

ENCA



Environmental Network *for* Central America

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MUFRAS-32

Hector Berrios is presented with Human Rights award.

Honduras protests

We round up events since the start of 2019

One step forwards...

Nicaragua faces mixed fortunes in environmental policy

HUMAN COST OF U.S. BORDER POLICY





ENCA aims to work directly with people in communities who are seeking to arrest environmental degradation and who are often struggling against the repression and violence of armies and police forces acting under the command of wealthy individuals, transnational corporations and corrupt politicians. We campaign with them to place environmental rights within national constitutions and to ensure that the exploitation of natural resources benefits the many and not just the few and is carried out within sustainable and renewable bounds.

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No Kids in Cages!

The migrant caravans from the Northern Triangle of Central America have not dried up. They are still going. Over these two pages we present here a few migration statistics from México, and below we include a small sample of the work of the organisation 'NoKidsInCages'.

#NoKidsInCages is about the children. No Kids in Cages says that the USA cannot be a nation that separates families.

For those who have forgotten, it's time to remember and raise our voices. For those who didn't know, it's time to understand the plight of these innocent children. And support organisations that are fighting to save and reunite children separated at the US border.

No Kids in Cages is supporting RAICES, an organisation on the frontlines providing free and low-cost legal and social services to immigrant children, families, and refugees. You can visit their websites at:

<https://nokidsincages.com/>
and
<https://www.raicestexas.org/>

This is America.

This is not history. This is happening now.



Over 3,000 children were separated from their parents at the México – US border. They live in cages, sleep on the floor under 68 cent blankets. They are shuttled around between 17 different states.

154 days is the average time spent by these children away from their parents.

6 of these children have died.

Migration trends from Central America



43,000 Hondurans detained by Mexican authorities in 2019 so far – that is **47%** of all migrant detentions.

25,000 Guatemalans detained by Mexican authorities in 2019 so far.

10,000 Salvadorans detained by Mexican authorities in 2019 so far.

27,255 Hondurans deported by land from México in 2019 so far.

13,930 of these were male, **4,525** women, **5,229** boys and **3,571** girls.



\$6 billion per year: the value of the business of trafficking migrants through México and into the United States, as estimated by the Mexican government.

Between \$3,500 and \$7,000: paid by each migrant to the *coyotes* (people smugglers) who guide the migrants.

6,000 Mexican troops deployed to the country's southern border (with Guatemala and Belize) after the agreement between the Mexican and US Presidents in order to prevent the flow of migrants northwards from the Northern Triangle countries.

68 frontier crossings unmanned along México's southern border – these were meant to be staffed and guarded a week after the agreement.



Sources:

- Criterio HN, 16 June 2019, 'México ha deportado a más 27 mil hondureños en 2019'
- Criterio HN, 13 June 2019, 'Las detenciones y deportaciones de migrantes aumentan en México'
- Telesur, 12 June 2019, 'Central American Asylum-Seeking Children Face Harsh Conditions'
- El Economista, 12 June 2019, 'México crea mesa permanente migratoria con Honduras, El Salvador y Guatemala'
- La Prensa Gráfica, 15 June 2019, 'Tráfico de migrantes deja \$6,000 millones al año'
- Popular Resistance, 16 June 2019, 'No Kids in Cages'

A round-up of recent chaotic events in the narco-state of Honduras run by organised crime

In ENCA Newsletter No 74 (November 2018), we included a three-page round-up of corruption, repression and violence in Guatemala. Half a year later the situation in Guatemala for defenders of land rights, environmental rights and human rights cannot be said to have improved, but in this issue it is the turn of Honduras to be scrutinised. Both countries are dysfunctional in terms of social and environmental welfare, are politically undemocratic and anti-democratic, are economically highly unequal and epitomise day-to-day activity controlled by organised crime. No place to be an environmentalist or a social activist. Compiled by ENCA member Martin Mowforth.

For weeks the streets of Tegucigalpa and other Honduran cities have been the scene of protests and violent repression by the police and army. Protests have been held regularly on Fridays this year demanding that the President Juan Orlando Hernández steps down due to his links with acts of corruption and narco-trafficking. But since late April, teachers and health workers have been demonstrating against the privatisation of education and health services.

These demonstrations have grown into huge mobilizations in support of the teachers and health workers, but also demanding the resignation of President Juan Orlando Hernández (commonly referred to as JOH). Honduran economist Hugo Noé Pino and sociologist Eugenio Sosa have explained the background to the unrest: “The budgets of both sectors [education and health] have decreased during the current decade. Spending on education by the central government was 32.9 per cent of the total in 2010 and in the approved budget for 2019 it is 19.9 per cent. Health spending was reduced from 14.3 per cent to 9.7 per cent in the same period.” During this same period, spending on security and defence has increased.

