

ENCA

Environmental Network *for* Central America

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CKDnT

Further research on the issues
facing Nicaragua's cane workers

Drug Trafficking

The USA deploys drug
trafficking smears

Panama-China

Tensions grow around
infrastructure and maritime rights



Honduras: La Lucha Sigue



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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“Our determination outweighs our fear”

Event highlights worsening land rights situation for Honduran Indigenous and campesino communities – Peace Brigades International

Report by ENCA member Jill Powis

In April, ENCA members Jill Powis and Martin Mowforth attended the launch of a report – *Our determination outweighs our fear* - by an international lawyers’ delegation to Honduras, hosted by Peace Brigades International (PBI UK) at Doughty Street Chambers in London. The event focused on the grave human rights situation facing Indigenous peoples and *campesino* communities struggling to defend their land and territories. Honduras has the highest per capita number of killings of environmental and land rights defenders in the world, committed in a context of near-total impunity. The panel included two Honduran human rights defenders - Dunia Maheli Sánchez and Kenia Oliva - who could speak from first-hand experience about the challenges these communities face.

Dunia is a member of COPINH, which has been supported by ENCA. The organisation represents the Lenca Indigenous people, who have been fighting against the construction of the Agua Zarca dam by DESA, a private company. The murder of their leader, Berta Cáceres, in 2016, highlighted the terrible price that can be paid by those who seek to defend territory in Honduras, and the difficulty in getting true justice. For over 10 years, COPINH has sought to ensure that all those involved in her murder are held accountable. Due to their efforts, with international support, most of the direct perpetrators have been convicted – eight altogether, including DESA’s ex-president. Dunia stressed, however, that this was only partial justice, as responsibility for Berta’s murder goes much wider.

In January 2026, an independent group of experts (GIEI, its Spanish acronym), appointed by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, released a report which concluded that Berta’s

assassination was the result of a coordinated criminal conspiracy to defeat opposition to the Agua Zarca project and to secure impunity after Berta’s assassination. Those implicated include the Honduran state, both in her persecution and murder, and in actively obstructing the justice process following her death. The report also highlights the gross lack of oversight of DESA’s use of international development funds, mainly the Central American Bank for Economic Integration and FMO, the Dutch development fund. According to the report, 70 per cent of these funds were diverted to activities such as surveillance, armed incursions and, ultimately, Berta’s murder. Dunia stressed the importance of ensuring that the report’s recommendations are implemented. These include bringing to justice all those who planned and financed the crime, a purge of the state authorities implicated, reforming the system for land registration, and full reparations to Berta’s family and COPINH.

Kenia Oliva is a lawyer and co-founder of Bufete Justicia para los Pueblos, established specifically to offer legal support to land and environmental defenders facing criminalisation. (She is the niece of Bertha Oliva, the leader of COFADEH, the prominent Honduran human rights organisation and whom Jill has worked with and Martin has interviewed on two occasions.) Kenia has worked extensively with communities in the Bajo Aguán where over 200 campesinos have lost their lives since 2010 in land disputes, mainly at the hands of private security guards and hitmen hired by the major landowners. A further 2,500 have been criminalised for trespassing and other alleged crimes. Such is the gravity of the situation, in February 2022 the Honduran government agreed to establish a tripartite truth commission to investigate the serious human rights >>

violations committed as a result of the land conflict in Bajo Aguán and to provide reparations and mechanisms to ensure non-repetition. To date, however, its recommendations still have not been implemented.

In general, a key concern for the panellists was the impact of Decree 93-2021 on campesino and Indigenous communities. Whereas before, land disputes were treated as civil matters, people peacefully occupying land in dispute could now be accused of trespass and sentenced to up to 10 years in prison. The Decree also creates the concept of 'preventive evictions', allowing the police to summarily evict families on disputed land without so much as a court order. Up to May 2025, over 9,000 Indigenous, Garifuna, campesino, and urban families had been evicted in this way.

Also of concern are proposals currently before Congress for a 'Special Bill for the Promotion of Investments through the Efficiency of Environmental Licensing Processes' which would enable private companies to grant their own environmental licences, without any prior consultation or citizen participation.

The recommendations in the report of the international lawyers' delegation include:-

- Immediate repeal of Decree 93-2021
- A comprehensive land survey to produce a land registry capable of preventing future disputes
- Establishment and implementation of the tripartite truth commission on the Bajo Aguán

The role of the international community was also stressed both in the report and by the panellists, who emphasised the importance of:-

- support for Honduran civil society organisations defending the land rights of Indigenous and campesino communities – Dunia emphasised that COPINH would never have got as far as it did in securing justice for Berta without the support of the international community
- raising issues with the Honduran government around land conflict, and the criminalisation of and violence against Indigenous and campesino communities
- the establishment of mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence mechanisms for all companies with business dealings in Honduras, especially in the agro-industrial and extractive sectors.

