

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU GUIDELINES ON HRDS IN HONDURAS



Honduras is one of the most dangerous and difficult places for HRDs worldwide, in particular for those working on land and environmental issues.¹ The EU faces many challenges to respond meaningfully here, including:

- high levels of violence and impunity;
- lack of easy access to HRDs in remote rural areas; and
- heightened risks for HRDs working on LGBTI rights, Indigenous rights or on issues related to land, territory and the environment.

¹ Global Witness, *At what cost? Irresponsible business and the murder of land and environmental defenders in 2017*. Global Witness documented 128 HRDs killed in Honduras from 2010 to 2017, the highest per capita rate of murdered HRDs in this period worldwide. Despite a significant decline in killings in 2017, Global Witness points to increased repression in the country, with the National Human Rights Defenders Network of Honduras documenting 1,232 attacks against Honduran HRDs in 2016-2017, a significant increase compared to previous years.

Beyond its role as a donor, the EU has developed good practices in terms of coordination and public action for HRDs in Honduras, maintaining them even when faced with mounting attacks and killings of HRDs. Yet challenges remain:

- How can the EU leverage its sustained work on one emblematic HRD case, that of Berta Cáceres, to benefit other Honduran HRDs outside the limelight?
- How can the EU match systemic support for a national human rights system with meaningful action when state actors are responsible for human rights violations?
- How to balance the EU's role as a donor, including for projects for the exploration and exploitation of natural resources, against its responsibility to critically engage the Honduran authorities?
- How can the EU and its member states meaningfully anticipate and address tensions between their HRD commitments and their interests in natural resource projects and other business projects that have a potentially adverse human rights impact?

1.1 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CHALLENGES FACED BY HRDS

Honduras still suffers the lasting repercussions of a coup in 2009, and most perpetrators of human rights violations during this period still have not faced investigation or prosecution.² The coup created a hostile atmosphere for HRDs and led the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) to grant precautionary measures to protect the life and physical integrity of several HRDs,³ state officials, journalists and trade unionists in danger because of their work.⁴ Many of these precautionary measures still remain in place at the time of writing.⁵

Honduras has seen some positive developments, in particular the 2015 Law to Protect Human Rights Defenders, Journalists, Social Commentators and Justice Officials (the Protection Law).⁶ Still, Amnesty International's research shows that the Honduran authorities have failed to implement effective protection measures for HRDs at risk.⁷ Indeed, most social leaders and HRDs with IACHR precautionary measures continue to face threats and attacks, and impunity for their assailants remains the norm.

One of the best-known beneficiaries of IACHR protection measures, Berta Cáceres of the National Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas de Honduras, COPINH), was killed on 2 March 2016. In December 2018, seven individuals were found guilty of being the material authors of her killing, but the intellectual authors who planned and ordered the attack still had not been brought to justice at the time of writing in late April 2019.⁸

The situation of HRDs is a microcosm of the overall challenges confronting Honduran society. The country suffers alarmingly high levels of violence.⁹ This is coupled with a lack of legitimacy of Honduran institutions, stemming from alleged collusion with organized crime,¹⁰ corruption and the failure to respond effectively to

² Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, *Situation of Human Rights in Honduras*, (OEA/Ser.LV/II.) Doc. 42/15 31, December 2015, para. 17, <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/reports/pdfs/Honduras-en-2015.pdf>.

³ IACHR granted precautionary measures to HRDs including: Rafael Alegria, national leader of Via Campesina; Salvador Zuniga, then a member of COPINH; several social leaders of Guapinol de Tocoa-Colon; Andrés Tamayo, President of the Olancho Environmental Movement; members of the Coordinating Committee of Popular Organizations of the Aguan (Coordinadora de Organizaciones Populares del Aguan, COPA); Hedme Castro, then Director of the Alba Nora Gúnera school and currently a member of the organization ACI PARTICIPA; and Antonia Damary Coello Mendoza and 17 members of the Committee of Relatives of the Disappeared in Honduras (Comité de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos en Honduras, COFADEH).

⁴ IACHR, Honduran Minister of Foreign Affairs, Patricia Rodas, and request for information on other individuals and Amplification of Precautionary Measures PM 196/09, <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/decisions/precautionary.asp>.

⁵ IACHR, PM 240/11 - Eight members of the El Aguán Authentic Movement for Campesino Claims (Movimiento Auténtico Reivindicador de Campesinos Aguan, MARCA), Honduras; PM 50/14 – Campesino leaders from Bajo Aguán, Honduras, <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/decisions/precautionary.asp>.

⁶ *Ley de Protección para las y los Defensores de Derechos Humanos, Periodistas, Comunicadores Sociales y Operadores de Justicia Decreto 34-2015*, <https://www.tsc.gob.hn/biblioteca/index.php/leyes/619-ley-de-proteccion-para-las-y-los-defensores-de-derechos-humanos-periodistas-comunicadores-sociales-y-operadores-de-justicia>.

⁷ Amnesty International, *Americas: The situation of State Protection Mechanisms for Human Rights Defenders* (Index: AMR 01/8912/2018), October 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AMR0189122018ENGLISH.PDF>.

⁸ Amnesty International, "Honduras: Half-truths for Berta Cáceres and her family" (News, 29 November 2018), <https://www.amnesty.org/es/latest/news/2018/11/honduras-half-truths-for-bertha-caceres-and-her-family/>.

⁹ The latest available World Health Organization homicide figures for Honduras in 2015 stand at 85.7 per 100,000, far above an epidemic level (10 per 100,000). World Health Organization, *Homicide: WHO 2015 Global Health Estimates (2015 update)*, <http://apps.who.int/violence-info/homicide/>.

¹⁰ *The New York Times ES*, "Un informe revela nombres y hechos relacionados con asesinatos cometidos por la policía en Honduras", 15 April 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/es/2016/04/15/un-informe-revelanombres-y-hechos-relacionados-con-asesinatos-cometidos-por-la-policia-en-honduras/>.

the needs of the population.¹¹ In 2015, months-long protests swept the country demanding the resignation of President Juan Orlando Hernández and an end to impunity and corruption.¹² In late 2017, another wave of protests emerged in response to the President's re-election, amid accusations of electoral fraud. Honduran security forces used excessive force to repress protests, leading to the killing and wounding of dozens of protesters and passers-by,¹³ as well as possible extrajudicial executions, arbitrary detentions and ill-treatment.

