

**Honduran Government Announces 30 Percent Decline in Homicides**  
*Extortion crimes also decrease by 45 percent.*

**TEGUCIGALPA (May 2)** -- Homicides have declined 30 percent in Honduras, according to the most recent government data, announced last week by President Juan Orlando Hernández.

Hernández also gave an update on Operation Arpia 2, wherein 384 prisoners were transferred from various penitentiaries to El Pozo, which will house Honduras's most dangerous prisoners.

Operation Arpia is the highest-impact operation undertaken in Latin America. Earlier this year, authorities transferred 755 detainees who were members of two enemy criminal gangs, Mara Salvatrucha and Pandilla 18. Under Operations Arpia 1 and 2, one-third of the prison population at San Pedro Sula has been relocated.

The operations also yielded a 45 percent reduction in extortion crimes, the seventh-most common reason for incarceration in Honduras.

President Hernández attributed the reduction in crime to reforms passed by Honduras's National Congress last February, the prisoner transfer program, and the Government's law enforcement efforts, especially those of judicial officials, the National Anti-Extortion Force, and the National Inter-Agency Security Force (Fusina).

In 2016, Honduras's homicide rate was 59 per 100,000 residents, according to the Violence Observatory at the National Autonomous University of Honduras.

"This means that Fusina was correct to propose these reforms, and that Congress did what needed to be done when it passed them," said Hernández.

He added that Arpia 2 "was a successful and noteworthy operation, showing not only our political will but also the Honduran State's new capabilities."

**Migration and Security**

Hernández said that Central America, particularly Honduras, continues to be important to U.S. interests.

"I want to share what, to me, is an important element of the United States' immigration policy, the subject of security; how the Trump Administration sees this subject; and what Honduras and the Central American and Mesoamerican region mean for the security of the United States," he said.

He referred to a speech U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly recently gave at George Washington University. "He clearly identified there how the new U.S. Administration sees the subject of security and immigration," said Hernández.

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Kelly said, "But it's not enough to tackle the problems here at home . . . Border security starts 1,500 miles to the south of the United States with incredible partners like Colombia, the Central American countries, and Mexico."

Kelly added, "A stable country needs a strong, accountable government that protects its citizens, upholds the rule of law, and expands economic opportunity for all its people. Without this, countries fail, and their people flee."

### **U.S. Priorities**

When asked about the 30 percent decrease in U.S. assistance to countries in the Central American Northern Triangle, Hernández said, "If we receive assistance, it will be welcomed, but if not, there are things that only we as Hondurans are going to make a priority."

Hernández stated that, in his most recent working trip to Washington, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson confirmed that President Trump had requested a 30 percent reduction in aid for Central American countries, which some members of Congress supported and others opposed.

In response to this extreme action, Hernández said, "This is a very sovereign decision by the United States."

### **Support for Law Enforcement Should Continue**

Hernández also stated that the establishment of a Tri-National Force -- from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador -- to fight crime was a Honduran initiative, before President Trump was inaugurated.

He highlighted the advancements that Honduras and the region have made in this area and what that means for the United States, given that President Trump promised to combat criminal gangs.

Hernández said that law enforcement operations should be executed jointly, with mutual assistance among all affected countries, including the United States. "United, we are stronger and more effective," he said.

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## Honduran President Announces Commission to Review Criminal Justice Reforms for Minors

TEGUCIGALPA (May 12) -- This week, Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández announced the formation of a commission that will consider reforms to the country's criminal justice system -- including whether to lower the age at which alleged offenders can be charged as adults.

"I have given instructions to the secretary general of Internal Affairs, Dr. Jorge Ramón Hernández Alcerro, to gather jurists and sociologists who can bring together different sectors of society to review two questions," he said. "Do we treat minors differently, even when they have committed horrendous crimes, or do we treat them like adults, as they do in other countries?"

