

GLOBAL TORTURE INDEX 2025: HONDURAS FACTSHEET

OVERALL GLOBAL TORTURE INDEX SCORE:

HIGH RISK

The Global Torture Index 2025 is the first analysis designed to assess the risk of torture and ill-treatment across 26 countries worldwide. This 2025 factsheet for Honduras includes an analysis of the country's overall performance, a breakdown by thematic pillars and key recommendations for driving meaningful change in the fight against torture and the promotion of human rights.

COLLABORATING ORGANISATIONS IN HONDURAS:

Centro de Prevención, Tratamiento y
Rehabilitación de Víctimas de la Tortura
(CPTRT)

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AT A GLANCE

Over the past 15 years, Honduras has faced a deeply complex social and political landscape. In 2009, the country experienced a coup d'état that sparked widespread protests in defence of democracy. The *de facto* government's response was marked by harsh repression, resulting in serious consequences for the civilian population. Today, more than a decade later—and amid an electoral process marked by controversy and uncertainty—a new government has come to power, positioning itself in opposition to those who supported the 2009 military coup and pledging to uphold the freedoms of the Honduran people. However, since 6 December 2022, the **country has been under a state of emergency, which has been renewed ten times despite the government's assurances that it would be a temporary measure.** The latter suspends the rights to personal liberty and the freedoms of association, assembly and movement.

The Honduran state has justified the ongoing suspension of constitutional guarantees as part of its fight against the criminal groups that have historically afflicted Central America. In this context, President Xiomara Castro's government has established 'special' police forces tasked with combating gangs known as Maras, whose identity is predominantly militaristic.

In this context, the practice of torture and ill-treatment has been a characteristic element of the Honduran public security strategy. From the execution of searches and arrests without warrants and the indiscriminate use of public force, to a penitentiary model based on corporal punishment as the aim of penal execution, the Honduran security model is part of the authoritarian tendency of 'public order'—a model followed by several Latin American governments. For 2025, the Global Torture Index classifies the country as facing a **high risk of torture and ill-treatment**, based on data collected in 2023 and 2024.

GENERAL INFORMATION



Type of government:
Federal Republic



United Nations Convention Against Torture:
Ratified



OPCAT ratification:
Ratified



Population:
10,962,012



People deprived of liberty:
19,978



Prison population (per 100,000 of national population):
182.7



Pre-trial detainees / remand prisoners (percentage of prison population):
45.44%



Documented Detained Human Rights Defenders:
Lack of data



Alerts Issued by the Observatory for Human Rights Defenders in 2024:
9



Prison Occupancy level:
149%



Homicide rate (per 100.000 people):
31.1

THEMATIC PILLAR OVERVIEW



I. POLITICAL COMMITMENT

INDEX SCORE: CONSIDERABLE RISK

Honduras has demonstrated limited political will to combat torture. Although it has ratified the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and has recently accepted the competence of the UN Committee Against Torture (UN CAT) to receive individual complaints, the security policies implemented under the state of emergency have increased the risk of torture and serious human rights violations, particularly affecting young people and those living in highly marginalised contexts.

Civil society organisations are concerned about the implementation of a highly punitive criminal policy, **such as Agreement No. CNDS-003/2024 of the National Council for Defence and Security**. This agreement orders the construction of two emergency detention centres in remote areas. This measure stands **in direct contradiction to the recommendations issued by the UN Committee Against Torture (CAT) in April 2024**, which expressed concern over the proposed construction of a maximum-security prison on the Swan Islands. The remote location of such facilities, along with the transfer of individuals deprived of liberty to them, would result in prolonged isolation. It would also significantly hinder communication between detainees and their families or legal representatives, as well as impede timely and adequate access to medical care in emergencies.

The same agreement urges the National Congress to reform the regulatory framework to classify individuals linked to organised crime who commit certain offences as terrorists, and to incorporate the measure of collective prosecution into domestic legislation. These reforms constitute a threat to the right to a fair trial, the right to defence, the presumption of innocence and contributes to deteriorating prison conditions.

Honduras's National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture is represented by the National Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CONAPREV). However, both civil society organisations and the UN CAT have expressed their concern about the lack of resources to carry out its monitoring tasks in an optimal manner. In addition, they have denounced the lack of legal certainty in the election of its members and the obstacles that prevail for the appointment of the civil society representative to the Committee.



