



EMIGRATION, DEPORTATION AND REFUGEES DURING THE PANDEMIC

HARSH REALITIES AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HONDURAS

ABSTRACT

In 2020, the response of the Honduran government to the Covid-19 public health crisis was a strict lockdown, the deployment of the military, and the declaration of a repressive state of emergency. During this time, Hondurans faced limited access to health services while a deteriorating economy disproportionately impacted the vulnerable and those already living in material poverty. Meanwhile, corruption cases related to the Covid-19 response by the government were exposed in the local media. For example, as of the date of this report, a \$50 million investment in new mobile clinics produced no new services or capacity, and the inflated prices of medical supplies purchased during the emergency indicate that pre-pandemic corrupt procurement practices have only deepened.

During the first months of the pandemic, the borders and airports were closed to all but those being deported from the United States. According to the Ministry of External Affairs, between January and June 2020, a total of 23,810 Hondurans were deported by plane. Migrants from other nationalities in Honduras were also affected by the pandemic. After the “third safe country” agreement between the United States and Honduras was signed in 2019, over 500 refugees from Cuba, Haiti, Angola, and Congo were stranded in Honduras. Human rights organizations denounced the absence of a government plan to respond to the asylum seekers despite the international agreement. These organizations also exposed the poor treatment that refugees received from police officers and military.

RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

- Organize actions to **demand respect for human rights** from the Honduran government, as well as a detailed plan to keep responding to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Denounce corrupt acts** in this moment of crisis and demand the application of the law in the case of government officials involved in corruption.
- **Promote anti-xenophobia** campaigns among Hondurans and especially government officials.
- Demand better policies for **child protection**, especially child migrants.

FOR THE GOVERNMENT

- Offer **services to migrants** by reopening all of the institutions that were closed with the declaration of the state of emergency.
- Allow the **participation of women and the LGBTQ+ community** in the elaboration of policies that protect them.
- Create a detailed plan to **reintegrate migrants** deported to Honduras.
- Promote actions in the border regions that help to **prevent xenophobia**.

FOR INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Promote training on the **rights of migrants** among the Central American states, with special focus on immigration officers and police from Honduras, Guatemala and the Mexican border.
- Demand **government health services for migrants** amid the pandemic. As well as sexual and reproductive health services for female migrants.
- Collaborate with Central American governments in the creation of **migration policies with gender perspective**.
- Propose the creation of **safe migration routes** in the region.

ABOUT THE CENTRAL AMERICA RESEARCH ALLIANCE

Since 2017, the Pulte Institute for Global Development's Central America Research Alliance (Pulte-CARA) at the University of Notre Dame has convened a working group of universities and civil society organizations working on human rights, democracy and migration research in the United States, Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. Representatives of the group produce, curate and disseminate research in the region and in the United States to inform evidence-based policy and practice. This report was commissioned as part of a series on understanding emigration from the region. For more information visit pulte.nd.edu.

The Center for Research and Promotion of Human Rights (CIPRODEH in Spanish) seeks to promote the rule of law, democracy and respect for human rights through research and advocacy in Honduras. CIPRODEH produced this report with support from Pulte-CARA.