Report of GIEI (Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts)
[94b2ad_1bb0f67f3fab4fbc624ecaa86856164.pdf](#)

Honduras takes a wrong turn

Since the return to power of the far right in Honduras, social and environmental movements in the country have begun to suffer the same kind of persecution and threats that they experienced during the post 2009 coup narco-dictatorship. At the end of June, the Honduras Solidarity Network issued the following statement.

In the weeks leading up to the 17th anniversary of the 2009 Honduran military coup, dozens of social movements and community-based organisations are coordinating press conferences, gathering signatures, blocking roads, and protesting in front of the Supreme Court. These actions are all aimed at denouncing a slew of laws that promote and prioritize large-scale private investments in agro-business, tourism, and energy, pushing Honduras back to the post-coup narco-dictatorship (2009-2022). Their resistance is directly related to heightened U.S. intervention in Honduras.

Seventeen years since the 2009 coup in Honduras, it is hard to understate the catastrophic impact of U.S. President Donald Trump and the Make American Great Again (MAGA) movement in Honduras. Following Trump's crude

intervention in the 2025 elections, Honduran drug trafficker Juan Orlando Hernández was pardoned and released from prison, and all political forces with progressive positions or sympathies find themselves under political attack. This includes representatives of Honduras' electoral institutions, the Attorney General, and the President of the Supreme Court who have been removed via threat of or direct impeachment. The National Party, with the support of the Liberal Party, have returned to power and to their traditional partnership. They are bringing back not only their conservative, pro-business policies, but also the same characters that were involved in and fundamental to the growth and structure of the corrupt narco-dictatorship of 2009 to 2021. In other words, the new government is reversing the important advances made under Xiomara Castro's

administration (2022 to 2026) and deepening the power of the wealthy oligarchs, organised crime, and transnational capital.

In the meantime, social movements are mobilising to stop the onslaught of damaging laws approved by Congress. After a massacre of 20 campesinos on May 21, 2026 in Rigos, Colón, the National Congress promoted the Law for the Strengthening and Protection of the Agro-industrial Sector as a manipulated and fake solution to land conflicts. The law prioritises agro-business over small-scale and subsistence farming. It also favours transnational over Indigenous, Afro-Indigenous and campesino land rights that are protected by agrarian reform laws and international treaties. Other laws and reforms, including a new definition of "terrorist association" in the Criminal Code, and the proposal to privatise the National Electrical Energy

Company (ENEE), will promote further state attacks and criminalization of community organisers and social movements, and hand over public goods and infrastructure to corporate interests.

As Trump's intervention in the elections demonstrated, Honduras remains an important country in the U.S.'s imperialist plan to re-exert its dominance in Latin America. In May, 37 audio files were released by *Hondurasgate* and *Diario Red*, featuring various Honduran political figures, including convicted drug trafficker and ex-President Juan Orlando Hernández. Among numerous scandalous revelations, the leaks outline an international and national plan to attack progressive forces and prop up right wing powers across Latin America. Hernández, a long-standing U.S. ally during his presidencies (2014 to 2022) is a central figure in the plan despite being a convicted drug trafficker who received a pardon from Trump as the U.S. continues to attack and bomb fishing boats in the Pacific and Atlantic to allegedly "combat narco-terrorism."

From FBI participation in police operations in Honduras to visits to Tegucigalpa from

Kristi Noem as part of the newly formed U.S.'s Shield of the Americas, the U.S.'s presence in Honduras is even more conspicuous now than in the years following the 2009 coup. But despite the increasing global reach of the 'MAGA' movement and the U.S.'s efforts to continue consolidating its power in the region, the social movements that the Honduras Solidarity Network (HSN) has long supported continue to organise and resist:

- Campesinos that form the bases of the Agrarian Platform and the National Union of Agricultural Workers (Centro Nacional de Trabajadores del Campo, CNTC) continue to recover land stolen by large-land owners and agro-business.
- The Black Fraternal Organisation of Honduras (Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña, OFRANEH) works to build ancestral health and educational centres and demand the restoration of their land rights in accordance with the rulings emitted by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.
- Lenca Indigenous communities with the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organisations of Honduras

(Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Indígenas e Populares de Honduras, COPINH) lead extraordinary efforts to demand justice for Berta Cáceres, and challenge international finance in foreign jurisdictions.

While these are just a few examples of how *la lucha sigue* (the struggle continues) 17 years after the 2009 coup, these struggles of organising and collaboration are not only sparks of hope, but active ways that Honduran groups are building alternative futures. They show how resistance, although hard, dangerous, and difficult, continues on this anniversary of the 2009 coup. As a network that formed 17 years ago, the HSN continues to denounce U.S. imperialism and call on all to resist in solidarity with social movements in Honduras, and around the world.

ENCA urges all its members and supporters to keep themselves and their groups informed of events in Honduras by regular visits to and support for the HSN website.

