

ENCA



Environmental Network *for* Central America

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A round-up of the festival in Wales

Argoecology

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Energy

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Supporting Lake Atitlán Communities





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.

Contact Details

Email: enca.info@gmail.com
Website: www.enca.org.uk

Chair: Doug Specht
doug.specht@outlook.com

Secretary: Sheila Amoo-Gottfried
0208 769 0492
sheila.amoo-gottfried@talktalk.net

Treasurer: Esma Helvacioğlu
finance@enca.org.uk

Postal Address
ENCA, c/o NSC
Durham Road Resource Centre
86 Durham Rd, Finsbury Park,
London N7 7DT

Editors:
Martin Mowforth
Doug Specht

Cover Photo:
IMAP

Supporting Lake Atitlán communities in organic food production and biodiversity enhancement

In 2022 ENCA supported to the tune of \$2,000 (USD) a programme entitled 'Restoration of Lake Atitlán and Sustainable Ecotourism' run by the Mesoamerican Association of Permaculture, or IMAP, in the department of Sololá in Guatemala. IMAP coordinator Inés Cuj wrote a report on the progress of the project specifically for ENCA and ENCA member Stephanie Williamson translated and summarized the report for this newsletter.

Guatemala's Meso-American Institute for Permaculture (IMAP, www.imapermaculture.org) has worked in the community of Pachitulum, on the shores of Lake Atitlán for over 20 years, to develop the practical skills and awareness needed to ensure food sovereignty, community development and the preservation of biodiversity. IMAP has a strong focus on safeguarding ancestral knowledge of the Mayan peoples and of their seed heritage.

In 2022, ENCA contributed to IMAP's project "Lake Atitlan Restoration and Sustainable Ecotourism," which involves tree planting, expanding conservation areas and activities for local communities as well as for tourists and supporting families to grow more of their own fruit and vegetables using organic methods. The health of the lake and the well-being of surrounding communities have been badly affected by logging operations and the use of chemical fertilizers, which contribute to the decline of local species and an insecure future for local people. The project aims for dozens of families to benefit from greater access to healthy food and to generate extra income from surplus produce and from ecotourism, with an emphasis on empowering women and youth.

IMAP has trained five young people as birdwatching guides, planted hedges around the community nature reserve and more native trees to provide a home for migratory birds, built a bird viewing point and renovated a pier for better access to the lake for birdwatching groups. Young people have been mobilized to improve access paths for educational tours and community birdwatching and taken part in rubbish collecting and lakeshore clean ups. IMAP has run workshops for school students and families on the importance of caring for biodiversity and protecting birds and native aquatic plants and animals.

Fruit, timber and forest trees were planted in the nature reserve and other community land by secondary school students, in line with IMAP's goal to instil in the new generation a strong sense of caring for nature and practical skills to enhance local biodiversity.

For home food production, 20 farming households from the Mayan Kakchikel people learnt good practices for tree planting, compost making and preparation of natural repellents for controlling pests in fruit trees. IMAP provided seed or planting material for peanuts, sweet potato, cassava, beans, maize,



amaranth, leeks, rocket and lettuce for family and community vegetable gardens. Households taking part in the training commit to sharing their skills with at least another three households, so that more families can benefit.

IMAP also used funds from ENCA to support their participation in national lobbying for a new law to protect ancestral knowledge, seed diversity and practices of traditional agriculture, as part of the *National Network for Defence of Food Sovereignty in Guatemala*.

We started the activities with the funds requested from ENCA with environmental education through training for 5 young people, 20 producers, reforestation, techniques for the production of organic fertilizers and natural repellents for plantations in orchards. Climate change has been a factor that has brought intense rains, so some forest species and fruit trees that were planted died off. Their seeds were kept to reforest and to conserve the biodiversity of the area and to be a home for migratory birds.

Extractivism and colonialism

By Doug Specht

It is not often that we talk about the UK in these pages, however the death of Queen Elizabeth II in September cannot pass by without a short entry on the role of the British monarchy in the extraction of resources and wealth from around the world.

The British Monarchy has played a central part in exploitation of nations and people throughout the world. The push for empire in the name of the crown fuelled Britain's industrial revolution through constant war, slave trading and the extraction of fossil fuels and industrial metals from the soils of Britain and its colonies. This process unleashed the process of climate change and transformed the human relationship with nature.