The commission will also explore how to restructure the country's penitentiary system in order to reintegrate young offenders into society. As part of that work, the commission will conduct an in-depth review of Honduras's juvenile detention centers.

"The entire penitentiary system has become paralyzed, and part of what is not working is its treatment of minors," Hernández said.

Hernández lamented that criminal organizations exploit minors to commit crimes, knowing that the law does not allow them to be tried as adults. The result is that youths -- frequently boys -- enter into a life of crime before they reach adulthood. Adult criminals, meanwhile, avoid justice.

"We should give minors options, so that they can be reintegrated into society and not lost to us," he said.

Youths participate in almost 40 percent of high-impact crimes in Honduras.

The commission will seek input from human rights groups, children's rights groups, civil society organizations, and churches.

President Hernández stated that he does not have an exact age in mind at which he believes minors should be tried as adults. "The commission will delve deeply into this question and give us the information to make that decision," he said.

"But we cannot delay any longer. This goal of this initiative is to protect the lives of Hondurans."

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## **Honduras Creates New Ministry for Human Rights**

*The president reaffirmed his intent to see justice done in cases of murdered journalists.*

**TEGUCIGALPA (May 31) --** Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández has announced the creation of a new Ministry for Human Rights, which will include responsibility for cases of crimes against journalists.

The Honduran president announced the decision during his speech at a Honduran Association of Journalists ceremony bestowing the Álvaro Contreras Award (2017-2018) on journalist Blanca Moreno, on the occasion of Honduras's Journalism Day.

The president supported the Association of Journalists' request that the authorities investigate murders of media and communications professionals.

"To the members of the Executive Branch, the instruction is clear and direct: Bring to trial those who must be tried to see justice done for Honduras and for journalists," Hernández said.

He added, "The instrument we have built together with you and with other leaders who defend and promote human rights not only in Honduras but in other parts of the world is beginning its work.

"I recognize that we have to relaunch this, I recognize that there is a lot left to do. We have assumed our responsibility, and I take this opportunity to say that I have made the decision to elevate the Office of the Undersecretary for everything involving human rights, to a new Ministry, because this portfolio should be important, today, tomorrow and always," Hernández said.

"I hope that you will join us in this effort," said Hernández.

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It is the policy of the Department of Health and Human Services to provide information to the public in a timely and accurate manner.

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"I am a scientist," said the scientist.

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1. The first part of the document is a letter from the author to the editor of the journal, dated 1954.

2. The second part is a letter from the editor to the author, dated 1954.

3. The third part is a letter from the author to the editor, dated 1954.

4. The fourth part is a letter from the editor to the author, dated 1954.

5. The fifth part is a letter from the author to the editor, dated 1954.

6. The sixth part is a letter from the editor to the author, dated 1954.

7. The seventh part is a letter from the author to the editor, dated 1954.

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## U.S. State Department Commends Honduran Government for Reducing Crime and Corruption Rates

TEGUCIGALPA (March 30) -- A report released this month by the U.S. Department of State credits the Honduran government for reducing rates of homicide, kidnapping, and extortion in the Central American country.

Between 2014 and 2015, the Honduran National Police reported a 48 percent decrease in kidnappings.

"Over the past several years, the Honduran government has taken concrete steps to bolster its security and justice system, while combatting organized crime and drug trafficking," said Christa Castro, Minister Advisor for Strategy and Communications for the Government of Honduras. "The State Department report highlights the fruits of our labor -- a safer country for all Hondurans."

The Honduran government is steadfastly eliminating corruption among the Honduran National Police force, according to the U.S. report. President Juan Orlando Hernández's Police Purge Commission, created last year, removed 1,946 police officers by December. The commission continues to vet its officers -- and is aiming to reach its goal of completing 14,000 personnel reviews by April.

The report also underscores the U.S. government's role in Honduran crime prevention and community programs, highlighting 40 U.S.-supported outreach centers for at-risk youth.

"The United States plays a key role in assisting vulnerable people in Honduras," said Castro. "We look forward to continuing our work with the U.S. government to improve the capacity of our justice system and ensure that civilians are protected."