Afro-Indigenous Garífuna people on red alert in Honduras

At the same time as HSN made its statement, OFRANEH (Black Fraternal Organisation of Honduras) issued its own communiqué, extracts of which we have included below.

OFRANEH denounces Official Gazette Decree No. 107-2026, which contains the "Law for the Strengthening of the Agro-industrial Sector, Energy Projects, Tourism, Livestock, and Small-Scale Agricultural Producers." This law is incompatible with the Constitution of the Republic, Convention No. 169 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the American Convention on Human Rights, and binding jurisprudence of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

It institutionalizes the criminalization of work in defence of rights and territory, creating the legal framework to dispossess Indigenous and Black peoples of their ancestral territories for the benefit of private interests.

The most serious aspect of this law is its presumption that any legal claim related to land or territory constitutes an invasion, and that land defenders are criminals. Before any investigation takes place, before any evidence is presented, and before a judge determines who has the right to the territory, this law pre-classifies legal claims to land and territory as an illegal occupation or invasion.

The law presumes guilt, supplants judicial review, and declares the defence of territory to be a public security issue. Its true purpose is to protect private interests by using criminal law to evict communities, undermine land recovery processes, and dismantle the resistance of Indigenous peoples.

In practice, when a community is to be evicted, the police, the Public Prosecutor's Office, and the judges do not verify whether the land is ancestral territory nor do they determine who has the right to the land - a complaint filed by a third party presenting a title is sufficient to activate the full repressive apparatus of the State against the communities, even if that title was fraudulently granted or registered on ancestral territory.

OFRANEH reiterates-; This law must be repealed and declared inapplicable. In addition to being unconstitutional, it presents a clear issue of compliance with international conventions. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights has consistently developed a solid body of case law in cases involving the >>

Garífuna communities of Triunfo de la Cruz, Punta Piedra, San Juan, and Cayos Cochinos.

In all these precedent-setting Inter-American Court cases, the Court has reiterated that States have the obligation to recognise and protect the collective property rights of indigenous and tribal peoples; to guarantee prior, free, and informed consultation before adopting measures that may affect their territories; to refrain from using criminal law to disregard or restrict territorial rights; and to ensure effective judicial remedies that allow for the resolution of conflicts with full respect for due process.



As Garífuna people, we join the efforts led by social movements in defence of human rights, fundamental freedoms, and life. We warn that the criminalization of protest and the persecution of those who defend rights constitute a threat to society as a whole, affecting Indigenous peoples, rural communities, and all sectors committed to justice and the defence of the rule of law alike.

ENFORCE NOW:

THE INTER-AMERICAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS' RULINGS

Honduran Black Fraternal Organisation (OFRANEH)

CKDnT: San Antonio is not just a statistic

La Isla Network is a research and advisory organisation working worldwide to address heat stress and other environmental exposures. The original stimulus for the creation of La Isla Network was from the epidemic of chronic kidney disease (CKDnT) suffered by Nicaraguan workers in the sugar cane fields around Chichigalpa, one area of which became known as La Isla de Viudas (the Island of Widows) owing to the high death rates of young married men who worked in the sugar cane plantations in the area.

On 26 June this year ENCA received a communication from La Isla Network thanking its supporters for their help. Below we have included extracts from their message to supporters..

You are the reason a 24-year-old in San Antonio is not just a statistic.

His name was Gabriel Infante. He was working in 100°F San Antonio heat on one of his first days on the job.

He grew disoriented in the heat. His supervisor thought he was on drugs. By the time anyone understood what was happening, Gabriel's body temperature was 109.8°F. He was dying of heatstroke. He was 24 years old.

His supervisor thought he was on drugs. That mistake is so common, and so deadly, that we built a tool to stop it. It is called [HASTE](#), and it trains crews to treat disorientation in the heat as the medical emergency it is, and to start cooling immediately. Gabriel did not have to die. The next worker does not have to.

Every heat death is preventable. We know this because we have proven it at our Centre of Excellence in Central America, where La Isla Network started. Worker productivity went up by as much as 19%. The return on investment for the company was 60%. The work runs from the essentials — water, shade, rest, and training — to the technical: research, protocols, and management systems designed around keeping people alive.

Now we are bringing those protections home. We have started on a major US construction site. The same model, adapted to American conditions: measured, documented, and built to scale.

Bring It Home is what we are calling it. Every dollar of this campaign builds

toward the same goal: a centre of excellence in the United States, where we prove what it takes for American workers to be protected and American businesses to thrive. And we cannot do this work without your support.

Bring It Home is already underway. Our team is on the ground designing the heat-safety programme around a real US construction operation: the crews, the schedules, the working conditions. We are training supervisors. We are measuring what changes. And, this matters, we are documenting the whole thing so the next employer can learn from it.