As the SOAW (School of the Americas Watch) reports, “the situation in public hospitals is disastrous due to lack of equipment, medicine and supplies. It is so bad that doctors report operating by the light of cell phones.” Honduras has 14 doctors for 10,000 population compared with a figure of 20 doctors as an average for Central America.

It is these conditions, along with the extremely high level of generalised violence and particular repression against protests, that have driven so many people to take the dangerous migration routes to the USA. It is ironic that GDP growth in Honduras is relatively high, thereby satisfying the International Monetary Fund’s demands and

requirements. One of the reasons for this GDP growth is the high level of remittances sent back to family members in Honduras by all the Hondurans who have successfully crossed the US border to find work and to earn enough to send back home.

On 7th June *Public Sector Finance* reported that in the first week in June protests by public sector workers continued unabated despite the government’s u-turn on public sector reforms. Workers are sceptical of the government’s willingness to carry out and comply with any agreements made through negotiations between government and workers. Additionally, JOH’s credibility and legitimacy are limited by the more general call for his resignation.

On 17th June, *teleSur* reported that the teachers’ and health workers’ protests are continuing despite JOH’s repealing of the two laws designed to privatise the two sectors. They point out that JOH’s repeal referred only to the health sector and not to the education sector; and they claim that this is a clear attempt to divide the protesters. At the time of going to print, the protests were continuing.

1,000 Israeli troops to Honduras

A multilateral treaty between Honduras, Israel and the United States sees the deployment of 1,000 Israeli soldiers to Honduras to train the Armed Forces of Honduras (FFAA) and the National Police.

The main mission of the troops is to train for border protection to prevent migrants fleeing Honduras to the USA, but they will also offer training in the fight against drug trafficking, investigation and counter-terrorism. The 1,000 troops will be stationed with the Joint Task Force of the US at the Soto Cano air base in Palmerola, the largest US military base in Latin America.

The presence of Israeli soldiers is part of a bilateral cooperation agreed between the two countries and signed before Honduras transferred its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Another agreement between the two countries (signed in 2016 for a period of ten years) commits Honduras to purchasing a million dollars’ worth of Israeli arms and military equipment and the repowering of ships and planes.

Olivia Zúñiga Cáceres, a deputy from the Partido Libertad y Refundación (Liberty and Refoundation Party), explained that the 2009 post-coup government “began to make military agreements where the Honduran army would receive more training, and it is all paid for with the taxes of the Honduran people, so that all of the general budget that was destined for health, education and public services is reduced.”

Zúñiga Cáceres (who also happens to be one of the daughters of the assassinated leader of COPINH, Berta Cáceres) went on to describe the Israeli armed forces as: “specialists in genocide, specialists in torture, which they do against the Palestinian people.”

300 US troops to Honduras

Another Southern Command (Southcom) brigade of US Navy and Marine soldiers arrived in Honduras at the beginning of June to “improve disaster response and other crisis situations”.

As *Popular Resistance.org* writes, “Southcom has been a controversial actor in Latin American politics for many years since its founding as a force to defend US interests at the Panama Canal. The commander of Southcom, US Admiral Craig Faller, has intimated that the force could be re-oriented for intervention in Venezuela ...”

It is interesting to note that this new deployment of forces coincides with >>

widespread civil unrest in Honduras. The protests of health and education workers have grown into broader demonstrations against government corruption and neoliberal economic development policies such as privatisation. It also coincides with US efforts to persuade northern triangle countries' governments (El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras) to prevent the waves of migrants that have chosen over the last nine months to leave the failed state that is Honduras.

Honduras: Murder Rate Surges Deflating Hopes for Better 2019

The number of violent deaths in Honduras has gone up in April and May, sometimes by a rate as high as 98 percent over figures from 2018.

According to a report by the General Directorate of Forensic Medicine and the National Observatory of Violence of the National Autonomous University of Honduras (OV-UNAH), between Jan. 1 and May 8 of 2019, 1,258 people were murdered – a rate of 10 per day. While the overall number for the year is lower than the 1,340 registered homicides that took place during the same time last year, the number of deaths in April and May of 2019 have increased significantly.

April 2019 saw 78 more violent deaths over last April and in the first 8 days of May there were 113 violent deaths, 38 more than those that occurred in the same period of the previous year. Wednesday (8th) was an especially violent day with 25 murders taking place all over the country according to a report by *Criterio*. The deaths were registered in cities such as La Ceiba, Choluteca, Danlí, Lepaterique, Teupasenti, El Paraíso, San Pedro Sula and Santa Cruz de Yojoa.