The State Department report details the efforts of the Honduran government to battle crime and drug trafficking from all sides -- by stamping out corruption, strengthening security forces, and supporting at-risk populations. "The results are visible," the report concludes. "Rates of homicide, kidnapping, and extortion were down from 2015, and citizens' impressions of the HNP are improving."

President Hernández is simultaneously spearheading human rights reforms within the Honduran Armed Forces, according to a separate State Department report. Over 4,500 service members had received human rights training as of August.

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1. The first part of the document is a letter from the author to the editor, dated 19th March 1954. It is a very short letter, only two lines long, and it is written in a very simple, direct style. The author is asking the editor to publish the enclosed article, and to give it the title 'The Role of the Teacher in the Modern School'.

2. The second part of the document is the article itself, which is a short, simple piece of writing. It is written in a very simple, direct style, and it is very easy to read. The article is about the role of the teacher in the modern school, and it is written in a way that is very clear and concise.

3. The third part of the document is a letter from the editor to the author, dated 25th March 1954. It is a very short letter, only two lines long, and it is written in a very simple, direct style. The editor is thanking the author for his article, and saying that it has been accepted for publication.

4. The fourth part of the document is a letter from the author to the editor, dated 30th March 1954. It is a very short letter, only two lines long, and it is written in a very simple, direct style. The author is thanking the editor for his letter, and saying that he is pleased to hear that his article has been accepted for publication.

5. The fifth part of the document is a letter from the editor to the author, dated 5th April 1954. It is a very short letter, only two lines long, and it is written in a very simple, direct style. The editor is thanking the author for his letter, and saying that he is pleased to hear that he is pleased to hear that his article has been accepted for publication.

6. The sixth part of the document is a letter from the author to the editor, dated 10th April 1954. It is a very short letter, only two lines long, and it is written in a very simple, direct style. The author is thanking the editor for his letter, and saying that he is pleased to hear that his article has been accepted for publication.

7. The seventh part of the document is a letter from the editor to the author, dated 15th April 1954. It is a very short letter, only two lines long, and it is written in a very simple, direct style. The editor is thanking the author for his letter, and saying that he is pleased to hear that his article has been accepted for publication.

8. The eighth part of the document is a letter from the author to the editor, dated 20th April 1954. It is a very short letter, only two lines long, and it is written in a very simple, direct style. The author is thanking the editor for his letter, and saying that he is pleased to hear that his article has been accepted for publication.

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**Attachment #1**

Below and following, please find a list of all informational materials issued by Keybridge Communications LLC ("Keybridge") prior to registering with FARA on August 2, 2017, through August 29, 2017, as well as two copies of each piece of informational material.

Due to a misunderstanding of the FARA requirements, Keybridge did not file copies of such informational materials within 48 hours with the Department of Justice and did not include the label required by Section 4(b) of the Foreign Agents Registration Act on the informational materials listed below.

Going forward, Keybridge will include the label required by Section 4(b) of the Act on all informational materials and will file the informational materials within the 48-hour period.