Here is the part the grants cannot do: your gift or donation sends a small communications team to the site to interview workers, capture photographs, and turn this first US implementation into a case study that reaches the rest of the country. A grant would take a year to approve that. You give us the speed to do it in weeks.

One worker's death does not have to be the last word. But only if we can move at the speed the work needs us to move. Gabriel was not the first American worker to die of heat on the job. He will not be the last this summer.

Alfredo Moreno

Communications, La Isla Network
From its early beginnings in Nicaragua 16 years ago, La Isla Network now works in numerous tropical countries especially where plantation labour can be extremely hot and arduous. Visit the organisation's website at:
<https://laislanetwork.org>

Beware US government's accusations about drug trafficking

Before the illegal kidnapping of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores by US Special Forces in January this year, US government propaganda had constantly accused him of being responsible for a large proportion of the drugs imported into the USA. As soon as he was taken into US custody, however, the accusations were dropped and other crimes were invented and used in the propaganda. Many experts had already informed the US government that very few of the illegal drugs used in the USA came through Venezuela.

A few weeks earlier, US President Trump had pardoned the former Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández who walked free from a US prison despite having been convicted of three counts of drug trafficking and weapons conspiracy for which he had been sentenced to 45 years in prison. During his presidency, he had managed to turn Honduras into a state in which security forces spent their time defending the illegal activities of the Honduran elite rather than defending law and order.

And a few weeks later than Maduro's kidnapping, the US Southcom (Southern Command) began its policy of extrajudicial executions of people in boats in the Caribbean Sea and in the eastern Pacific Ocean. It claims of course that all those it has killed (over 200 as of this date) were drug traffickers but has offered no evidence to back its claims.

Many other examples of US hypocrisy and lies, especially relating to drug use and drug trafficking, could be mentioned. Whilst ENCA doesn't normally report on Mexican affairs, this issue clearly has relevance for drug studies relating to the Central American countries. Telesur and the Orinoco Tribune have recently reported comments made by the Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum, as below.

Mexico's President: US Weaponizes Drug Trafficking Accusations to Destabilize Governments

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum stated that the United States government has historically used drug trafficking accusations against individuals or politicians as a strategy to create conditions for interference and weaken sovereign governments.

She added that this strategy is not only being applied against her government but was also previously used against that of former Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

To illustrate these interventionist mechanisms, she spoke about historical cases such as the Iran-Contra scandal, where the US used drug cartels to transport weapons to Nicaragua to overthrow the legitimate government there.

President Sheinbaum made these comments while addressing the controversy surrounding the statements made by Ken Salazar, former US ambassador to Mexico, regarding the kidnapping and illegal extradition of the drug lord Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada, leader of the Sinaloa cartel.

She highlighted contradictions in Washington's official positions following the recent public presentation of the aircraft used to transfer Zambada, as US authorities claimed it belonged to a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) operation.

In this scenario, Sheinbaum emphasized that the ends do not justify the means and that the fundamental issue lies in the open violation of Mexico's

national sovereignty. She requested that the Attorney General's Office investigate whether crimes were committed on Mexican soil during Zambada's kidnapping and the internal conflict that subsequently erupted in the state of Sinaloa as a result of the US operation.

The Mexican president also reported that the current US ambassador to Mexico, Ronald Johnson, is already reviewing a formal request for a detailed explanation to provide more information about the case.

Sheinbaum also dismissed claims accusing the Mexican government of protecting or hiding Sinaloa Governor Rubén Rocha Moya, who is currently not performing his duties. She emphasized that the governor remains at his residence and that any extradition procedure would require compelling legal evidence within the framework of the current bilateral treaty.

Finally, President Sheinbaum questioned the effectiveness of Washington's internal policies against organised crime, demanding answers about the mechanisms of drug distribution within the US, the sales channels, the final destination of the profits, and the associated money laundering schemes. She reiterated Mexico's commitment to sovereign and equitable collaboration to prevent drugs from affecting the youth of both countries.



Maduro kidnapped by the USA

China-Panama Tensions Impact Maritime And Merchant Sectors

In ENCA 96 (March this year), we outlined Panama's cancellation of its concession to the Hong Kong corporation CK Hutchison to run the two port terminals at either end of the Panama Canal. This was done under pressure from US President Trump who has some difficulty in formulating and understanding the implications of his foreign policy. Not surprisingly the move has caused tensions between Panama and China, described here by Telesur.

By TeleSur, [Orinoco Tribune](#).
April 3, 2026

The situation is causing concern because ships flying the Panamanian flag carry a significant portion of international trade. The escalating tension with China is affecting Panama's merchant registry, one of the largest in the world.

The Panamanian government has acknowledged an increase in the detention of Panamanian-flagged vessels in Chinese ports, a phenomenon that coincides with a period of bilateral tension stemming from the withdrawal of the Chinese company from operating the two Panama Canal ports.

