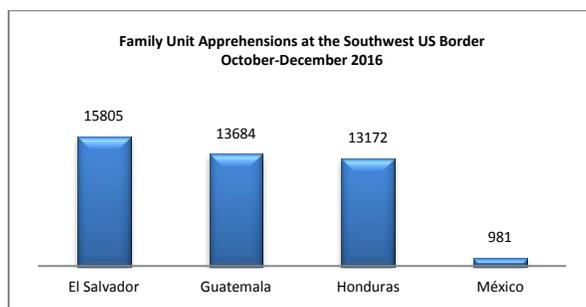
In 2016 deportations of migrant children and adolescents increased by 41% in comparison to 2015, demonstrating that the situation, far from being resolved, is getting worse.

In January 484 minors were deported, according to data collected by Covenant House's program for unaccompanied child migrants.

Between October and December 2016 (three months), 21,067 unaccompanied child migrants from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras were detained at the southern border of the United States. Of this total, 4,623 (21%) were of Honduran origin.



Migrant children are vulnerable whether migrating alone or accompanied by relatives. Between October and December 2016 (three months), 43,642 family units were detained from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. Of this total, 13,172 (30%) were of Honduran origin.



Migrant children and adolescents are highly vulnerable, as they are subject to violence and abuse by criminal groups, traffickers, sexual offenders as well as other dangers. Most of them flee varying situations of violence and when deported are reinserted in the violent contexts they intended to leave.

3.2 Internally Displaced Children

Internal displacement caused by violence is a problem that increases daily in the conflictive neighborhoods of our country. Initial displacement occurs within country, from one neighborhood to another, between municipalities and/or between departments. If the threat continues, families decide to migrate to another country.

Covenant House Honduras, with support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), identifies migrant children, youth and families who fled the country due to violence. These cases are identified upon the child's arrival to the Center "El Belen," in San Pedro Sula. **In 2016, 357 cases of internally displaced children and adolescents were identified. Additionally, in January, 30 cases were reported.**

Generally, this population expresses feelings of hopelessness, anger, disappointment, sadness and concern. They also report the precarious conditions of the Mexican detention centers, including lack of food, physical and verbal ill-treatment by Mexican immigration authorities, and the lack of information on alternative processes to deportation, for example, the request for refuge in cases of forced displacement.

3.3 Penal Justice System for Juvenile Offenders

The justice system for juvenile offenders in Honduras is in crisis due to - among several factors - a punitive model focused on punishment that purposefully ignores the vulnerability of these individuals who are immersed in contexts of extreme violence.

This failure has become more evident in recent months, leading the national and international community to raise questions about the conditions of the internment centers, the government's lack of control, and incidents in which juvenile offender's fundamental rights have been violated. For example, multiple cases of minors gruesomely killed inside these centers.

In this context, Covenant House Honduras continues to implement the program called "Proponte Más," in partnership with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). This involves "strengthening the capacities of DINAF (Government Agency for Children, Adolescents

and Families) to help plan and manage government and civil society services to create greater opportunities for these adolescents."

During January, Covenant House, in line with its commitment to provide the necessary companionship for children and youth with offenses, implemented the YSET interview with 5 minors to determine their level of risk.

As part of the initiative to raise awareness, Covenant House participated on a TV program to discuss the Juvenile Criminal Justice System and to promote alternative measures that provide a space for reflection and reparation of the damages committed rather than punishment. They also explained Covenant House's aspiration to provide opportunities for social reintegration with the participation of the family.

In addition, in January 15 adolescents who were granted non-custodial measures continued to receive follow-up care and guidance in their process of rehabilitation and social reintegration.

3.4 Sexual Education as a Mechanism to Prevent Sexual Violence and Teen Pregnancy

This year at least eight departments in the country will use the textbook "Caring for my health and my life," which addresses issues of sexual and general health, as a fundamental part of the National Basic Curriculum (CNB). Social organizations, teacher unions, feminist organizations, and others have supported this decision.

"We have already trained more than 23,000 teachers and we obviously are in debt with the country given the high rates of teenage pregnancies and we must keep moving forward," said Lourdes Cartagena, the Ministry of Education's General Director of Educational Services.

"The World Health Organization (WHO) has been clear that the best way to prevent teenage pregnancies is precisely talking to young people and providing sexual education, because the problem will not be prevented by hiding information," said Jaime Rodríguez, President of the College of Teachers of Middle Education of Honduras (COPEMH).

Although the implementation of these guidelines represent a significant advance in Honduras, the conservative sectors of society, found mostly in the Catholic and Evangelical church, has accused the textbook of "hedonistic sex education" and accusing it of "perverting children."

Despite the above, education authorities said they will not reverse the project, arguing that the guidelines were agreed upon with technicians, parents and people who belong to churches.

4. Statistical Analysis of Violent Deaths and/or Homicides.

During January, the written press in Honduras reported 201 violent deaths, which indicates an average of 6.4 violent deaths daily.

Of this total, 182 were male and 19 female. The ages of the victims varied between 9 and 76 years old and 41% of the victims were younger than 30 years old.

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

Of particular interest is a report that acquired nationwide media coverage that reports 341 violent deaths during the month of January, representing an average of 11 murders per day.

The report's data was collected from the police, hospitals, morgue, traffic authorities, and others. In general, the following data stands out for January 2017:

- At least 341 murders were reported, representing 11 murders a day.
- Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula are the locations with the most violent events.
- 8 massacres were reported in the northern area of San Pedro Sula.

Of the total deaths reported in the written news and collected by the Observatory, 53 children and youth between the ages 0 and 23 were killed violently. Of this total, 50 were male and 3 female. Between the ages 0 and 17, 13 violent deaths were reported, of which 12 were male and 1 female.

The departments with the largest percentage of violent deaths, representing 83% of total cases, are Cortes (25 cases) and Francisco Morazán (19 cases).

Violent deaths and/or arbitrary executions of children and youth between the ages 0 and 23 Department and Municipality January 2017					
Department	Municipality	# of cases	Department	Municipality	# of cases
Cortés	Choloma	9	Atlántida	La Ceiba	2
	Omoa	1	Colón	Trujillo	1
	Puerto Cortés	2	Comayagua	Comayagua	1
	San Manuel	2	Copán	San Pedro de Copán	1
	San Pedro Sula	10	Francisco Morazán	Distrito Central	18
	Villanueva	1		Valle de Ángeles	1
Intibucá	Intibucá	1	Yoro	El Progreso	1
Olancho	Santa María del Real	1		Yoro	1

Alleged Offenders

Based on the collected information, 86.7% of the cases determine the culprit as “unknown,” which means impunity for the perpetrator. The people in Honduras operate under the assumption that the investigative police’s job consists of collecting the body and giving it to the family. They believe that a violent death only becomes a document in the police’s archive.

4.1 Violent Deaths in the Last 18 Years

During the last 18 years, between February 1998 and January 2017, there have been 11,774 cases of violent deaths and/or arbitrary executions of children and youth ages 0 to 23.

During the two years and ten months of Juan Orlando Hernandez’s presidency, there have been 2,660 violent deaths and/or arbitrary executions of children and youth ages 0 to 23.

By calculating the monthly averages of violent deaths and/or arbitrary execution of children and youth of previous administrations, it is evident that the number of violent deaths has increased. Currently, the monthly average of violent deaths is 73.8, which has almost doubled since 1998, when the monthly average was 50.

Comparative graph of monthly averages of violent deaths and/or arbitrary executions of each administration since 1998.