Just the day before on Tuesday at the Central American Security Conference 2019 run by the United States Southern Command, and including Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico as observers, the head of the Armed Forces of Honduras René Orlando Fonseca had said that Honduras "lives in a climate of peace and security" and that "violence is sporadic."

This year, 274 homicides were reported in January, 258 violent deaths in February, and in March there were 251 homicides, figures

below those registered in 2018 during the same period.

Those three encouraging months of reduced homicides in the country were overshadowed, however, by the high incidence of deaths in April and the start of May.

Spokesman for the Secretariat of Security Jair Meza, a high ranking police official, attributed the increase in violent deaths to "gangs and gangs linking up to acquire territories for the sale of drugs in different neighbourhoods." Meza argued that another factor causing the high incidence of homicides is extortion, mainly in the transportation sector.

"We cannot place a policeman or military member on every bus," says Meza.

Femicides in Honduras

30 women were murdered during the month of January this year according to the Observatory of Violence at the National Autonomous University of Honduras (OV-UNAH). About 95 per cent of the country's femicides go unpunished.

The number of femicides in Honduras has reduced in recent years, but remains very high. Femicides make orphans of thousands of children. A September 2018 report by the Association of Quality of Life and the Women's Tribe Against Femicides found that over 17,000 children in the country have been orphaned as a direct result of femicides. The United Nations has named 'machismo' or male superiority as one of the leading causes that normalises violence against women in Honduras.

UNICEF in Honduras: violence and de-education

In early April, UNICEF director Henrietta Fore visited Honduras. She emphasised that Honduras is not a nation at war but is a country which has a rate of violence that is "astronomical". Since 2010, Honduras has had one of the highest murder rates in the world.

She said, "Honduras continues to be a dangerous place for too many children and adolescents. The gangs sow terror

throughout the country and offer young people an impossible choice: Join or die." Fore listened to testimonies of affected populations and stated that more than half a million children of school age do not have access to secondary education in Honduras.

Criminalisation in Honduras

On the World Press Freedom Day in May this year, UN Secretary General António Guterres endorsed a letter calling for an end to the use of criminalisation as a tactic to silence critics.

In Honduran courts, there are currently at least 41 lawsuits relating to crimes against one's honour. The Comité por la Libre Expresión (Committee for Free Expression) gave details of 13 cases relating to journalists, eight to political party members, three to trade unionists, four to land defenders, two to the defenders of women's human rights, two to victims who demanded justice for the assassination of relatives, and one public employee. The majority of these had divulged information or had expressed an opinion regarding matters of public concern.

In its letter to mark World Press Freedom Day, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights acknowledged the significance of the media and journalists in the promotion and protection of this freedom. The Office observed with concern the aggression, violence and violations of human rights of journalists in Honduras. ♦



Looking for the Bright Side of the Darién Gap

May 07, 2019 | Pulitzer Centre

BY GUIDO BILBAO

This is a short article produced as one of the Pulitzer Centre's Shorthand Stories series. We are grateful to Guido Bilbao for permission to reproduce the article here. The article leads via a link in the final sentence to an excellent multimedia report which we encourage all our readers to visit for a very informative experience. The project which is the subject of this report was supported by the Pulitzer Centre on Crisis Reporting.

Darién is a land full of challenges. First and foremost is the advance of loggers and settlers who threaten its tropical forests. Land ownership, constantly changing, has direct consequences on the health of the forest. That is why we embarked on a story that, through the indigenous people who organise to defend it, goes through the different forces that threaten their survival.

First we mapped the growing deforestation and declining forest cover that has evolved over the last 17 years. The result was overwhelming. Although we knew about the height of the felling, we did not imagine such a dramatic result. We were still prisoners of the general view of a forgotten place that always remains the same over time. Well, no. The effects reach the deepest areas of a forest that is the bridge of biodiversity between South America and Central America. Although here the Pan-American Highway is interrupted, the truth is that the opening of the Darién gap is in fact taking place.

The map shows us that the legalized indigenous territories have a more robust forest cover than the non-indigenous territories, or even protected areas. Then, we sought to define the areas in conflict, and we found that the dispute over untitled lands also defines how the tropical forest will be used. We worked together with the team of indigenous drone pilots and mappers to create a map of land ownership that shows how indigenous peoples with legalized

territory are much more efficient than the central government and its system of protected areas to take care of the forest. We also defined the lands being claimed by communities that are inside national parks. We came to the determination that there are 650,000 hectares in dispute for which the Ministry of the Environment of Panama does not want to respond.

Once we defined the areas where deforestation was concentrated and where there were conflicts between settlers and indigenous peoples, we tried to explain how the logging business works. This is how we found the business around companies that use micro-titling of land in the name of poor peasants and then build enormous *latifundios* [estates] without having paid for those territories.