II. ENDING POLICE BRUTALITY AND INSTITUTIONAL VIOLENCE

INDEX SCORE: HIGH RISK

Since 6 December 2022, Honduras has been under a state of emergency that has enabled violations of citizens' rights and freedoms. This policy has paved the way for the systematic abuse of power and widespread institutional violence. Under this decree, public security has been militarised, leading to the creation of a police force in which the National Police and the armed forces operate jointly, resulting in the formation of the so-called Military Police of Public Order.

Under the state of emergency, police forces have been granted broad powers to detain individuals they deem to be involved in, or associated with, criminal activity, and to conduct raids without warrants. Civil society organisations estimate that, during this period, **the National Police have carried out approximately 24,536 arrests and conducted 16,800 raids. In addition, the Military Police of Public Order have detained around 1,333 individuals, the majority of whom were minors under the age of 18.**

The detention centres operated by the National Police and the Military Police of Public Order lack adequate living conditions, and detainees may be held in isolation and incommunicado for periods exceeding 24 hours. In general, there is little control or supervision of these centres, and without a clear registry, there is considerable uncertainty as to whether all these facilities are formally established.

Civil society organisations have denounced serious human rights violations committed by both the Military Police of Public Order and the Anti-Maras and Gangs Police Directorate against Organised Crime (DIAPANCO). According to the Public Prosecutor's Office, **at least three forced disappearances and 86 complaints of torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment by security and military forces are being investigated in 2024.**

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has denounced the excessive use of force and the lack of protocols for the prevention and control of incidents inside prisons. **In 2024, the UN Office documented the disproportionate use of force following three serious incidents at Támara prison, including three violent deaths—two of which may amount to extrajudicial executions—and 161 cases of ill-treatment.** These incidents took place in the context of control and search operations.



III. FREEDOM FROM TORTURE WHILE DEPRIVED OF LIBERTY

INDEX SCORE: VERY HIGH RISK

The UN CAT, in its concluding observations on the Third Periodic Report of Honduras, expressed concern over the militarisation of the penitentiary system. The Committee condemned **the takeover of the national penal system by the Military Police of Public Order**, which has imposed a prison control regime prioritising security measures and corporal punishment over respect for the human rights of persons deprived of their liberty.

The Committee drew the Honduran State's attention to the difficult conditions of detention in the country's prisons. Specifically, it urged the State to address the following issues:

- Excessive overcrowding (149%) resulting, inter alia, from indiscriminate abuse of pre-trial detention (45.4%).
- Deficiencies in basic food services, medical and psychological care and food and medicine supplies.
- The absence of a real social reintegration policy in the Honduran prison system.
- The construction of a maximum-security prison complex on the so-called 'Isla del Cisne', whose suitability and relevance remain unclear given the country's insecurity and institutional violence.
- The overall conditions of women deprived of their liberty within the national penitentiary system, who face frequent disciplinary punishments without justification, prolonged isolation, lack of social reintegration programmes, and an absence of basic healthcare services informed by a gender perspective.
- The situation of persons belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community, who experience discrimination and ill-treatment from both the prison population and staff.

Local organisations, such as the Centre for the Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims and their Families (C.P.T.R.T), **have denounced the mishandling of the deaths of 46 women at the National Women's Penitentiary for Social Adaptation (PNFAS)**, who died as a result of fire and firearms attacks. Rather than improving detention conditions for women, the Honduran state responded by militarising the women's prison system and planning the construction of a maximum-security prison on Isla del Cisne.

Civil society organisations have also criticised the intensification of the penitentiary system's disciplinary regime, which is based on militarisation. They have highlighted the lack of safeguards to prevent living and security conditions that amount to torture or ill-treatment. Additionally, they have condemned the use of ill-treatment and humiliating treatment against relatives of detainees who visit the prisons. Reports received by these organisations describe invasive behaviour by prison staff, primarily towards women, including inappropriate touching, invasive searches involving complete nudity, and orders to maintain humiliating positions for extended periods.

These organisations have drawn attention to the high incidence of deaths in penitentiary detention centres. Since 2017, Caritas has denounced the occurrence of **13 massacres inside prisons, with a total of 130 victims**.



IV. ENDING IMPUNITY

INDEX SCORE: VERY HIGH RISK

Both [international bodies](#) and [civil society organisations](#) have expressed deep concern over the high rates of impunity for the crime of torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment that prevail within the Honduran judicial system. This impunity is generally manifested through prolonged delays in judicial proceedings and the authorities' reluctance to investigate acts of torture as the criminal offence defined by law, instead often treating them as lesser offences.