This legal action came after pressure from the United States regarding the waterway and years of internal complaints against the contract.

Panama's Foreign Minister, Javier Martínez-Acha, stated on March 19 that his government considered the increasing number of ships detained to be "a product of the maritime industry's routine," although he expressed his hope that Beijing would disregard "a decision by the Supreme Court of Justice."

The detention of vessels in Chinese ports, according to René Gómez, president of the Panama Maritime Chamber (CMP), is "not normal" at the current rate. "Previously, the situation affected about 40 ships, and now the number has almost doubled, or more than doubled," stated the representative of the association that

brings together some 300 companies in the maritime and logistics sector.

However, the executive called for a solution through open and active dialogue. He noted that "some processes are more protracted than others, but in this way, with this communication, we can try to mitigate the situation."

Meanwhile, the U.S. Federal Maritime Commission reported that it is closely monitoring the impact of recent events related to the new administration of the Balboa and Cristóbal ports and the actions taken by China, given the potential effects on global maritime transport.

The situation is causing concern because Panamanian-flagged vessels transport a significant portion of U.S. container trade, so these measures could have significant consequences for the supply chain and international trade.

The case dates back to the Supreme Court ruling of January 29. In 2026, the Panamanian government declared Law No. 5 of January 16, 1997, unconstitutional. This law had approved the contract with Panama Ports Company, a subsidiary of the Chinese company CK Hutchison, to manage the ports of Balboa and Cristóbal, located at the entrances to the Panama Canal.

Following the ruling, the Panamanian government appointed the US subsidiaries APM Terminals and Terminal Investment Limited, linked to the shipping companies Maersk and Mediterranean Shipping Company, respectively, as interim operators for a period of 18 months.

In response, CK Hutchison rejected the court's decision, initiated legal action against the Panamanian state, and intensified its international arbitration strategy.

Award for Zenayda Serrano

On 28 May ENCA received the pleasing news that our Salvadoran friend Zenayda Serrano, representing the Salvadoran organisation MUFRAS-32, had been awarded an Environmental Activism prize by the Environmental Film Festival of The Canaries (FICMEC) for 2026.

Her partner Hector Berrios informed us of the news via email and renewed the family's and organisation's thanks to ENCA for our solidarity and assistance to both the Berrios-Serrano family in their escape from the threats they faced in El Salvador and to MUFRAS-32 for our support for their development programmes.

Café con Aroma FICMEC	
	Mónica López Moyano (Premio Brote Comunicación) 29 de mayo - 16:00h Hotel La Quinta Roja
	Sofija Stefanović (Premio Brote Joven) 30 de mayo - 16:00h Hotel La Quinta Roja
	ACADEVI (Asociación Canaria de Desarrolladores de Videojuegos) 28 de mayo - 16:00h Hotel La Quinta Roja
	Vulcanalia (Jornadas sobre vulcanología) 4 de junio - 16:00h Parque del Drago
	José García Casanova (Premio Brote Canarias) 5 de junio - 16:00h Parque del Drago
	Zenayda Serrano (Premio Brote Activismo) 6 de junio - 16:00h Parque del Drago

Con el impulso de **tenerife!** film commission

Zenayda's part in the Festival is shown in the accompanying publicity flyer and more details about FICMEC's Brote Awards can be found at: <https://ficmec.es/festival/premios-brote/?lang=en>

ENCA.org.uk

In a while crocodile? Croc populations learn to surf in Costa Rica

Debates occur over potential overpopulation of crocodiles in Costa Rica as they begin to affect locals and tourists alike.

By Jorja Oliver, 3rd June 2026.

Officials have had to step in regarding the management of crocodiles in the rivers and warm oceans of Costa Rica. Establishments such as the National University's International Institute of Conservation and Management of Wildlife (ICOMVIS-UNA) and the Ministry of Environment and Energy are reviewing protocols to help keep the public safe from the native crocodiles, who have taken a liking to riding the waves with surfers on various beaches.

Playa Tamarindo in Guanacaste stands out as one of the most talked-about spots. The beach's estuary attracts crocodiles that swim out to sea. In 2015, [a surfer suffered serious injuries](#) from a crocodile bite here.

Drones have captured footage of crocodiles gliding through waves near the lineup, and locals report occasional appearances. Surfers paddle carefully, especially at dawn or dusk when animals feed. Nearby, Playa Grande sees similar activity. Crocodiles cross between Tamarindo and Grande, using ocean currents. This stretch, part of Las Baulas National Marine Park, protects leatherback turtles but also hosts reptiles from the Tamarindo River. Riders here describe moments when a crocodile surfaces mid-session, prompting quick exits from the water.