The British Empire pushed the narrative that the world is merely a resource to be consumed, and that harms committed in the process of consumption are just necessary evils that fuel progress. The British Monarchy commodified the world, creating an instrumental attitude to the earth and people that has led us directly to the climate crisis we find ourselves in now. And the continuation of the Monarchy and the Crown (the physical manifestation of which is decorated with stolen jewels) allows for the continued extraction and exploitation of people and planet.

The British Monarchy knows of the horrors of Empire, of the violence enacted on others in their name. And for all the new Monarch's talk of climate action, the continuation of the monarchy perpetuates the notion that people and planet are a commodity to be consumed by some at the expense of others – a process that will lead to the destruction of us all.

This is an extract from a lecture delivered on 14th November at the University of Padova, Italy to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Human Rights Centre founded by Professor Antonio Papisca in 1982.

Concerns raised about pesticides in Costa Rica

By [Fabiola Pomareda García](#) | pomaredafabiola@gmail.com | 22 September 2022

We are grateful to Fabiola for permission to translate and summarise her article in Semanario Universidad, the Costa Rican weekly paper. Translated and summarised by ENCA member Jill Powis with minor additions by Stephanie Williamson.

A virtual seminar 'From the global pesticide complex to the agripoisons crisis in Costa Rica' discussed worrying aspects of Costa Rica's pesticide licensing system and use. It was jointly organised by a number of Costa Rican organisations: Biodiversity Coordination Network (RCB), CoecoCeiba - Friends of the Earth Costa Rica, Bloque Verde (Green Block) and Frenasapp (National Front of Sectors Affected by Pineapple Production).

Soledad Castro, doctoral researcher at Barcelona's Autonomous University, presented the results of research into Costa Rica's pesticide licensing system carried out from 2018-21 with Marion Werner, professor and researcher at the University at Buffalo, New York State.

She explained that a total of 1,800 pesticides are still licensed for use in Costa Rica without up-to-date studies on their potential risk to health and the environment. The problem goes back to 2004, when Costa Rica's Comptroller General formally declared that the pesticide licensing system needed to be changed. Health and environmental risk assessments would be mandatory, with evaluations carried out in Costa Rica

itself before pesticides would be licensed. In 2007 new legislation gave a 10 year deadline for these old licences to comply with the new requirements, which, however, led to a huge backlog of license updating.

In 2016, executive decrees were issued relaxing these requirements, a move described by critics as a form of deregulation. Following legal challenges, these decrees were suspended by the Constitutional Court and then countered by legislative attempts to extend further the 'useful life' of these outdated pesticides. There is now a Registration of Agrochemicals bill before the Legislative Assembly under which an affidavit would be sufficient for a substance to be approved for use and studies carried out in other countries would be acceptable. The State Phytosanitary Service confirmed to the researchers that 1,800 pesticides licensed before 2007 are still being used, without any updated risk assessments carried out. Soledad Castro expressed concern at their social and ecological impact.

Fernando Ramírez, researcher and professor at the Regional Institute for Research on Toxic Substances (IRET) of

Costa Rica's National University explained that 80% of the pesticides applied in Costa Rica qualify as highly hazardous. Furthermore, Costa Rica uses 10 times more pesticides per hectare than the United States – on average 25kg/ha of

active ingredient as compared to 2.5 kg/ha in the States.

Since 2007, Costa Rica has become an exporter of pesticides, mainly due to its high importation of technical grade active ingredients for making formulations – mixing them with adjuvants to make their application more effective. The formulated products are then exported to other countries. Costa Rica mainly imports active ingredients from India (63%), China (30%), the United States (3%) and Poland (2.5%).

According to Henry Picado, a researcher with the RCB and member of Bloque Verde, Costa Rica's pesticide industry has large yearly profits of \$2.5 billion for imports and \$700 million for exports, while, according to agronomist Elidier Vargas, the state annually loses \$22-\$27 million in tax exemptions to the sector. It is concentrated in only a few hands - according to statistics from the Ministry of Economy, Industry and Trade (MEIC), 63% of glyphosate, 50% of paraquat and 98% of 2,4-D, respectively, are imported by one company each.