HRDs working to defend human rights related to land, territory and the environment face a particularly dire situation.¹⁴ In 2017, Global Witness designated the country as the deadliest in the world for environmental activists, 120 of whom were killed between 2010 and 2017.¹⁵ LGBTI defenders in Honduras face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination as HRDs and LGBTI people,¹⁶ and are subject to killings and repeated threats.¹⁷ HRDs and journalists in Honduras likewise face increased risks for reporting on human rights violations, facing harassment and smear campaigns.¹⁸

1.2 ASSESSMENT OF ACTION BY THE EU AND EU MEMBER STATES

EU-Honduras relations are mainly framed by EU development assistance to the country. Honduras is a signatory to an Association Agreement with the EU and high-level interactions mainly occur in the context of the EU's relationship with the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). Given that the CELAC format does not formally address human rights and Honduras lacks a formal bilateral human rights dialogue with the EU, there is no readily apparent high-level or formal venue for the EU to address human rights concerns regularly with the Honduran authorities. Still, EU diplomats report regular interactions with the Honduran authorities on the human rights situation at local level.

Few EU member states have a physical presence in the country. Along with the EU delegation, France, Germany and Spain are present in the capital Tegucigalpa, while other member states cover the country from embassies elsewhere in the region.

As the country is not a major strategic partner in the region, diplomats told Amnesty International that the EU has more space to focus on the promotion of human rights in Honduras. Yet this view seems to disregard potential tensions between EU engagement on human rights and EU-based interests in extractive industry or industrial development projects in the country.¹⁹ This tension presents a serious challenge for the EU in a country where many attacks on HRDs happen in the context of exploration and exploitation of natural resources by privately owned foreign companies, including European ones.

As early as 2010, the EU adopted a local strategy for HRDs that laid out the situation of Honduran HRDs, existing support mechanisms and possible courses of action for diplomats to support their work.²⁰

¹¹ IACHR, *Situation of Human Rights in Honduras*, (OEA/Ser.LV/II.) Doc. 42/15, 31 December 2015, para. 216, <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/reports/pdfs/Honduras-en-2015.pdf>.

¹² *The Guardian*, "Our Central American spring: protesters demand an end to decades of corruption", 14 August 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/14/honduras-guatemala-protests-government-corruption>.

¹³ Amnesty International, *Protest Prohibited, Use of Force and arbitrary detentions to suppress dissent* (Index: AMR 37/8289/2018), June 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AMR3782892018ENGLISH.PDF>; OHCHR, *Human Rights Violations in the context of the 2017 elections in Honduras*, March 2018, https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/HN/2017ReportElectionsHRViolations_Honduras_EN.pdf.

¹⁴ Amnesty International, *We are defending the land with our blood*.

¹⁵ Global Witness, *Honduras: The Deadliest Country in the World for Environmental Activism*, 31 January 2017, <https://www.globalwitness.org/pt/campaigns/environmental-activists/honduras-deadliest-country-world-environmental-activism/>.

¹⁶ Front Line Defenders, *LGBTI defenders in Honduras: doubly at risk*, 3 February 2016, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/statement-report/lgbti-defenders-honduras-doubly-risk>.

¹⁷ Among others, Front Line Defenders reported the killings of the following Honduran LGBTI defenders: Paola Barraza in 2016, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/case-history-paola-barraza>; René Martínez in 2016, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/case-history-rene-martinez>; Gloria Carolina Hernández Vásquez in 2015, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/case-history-gloria-carolina-hernandez-vasquez>. Front Line Defenders reports assassination attempts of the following Honduran LGBTI defenders: David Valle in July 2017, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/attempted-murder-david-valle>; Jlo Córdoba in October 2016, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/assassination-attempt-against-jlo-cordoba>; Jlo Córdoba and Juan José Zambrano in March 2016, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/case-history-juan-jose-zambrano>; Francisco Mencia in October 2015, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/case-history-francisco-mencia>.

¹⁸ Amnesty International, "Honduras: Authorities must guarantee the safety of defenders and journalists targeted in smear campaigns" (News, 28 September 2018), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/09/honduras-autoridades-deben-garantizar-la-seguridad-de-defensores/>.

¹⁹ See, for example: *The Guardian*, "Backers of Honduran dam opposed by murdered activist withdraw funding", 4 June 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/04/honduras-dam-activist-berta-caceres>.

²⁰ *Estrategia local de la Unión Europea para Defensores de los Derechos Humanos en Honduras*, http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/honduras/documents/estrategia_local_derechos_humanos_es.pdf.

In 2015, the EU funded the drafting of the National Protection Law²¹ and the establishment of the Directorate General to provide protection measures to HRDs within the then Ministry of Human Rights, Justice, Governance and Decentralization. While this effort represented a positive step towards ensuring the safety and protection of HRDs, many challenges remain in practice.²² HRDs assert that the Protection System (*Sistema de Protección*) still does not function adequately and lacks sufficient independence and autonomy to act meaningfully. Nonetheless, the system is still seen as necessary as it recognizes the risks faced by HRDs and the resulting need for protection.

Currently, the EU's local engagement with HRDs is shaped by the non-public Human Rights and Democracy Country Strategy (HRDCS) and a National Strategy for Human Rights and Democracy in Honduras, both covering 2016-2020.²³ Neither strategy is exclusively dedicated to supporting HRDs, but both place work on HRDs within a wider context of EU activities on human rights and rule of law in Honduras.

The National Strategy for Human Rights and Democracy is the operational document laying out the EU's key areas of engagement on human rights as agreed at local level by the EU delegation and EU member state embassies on the ground. The strategy reflects the EU's view of the main human rights challenges in Honduras: the polarization of society; low levels of trust between civil society and the government; and state failure to meet its obligations to protect HRDs, which reinforces mistrust of the national protection mechanism and other national human rights institutions.