Crocodiles are an important species for the ecosystems they inhabit due to their position in the food chain. According to the UNA, they are the biggest predators in their habitat, but their population is being affected by a loss of space, water contamination and poaching (illegal since 1992). The crocodiles use estuaries where fresh and saltwater meet, to breed and eat. Nearby mangroves provide essential cover and food for the animals. Surfers know to respect the wildlife, and take necessary precautions when in the water.

Further south, specifically the Tárcoles Bridge in Garabito, tension has arisen

regarding the unofficial building of a crocodile viewing deck adjacent to a busy bridge spanning the Tárcoles River. The bridge itself remains under renovation, with single-lane traffic in place and pedestrian viewing restricted for safety. The new deck sits on the right bank of the river coming from Orotina, only meters from the bridge. Environmental lawyer Walter Brenes raised questions about the project in an area known for its large crocodile population and steady stream of tourists. He sent an inquiry to the Orotina Subregional Office of the National System of Conservation Areas.

Government and eco-focused officials alike are attempting to preserve the crocodile population while keeping the public safe, through various precautions such as frequent signage with warnings, and laws in place regarding approaching and feeding the reptiles. But some tour guides have been reported as encouraging their tourist charges to throw bread to the reptiles. This encourages both tourists and crocodiles to get nearer to each other, not a healthy option.

Similarly, the National University of Costa Rica (UNA) has announced they will use drones to monitor crocodile populations in the area, and relay scientific data that supports the management of these animals. Laura Porras, investigator for Icomvis-UNA, explained:

"Now what we are doing is establishing some parts of the river where we can stage takeoffs and landings of the drones, capturing information during the day and afterwards sending the



images off to be processed; this allows us to count the crocodiles, see how they are distributed in the river and estimate their population and placement in the river. It's very important because it'll allow us to gain scientific data that will support the management decisions."

The university confirmed that this project is pioneering for the country, and at a global level is "incipient"; the process of data standardisation will take the longest: "We need to standardise (drone) flight data; take into account the time (from the sunlight on the water), use a height that won't alter the animals life, and other factors such as the rain or wind. All of these parameters are necessary so that the corresponding authorities can utilise the monitoring protocol in different parts of the country", added Porras.

With care in mind, the country is working to make sure both parties (reptile and human) are respected and kept safe in order to reduce any injuries or fatalities. Data from 1990 to 2017 show 99 human-crocodile interactions in Costa Rica, with 27 attacks. Numbers rose in recent years due to habitat changes and population growth. In 2024, officials noted more sightings nationwide, linked to flooding and development. But in 2025, no fatal surf-related attacks made headlines, although close calls persist. >>

With these figures in mind, it is imperative that the wellbeing of the public should be a priority, with the wellbeing and preservation of essential native wildlife being a close second. If you are planning on visiting Costa Rica anytime soon, be prepared to be greeted by the shimmering eyes of gliding crocodiles!

Sources:

- Tico Times, 3 January 2026, 'Crocodiles Share Waves with Surfers at Costa Rica's Popular Breaks', San José.
- Adrián Z. Rivero, 5 mayo 2025, 'La UNA utilizará drones para monitorear poblaciones de cocodrilos', Instituto Internacional de Conservación y Manejo de Vida Silvestre, Universidad Nacional (Icomvis – UNA).
- Tico Times, 28 March 2026, 'Costa Rica Blocks Tárcoles Crocodile Deck Permits as Officials Push Back', San José.

Stop Press: Warning signposts to be installed

The 4th July edition of the Tico Times (a Costa Rican weekly English language paper) reports that Costa Rican authorities have begun to install warning signs at beaches, rivers, national parks and conservation areas where crocodiles and caimans are known to live, as the country prepares for one of its busiest domestic holiday periods of the year. The campaign is directed at both local families and international tourists visiting coastal areas and rivers.

55 signs are planned in locations where crocodiles and caimans are known to be regularly present. Costa Rica's wildlife is one of the country's biggest tourism attractions, but crocodiles and caimans can present a serious risk of danger to tourists. Visitors are advised not to swim in estuaries or to walk along muddy river banks. Many of the places most visited in Costa Rica are also wild places where the space of animals should be respected.

Source: Tico Times, 4 July 2026, 'Costa Rica Adds Crocodile Warning Signs at Beaches and Rivers'.

Greening Belize Initiative

Launched to Restore Forests and Empower Communities

Belmopan, January 27, 2026 and May 31, 2026.

In January this year, the Belize Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change, and Solid Waste Management officially launched the Greening Belize Initiative, a national forest restoration and climate resilience programme aimed at planting one million trees across Belize by 2035.

Supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) under the GEF6 Project, the initiative focuses on restoring wildfire-affected and degraded landscapes while advancing sustainable land management nationwide. It has an ambitious goal to plant and nurture one million trees across Belize by 2035.

The partnership agreements were signed in May by more than a dozen conservation organisations across the country.