Costa Rica is also one of the cheapest countries in Latin America to license a pesticide product, with an average cost of \$400, as compared to \$1,500-\$4,500 in Mexico, \$2,000 in Uruguay and \$8,500 in Argentina.

While the industry accumulates profits and enjoys tax exemptions and very low licensing costs, 64.3% of the fresh food consumed in Costa Rica contains pesticide residues. "It's basically an invasion by these businesses of our homes, our tables, our bodies," Picado said.



A report from the El Sueño Existe festival 2022

ENCA member *Nathasha Fernando* reflects on the Wales based festival held in the name of Victor Jara

“Wanna come along to a Latin American festival in Wales this august?”

This was how my friend invited me to the ‘El Sueño Existe’ festival. Not that it was misleading or fraught, but having been to a couple of festivals over the years, perhaps my dear friend should have added more details. Because while it was very much a festival, we did camp outside. It was indeed Latin America themed. And, yes, there was music and dancing too. But it was so much more than that as well.

The festival was also a point of solidarity, education, sharing, comradery and looking to a brighter future. What struck me the most was the interconnection that was highlighted throughout the festival between social justice and climate change. I say this, as someone who has perceived a hierarchy between different forms of activism over the years.

Much like any other festival though - FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) was very much part and parcel of the weekend. With a programme packed full of interesting talks and activities, my lifelong indecisiveness kicked in full swing....

I started by first going to the panel on agroecology, which featured ENCA member Brittany Oakes, and was chaired by Doug Specht, where they explained the issues around food sovereignty and ‘La Via Campesina’. Speakers from Nicaragua, Wales, Brazil and the Land Workers Association highlighted the issues facing farming on a global scale, and looked to solutions that not only speak to food security but also the mitigation of climate change.

Martin Mowforth, also of ENCA presented on gangs in Central America. A sobering, and humbling talk among the festivities, but one that while tackling some of the

most difficult issues in the region, was still filled with the hope and solidarity that the festival embodied.

Space does not permit me to share details of every talk I went to see, but as a lecturer I couldn’t have asked for a better presentation than the one given by Andrew Redden on Mayan Cosmovision. The panel focused on how the ancient mythology might serve as a lens to interpret modern (cyclical) events occurring in the Guatemala. The talk was accompanied by wonderful animations created by the speaker himself (he later told me that he had created the animation during lockdown – and it took him 40hours to complete it!).

Of course, Jeremy Corbyn was the highlight of the event. As always, his speech was concrete and to the point addressing the current political situations. The room was so packed, that he had to give another shorter speech in the tent outside for those who didn’t get the chance to enter the main hall. And the next morning, he took a seat as just another participant in the event as he attended and contributed to workshops.

The weekend was a non-stop carnival of engaging talks, activities for children, artworks, poetry, music (seeing Lokandes playing live again and their Cumbian rendition of ‘Brick in the wall was definitely a highlight) and dancing (Cuban Salsa classes, and more free style later in the evening). And at the same time, you could feel there was a common sense of purpose, a shared ideal for the future and a willingness to actively and concretely contribute towards a fairer, less exploitative world.

The gorgeous journey there, the magnificent weather, the amazing talks and great people I got to meet - what can I say, I’ll definitely be back!



ENCA shared newsletters and publications



Jeremy Corbyn addresses the festival



Andrew Redden and Martin Mowforth present on the effects of responding to gangs in the region



Doug Specht chairs a session on agroecology organised by the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign

The Belizean Crocodile Research Coalition presents to ENCA: Countering snap judgements on crocodiles

The ENCA February 2022 meeting was lucky enough to be presented with a snappy talk (via video link) by two members of the Crocodile Research Coalition (CRC): Dr. Marisa Tellez, Executive Director and Founder and Darcy Uclez, CRC Education Coordinator. Established in January 2016, the CRC seeks to preserve crocodiles and their environments throughout Central America and the Caribbean to ensure the long-term sustainability of biodiversity in the region. Its base is on the Placencia Peninsula in Belize bordering the wildlife-rich Placencia Lagoon.

We are grateful to ENCA member Jill Powis for her summary of the their presentation and of the interaction between them and the ENCA members present.