For the Panamanian government, deforestation is an improvement of the land. In this way the felling is rewarded. And businessmen take advantage of legal loopholes to advance over a territory where the presence of the Panamanian State is nil. Through exhaustive searches in the Public Registry, we discovered the titling of 2,000 hectares in indigenous territory that were carried out over two years in more than 40 different deeds. And with that land as collateral the businessmen got mortgages from state banks. To verify these payments we accessed the records of the Ministry of Agricultural Development where we found payments to these companies for \$2 million over the past 10 years – more than 60 orders of payments for smaller sums that together build a small fortune.

However, we understood while doing the fieldwork that we did not want to continue abusing the myth of the cursed and wild land. Like a 21st-century Old West or a tropical Siberia, the myth of the wild Darién has grown since ancient times. But when visiting the communities and in spite of the threats of the settlers and the logging, despite the poverty and absence of the State, we found that there was a

vitality and a work of great commitment to defend the forest and their cultural heritage. The historical narrative about Darién is full of tragedies and barbarities. But it is a story without heroes. And in these times of climate change and environmental apocalypse we wanted to highlight the work of all these communities that, against all odds, defend the tropical forest. Therefore, without losing sight of the weight of the investigation, we decided to change the focus to highlight the work of these defenders of Darién who risk their lives to try to prevent further deforestation, since they understand that the disappearance of the forest means the disappearance of their culture.

When setting up the transmedia project, we did it following the research process. We narrated the myth of the accursed Darién, explained the legal situation of the land, then the wood business and widespread corruption, to end up telling the story of the defenders of the Darién in a 10-minute mini-documentary.

We built a trailer to promote the transmedia project at:

<https://pulitzercenter.shorthandstories.com/DefendersofDarien/#group-documentary-nfC3qxY6z1>

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Guido Bilbao was born in Argentina where he majored in journalism. He has worked in his home country, Spain, and in Panamá where he has lived for 15 years. His writing has appeared in El País, Le Monde Diplomatique, Berlín, La Prensa Panamá and La Nación Argentina. He has also directed documentaries for Al Jazeera International. His first documentary 'Time to Love: A Backstage Tale' was screened at the Lincoln Centre in March 2017.

Nicaragua: One step forwards, two steps back?

Interoceanic Canal to be de-activated? – a non-development?

On 13 June the Anti-Canal Movement of Nicaragua celebrated the possibility of the end of the planned Interoceanic Canal through Nicaragua. The date marked six years since the signing into effect of the Canal Agreement between the Nicaraguan government and the HKND Group which was the holder of the concession to build and operate the canal.

The original agreement contained clauses allowing the cancellation of the agreement if the development's many sub-projects were not concluded within six years. The clauses allow for the cancellation without consequences for the government.

It is important to point out that this does not necessarily mean that the project has been brought to an end. For it to be concluded, the government would have to invoke the clauses and its many articles, and this has not happened. Nevertheless, it is also noteworthy that few developments on the sub-projects have been made and the issue has taken a back seat in public debate over the last two years.

One of the leaders of the Anti-Canal Movement is Medardo Mairena who was recently released from prison and led the celebrations. Mairena had been accused and convicted of involvement in the murder of four policemen and one teacher at Morrito during the anti-government protests which convulsed the country during 2018. He was released as part of the Amnesty Law brought into force as a result of the current dialogue between the government and anti-government movement that formed the core of the protests during 2018.

There are different versions of Mairena's guilt and he himself claims innocence.

English company to look for oil in Nicaragua – a retrograde step?

An English company, Cairn, has joined the Norwegian state company Equinor (previously known as Statoil) which holds oil exploration concessions in Nicaragua. Cairn has a 35 per cent non-operative interest in four exploration blocks along the Pacific coast on Nicaragua. Cairn's executive president Simon Thomson explained that the company had acquired the exploration rights with a view to carrying out exploratory drilling during 2020.

Equinor continues as the principal operating partner with 49.9 per cent of the capital. The Nicaraguan oil company Petronic has the remaining 15 per cent. Drilling is expected to take place off the Nicaraguan coast, and a figure of 300 million barrels of oil has been mentioned as possible if the exploration is successful.