In response, the EU strategy sets objectives to:

- build bridges between civil society and government by maintaining a dialogue with civil society as well as with the government, and by providing electoral observation;
- protect HRDs, including by providing funding to ensure the full and effective implementation of the National System of Protection for Human Rights Defenders, Journalists and Justice Operators;
- support the rights of LGBTI individuals and promote gender equality; and
- strengthen the rule of law and democracy and support the fight against impunity and corruption.

The EU's CSO Roadmap²⁴ reinforces these objectives by promoting and protecting the space for civil society as one of its priorities, through monitoring of state protection measures for HRDs, engaging in dialogue on human rights with the authorities and facilitating a dialogue on human rights between civil society and the government. From 2012 to 2017, the Programme for the Support of Human Rights in Honduras (Programa de Apoyo a los Derechos Humanos – PADH) likewise worked towards these objectives, including through the drafting of the 2015 Protection Law.²⁵

The EU delegation to Honduras publicly shares the work of HRDs on social media or through other channels. Pictures of EU representatives meeting HRDs in their offices²⁶ and films presenting their day-to-day work,²⁷ have the potential to both validate HRDs' activities and underscore their importance.

Diplomats also highlighted how the EU delegation worked to create a more enabling environment for HRDs, for example by participating in the march marking International Day Against Homophobia, flying the rainbow flag at the EU delegation and through social media posts²⁸ – in addition to multiple public statements on the LGBTI community and HRDs working on LGBTI rights.²⁹

²¹ European Parliament, "Answer given by HR/VP Mogherini on behalf of the European Commission", 17 June 2016, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2016-003227-ASW_EN.html?redirect.

²² Amnesty International, *Americas: The situation of State Protection Mechanisms for Human Rights Defenders*.

²³ Delegation of the EU to Honduras, *Estrategia Nacional de Derechos Humanos y Democracia, 2016-2020*, 9 June 2017, https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/honduras/27950/estrategia-nacional-de-derechos-humanos-y-democracia-2016-2020_en.

²⁴ EEAS, *Hoja de ruta de la ue para el compromiso con la sociedad civil, 2016-2018*, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/1_hdr_honduras_plan_de_accion_final_due_apr_19_2017_0.pdf.

²⁵ Delegation of the EU to Honduras, "El Gobierno de Honduras y la Unión Europea suscriben Memorando de Entendimiento para continuar fortaleciendo el sistema de protección de los derechos humanos en el país", 14 June 2012, http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/honduras/press_corner/all_news/news/2012/20120612_es.htm.

²⁶ See, for example: UE en Honduras Facebook, 20 August 2018, https://es-la.facebook.com/DelegacionDeLaUnionEuropeaEnHonduras/posts/1839715159440670?_tn_=-UC-R, or @UEenHonduras Twitter account, 10 May 2018, https://twitter.com/Eurojusticia_hn/status/994620996584968192.

²⁷ See, for example, 15 October 2018, https://es-la.facebook.com/DelegacionDeLaUnionEuropeaEnHonduras/posts/1907463265999192?_tn_=-R.

²⁸ See @UEenHonduras tweets from 2019 (<https://twitter.com/UEenHonduras/status/1129391203726909440>; <https://twitter.com/UEenHonduras/status/1129579085305405440>; <https://twitter.com/UEenHonduras/status/1129558416198983680>); from 2018 (<https://twitter.com/UEenHonduras/status/997160630888161280>; <https://twitter.com/UEenHonduras/status/997160181397106688>; <https://twitter.com/UEenHonduras/status/997159850256863233>); and from 2017, <https://twitter.com/UEenHonduras/status/864900877668241410>.

²⁹ EEAS, "Statement by the Spokesperson on the killing of Human rights' defender René Martínez in Honduras", 5 June 2016, https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/honduras/5046/statement-spokesperson-killing-human-rights-defender-rene-martinez-honduras_en.

Honduran HRDs interviewed for this report acknowledged the effectiveness of such actions. One said:

[T]heir presence and the importance given to [the LGBTI] group has had an impact especially on how the government tackles this issue... Visibility [of the LGBTI community] came partly from the importance given by the EU and its member states to this topic.

In a similar spirit, the EU delegation funded a human rights awareness campaign called “More Human Rights Equals Peace” (+Derechos Humanos=Paz)³⁰ in 2015 and created the Carlos Escaleras award for Honduran HRDs through a project funded by the EIDHR.³¹

These ways of working were tested by the murder of the HRD Berta Cáceres in March 2016. The EU reacted immediately, with a local statement calling for a prompt investigation and for the perpetrators to be brought to justice.³² A week later, the HR/VP spokesperson likewise called for an investigation and justice, as well as protection for Gustavo Castro Soto, a Mexican HRD who witnessed the murder.³³ The Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs also released a press communiqué condemning the killing and calling for a transparent investigation and a fair trial of those responsible.³⁴

In separate visits to Honduras in 2016, both the EU Special Representative for human rights³⁵ and the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs publicly repeated these messages and raised the case with the government.³⁶ In 2018, during a visit to Honduras, the Spanish Vice Minister for Latin America met Berta Cáceres’ daughter and visited the office of COPINH to pay homage to the Indigenous activist.³⁷ Coupled with practical efforts, these sustained and joined-up messages by the EU and its member states represent good practice for other cases where HRDs are attacked, killed or forcibly disappeared.

In the aftermath of the killing, the EU and member state missions closely followed the investigation and monitored the trial of the alleged perpetrators.³⁸ HRDs interviewed for this report felt that concerted international attention ensured that the investigation did not stall. HRDs also noted how international monitoring of their situation and safety contributed to the security of other COPINH members following Berta Cáceres’ murder.