Crocodile populations in Belize have undergone a resurgence after being virtually wiped out in the 1940s and 50s when they were killed for their skins. While the Indigenous people of Belize are accustomed historically and culturally to coexisting with them (with certain Mayan groups revering them in the past, including Belizean groups), for other sectors of the population this recovery in crocodile numbers has caused alarm.

In 2017, the CRC received many calls from around the Placencia Lagoon to relocate the crocodiles. Instead, it established a community science programme to provide the community with the knowledge on how to coexist with them and be part of its research and conservation mission. It has supplied many residents with educational literature on how to live with crocodiles and avoid human-crocodile conflict, and for those that are interested, with a behavioural observation sheet to record further crocodile sightings. Over the years, this scheme has expanded to include manatee and other wildlife sightings around the lagoon. As well as contributing to knowledge about wildlife populations, the data can also be used by the authorities to identify hotspots and reduce negative crocodile-human interactions.

The CRC considers community engagement to be key to successful conservation efforts. As well as the Placencia Lagoon community science programme, other initiatives such as

frequent talks to schools, with repeat visits, and the Visitors' Centre at the Lagoon, have borne dividends in increasing awareness. The CRC says that members of the local community are now genuinely distressed and concerned when they hear of crocodiles being injured or killed, and the police now take reports of crocodile-killing seriously and investigate. (COVID has brought particular challenges as crocodiles have been killed because people have been desperate for food).

As well as being killed by humans, whether out of fear or for food, the crocodile population of Belize is also threatened by pollution and habitat loss, with the American crocodile in particular, as a saltwater species, affected by the boom in coastline development (see, for example, Issue 85 of the ENCA newsletter about Vulcan Materials Company and Gales Point). As the last crocodile surveys took place in the 1990s, the CRC, in collaboration with the state authorities, has been undertaking new ones to establish the extent of these impacts, which will help in the development of a conservation strategy. In all survey locations, the CRC takes time to engage with the local communities, performing outreach but also actively involving them with the surveys.

In its work, the CRC takes a holistic approach, aware of the need to protect entire ecosystems rather than just a single species, which means that other species are also beneficiaries of their work – see ENCA 83, p.7. A current focus

of its research is the New River in the north, the longest river that is entirely confined to Belize. It is a habitat for numerous types of fish, birds, as well as crocodiles, but is being seriously polluted by factory effluent, human waste, and waste from agricultural developments – see ENCA 77, pp.7-8. The CRC found crocodiles in a very bad condition, some to the extent that their organs were decomposing while they were still alive.¹ The CRC calls them 'The White Walkers', after the undead in *A Game of Thrones*. It is conducting research which will hopefully establish the precise sources of the pollution.



The CRC is raising funds to build a state-of-the-art research centre on the Placencia Peninsula. However, in the meantime, it has the space and lodging to accommodate interested researchers and small academic groups nationally and internationally who wish to conduct wildlife and conservation research.

For more information: <https://crocodileresearchcoalition.org>

1. Some crocodiles there have been found to be unable to mate and reproduce and are thought to be suffering from reptile dysfunction. (Well we tried to avoid the more obvious jokes about crocodiles.)

La Via Campesina and the Global Struggle for Food Sovereignty

By Brittany Oakes, October 2022.

Brittany interned with a co-founding La Via Campesina (LVC) member, the Rural Workers' Association, in Nicaragua and has been involved in international Nicaragua solidarity campaigns, including Friends of the ATC and Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign. She currently volunteers with the LVC UK member, Landworkers' Alliance.

This year, La Via Campesina (LVC), the largest international grassroots social movement in the world, celebrates 30 years of collective organising for food sovereignty. Today, LVC represents more than 200 million rural workers, Indigenous people, foresters, fishers, migrants, peasants and small-scale farmers around the world, spanning 81 countries across five continents. There is a strong Latin American presence through the Latin American Coordinator of Campesino Organisations (or CLOC), which itself represents 84 organisations in 18 countries across Latin America and the Caribbean.

Why and how did this global movement arise, and what is their shared vision of food sovereignty? To understand this, we need to take a step back and look at the food system, and how it has dramatically changed over the past decades.