Spearheaded by the Belize Forest Department, the programme integrates large-scale tree planting with innovation through the Greening Belize App, a centralized digital platform that enables real-time monitoring, verification, public participation, and transparent reporting of restoration efforts. The programme's publicity suggests that it will strengthen governance and data-driven decision-making.

A key component of the initiative is the Belize River Watershed Micro-Grants Programme, which will provide targeted funding to support community-led conservation and sustainable livelihood projects. As part of the launch, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed with the Community Baboon Sanctuary (CBS) and the

Belize Enterprise for Sustainable Technology (BEST) to support the delivery and implementation of the grant.

The programme will empower community-based organisations, Indigenous Peoples, women-led initiatives, farmers, and youth groups to undertake projects such as riparian restoration, climate-smart agriculture, biodiversity conservation, reforestation, and environmental education, ensuring local communities play a central role in protecting the Belize River Watershed.

At the launch ceremony, the Minister of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Solid Waste Management, Orlando Habet remarked, "The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago; the second-best time is now." The event marked a significant milestone in Belize's efforts to restore degraded land, strengthen climate resilience, and secure long-term environmental and socio-economic benefits for all Belizeans.

Over the last few decades, Belize has watched forests shrink in size and communities face increasing climate pressures. The Greening Belize Initiative represents a genuine commitment to reversing those trends. Time will tell whether the commitment is realised.



News round-up from around the region

Compiled by ENCA member Martin Mowforth

Costa Rica

Monteverde Cloud Forest Biological Reserve

On 6 July 2026, Costa Rica's Monteverde Cloud Forest Biological Reserve entered into the Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

This recognition means that Monteverde becomes Costa Rica's first protected areas and one of the first land-based private reserves in the world to achieve this distinction.

The reserve has been administered by the Tropical Scientific Centre (CCT by its Spanish initials) since 1972 and serves as a space for scientific research, environmental education and biodiversity conservation.

The IUCN's Green List is a global standard which recognises protected and conserved areas that are administered fairly and efficiently with positive results for the conservation of biodiversity and the wellbeing of people.

Currently there are 240 such sites recognised throughout the world which function as a tool for improving the continuation of area protection.

More information on the IUCN is available at:

<https://iucn.org/resources/conservation-tool/iucn-green-list-protected-and-conserved-areas>

Wildlife trafficking

Around 1,000 wild animals are taken illegally from their natural habitats in Costa Rica each year. According to the Public Ministry, they are sold to international markets as pets or are added to private collections. According to the UN

Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the worldwide trade can generate profits of up to \$20 billion annually and is run by organised crime syndicates.

In June, a seminar on this issue was held in Costa Rica. It was established that every wild animal extraction led to damage to ecosystem balance and environmental degradation due to blockage of the dispersal of seeds, pollination and the food chain on which other animals depend. It was also made clear that these extractions were not isolated incidents; rather they are acts of organised crime.

(Source: *Fabiola Pomareda García, Semanario Universidad, 23 Junio 2026, 'Tráfico de vida silvestre en Costa Rica: 1,000 animales salvajes son extraídos ilegalmente cada año'.*)

National Park visitor rates

Costa Rica's protected areas drew a record 2,970,516 total visits in 2025, a 13.7 per cent increase over the previous year, according to the statistics of the National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC). One park stood out for its lack of visitors, however, and that was the Juan Castro Blanco National Park, between Alajuela and San Carlos, which recorded only 26 visitors in the whole year.

This illustrates an imbalance between a small number of headline parks which receive the bulk of the country's nature tourism and several protected areas which remain almost untouched.

(Source: *Tico Times, 10 June 2026, 'Costa Rica National Parks Set Record But One Park Draws Just 26 People'.*)

Damages and deaths due to Paraquat

According to data from the National Centre for the Control of Poisonings (CNCI) and the National Children's Hospital, between 2023 and May 2026, there were 18 cases of intoxications of minors (under the age of 12) by the herbicide paraquat in

Costa Rica. Up to May of this year (2026), four cases have been registered in children between the ages of 3 and 11.

Carlos Jiménez, Director General of the National Children's Hospital, said that "Paraquat is a highly toxic pesticide which must be stored securely so that children do not have access to it." Viviana Ramos, Director of CNCI, suggested that although the child cases were accidental, they were preventable and must not be seen as inevitable.

The Hospital and the CNCI made a series of recommendations for the use of paraquat to avoid such cases in future.

(Source: *Montserrat Cordero Parra, 29 mayo, 2026, 'Intoxicaciones por herbicida paraquat dejan un menor grave y otro fallecido en lo que va del año'.*)

Nicaragua

New solar energy

On 10th June 2026, ENACAL (Nicaraguan Waterworks and Sewage Works Company) began the installation of ENESOLAR 1, a photovoltaic plant in the department of Matagalpa with a capacity of 63 Megawatts. The plant will have 100,000 solar panels and cover 160 manzanas of land. (One manzana is approximately equivalent to 1.73 acres.)