**Press Release Summary**

Press Release: Honduran Government Receives Praise from U.S. State Department for Reducing Crime and Corruption Rates	Mar 30, 2017	<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-government-receives-praise-from-us-state-department-for-reducing-crime-and-corruption-rates-300432113.html">http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-government-receives-praise-from-us-state-department-for-reducing-crime-and-corruption-rates-300432113.html</a>
Press Release: Honduran Government Announces 30 Percent Decline in Homicides	May 02, 2017	<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-government-announces-30-percent-decline-in-homicides-300449349.html">http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-government-announces-30-percent-decline-in-homicides-300449349.html</a>
Press Release: Honduran President Announces Commission to Review Criminal Justice Reforms for Minors	May 12, 2017	<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-president-announces-commission-to-review-criminal-justice-reforms-for-minors-300456619.html">http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-president-announces-commission-to-review-criminal-justice-reforms-for-minors-300456619.html</a>
Press Release: Honduras Creates New Ministry for Human Rights	May 31, 2017	<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduras-creates-new-ministry-for-human-rights-300466021.html">http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduras-creates-new-ministry-for-human-rights-300466021.html</a>
Press Release: Honduran Government Lauds New IMF Findings on Country's Economy	Jun 08, 2017	<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-government-lauds-new-imf-findings-on-countrys-economy-300470914.html">http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-government-lauds-new-imf-findings-on-countrys-economy-300470914.html</a>
Press Release: Honduran President Asks U.S. Government to Extend Temporary Protected Status for Central American Immigrants	Jun 14, 2017	<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-president-asks-us-government-to-extend-temporary-protected-status-for-central-american-immigrants-300473679.html">http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-president-asks-us-government-to-extend-temporary-protected-status-for-central-american-immigrants-300473679.html</a>

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Press Release: Honduras Moves to Strengthen Integrity of Its Police Force	Jun 14, 2017	<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduras-moves-to-strengthen-integrity-of-its-police-force-300474312.html">http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduras-moves-to-strengthen-integrity-of-its-police-force-300474312.html</a>
Press Release: Honduran Police Arrest Suspect in Murder of Journalist Víctor Fúnez	Jun 16, 2017	<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-police-arrest-suspect-in-murder-of-journalist-victor-funez-300475485.html">http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-police-arrest-suspect-in-murder-of-journalist-victor-funez-300475485.html</a>
Press Release: Honduras and Guatemala Launch Historic Customs Union	Jun 28, 2017	<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduras-and-guatemala-launch-historic-customs-union-300481087.html">http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduras-and-guatemala-launch-historic-customs-union-300481087.html</a>
Press Release: Honduran Government Clears Over 25 Percent of Backlogged Court Cases	Jun 30, 2017	<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-government-clears-over-25-percent-of-backlogged-court-cases-300482652.html">http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-government-clears-over-25-percent-of-backlogged-court-cases-300482652.html</a>
Press Release: Honduran President Urges Central American Neighbors to Join Customs Union	Jul 03, 2017	<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-president-urges-central-american-neighbors-to-join-customs-union-300483133.html">http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-president-urges-central-american-neighbors-to-join-customs-union-300483133.html</a>
Press Release: Honduras Improves Transparency on Public-Private Infrastructure Investments	Jul 06, 2017	<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduras-improves-transparency-on-public-private-infrastructure-investments-300484172.html">http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduras-improves-transparency-on-public-private-infrastructure-investments-300484172.html</a>
Press Release: Honduras Rises Five Places in Global Peace Index	Jul 07, 2017	<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduras-rises-five-places-in-global-peace-index-300484676.html">http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduras-rises-five-places-in-global-peace-index-300484676.html</a>
Press Release: Honduran Government Tells U.N.: We've Made Strong Progress on Human Rights	Jul 12, 2017	<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-government-tells-un-weve-made-strong-progress-on-human-rights-300487337.html">http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-government-tells-un-weve-made-strong-progress-on-human-rights-300487337.html</a>
Press Release: Honduran Government Welcomes Investigation into Allegations of Corruption with Dam Project	Jul 17, 2017	<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-government-welcomes-investigation-into-allegations-of-corruption-with-dam-project-300489037.html">http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-government-welcomes-investigation-into-allegations-of-corruption-with-dam-project-300489037.html</a>
Press Release: Honduran President Touts Nation's Improved S&P Credit Rating	Jul 20, 2017	<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-president-touts-nations-improved-sp-credit-rating-300491478.html">http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-president-touts-nations-improved-sp-credit-rating-300491478.html</a>
Press Release: Honduran President Urges National Congress to Approve Tourism Incentives	Jul 21, 2017	<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-president-urges-national-congress-to-approve-tourism-incentives-300492311.html">http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-president-urges-national-congress-to-approve-tourism-incentives-300492311.html</a>
Press Release: Honduran Naval Forces Receive International	Jul 28, 2017	<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-naval-forces-receive-">http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-naval-forces-receive-</a>