The dominant globalised, industrial food system

The food system is everything that goes into keeping us fed: from growing, harvesting, packing, processing, and preparing the food, to marketing, consuming and disposing of it. Half of the global workforce (1.3 billion people) are employed in some form of agriculture, with an estimated 2.6 billion deriving their primary livelihoods from the food system as a whole.¹

If you look at the dominant food system worldwide today, it is largely controlled by an increasingly consolidated corporate chain. A 2013 report by Oxfam showed the top 10 food companies make a profit of more than £917 billion

GBP a day and represent more than 10% of the global economy.⁵ Power is concentrated at the very top of the system, with corporations investing billions in influencing and dictating national and international government policy, and farmers and workers required to become dependent on the terms set by these corporations to make any kind of livelihood.

This model of globalised, industrial food production grew during the Thatcher-Reagan era of international free market policies in the late 1980s and into the early 1990s.^{3, 6} This shift in the food system has had drastic implications for local markets, and it was during this expansion that LVC coalesced.²

The rise of La Via Campesina

At the same time as international trade agreements and forced "development" schemes were imposed in the 1980s, regional and national peasant organisations strengthened and began forming transnational coalitions, particularly across Latin America and especially in Central America. Peasant workers recognised that their influence within their own countries was weakening and they lacked representation in the international fora. Grassroots mobilising also took place across India and Europe, with demonstrations of tens of thousands of farmers marching in protest against free trade treaties which severely undercut local markets and threatened the livelihoods of millions. We also saw as Europe and the US were celebrating 1992 as the 500 year anniversary of Columbus's arrival in the Americas, Indigenous and peasant organisations

coordinated the Continental Campaign - 500 Years of Indigenous, Black and Popular Resistance from 1989-1992.

In 1992, peasant farmer and rural worker organisations from Central America, the Caribbean, North America and Europe met in Managua, Nicaragua, during a convening of the Rural Workers' Association (ATC) and the 10th anniversary celebration of National Union of Farmers and Cattle Ranchers. It was at this gathering that the idea took root of forming an international, intercontinental movement without mediating representation by non-governmental organisations (Martínez-Torres & Rosset, 2010). At a follow-up convening in Mons, Belgium, in 1993, more than 70 farm leaders from around the world gathered to formally launch LVC. Through these initial gatherings and subsequent international assemblies, LVC developed a shared vision of food sovereignty.

A shared vision for food sovereignty

Food sovereignty can be understood as a concept, an on-going social and political process and a movement. The concept was put forward by LVC, in coordination with other international allies, at a UN Conference in Rome in 1996, and it was refined and developed over the following years into what culminated in the Nyeleni Declaration in 2007.⁴ The full definition is over a page long; it is radical and holistic, and it should be read in its entirety, but it is often summarised in the first line:

"Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically >>

sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.”

How does La Via Campesina work for food sovereignty?

LVC member organisations work for food sovereignty at local, national and international levels through a wide range of activities and processes. Lobbying, campaigning, outreach, awareness raising and political education are crucial for building broader public support to change the dominant food system. LVC focuses on preserving traditional knowledge of sustainable farming methods, including seed saving and protecting Indigenous varieties of seed that are resilient in a changing climate. LVC also supports training and research in traditional farming methods.

With the climate crisis and the many social and political crises we face today, the work and vision of LVC is a beacon of hope for a sustainable and just future based on respect for people and the planet. Around the world we unite in saying, *Globalise the struggle, globalise hope!*

The 7 Pillars of Food Sovereignty:

- Placing priority on **food production for domestic and local markets**, based on peasant and family farmer diversified and agroecologically based production systems
- Ensuring **fair prices for farmers**, which means the power to protect internal markets from low-priced, dumped imports
- **Access to land, water, forests, fishing areas and other productive resources** through genuine redistribution, not by market forces and World Bank sponsored “market-assisted land reforms.”
- **Recognition and promotion of women’s** role in food production and equitable access and control over productive resources
- **Community control over productive resources**, as opposed to corporate ownership of land, water, and genetic and other resources
- **Protecting seeds**, the basis of food and life itself, for the free exchange and use of farmers, which means no patents on life and a moratorium on the genetically modified crops which lead to the genetic pollution of essential genetic diversity of plants and animals.
- **Public investment in support for the productive activities of families, and communities**, geared toward empowerment, local control and production of food for people and local markets.