The work is financed by an investment of 90 million US dollars by China. The maximum demand for energy in Nicaragua has in recent years almost doubled from 500 Mw to 980 Mw.

(Informe *Pastrán, 10 junio, 2026, 'Nicaragua da nuevo impulso a energía solar'.*)

El Salvador

Ruth López and Cristosal

In November 2025, ENCA 95 Newsletter included a short article on the arrest and imprisonment of Ruth López, the anti-corruption and justice director of the organisation Cristosal which had to close its operations in El Salvador because of government persecution. Ruth is still in prison and like numerous other organisations, Global Exchange has called for her immediate release.

Global Exchange says that for years, Ruth exposed corruption and filed legal challenges on behalf of the vulnerable. For that work, the government of Nayib Bukele made her a target. A [recent Cristosal report](#) documents 245 cases of political persecution in El Salvador since President Bukele took office — 86 of those individuals are currently imprisoned, including journalists and human rights defenders who dared to criticize his government.

(Sources: <https://globalexchange.org> ; <https://cristosal.org> ; ENCA 95, November 2025, 'Cristosal closes up shop'.)

Honduras

More than 423,000 Hondurans displaced by violence

More than 423,000 people have been internally displaced in Honduras due to violence, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)). The figure represents approximately 4.5 percent of the country's population, with many more Hondurans fleeing abroad, particularly to Mexico and the United States.

The Norwegian Refugee Council has described the situation as one of the world's ten most neglected displacement crises. The UN says the crisis is being driven by a combination of gang violence, poverty, organised crime, weak institutions and climate-related disasters. Criminal groups such as MS-13 and Barrio 18 continue to exert control in some

communities, carrying out extortion, recruitment of children and threats against families.

Women, children, LGBTQI+ individuals, journalists and activists are among the groups most vulnerable to forced displacement, the U.N. noted. Poverty and recurring natural disasters have further worsened the situation.

(Source: Zoila Palma, *Breaking Belize News*, 13 June 2026,)

Regional

Costa Rica and Nicaragua: Agreement signed to combat malaria

On 3 July, Dr Carlos Sáenz, Deputy Minister of Health in Nicaragua (pictured), announced the signing of an agreement between Costa Rica and Nicaragua intended to strengthen epidemiological surveillance and coordinate simultaneous public health actions in the border region to reduce the transmission of malaria. The work is intended to move the area toward the elimination of malaria and ensure long-term sustainability to prevent its recurrence.



Dr. Sáenz stated that although climate change has caused a widespread increase in malaria across the Americas, Nicaragua's health system is showing highly positive results, due especially to the implementation of the Family and Community Health Model. The model includes intensive campaigns to eliminate breeding sites, clear overgrown vegetation, apply larvicides, and spray insecticides at critical transmission hotspots, accompanied by robust education and risk communication campaigns to prevent the disease.

(Sources: *La Primerísima*, 7 July 2026; *Alliance for Global Justice*, 9 July 2026, 'Agreement signed with Costa Rica to combat malaria'.)

Reports of interest

This is a new feature in the ENCA Newsletter, begun in the previous newsletter (no. 96). It is intended as a notification to ENCA readers and members about reports received by ENCA which are too long or too late for inclusion in the current ENCA Newsletter. It is a simple listing with titles and urls of such reports.

- Rights Action, 30.03.26, '**Cuban medical programs kicked out of Honduras & Guatemala. More victims of US economic terrorism against Cuba**'. tinyurl.com/bn5hhrfv
- CounterPunch, Emily Taylor and Angélica Macario, 08.04.26, '**Guatemala's Ongoing Memory Battles**'. tinyurl.com/d3wp569r
- John Perry and Roger Harris, 23.05.26, "Hondurasgate": A Warning for Latin America and Symptom of Deeper Crises in Honduras - LA Progressive tinyurl.com/4jv8vxw3
- Guatemala Human Rights Commission (GHRC), 29.05.26, Judge Miguel Ángel Gálvez, '**New Attorney General Must End Criminalization**'. tinyurl.com/488avn2u
- Pía Riggirozzi and Natalia Cintra, Migration Policy Institute, 26.05.20, '**How Immigration Crackdowns and Aid Cuts Are Reshaping Migration Across Central America**'. tinyurl.com/v2vhjkz
- Rights Action, 01.06.26, '**Green light for Solway Investment Group to re-open Fenix Mine in Guatemala; 60-year nightmare of mining in Maya Q'eqchi' territories of El Estor to continue**', tinyurl.com/mu22e2s2
- Belén Fernández, *CounterPunch*, 28.06.26, 'Inside the Darién Gap', tinyurl.com/24c257hv

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Meeting Dates 2026

February 19th (4pm) | June 27th | October 18th

ENCA meetings are usually held in London, with the location shared with members in the weeks before the meeting. 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.