Training to Combat Drug Trafficking		<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/international-training-to-combat-drug-trafficking-300496237.html">international-training-to-combat-drug-trafficking-300496237.html</a>
Press Release: Honduran Government Welcomes UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights	Aug 01, 2017	<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-government-welcomes-un-assistant-secretary-general-for-human-rights-300497564.html">http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-government-welcomes-un-assistant-secretary-general-for-human-rights-300497564.html</a>
Press Release: Honduras Enacts New Laws to Strengthen Civilian Oversight of Police	Aug 03, 2017	<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduras-enacts-new-laws-to-strengthen-civilian-oversight-of-police-300498992.html">http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduras-enacts-new-laws-to-strengthen-civilian-oversight-of-police-300498992.html</a>
Press Release: Honduras Partners with Central American Neighbors, U.S. to Fight Gang Violence	Aug 04, 2017	<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduras-partners-with-central-american-neighbors-us-to-fight-gang-violence-300499801.html">http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduras-partners-with-central-american-neighbors-us-to-fight-gang-violence-300499801.html</a>
Press Release: Honduras Celebrates Lower Crime Rates, Vows to Keep Fighting	Aug 07, 2017	<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduras-celebrates-lower-crime-rates-vows-to-keep-fighting-300500389.html">http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduras-celebrates-lower-crime-rates-vows-to-keep-fighting-300500389.html</a>
Press Release: Honduran President Lauds Nation's Law and Order Gains	Aug 09, 2017	<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-president-lauds-nations-law-and-order-gains-300501952.html">http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-president-lauds-nations-law-and-order-gains-300501952.html</a>
Press Release: Honduras to Champion Transparency in Construction at Regional Meeting Next Month	Aug 11, 2017	<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduras-to-champion-transparency-in-construction-at-regional-meeting-next-month-300503198.html">http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduras-to-champion-transparency-in-construction-at-regional-meeting-next-month-300503198.html</a>
Press Release: Honduran President Hernández Lauds Country's Progress on Criminal Justice	Aug 17, 2017	<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-president-herandez-lauds-countrys-progress-on-criminal-justice-300506206.html">http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-president-herandez-lauds-countrys-progress-on-criminal-justice-300506206.html</a>
Press Release: Honduras Hosts Technology Camp for Youth in Response to Skills Gap	Aug 21, 2017	<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduras-hosts-technology-camp-for-youth-in-response-to-skills-gap-300507062.html">http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduras-hosts-technology-camp-for-youth-in-response-to-skills-gap-300507062.html</a>
Press Release: Honduras Holds Festival for LGBTI Rights	Aug 24, 2017	<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduras-holds-festival-for-lgbti-rights-300509361.html">http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduras-holds-festival-for-lgbti-rights-300509361.html</a>
Press Release: Honduras Peace Forum Marks National Progress in Crime Prevention	Aug 29, 2017	<a href="http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduras-peace-forum-marks-national-progress-in-crime-prevention-300510731.html">http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduras-peace-forum-marks-national-progress-in-crime-prevention-300510731.html</a>

## **Honduran Government Lauds New IMF Findings on Country's Economy**

*International Monetary Fund calls Honduras's economic outlook "favorable"*

**TEGUCIGALPA** (June 8) -- The Government of Honduras applauded the International Monetary Fund for expressing optimism about the country's economy in a new statement of preliminary findings following an 11-day visit to Honduras by Fund representatives.

An official statement from Roberto García-Saltos, chief of the IMF delegation, said that he and his team were "encouraged by the continuing strengthening of the Honduran economy, including advances in the security situation."

President Juan Orlando Hernández responded by reiterating his commitment to build a better Honduras for all Hondurans.