Learn more about La Via Campesina through their website:

viacampesina.org/en/

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Briefs on energy developments in Central America

Compiled by ENCA member Martin Mowforth

The good – expansion of geothermal energy in El Salvador

In October (2022) the Hydroelectric Executive Commission of the Río Lempa (CEL) announced a \$620 million (USD) investment to increase its capacity to generate geothermal energy. The investment would add 90 megawatts (MW) to the country's current production.

The two current geothermal energy projects (Ahuachapán and Berlín) jointly produce 190 MW and are operated by LaGeo, a company which forms part of the CEL Group. This percentage represents about 25 per cent of El Salvador's energy matrix. It is understood that the funding will be provided by the government of El Salvador.

Further exploration of geothermal potential is also taking place elsewhere in the country.

The ugly – still far off resolving the energy crisis in Honduras

At the beginning of October, the Honduran online news sheet *Proceso Digital* reported that the Honduran Association of Renewable Energy (AHER by its Spanish initials) had claimed that the country is far from resolving its current energy crisis.

AHER Director Samir Siryi said that not all the energy generating companies would be able to meet their target of production agreed with the government's National Electrical Energy Company (ENEE).



He also pointed out the problems of high technical and non-technical losses of energy which require investment that is not forthcoming. He stated that the electricity sub-sector would need an investment of \$3,000 million, of which \$1 billion would be for electricity distribution, \$800 million for transmission and \$1.2 billion for energy generation.

The bad – second crack discovered in Costa Rican HEP dam

In September the Costa Rican Electricity Institution (ICE) announced that a second crack had been discovered in the Reventazón Hydroelectric Dam. ICE officials reported that the crack has appeared in one of the tunnels that links with the reservoir behind the dam and that it could cause a total collapse of the tunnel which would affect the dam's functioning during repairs.



The first crack was discovered on the reservoir side a few months before the \$1.5 billion project was opened in 2016. The dam is an important source of Costa Rica's energy supply and is often touted as 'clean' energy despite the human displacements and ecosystem alterations that such schemes cause. Although the ICE boasts about the Reventazón Dam's productive capacity, it has never lived up to the energy generation levels that were originally projected for it.

The first crack caused the closure of the energy plant for several months and it is possible that if the second one worsens, it too may necessitate closure of the plant. The ICE, however, have assured the public that the structural integrity of the dam is secure.

Dengue outbreak in El Salvador

On 28th October, TeleSur reported that over 15,000 cases of dengue fever were suspected in El Salvador. It was hasty to add that only 57 of these were absolutely confirmed and that another 38 were deemed to be probable cases. 13 of the confirmed cases were children under 14 years old.

Despite the difference between the suspected and confirmed cases, the figure is nevertheless alarming and is four times higher than the equivalent figure at this time last year. The data were taken from the Epidemiological Bulletin of the Salvadoran Ministry of Health which provides the following warning to the population.

We take care of your health and that of your family!

Our fumigation team is carrying out anti-vector actions in the cemeteries of our country; in this way prevent dengue, Zika and chikungunya to families who visit this coming November 2.

They also ask visitors to cemeteries not to take objects such as flowers that need to stand in water in order to avoid the spread of the mosquito that transmits dengue fever.

(Source: TeleSur, 28 October 2022.)

Costa Rica's roads in chaos?

As Costa Ricans and frequent visitors to the country already know, the state of Costa Rican highways is far from good. Potholes, diversions and city congestion add a lot to the time and cost of car journeys in the country.

In September a stretch of the Panamerican Highway near San Ramón was closed for at least three months for emergency repairs, and some say that this is a considerable time underestimate. The section of the road in need of repair was recently hit by a landslide which swept a bus and several other vehicles off the road causing the deaths of nine people. The road had been reopened only the day before after an inspection by the Ministry of Public Works (MOPT).

Additionally, journeys on Route 27 from San José southwards along the Pacific coastline towards Panama, are now taking three times longer to complete than they should. Recently, various routes from San José to the Caribbean coast have also been closed because of landslides.

In October, Costa Rican President Rodrigo Chaves declared a national emergency due to the poor road

conditions. Clearly, these difficulties are due in part to the heavy rains and consequent landslides, but as Chaves also made clear, "... the infrastructure in this country is truly deplorable ... This is due to the carelessness and ineptitude of how the country has been administered."