At the time of Berta Cáceres’ killing, FMO (Dutch Development Bank) and Finnfund (Finnish Fund for Industrial Cooperation) were providing financial support to DESA (Desarrollos Energéticos S.A.), the company responsible for the Agua Zarca hydroelectric dam project which COPINH, Berta Cáceres’ organization, had objected to, and to which the killing was linked. FMO and Finnfund later decided to end their funding in order “to reduce international and local tensions in the area”. They pointed to the need for voluntary dialogue among local communities on the future of the area and development options there, as well as for a “credible international human rights institution [to] monitor the situation on the ground before any dialogue is initiated so as to ensure that participants can feel free to speak their minds without fear of retaliation from anyone”.³⁹ COPINH welcomed this decision, but they and other NGOs also raised continued concerns about free, prior

Delegation of the EU to Honduras, “La UE expresa su preocupación con situación difícil de la comunidad LGBTI en Honduras”, 17 February 2016, http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/honduras/press_corner/all_news/news/2016/20160217_es.htm; Delegation of the EU to Honduras, “Nota de prensa sobre la situación de derechos humanos y la comunidad LGBTIQ en Honduras”, 28 September 2015,

http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/honduras/press_corner/all_news/news/2015/20150929_es.htm.

³⁰ *El Herald*, “Lanzan campaña de derechos humanos en Honduras”, 10 December 2018, <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/909997-466/lanzan-campa%C3%B1a-de-derechos-humanos-en-honduras>.

³¹ Diakonia, “Pase lo que pase voy a seguir en esta lucha”, 20 October 2017, <https://www.diakonia.se/es/noticias/premio-carlos-escaleras/>.

³² Delegation of the EU to Honduras, “Declaración Local: Unión Europea lamenta muerte de Defensora de Derechos Humanos Berta Cáceres”, 2 March 2016, http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/honduras/press_corner/all_news/news/2016/20160303_es.htm#.

³³ EEAS, “Statement of the Spokesperson on the follow up of the death of Berta Cáceres in Honduras”, 12 March 2016,

https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/honduras/2824/statement-spokesperson-follow-death-bertha-caceres-honduras_en.

³⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain, “Official Statement 063, Honduran human rights defender murdered”, 7 March 2016, http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/en/SalaDePrensa/Comunicados/Paginas/2016_COMUNICADOS/20160307_COMU063.aspx.

³⁵ @SJLambrinidis, 3 June 2016, Twitter, <https://twitter.com/SJLambrinidis/status/738872578425683968>.

³⁶ *WRadio*, “García-Margallo reitera condena de España al asesinato de Berta Cáceres”, 16 March 2018, <http://www.wradio.com.co/noticias/internacional/garciamargallo-reitera-condena-de-espana-al-asesinato-de-bertha-caceres/20160316/nota/3086175.aspx>.

³⁷ *EuropaPress*, “García Casas se reúne con el presidente hondureño y con la hija de Berta Cáceres en su viaje a Honduras”, 18 April 2018, <https://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-garcia-casas-reune-presidente-hondureno-hija-bertha-caceres-viaje-honduras-20180418112611.html>.

³⁸ EEAS, “Statement by the Spokesperson on the trial of those accused of the murder of Honduran Human Rights Defender Berta Cáceres”, 28 November 2018, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/54301/statement-spokesperson-trial-those-accused-murder-honduran-human-rights-defender-bertha-caceres_en.

³⁹ “FMO and Finnfund finalize Exit Agua Zarca”, 6 July 2017, <https://www.fmo.nl/news-detail/21a7c615-a32b-471c-9378-60317196daf6/fmo-and-finnfund-finalize-exit-agua-zarca>, https://www.finnfund.fi/en/news/fmo-jand-finnfund-finalize-exit-agua_carca/.

and informed consent in consultations about the project, ongoing violence and attacks on dam opponents and continued impunity for crimes committed in this context.⁴⁰

1.3 EU EFFORTS TO IMPLEMENT ITS HRD GUIDELINES

CLOSED-DOOR DIPLOMACY

The EU lacks a formal human rights dialogue with Honduras, but EU diplomats told Amnesty International that the EU delegation raises human rights concerns in its regular interactions with the government. Diplomats said that individual HRD cases are raised both in these exchanges with the Honduran authorities and through formal demarches to the Foreign Minister, Public Prosecutor or President of the Supreme Court.

Until its recent decline, these efforts were complemented by the *grupo enlace*, where the EU and its member states interacted with justice officials and other relevant government counterparts. In addition, the EU and its member states are part of the G16, a group of donors established during the response to Hurricane Mitch in 1998, which continues work to date. The G16 meets the Honduran Human Rights Minister and discusses HRD cases. It also took a joint public position on the killing of two civil society leaders in 2016.⁴¹

While the direct outcomes of such closed-door diplomacy are challenging to track by their very nature, both the EU's stated human right priorities for Honduras and all visible evidence of its closed-door diplomacy resonate with key concerns of civil society around issues such as LGBTI rights and impunity for attacks on HRDs.⁴²

PUBLIC ACTION

From January 2014 to the time of writing in late April 2019, the EU delegation and member states made 12 public statements on Honduras, including local statements about the overall human rights situation in the country,⁴³ specific groups at risk,⁴⁴ and individual HRD cases. In some cases, local statements were followed by statements from the spokesperson of the HRVP at headquarters level.⁴⁵ Of the 12 statements:

- 11 referred to the killing of HRDs or activists;
- 11 called for investigations and for justice to be done in these cases;
- 11 referred to the names of individuals and eight used the term “human rights defender”;
- 11 made additional recommendations, including strengthening efforts to protect HRDs through the national mechanism or following up on UPR recommendations accepted by the government;
- Seven referred to other groups of concern (LGBTI persons, women, children, persons of African descent, persons with disabilities); and
- Three statements about other defenders referred to the high-profile case of Berta Cáceres.

⁴⁰ “Letter to FMO and Finnfund about exit from Agua Zarca Project in Honduras”, 3 August 2017,

https://justassociates.org/sites/justassociates.org/files/sign_on_letter_to_fmo_and_finnfund_about_agua_zarca_project.pdf.

⁴¹ “Comunicado Conjunto de Prensa: G-16 lamenta el asesinato del presidente del Movimiento Unificado Campesino del Aguán (MUCA) José Ángel Flores y del líder campesino Silmer Dionisio George”, 26 October 2016,

http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/honduras/press_corner/all_news/news/2016/20161026_es.htm.