This news comes to us despite the rising image of the 'Leave it in the Ground' campaign, despite Nicaragua's own successful push to use renewables rather than fossil fuels for the basis of its energy production, despite the government's own hard-line stance on the need for a low threshold of temperature increase to address

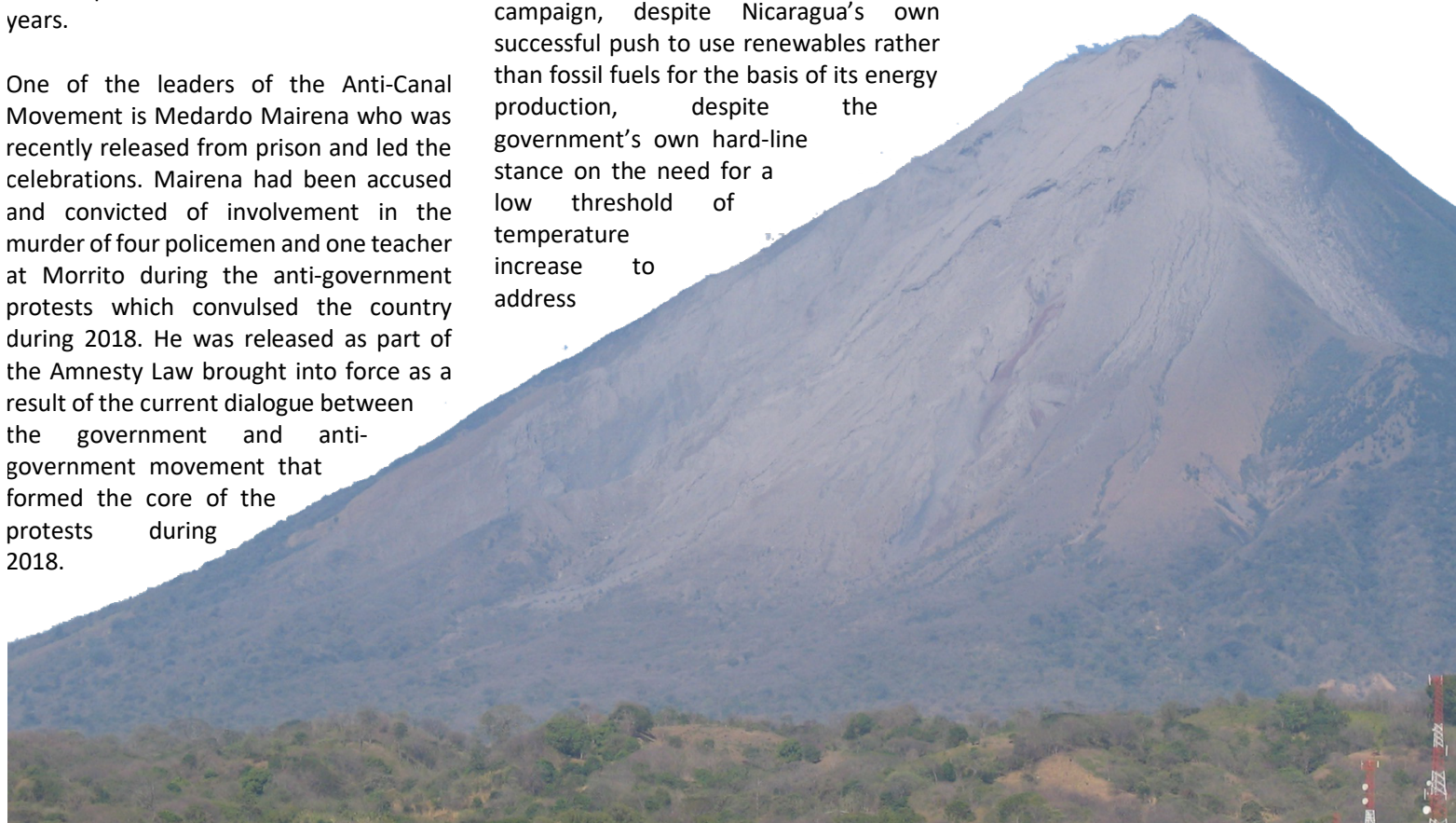
climate change, despite the current growing awareness of the need to drastically reduce the use of fossil fuels and despite the well-known and observed dangers of oil spills at sea.

\$100 million investment in solar energy – a development?

The Israeli company EPR Solar has agreed to invest \$100 million in the development of a solar energy plant between San Benito and Tipitapa in Nicaragua.

The plant is expected to produce 100 megawatts of electricity, and will require 143 manzanas (approximately 220 acres) of land, 170,000 solar panels, and the mobilisation of 3,000 containers to transport all the equipment. It is projected to reduce the country's petrol bill by 140,000 barrels of oil.

Preliminary activity is expected to start this year and to be finished in 2020. Two hundred people are expected to be employed in the construction of the plant.



México to donate US\$30 million for 'Sowing Life' programme

On the World Refugee Day (20th June), President Nayib Bukele of El Salvador and President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) of México signed an accord that México would provide El Salvador with US\$30 million in support of the 'Sowing Life' programme. 'Sowing Life' incentivises agro-forestry systems over an area of 50,000 hectares of land and it is hoped to generate 20,000 jobs. It is designed to reduce the flow of Salvadoran refugees northwards.