It is reported that the National Emergency Commission (CNE) will issue 'imminent danger declarations' due to the appalling infrastructure conditions. The Legislative Assembly is expected to approve a bill for the urgent approval of credit to begin repairs in the dry season. President Chaves has sought \$700 million (USD) from an environmental fund of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and will seek further funds as a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

Various transport specialists have warned travellers to expect considerable delays over the coming weeks and months. The President of the CNE, Alejandro Picado Eduarte, said "We cannot allow the rainy season of 2023 to cause the same conditions as this year and inflict more damage. Above all, we must activate measures to protect life."

ENCA looks forward to receiving reports from our own Costa Rican friends and contacts to inform us of how and if the road conditions improve over the next few months.

Sign-on letters

When we as an organisation are asked by other organisations to add our collective name to a campaign letter, protest letter or lobbying letter we use the ENCA Internal e-list group to conduct a kind of democracy or consensus exercise. Normally these exercises ask members of the Internal group if they have any objections to ENCA signing on to the relevant letter and a deadline date is given for a response. The deadline usually depends on the deadline given by the requesting organisation.

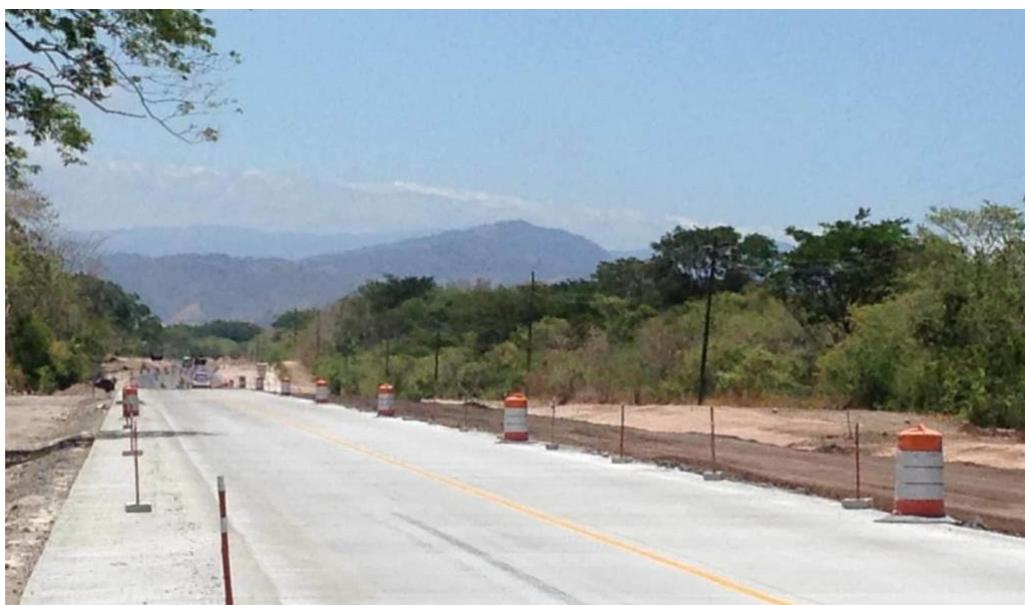
August was a busy month for ENCA's email exercise in consultative democracy.

Guatemala

On 15th August, the US/Canadian organisation **Rights Action** asked ENCA to sign on to a solidarity letter with the families and plaintiffs of the **Military Diary Case in Guatemala**. In May 2022, Judge Miguel Angel Gálvez ordered the opening of the trial for the first nine accused of illegal detention, torture, forced disappearance, murder, extra-judicial execution, sexual violence and crimes against humanity of at least 183 people between 1983 and 1985.

One of the reasons that ENCA supported this letter is the known and evidenced links between the corrupt actors and private security companies with which the accused were associated and the clandestine structures that maintain corruption and impunity in the present. In the face of such corruption and impunity at high governmental and business levels, there is little hope of any real national, regional or local development in Guatemala. The trial, therefore, is crucial for present-day society in Guatemala despite its distant history.

As the case moves slowly forward, a central concern and demand of the sign-on letter was the guarantee of safety for the families, plaintiffs, lawyers, >>



prosecutors and judge of the case. The international solidarity shown by the contributes to the visibility of the struggle that relatives and survivors have carried out for decades.