⁴² CONADEH (ombudsperson), “Prevalecen en la impunidad acciones de violencia contra miembros de la diversidad sexual”, 17 May

2018, <http://conadeh.hn/prevalecen-en-la-impunidad-acciones-de-violencia-contra-miembros-de-la-diversidad-sexual/>; Secretaría de

derechos humanos, “SEDH promueve igualdad y la no discriminación de la comunidad LGBTI”, 15 August 2018,

<https://www.sedh.gob.hn/noticias/92-sedh-promueve-igualdad-y-la-no-discriminacion-de-la-comunidad-lgbti/>; *Proceso Digital*, “Conadeh

pide avanzar en reconocimiento de derechos de personas LGBTI”, 3 November 2018, <http://www.proceso.hn/nacionales/9-nacionales/conadeh-pide-avanzar-en-reconocimiento-de-derechos-de-personas-lgbti.html>.

⁴³ See, for example, Delegation of the EU to Honduras, “Declaración Local sobre la situación en Honduras”,

https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/honduras_es/39615/Declaraci%C3%B3n%20Local%20sobre%20la%20situaci%C3%B3n%20en%20Honduras.

⁴⁴ See, for example: Delegation of the EU to Honduras, “Nota de prensa sobre la situación de derechos humanos y la comunidad LGBTIQ en Honduras”, 28 September 2015,

http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/honduras/press_corner/all_news/news/2015/20150929_es.htm.

⁴⁵ For example, in the cases of Berta Cáceres and René Martínez. See Appendix III for a full list of EU public statements on Honduras.

EU statements mainly respond to the killing of individual HRDs, rather than acting preventively to highlight cases of HRDs at risk. Consequently, they represent a missed opportunity for preventive action. Nine of the statements were issued in 2016 at the time of the killings of Berta Cáceres and other HRDs.



 ↑ *Acción Global "Justicia para Berta Cáceres"/Global Action "Justice for Berta Cáceres", mobilization before the Embassy of Honduras in Mexico City, 15/06/2016. © Amnesty International*

Still, EU statements consistently foreground individuals' names, use the term "human rights defender" and include explicit recommendations and forward-looking elements. Practically all statements call for investigation, justice and a strengthening of HRD protection in country. In addition, EU statements regularly link individual cases of murdered HRDs with concerns about other HRDs still at risk and/or human rights issues facing other vulnerable groups.

When LGBTI rights defender René Martínez was killed in 2016, a spokesperson statement at Brussels level called for "thorough investigations [to be] conducted as soon as possible to bring the perpetrators to justice" and for "[u]rgent and decisive steps to protect human rights defenders in Honduras [...] so that impunity and violence come to an end".⁴⁶ This statement also explicitly referred to the high-profile case of Berta Cáceres. Shortly thereafter, the visiting EU Special Representative for human rights was quoted in an EU local statement stating that the "only way to end the violence is to effectively combat impunity"⁴⁷ – a stance that received much attention in the Honduran press.⁴⁸

No statements on HRDs or civil society were issued in 2013, 2014 and 2017, coinciding with general elections in November 2013 and November 2017. Both elections were monitored by EU election observation missions (EOM), including with a view to civil and political rights and the safety of activists.⁴⁹ The 2017 EU EOM report

⁴⁶ EEAS, "Statement by the Spokesperson on the killing of Human rights' defender René Martínèz in Honduras", 5 June 2016,

https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/honduras/5046/statement-spokesperson-killing-human-rights-defender-rene-martinez-honduras_en.

⁴⁷ Delegation of the EU to Honduras, "Unión Europea lamenta asesinato de defensor de Derechos Humanos y líder de la comunidad LGBTI, René Martínez", 8 June 2016, http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/honduras/press_corner/all_news/news/2016/20160608_es.htm.

⁴⁸ See, for example, *Europapress*, "Brutalmente asesinado el líder de la comunidad LGTBI en Honduras", 5 June 2016, <https://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-brutalmente-asesinado-lider-comunidad-lgtbi-honduras-20160605144029.html>; *Proceso Digital*, "Unión Europea lamenta asesinato de líder hondureño de comunidad LGBTI", 3 June 2016, <http://proceso.hn/caliente/12-caliente/union-europea-lamenta-asesinato-de-lider-hondureno-de-comunidad-lgtbi.html>.

⁴⁹ See for 2013: Delegation of the EU to Honduras, "República de Honduras: La Unión Europea observará las elecciones", 4 October 2013, http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/honduras/press_corner/all_news/news/2013/20131004_es.htm; "Declaración por la Alta Representante de la UE, Catherine Ashton en relación a las elecciones generales en Honduras el 24 de noviembre 2013", 27 November

issued recommendations on the need to reinforce and ensure sufficient capacity for the national protection mechanism and to extend its protections to journalists, with a view to preserving the right to freedom of expression.⁵⁰ This suggests a potential avenue for good practice in Honduras and elsewhere – to explore how EU EOMs can boost the important work of HRDs during an election and pro-actively reinforce longer term EU work on their behalf.

The EU head of delegation also made at least one public declaration in support of HRDs and against the delegitimization of their work.⁵¹

In interviews with Amnesty International, both EU diplomats and HRDs concurred that public statements are crucial to support HRDs and their work, while lowering the levels of threat they face. One HRD stated:

[I]t has been this support that stopped some actions of the Honduran government, because they care about the EU's opinion. This advocacy work has helped to mitigate [risks to HRDs].

Others suggested that the EU's public interventions reinforce dialogue between the government and civil society and help to smooth over moments of crisis.

Still, HRDs remained concerned that EU statements tend to be issued after killings, rather than when defenders alert them of acute threats, risks or unjust charges they face due to their human rights activities. HRDs likewise highlighted the crucial importance of practical follow up on statements. One said:

“[O]ften, recommendations to Honduras are put forward but there is no follow up and they are forgotten. With impunity cases, even if there is international pressure, one part of the observation [of the situation of HRDs] is the follow up [that is done on it].

Regular contact between HRDs and EU diplomats is crucial in ensuring that EU public positioning stays in step with the evolving situation of HRDs, even if exchanges may not always result in a strong statement by the EU. One stated:

[W]e pushed for a more robust public statement in the post-election context and held meetings with the EU delegation and member state embassies to make this happen. In the end, there was a local statement⁵² but it was weaker than expected and they did not talk explicitly about threats against defenders.