México's Chancellor, Marcelo Ebrard, said that the accord holds out the possibility that the support could be extended to as much as US\$100 million and that it is given without conditions.

There is a strong environmental element to the programme as it involves the reforestation of specific zones of land and includes the planting of trees for both wood (such as cedar and caoba) and food (such as coffee and cacao).

Further news on plastics

Following our articles on the banning and reduction of plastics use in Central American countries in our last issue (ENCA 75), we have received a report from the Waterkeeper Alliance that Belize has phased out single use plastic bags and utensils and expanded polystyrene foam (commonly known as Styrofoam).

The Waterkeeper Alliance fights for every community's rights to drinkable, fishable and swimmable water. More information at: waterkeeper.org

Elections in Panamá

On 5th May centre-left candidate Laurentino Cortizo was declared the winner of Panamá's presidential election. Cortizo was the candidate for the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) first founded by military ruler Omar Torrijos in 1979. Cortizo was educated in the USA and previously served as Minister of Agriculture.

Corruption was one of the election's main issues and Cortizo vowed to tackle the problem. Before the election the Brazilian construction company Odebrecht was found guilty of giving illegal payments to 17 Panamanian officials. Other major issues in the election included rising unemployment, Panamá's education system and the state of the capital city's water utilities and rubbish collection services.

UNES exposes illegal logging

The Salvadoran Ecological Unit (UNES) has alerted Salvadoran society to serious environmental damage caused in the Apaneca-Illamatepec Biosphere Reserve within the Cerro El Aguila Protected Natural Area in the departments of Sonsonate and Santa Ana. The El Aguila range is the most important area for water provision in the country and provides shelter for hundreds of species of flora and fauna.

Since mid-February about five manzanas (approx. eight acres) have been deforested including some mature trees over a meter and a half in diameter. Such a level of felling will affect the area's ability to absorb water, warned UNES. The police have verified that the felling was conducted illegally.

A representative of UNES commented: "We are in a country facing a serious hydrological crisis, we are the second most deforested country; the government must apply its conservation and protection policies. We are one of the 15 most vulnerable countries in the world as regards the threat of natural phenomena and we have sparse vegetative cover." She added, "This case is yet another example of the State's institutional weakness in matters environmental."

UNES called on the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Cattle Ranching (MAG) to carry out their duties to protect and conserve environmental resources and to investigate this destruction. Additionally, the Human Rights Ombudsman, Raquel Caballero, has called for protective measures for the municipal leaders of Juayúa and of the Sonsonate Roundtable for Sustainability who are now at risk after denouncing the felling.

Sources: *Salvadoran Ecological Unit (UNES)*, <http://www.unes.org.sv/2019/02/22/justicia-resarcimiento-danos-cerro-aguila/> and *La Prensa Gráfica*, 21 February 2019.



Foto de LA PRENSA/Marcos Salguero

Panamá copper mine begins exports

In June the first exports of copper were made by the Canadian mining company First Quantum Minerals from their mine in the north of the country. 32,200 tons of copper were exported to China from Punta Rincón in the province of Colón via the Panamá Canal.

The outgoing Panamanian President Juan Carlos Varela promised that there would be a boat arriving every four weeks for the material. The general manager of the mine said that the material would be used to drive sustainable clean energies such as electric cars, agricultural generators and battery technology.

The mine has been mired in legal battles since 1997, in part due to the objections of an environmental group along with local farmers who consider the project harmful to the state of Panamá. Amongst other objections, the mine cuts across the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor. Legislative deputies also rejected the legislation permitting the mine to operate due to the miserly 2 per cent of profits that the company would leave in the country. The new President, Laurentino Cortizo, has said the mine will continue to operate without legal uncertainties.

The mine is located in the midst of an area of tropical rainforest and operates as an open-pit mine. It is appropriately referred to as a 'megaproject' and includes a processing plant, a new port area and a 300 megawatt electricity generating station as well as the mine itself.

6.3 billion US dollars have been invested in the plant which is expected to produce 320,000 tonnes of copper concentrate a year which is currently valued at 2 billion US dollars. The mine is expected to be productive for 35 years.

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Guna Indians of Panamá Overcome Nike



The Guna Indians of the San Blas Archipelago of Panamá are famous for their tapestry designs that are used on their 'molas'. Molas are hand-made textiles that form part of the traditional women's clothing of the Guna. The full costume includes a patterned wrapped skirt (saburet), a red and yellow headscarf (musue), arm and leg beads (wini), a gold nose ring (olasu) and earrings in addition to the mola blouse (dulemor).