El Salvador

Shortly after the Rights Action sign-on letter request, the **Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES)** sent a request for our sign on to their letter denouncing **political persecution and human rights violations in El Salvador and calling for the release of political prisoners.**



This referred of course to the **State of Exception** declared by President Bukele during which so many human rights were, and still are, denied to the Salvadoran people, and during which it has become a crime to be young as that leads to police and authority suspicion of gang membership. During this State of Exception, many thousands of young people have been picked up and detained.

Social movement and solidarity organisations have held rallies denouncing the authoritarian Bukele regime and demanding an end to mounting human rights violations.

Beginning in 2021, the Bukele administration has also illegally imprisoned or forced into exile over 40 former opposition leaders from the leftist FMLN party. Since March 2022, those targeted captures have been expanded to the population at large: Under the ongoing State of Exception, tens of thousands of regular

citizens have been arbitrarily and illegally rounded up and incarcerated in the country's already overcrowded prisons. As of mid-August, approximately 60 people have died in custody.

We have since been informed by CISPES that their international solidarity letter really made an impact with the letter appearing in the Salvadoran news outlets *Diario CoLatino* and *Diario El Mundo*.

Honduras

Also in August, ENCA was asked to support a petition created by the **Black Fraternal Organisation of Honduras (OFRANEH)** demanding an end to the **criminalisation of Garífuna defenders** by the previous government officials who still control the Honduran Public Ministry which includes the Justice Department and Attorney General, despite the recent change in government.

The Ministry has stated that it is investigating with a view to bringing criminal charges against OFRANEH and its investigative body (SUNLA) that was set up to make its own investigations into the disappearance two years ago of four Garífuna leaders.

After the 9th August protests demanding justice for the disappeared, the Ministry ordered their investigative body, the ATIC (Technical Agency for Criminal Investigations) to investigate Miriam Miranda the General Coordinator of OFRANEH; Dr. Luther Castillo, member of OFRANEH and the current government's Minister of Science and Technology; and Edy Tábora, a member of the Board of SUNLA and a lawyer for OFRANEH for Disturbing the Peace (1-3 years prison) and Kidnapping (3-5 years). This is a response to a non-violent protest August 9 - 11th in which the participants entered the Public Ministry's building and temporarily occupied it while trying to deliver their

demands to the Attorney General's office.

This case also gives us all an indication of the difficulties faced by the new Honduran administration of President Xiomara Castro while so many of the gangster-ridden previous government of Juan Orlando Hernández are still in place.



Because this case came so hot on the heels of the previous two sign-on letters, we circulated the details of the case to individual members of the ENCA Internal e-list group asking for individual responses and support rather than carrying out our usual group email democracy exercise.

If any ENCA members have opinions about how our system of decision-making about such sign-on letter requests can be improved, we would be very pleased to receive new ideas and thoughts on this matter.

Contact ENCA via our website

ENCA.org.uk



The US is continuing its sanctions, blockades and illegal ‘regime change’ efforts against Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua. Yet these countries are resisting the ‘Empire’ and continue to make remarkable social advances. At the same time the continent is changing – left governments have been elected in Chile, Bolivia, Argentina, Mexico, Peru and even in Colombia. Brazil has finally elected Lula and removed the far-right Bolsonaro who was so intent on destroying the Amazon. We can take inspiration from how people across the region are fighting back, through progressive mass movements to struggles for independence and sovereignty, and resisting neo-liberalism and US domination.

The 2023 Latin America Conference includes over 20 seminars:

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- Nicaragua: How US sanctions undermine social progress
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- Standing with Lula in Brazil & against the far right

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- Jeremy Corbyn MP
- Richard Burgon MP
- Jess Barnard Labour Party, NEC
- Bárbara Montalvo Cuban Ambassador
- Navendu Mishra MP
- Dr Emily Morris UCL Institute of the Americas
- Kevin Courtney TUC International Spokesperson
- Guisell Morales-Echaverry Nicaraguan Ambassador
- Rocío Maneiro Venezuelan Ambassador
- Asad Rehman War on Want
- Jon Trickett MP
- Lindsey German Stop the War Coalition
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Plus more great speakers to be announced

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Meeting Dates 2023

Feb 26th | July 9th | October 22nd

ENCA meetings are usually 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.

A Hybrid option will be provided at some meeting should this be requested.