In particular, Honduran HRDs asserted that it was much harder to get the EU to take action on lower-profile cases of Indigenous HRDs or other defenders at risk for their work on land and territory than on the high-profile case of Berta Cáceres. While EU diplomats expressed concern that the situation of HRDs in remote areas was often difficult to verify, this could be resolved through deeper and more consistent exchanges with HRDs, coupled with outreach to HRDs in remote or rural areas.

TRIAL MONITORING

The EU delegation and member state embassies share the responsibility of trial monitoring in Honduras, under the coordination of the EU delegation. According to COPINH, the trial of the alleged killers of Berta Cáceres received particular attention, although some HRDs reported that the EU delegation and member states mainly respond positively to requests to monitor trials of other individuals and organizations in the capital.

While some instances of EU member states monitoring trials outside of the capital have been reported, more efforts in this regard, or more visibility of ongoing efforts, are needed.

2013, http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/honduras/press_corner/all_news/news/2013/20131127_1_es.htm; Honduras: Final Report: General Elections 2013, http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/eueom/missions/2013/honduras/pdf/final-report-eueom-honduras-2013_en.pdf. See for 2017: EEAS, “Statement by the Spokesperson of the EU High Representative on the situation in Honduras: ‘We expect parties to express their concerns peacefully, using the legal mechanisms available to them’”, 5 December 2017, https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/honduras/36791/statement-spokesperson-eu-high-representative-situation-honduras-we-expect-parties-express_en; “EU EOM Honduras 2017 Preliminary Statement: Well-organized elections follow campaign marked by unequal resources”, 29 November 2017, https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/honduras/36396/eu-eom-honduras-2017-preliminary-statement-well-organised-elections-follow-campaign-marked_en; Honduras: Final Report: General Elections 2017, <https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/373045796-eu-eom-honduras-2017-final-report.pdf>.

⁵⁰ Honduras: Final Report: General Elections 2013, p. 41, <https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/373045796-eu-eom-honduras-2017-final-report.pdf>.

⁵¹ See, for example, *Conexihon*, “Se reactiva campaña de desprestigio a defensores y defensoras de DDHH”, 30 January 2018, <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/226-se-reactiva-campana-de-desprestigio-a-defensores-y-defensoras-de-ddhh>.

⁵² Delegation of the EU to Honduras, “Declaración Local sobre la situación en Honduras”, 8 February 2018, https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/honduras_es/39615/Declaraci%C3%B3n%20Local%20sobre%20la%20situaci%C3%B3n%20en%20Honduras.

To date, the EU has failed to issue follow-up statements on trial observation, missing an opportunity to underline violations of fair trial guarantees and other shortcomings in the proceedings.

ENGAGEMENT WITH HRDS

On a practical level, the EU delegation and member state missions established the *grupo enlace*⁵³ to coordinate their actions on human rights, initially following the 2009 coup and, up until recently, to carry forward the 2010 Honduras-specific local strategy on HRDs. In an innovative good practice, a wide range of actors participated in the *grupo enlace* to strengthen links between the government and civil society. HRDs, civil society representatives, representatives of the Attorney General, the government and the EU attended these exchanges, allowing HRDs access to a wide range of counterparts and recognition for their work in the eyes of the state and the diplomatic community. According to EU diplomats interviewed for this report, the EU's next human rights programme for Honduras from 2020 onward envisages building on the *grupo enlace* by expanding links between the national authorities, civil society and businesses.

Unfortunately, following a change in staff at the EU delegation, the *grupo enlace* has lost momentum. Meetings have become less frequent, with quarterly meetings dropping to two meetings in 2018. So far, up to late April, no meeting had taken place in 2019. The *grupo enlace* has also become less diverse. It used to be facilitated by Espacio ACI (Asociación de Cooperación Internacional), which coordinated international NGOs in Honduras. At present, the EU delegation convenes it, and one civil society interviewee observed that HRDs attending are usually those already in touch with the delegation. This interviewee also mentioned that the most recent meetings no longer end with agreement on a list of commitments, as was previously the case.

In addition to meetings with HRDs at the *grupo enlace*, with EU ambassadors and in the framework of the G16 donor group, the EU delegation says it has an open-door policy for HRDs and human rights NGOs to set up meetings with EU diplomats. Similar policies were reported for the German and Spanish embassies. International NGOs also organize training or workshops that bring together HRDs and diplomats for networking and exchange.

Speaking with Amnesty International, both diplomats and HRDs agreed that publicizing visits of diplomats or high-level officials to human rights organizations and HRDs' offices can be particularly valuable to raise the profile of HRDs, legitimize their activities and lower the risks they face due to their work.

Such public action is especially important in Honduras due to smear campaigns in social media targeting HRDs and their work.⁵⁴ The EU delegation reported specifically working to counter such campaigns through its public channels. The EU head of delegation posed for pictures during meetings with HRDs⁵⁵ and stated his support to them in times of crisis. The Spanish Vice Minister for Latin America made a show of support by tweeting a picture of his meeting with COPINH, at which he reported discussing the situation of Honduran HRDs and progress in the trial of Berta Cáceres' killers.⁵⁶ During his 2016 visit, the EU Special Representative for human rights met several HRDs and LGBTI organizations, publicizing the exchanges on Twitter.⁵⁷

Honduran HRDs said the EU has generally responded positively to requests for visits with HRDs at risk or for the EU to ask the authorities for information on protective measures. In situations of imminent risk, the EU delegation has occasionally physically accompanied individuals at risk.

Still, challenges remain. As most contact takes place in Tegucigalpa, outreach to HRDs based outside of the capital requires additional effort. Due to staff capacity and infrastructural limitations, EU diplomats reported that they could not travel often to remote areas where defenders face heightened challenges, especially in northern Honduras. HRDs regretted that diplomats' visits to regions are also often too short to allow for in-depth discussion with HRDs and the local population. Similarly, HRDs based in remote areas cannot make full use of open-door policies at embassies or take full advantage of the potential for EU action. One HRD outside the capital said: "we are not aware of any [EU] reports on Honduras, they do events in Tegucigalpa, but there is not enough coverage from media."