In the Guna language, 'mola' means 'clothing', and the swirling designs are coveted not just by artists all over the world but also by companies advertising their products and by the world of fashion. On sale in New York, items made up of combinations of mola squares are amazingly popular and pricey, whilst on the San Blas Islands they are the everyday component of towels, blankets, sheets, T-shirts, skirts and other textile items.

The transnational sportswear company Nike was preparing to release to the public a new trainer labelled 'the Air Force 1' which features a graphic design of the Puerto Rican native Coqui frog. The Guna people of Panamá, however, objected to the trainer's launch and pointed out that the design was based on the community's traditional 'mola' textile.

"We are not against our mola being commercialised. What we oppose is it

being done without consulting us first," said Belisario López, a Guna leader. Lawyers for the Guna explained that the trainer was created without the community's permission, disregarding their intellectual property rights which are recognised in Panamanian law.



Various commentators on this matter have taken Nike to task for their poor research in believing that the design was Puerto Rican rather than belonging to the Guna. The trainer was due to be launched on 6th June this year, but in May Agence France-Presse reported that Nike had withdrawn the product and would no longer offer it, as they had planned, for \$100.

The community is seeking compensation from Nike.

Sources:

- Agence France-Presse, 22 May 2019, 'Nike ditches shoe design after Panama's indigenous Guna protest'
- Telesur, 24 May 2019, 'Indigenous Guna Force Nike to Drop Shoe with 'Stolen Design'

HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD FOR ENCA PARTNER IN EL SALVADOR

By ENCA member Martin Mowforth

For several years ENCA has worked with and supported the anti-mining group MUFRAS-32 based in the department of Cabañas in El Salvador. MUFRAS-32 is headed by Hector Berrios and his partner Zenayda Serrano, both of whom have worked tirelessly over the last decade to prevent the contamination of their environment and society by invading transnational mining companies, mostly from Canada and the USA.

Hector was the driving force behind the pressure exerted by the National Roundtable Against Metal Mining on the Salvadoran government to instigate and implement a ban on metal mining in the country. This was the first ban of its kind in the world.

But Hector's work to show that metal mining can be constrained has come at a cost. He has received various death threats and threats of violence to his family, his partner Zenayda and their two daughters Maya and Kiara, as well as the assassination of four anti-mining colleagues in Cabañas.

In December 2018 Hector was awarded the prize of Defender of Human Rights and the Culture of Peace by the country's Human Rights Ombudsman. The prize is awarded for distinguished work in the promotion and defence of human rights.

Hector dedicated the prize to all the women and men in the communities which accompany the efforts of MUFRAS-32.

The Canadian Pacific Rim mining company (which later was taken over by Oceana Gold) lost its lawsuit against the government of El Salvador at the International Court for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) as reported in previous ENCA Newsletters.

The government had withdrawn the company's concession to exploit gold deposits in the area of Cabañas and it was the efforts of MUFRAS-32 which had done so much to expose the damage and contamination caused by the company's exploration processes.

It is interesting to note, however, that the company (now Oceana Gold) kept open an office in the country in the hope that a change of government may bring about a change of approach to the mining industry. The government has just changed, and we are yet to see how the government of President Nayib Bukele will address the issue of metal mining.

ENCA will continue to support MUFRAS-32 in its efforts to bring together the different groupings in Cabañas to discuss the harms that mining causes and alternative activities to metal mining for the people of the area.



Elections in Guatemala

On 16th June the Guatemalan electorate gave Sandra Torres (National Unity of Hope – UNE – party) 26 per cent of the votes and second placed Alejandro Giamattei (Vamos Party) 14 per cent. A run-off second ballot between these two will be held on 11th August. Both candidates and parties are mired in corruption scandals and have supported the 'Pact of the Corrupt Ones', an informal coalition that promoted laws favouring corruption and impunity.



Thelma Aldana, a former attorney general who worked alongside the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) to bring cases of corruption and impunity to justice, was leading in the polls but was expelled from the race when corruption charges were lodged the day before her candidacy could be authorised. In contrast, charges against Sandra Torres, including criminal association and illegal election financing, were delayed for months until being presented the day after her authorisation as a candidate – too late as she was granted immunity from prosecution by dint of her authorised candidacy.

As Rights Action (<https://rightsaction.org/>) declared: "Corruption, exploitation, destitution, state repression and impunity remain endemic in Guatemala that is controlled by a 'Guatemala is open for global business' regime".

World Turtle Day

ENCA has always been kindly disposed to turtles. We like them because they are slow and gentle, qualities which reflect our own operations, and of course the turtle illustrates our logo. So we think it appropriate, just every now and then, to remind our readers of how slow and gentle we are, and what better way to do so than to inform our readers about World Turtle Day.