Several factors have been identified as contributing to the inefficiency in prosecuting torture, ranging from victims' limited opportunities to file complaints to the lack of due diligence by judicial authorities in investigating and prosecuting these crimes. Common scenarios include:

- Prosecution authorities prioritise the accusation against a person suspected of committing a crime over their potential status as a victim of torture during detention or at any other procedural stage, which hinders the initiation of investigations into such acts.
- Victims are required to report torture to the very authorities who may have committed it, such as police forces or prosecutors.
- The burden of proof is placed on the victims and their relatives, which complicates the process and leads to further victimisation of those affected.
- Authorities accused of perpetrating torture are often not removed from their positions, enabling them to influence the investigative process and/or intimidate victims and their families.
- Acts of torture are frequently not properly detected or documented because the Istanbul Protocol is not applied diligently or promptly. Investigations often lack contextual analysis, fail to identify the appropriate criminal offences reflecting the severity of the acts, and omit characterisation of victims or examination of intellectual authorship and command chains in cases involving security forces.
- Medical personnel are insufficient in number, lack adequate training to identify and document torture, and are administratively attached to the same institutions where such acts commonly occur.
- Although a specialised human rights prosecutor's office exists to investigate torture cases, it lacks the necessary material and human resources to handle the volume of reported cases.

The UN Committee Against Torture (CAT) urged the Honduran State to take measures ensuring judicial independence so that criminal proceedings for acts of torture are conducted with greater speed and transparency. As of 2024, the Honduran government [reported](#) that 529 investigations into allegations of torture have been initiated, of which 75 have proceeded to prosecution (32 for torture and 43 for cruel treatment), with sentences obtained in only 10 cases—although no data on the outcomes of these sentences was provided.



V. VICTIM'S RIGHTS

INDEX SCORE: VERY HIGH RISK

In April 2024, a draft Law on Compliance with International Human Rights Obligations to Victims of the National Security Doctrine (1980-1993) was submitted to the National Congress to address serious human rights violations committed in that context. The adoption of this law would allow access to the right to truth, memory, justice, reparation and non-repetition for the victims.

Despite these developments, **there are no specific mechanisms in domestic legislation to provide victims of serious human rights violations with means of reparation and rehabilitation** beyond those contemplated in cases of past crimes. The Honduran government provides no public information on the implementation of non-repetition mechanisms for cases of torture over the past five years.

There is also a lack of publicly available information for victims of human rights violations regarding the services offered by the State. Torture victims have no access to protection mechanisms, and their families are not recognised as being at risk of reprisals or intimidation, leaving them vulnerable and defenceless.



VI. PROTECTION FOR ALL

INDEX SCORE: HIGH RISK

Women in Honduras face a difficult panorama of gender-based violence. According to data from the OHCHR published in 2023, there were **280 violent deaths of women in the country, including 52 that occurred in the women's prison (PNFAS)** in June of the same year. This reveals an ongoing trend of gender violence experienced in the public sphere being transferred to the institutional sphere.

Despite this, Honduras still lacks legislation protecting women from violence in public and institutional settings, as well as laws safeguarding gender-diverse individuals from hate crimes. The case of [Keyla Martínez](#) is particularly notable, especially due to the reduction of the sentence originally imposed on her aggressor. Additionally, legal frameworks criminalising abortion and restricting women's right to choose have been further tightened.

The persecution of young people in Honduras is especially severe. Considering the militarisation of public security and the anti-gang measures, adolescents are frequently criminalised by law enforcement authorities operating under the state of emergency currently in force.

According to data from civil society organisations, **as of 2024, there were 1,661 children and adolescents under criminal sanctions, of whom 126 are deprived of their liberty and 1,535 are under other types of measures.** However, none of these cases benefit from formal and effective social reintegration programmes, and those deprived of their liberty often endure ill-treatment and undignified living conditions, as seen in the 'El Pocito' Pedagogical Internment Centre.

The situation faced by indigenous peoples fighting to preserve their territories and cultural identity is also deeply concerning. International organisations have urged the Honduran State to guarantee, through legal reforms, the collective physical, legal, and cultural integrity of indigenous peoples in the face of threats posed by poorly regulated business activities impacting their ancestral lands.