⁵³ Delegation of the EU to Honduras, *Estrategia Nacional de Derechos Humanos y Democracia, 2016-2020*, point 1.

⁵⁴ See, for example, Amnesty International, "Honduras: Authorities must guarantee the safety of defenders and journalists targeted in smear campaigns"; Honduras: *Urgent Action: Increasing smear campaign against defenders* (Index: AMR 375/613/2017), 2 February 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AMR3756132017ENGLISH.pdf>; Amnesty International, "Honduras/Guatemala: Attacks on the rise in world's deadliest countries for environmental activists" (News, 2 September 2016), <https://www.amnesty.org.nz/hondurasguatemala-attacks-rise-world%E2%80%99s-deadliest-countries-environmental-activists>.

⁵⁵ Defensoresenlinea.com, "COFADEH renueva su compromiso por la defensa y promoción de los derechos humanos", 31 August 2016, <http://defensoresenlinea.com/cofاده-renueva-su-compromiso-por-la-defensa-y-promocion-de-los-derechos-humanos/>.

⁵⁶ @GarciaCasasF, 16 April 2018, Twitter, <https://twitter.com/GarciaCasasF/status/985879454609231872>.

⁵⁷ See, for example: @SJLambrinidis, 3 June 2016, Twitter, <https://twitter.com/SJLambrinidis/status/738874374455885825>; 4 June 2016, Twitter, <https://twitter.com/SJLambrinidis/status/739110206437609472>.

One solution is for EU diplomats to visit HRDs based outside Tegucigalpa by combining HRD meetings with visits to cooperation projects in remote areas. For example, the Spanish Vice Minister for Latin America used such an opportunity to hold meetings with HRDs from the North Coast in the city of San Pedro Sula and to travel to La Esperanza to visit the office of COPINH.

The overall visibility of the EU Guidelines on HRDs leaves room for improvement in Honduras. Most HRDs interviewed for this report were familiar with the EU Guidelines, but mainly from training sessions provided by international NGOs and the personal commitment of individual delegation staff. One HRD believed the Guidelines were unknown outside larger cities in Honduras:

I think that defenders who are in the main cities such as Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula or El Progreso have access to this information, but this is not the case for those in rural areas. The EU representatives do not inform HRDs about the Guidelines. There is a lack of information about how EU diplomatic missions work and the existing mechanisms for defenders.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

One of the EU's three funding priorities for Honduras over 2014-2020 is the promotion of the rule of law, including by setting up a national system to promote and protect human rights. €40 million has been allocated to this priority for the six-year period, channeled through the government budget.⁵⁸ The 2012-2017 PADH programme likewise supported several systemic measures designed to improve the national human rights system.⁵⁹

Since 2013, the EU has also funded EuroJusticia, a €31 million project designed to reform and strengthen the justice system in Honduras.⁶⁰ One of the project's key objectives is to improve access to justice for marginalized groups. However, the project's implementation through the Ministry of Public Security (which controls the police) and the Attorney General's office has drawn criticism from local HRDs, who do not perceive these entities as reliable partners due to their failure effectively to investigate crimes against HRDs and other human rights violations.⁶¹

The EU has been a committed donor to the IACHR, although its contributions have significantly varied over time.⁶² Continued EU support for the IACHR will be a politically and practically important backup to national protection efforts in Honduras and in the region more widely, in particular where the IACHR can provide HRDs with visibility and protection when the state fails to do so.

In Honduras and elsewhere, there is room for reflection and analysis on how the EU can best use its influence to balance systemic support to a national human rights system or the National Protection System for HRDs with meaningful, practical action and critical engagement with the authorities when state actors themselves are behind attacks on HRDs.

FINANCING, TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

The EIDHR is the principal source of EU funding for HRDs in Honduras and supports seven projects by local and international NGOs at the time of writing. EIDHR support targets WHRDs for capacity building, promotion of local women's networks, improved protection of WHRDs in areas of major socio-environmental conflict and assistance to women land rights defenders.

The EU's stated priorities in providing emergency funding through the EIDHR or the EU's Protect Defenders mechanism are:

⁵⁸ 2014-2020 EU Multiannual Indicative Programme for Honduras, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/2014-2020_multiannual-indicative-programme_honduras_en_0.pdf.

⁵⁹ These include: the implementation of the Human Rights National Policy and Action Plan; the reinforcement of the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Vice Ministry for Human Rights and the National Committee for the Prevention Against Torture; the creation of a new Directorate for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in the Vice Ministry for Human Rights; the creation of the Human Rights Observatory and the Monitoring System for Recommendations to Honduras (Sistema de Monitoreo de Recomendaciones de Honduras – SIMOREH) following up on international (UN and Organization of American States OAS) human rights recommendations towards Honduras; and the provision of training in special investigation capacities for human rights violations to staff of the Public Prosecutor's Office.

⁶⁰ European Commission, International Cooperation and Development, *Promoting rapid and accessible justice in Honduras (EuroJusticia)*, https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/projects/promoting-rapid-and-accessible-justice-honduras-eurojusticia-0_en.

⁶¹ Amnesty International, *Americas: The situation of State Protection Mechanisms for Human Rights Defenders*.

⁶² IACHR, *Annual Report 2017*, Chapter VI, <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/docs/annual/2017/docs/IA2017cap.6-en.pdf>; Organization of American States, *Specific Funds Contributions to IACHR 2011-2016*, <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/mandato/finanzas/RecursosFinancieros-2011-2016.pdf>.

- HRDs at risk, specifically in cases where IACHR protection measures need to be strengthened;
- LGBTI defenders and organizations, through measures such as enforcing the security infrastructure of offices; and
- HRDs requiring legal support in response to criminalization of their work.