World Turtle Day is celebrated each year on 23rd May. It was first observed as World Turtle Day in 2000 and is sponsored by American Tortoise Rescue (www.tortoise.com). The day is aimed at bringing attention to and increasing knowledge of and respect for turtles and tortoises, which date back to the age of the dinosaurs.

Unfortunately, factors such as climate change, ocean plastics, hunting, the illegal pet trade and disruption of ecosystems have pushed this ancient group of reptiles closer to the brink than they have ever been. Almost every species of sea turtle is endangered, an illustration of which is given in the following article.



Leatherback turtles fail to show up in Nicaragua

We are grateful to Nathan Williams and to Fauna & Flora International for the material used in this brief report.
<https://www.fauna-flora.org/>

Under the headline 'A gentle giant on the brink – Leatherback turtles absent from Nicaragua for first time', Fauna & Flora International (FFI) reported earlier this year that the leatherback nesting season "ended in early March without the world's largest turtle establishing a single nest in Nicaragua" - <https://www.fauna-flora.org/news/gentle-giant-brink-leatherback-turtles-absent-nicaragua-first-time>.

Although in their search for food, leatherbacks range between both sub-polar regions, their preferred nesting habitats are sandy tropical beaches and the Chacocente Wildlife Reserve on Nicaragua's Pacific coastline is one of their most favoured spots. This year, however, not a single leatherback nest was established during the November-March nesting season.

The East Pacific population of leatherbacks has experienced a precipitous decline in recent years largely because of illegal egg harvesting, habitat destruction and entanglement and drowning due to damaging fishing practices.

Additionally, a rapidly warming world is adding more pressures on turtle populations by increasing the proportion of female hatchlings. The temperature of the sand around the nest is a determining factor for the sex of hatchlings such that as the sand heats up, more females are produced. Recent observations have recorded up to 80 per

cent of female hatchlings within nests. If temperatures continue to rise and increase these percentages towards 100 per cent, the population of leatherbacks could be devastated.

As Nathan Williams of FFI reports, "Like all sea turtles, leatherbacks rely on a healthy number of juveniles each year to keep the population viable in the long term. This is because young turtles face many hurdles in their early years and have a very high mortality rate; as a result, the lower the number of hatchlings each year, the less likely it is that many (or any) will survive into adulthood. And with fewer males being born, even those who do make it to adulthood will be less able to sustain the population."

He continues, "Through strict enforcement procedures and awareness-raising campaigns, FFI, its partners and local communities have overseen an almost complete eradication of the illegal harvesting of eggs." Despite these efforts, leatherbacks are still struggling to sustain their population faced with so many human pressures.

"It would be a profound failure of humanity if this gentle giant were to die off forever after having survived the worst that has been thrown at planet Earth, including the event that wiped out the dinosaurs. FFI is calling for more support to ensure this doesn't happen."

"The unprecedented situation in Nicaragua is alarming," said Alison Gunn, Fauna & Flora International's Programme Manager for the Americas & Caribbean. "Our monitoring work shows this decline in leatherback numbers is a trend and not a blip. While females don't always nest every year, this is the first time in 16 years we've seen no nests in Chacocente. To turn this situation around and save the leatherback from extinction is going to take everything we've got."

We urge our readers to visit the FFI website to learn more about the work of the organisation and how we can all help. The 'ABOUT' tab on the website includes a 5 minute video clip about FFI's work with turtles and former egg-taking communities in Nicaragua - <https://www.fauna-flora.org/about>

ENCA's Environmental Study Tour of Belize

In ENCA 75 we gave early notice of a potential Environmental Study Tour of Belize to be run by ENCA and asked people who might be interested in joining such a tour to register their interest (without any commitment) with ENCA member Martin Mowforth on mmowforth@plymouth.ac.uk. Nine people have so far registered an interest although no definite decision has been made to give a go-ahead to the tour. We would look for a tour size of anywhere between 6 and 15 people.

The possibility will be discussed at the next ENCA meeting on Sunday 13th October. The meeting will have the benefit of a report-back from Martin who will be visiting Belize in September with students. Whilst there, he will make preliminary inquiries about venues, accommodations, activities, transport, meetings and costs.

We are still keen to receive more expressions of interest, and we should like to emphasise that the potential tour would not be open exclusively to ENCA members. So please feel free to pass this limited information to friends, family and other networks.



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Meeting Dates 2019

October 13th

ENCA meetings are held at the NSC's office at the Durham Road Centre, London, N7 7DT. Meetings are held on Sundays from 12:30 pm to 5 pm and we start with lunch which is made up of whatever people attending choose to bring to share.