VII. RIGHT TO DEFEND AND CIVIC SPACE

INDEX SCORE: HIGH RISK

The [Inter-American Commission on Human Rights](#) has recognised Honduras **as one of the most dangerous countries in the Americas—and indeed the world—for human rights defenders (HRDs)**. HRDs face extreme risk due to various forms of violence perpetrated by both state and non-state actors aiming to silence their causes. Of particular concern is the high number of assassinations targeting those who defend the environment, land, and territory.

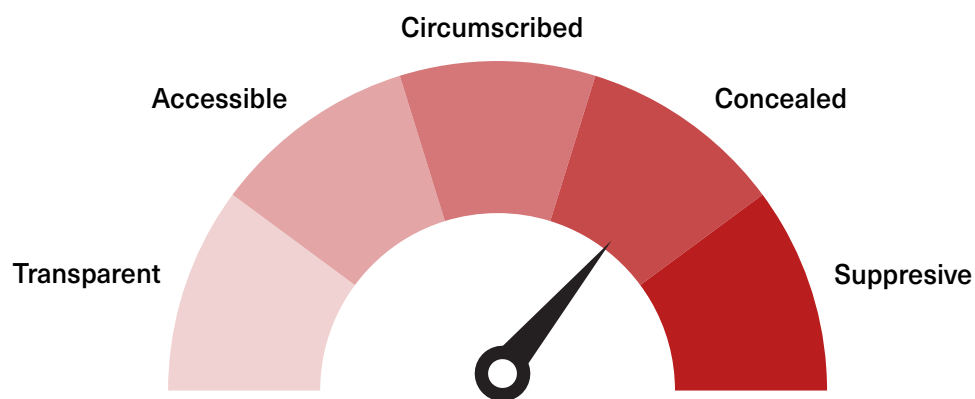
In 2024, the United Nations Office for Human Rights **recorded 284 attacks against 319 individuals and organisations, of which 219 (68.65%) were human rights defenders and 100 (31.35%) were journalists and social communicators**. The Special Prosecutor's Office for Crimes against Life currently has open investigations into **at least 19 cases of murders and disappearances of human rights defenders and journalists between 2023 and 2024**.

In September, [Juan López](#), an environmentalist and prominent defender of the Guapinol River against extractive projects, was murdered. His death occurred amidst ongoing attacks, threats, intimidation, and criminalisation of human rights defenders. López was a beneficiary of precautionary measures granted by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights; however, these measures were not effectively implemented in Honduras. While the alleged perpetrators of the murder have been apprehended, the masterminds remain unidentified—a critical gap that hinders the right to justice, truth, reparation, and guarantees of non-repetition.

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The Global Torture Index rates the access to information and transparency available in each country when measuring and assessing the risks of torture and ill-treatment. It takes into account the availability of information, as well as the obstacles faced by civil society organisations in collecting data and their assessments in accessing information. Access to information must be guaranteed in every society, both in law and in practice, to ensure state transparency and accountability. It enables organisations, journalists and individuals to request data on public bodies, protocols and statistics on human rights violations. This indicator reflects the challenges in accessing information within a country, with each country and territory assigned a rating as Suppressive, Concealed, Circumscribed, Accessible or Transparent.

Honduras's score is **concealed** based on our evaluation of its current level of transparency and access to information.



ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE IN HONDURAS: KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Index includes 5 recommendations for Colombia, taken from the [Index webpage](#), which will serve as references in upcoming editions to monitor achievements within the anti-torture movement.

1. Revoke the state of emergency governing the country's public security policy as soon as possible, and establish a strategy centred on peacebuilding and the guarantee of human rights.
2. Develop and implement a programme to transfer prison administration to the National Penitentiary Institute as a civilian, autonomous, and independent body, ensuring measures to strengthen it and introduce programmes aimed at the social reintegration of persons deprived of their liberty.
3. Increase the budget allocated to the operation of the National Committee for the Prevention of Torture and take the necessary steps to appoint a representative from civil society organisations to the Committee.
4. Promptly and impartially investigate allegations of torture or ill-treatment committed by members of the security and armed forces, as well as enforced disappearances, extrajudicial executions, and deaths in police custody during the state of emergency.
5. Guarantee a safe and enabling environment for the defence of human rights by strengthening the National System for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists, and by effectively investigating and prosecuting attacks and killings of human rights defenders and journalists.



FURTHER RESOURCES

For further information, the complete 2025 Torture Index—including detailed data visualisations, FAQs, the methodology, and more—can be accessed on our website: <https://www.omct.org/en/global-torture-index>. Should you have any questions, feel free to reach out to us at tortureindex@omct.org.

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