The EU further supports the organization of training sessions and workshops, including workshops on the EU Guidelines on HRDs and a regional workshop for civil society on the Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights within the context of its regional project on extractive industries and human rights in Central America.⁶³

In her statement on behalf of the EU on the occasion of the International Day for the World's Indigenous People in August 2018, the HR/VP announced that the EU will dedicate €5 million to HRDs and organizations working on land grabbing, climate change and Indigenous peoples' rights, although it is as yet unclear if and how these funds might be allocated to HRDs working on issues related to the land and territory in Honduras.⁶⁴

RELOCATION AND VISA SUPPORT

The EU's Protect Defenders mechanism and EIDHR emergency funding provide resources for emergency relocation and rest and respite leave for HRDs at risk. Some Honduran HRDs confirmed receiving EU assistance for relocation in country, but resources available through these mechanisms are limited and many HRDs are unable to access them at times of need. HRDs further highlighted the lack of information about the EU relocation funding available through the EU delegation.

In some instances, CSOs provided substantiating research and verification of HRD cases to the EU delegation, allowing the EU and its member states to decide on preventive measures for HRDs at risk, such as relocation to a different area or outside of the country.

HRDs further welcomed the recent creation of a shelter city programme for individuals at risk from the Central American region in Costa Rica with Dutch government support.⁶⁵

ENGAGEMENT AT REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL FORA

The EU delegation and EU member state missions in Honduras are known to work closely with regional and international organizations and their respective human rights bodies. The *grupo enlace* has often included the OHCHR representative for Honduras, while UN and Organization of American States (OAS) representatives in Honduras are part of the G16 group. The EU engages with relevant UN Special Procedures, such as the Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of HRDs, as well as with the IACHR, on their visits to Honduras. The EU delegation also supports follow up on the UPR recommendations accepted by Honduras in May 2015 by funding the establishment and maintenance of a tool to track UPR commitments and their implementation.⁶⁶

As little evidence was found of EU support to Honduran HRDs accessing regional and international human rights bodies outside of the country, work in this area should either be stepped up or made more visible to ensure that Honduran HRDs are aware of this possibility.

VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL COORDINATION

Despite significant efforts towards coordination, Honduran HRDs perceived a lack of a systematic approach to human rights and HRDs among EU diplomatic staff in Honduras. Speaking with Amnesty International, Honduran HRDs pointed out how much EU human rights work in Honduras seemed dependent on individuals and was thus vulnerable to regular staff rotations, rather than being systemic, systematic and strategic. As one HRD said in 2018:

⁶³ UE en Honduras Facebook, 16 October 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/353373548074846/posts/1908316075913911/>.

⁶⁴ "Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the occasion of the International Day for the World's Indigenous Peoples", 8 August 2018, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/08/08/declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-the-occasion-of-the-international-day-for-the-world-s-indigenous-peoples/>.

⁶⁵ "Costa Rica becomes third international Shelter City for human rights defenders", 7 February 2018.

<https://sheltercity.nl/en/costa-rica-becomes-third-international-shelter-city-for-human-rights-defenders/>.

⁶⁶ *Sistema de Monitoreo de Recomendaciones de Honduras*, <https://simoreh.sedh.gob.hn/buscador/home>.

Before, they used to be our allies to protect the right to defend human rights, and the one with most commitment was the EU ambassador. Our communication used to be fluid and speedy. Now we feel helpless because we do not know the new ambassadors, and we need to recreate synergies and communication channels to support individuals at risk for the work they do as defenders.

HRDs also perceive the EU and its member states as having divergent positions between their support of HRDs and other interests, in particular business activities and development projects in Honduras. In the words of one HRD:

We heard discourse coming from some embassy representatives saying that [land rights] organizations and communities are against development, and this is a very widespread narrative. They emphasize that development is important and therefore these projects are important.

Both HRDs and diplomats agreed there is a need for greater vigilance and more open exchange about EU member state-backed trade or business agreements and development projects, and the impact they may have in Honduras, and specifically on HRDs – and that Honduran HRDs have a crucial role to play in that debate.

1.4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In Honduras, several good EU practices of support to HRDs have emerged in a situation of high risk where the EU and its member states have significant leverage. These include:

- statements on killings of HRDs with explicit calls for justice, better HRD protection and attention to other individuals and groups at risk;
- multiple levels of coordination with HRDs through the *grupo enlace* and the G16;
- public communication aimed at countering smear campaigns; and
- links between the EU EOM and long-standing work on HRD protection.

Still, challenges for EU engagement on HRDs in Honduras remain, including:

- Conducting meaningful outreach to HRDs in remote or rural areas;
- Developing strategies to extend work on emblematic HRD cases to benefit other HRDs and groups at risk;
- Reinforcing work to address specific groups and their needs, in particular Indigenous HRDs, HRDs working on territory, land and environment and those working on business and human rights;
- Ensuing EU systemic support to the national human rights system is matched by meaningful critical engagement where there is state responsibility for human rights violations against HRDs; and
- Balancing EU and member state commitments on HRDs with interests in development projects or business, where these may have an adverse human rights impact.



TO IMPROVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU GUIDELINES ON HRDS IN HONDURAS, THE EU AND MEMBER STATES SHOULD:

- **Pro-actively issue statements addressing cases of HRDs at risk**, including: those in pre-trial detention or criminalized for their activities; those working on human rights related to the land, environmental protection and Indigenous rights; and those who do not have a high profile.
- **Ensure consistent human rights monitoring of EU-funded police, military and judicial investigation bodies** in Honduras to ensure they respect and protect human rights.
- **Fully use EU and member state support to the national human rights system and HRD protection mechanism to critically engage with the Honduran authorities on individual HRD cases.** Likewise, act to ensure that the national protection mechanism for HRDs is adequately resourced, supported and fully backed politically to function meaningfully.
- **Reinvigorate the quarterly meetings of the *grupo enlace***, ensuring regular, inclusive and action-oriented exchanges with Honduran HRDs and civil society. In close consultation with all involved, build on proposed initiatives of expanding the *grupo enlace* to link up HRDs (and civil society more widely) with government, international diplomats and business actors.
- **Ensure due diligence, as set out in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights**, so that the human rights of individuals and communities are respected in the context of European activities and projects related to the exploration and exploitation of natural resources.
- **Step up work to link Honduran HRDs with regional and international human rights mechanisms and/or to make this work more visible to HRDs.**

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