"Honduras has come a long way under our administration. Today, we are beginning to see the tangible results of our efforts, as the international community recognizes that Honduras is an attractive country for domestic and foreign investment," Hernández said.

"We are working hard to become one of the safest countries in the Americas," said Hernández. "Our achievements are supported by facts and statistics as measured by independent observers like the IMF. That engenders trust among the Honduran people in their country, and among foreign individuals who visit and invest here."

The IMF delegation found that the Honduran economy grew 3.6 percent in 2016 and projected real GDP growth of 4 percent to 4.5 percent in the first quarter of 2017.

The IMF's findings are timely, as Honduran government officials will meet in Miami June 15-16 with U.S. Vice President Mike Pence and other high-ranking U.S. and Mexican officials at the Conference on Prosperity and Security in Central America. Investors from the Americas, Europe and Asia, and the Inter-American Development Bank will also be in attendance to discuss investment opportunities in Honduras and neighboring countries in the Northern Triangle.

"The IMF's recent visit reaffirms that we are on the right path," Hernández said. "There is much left to do, but evaluations like the IMF's confirm that the policies that our administration has outlined are working."

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To read the International Monetary Fund's official recap of its recent mission to Honduras, please visit: <http://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2017/06/01/pr17203-imf-staff-concludes-visit-to-honduras>.

For more information or to schedule an interview with Honduran officials, please contact Yael Wollstein at [yael@keybridge.biz](mailto:yael@keybridge.biz) or +1-202-471-4228 ext. 118.

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**Honduran President Asks U.S. Government to Extend Temporary Protected Status for Central American Immigrants**

*Officials will consider renewal at the Conference on Prosperity and Security in Central America*

**MIAMI** (June 14, 2017) -- This week, at the Conference on Prosperity and Security in Central America, Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández will meet with Vice President Mike Pence, Secretary Rex Tillerson and Secretary John Kelly, to request an extension of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Hondurans in the United States.

TPS, originally established in 1998, currently allows 60,000 Hondurans to live, study, work and travel legally in the United States. In 2016, Hondurans in this program sent approximately \$4 billion back home in remittances, making TPS a key component of the Honduran economy.

The current TPS extension expires on January 5. At the conference, hosted in Miami from June 15-16, Hernández will present the case for renewal -- citing factors like poverty and climate change.

Other government officials and civil leaders from Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Mexico and the United States are also expected to participate in these discussions.

"In the past 18 years, TPS Hondurans have integrated into American society, built businesses and raised American children. We will continue our best efforts to achieve TPS renewal for them," said Hernández.

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## **Honduras Moves To Strengthen Integrity of Its Police Force**

*(Tegucigalpa, Honduras. June 14, 2017)* The Republic of Honduras' National Police Purification Commission will soon submit 25 names for Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández to consider for police leadership positions.

The leadership revamp is part of recent government efforts to monitor for police integrity. Efforts include identifying and firing corrupt individuals who have participated in crimes like drug trafficking, illegal weapons sales, and murder. Overall, the National Police Purification Commission is working to reorganize the police and only retain officers who have demonstrated their commitment to anti-corruption policies.

To date, the commission has dismissed 4,004 police officers that did not meet the requirements for police work in Honduras.

Hoping to inject new blood into the police force, the commission is considering both young and well-seasoned candidates for leadership positions, all of whom have received high-quality training and proven their integrity.

Omar Rivera, a commission member, stated that the primary challenge is finding police leaders of the future who will champion the current institutional reforms. "We want to enlist an efficient, legitimate and honest leadership," he emphasized.

Commission members Vilma Morales, the former chief justice of the Supreme Court of Justice, Omar Rivera, and Alberto Solórzano, are leading the selection process along with Security Secretary Julián Pacheco. They are evaluating candidates from the first levels of the senior officer ranks.

The 25 potential candidates include three generals and 22 police commissioners. The most important open positions are Director General, Deputy Director General, and Inspector General of the Police.

Department of Security sources indicate that the commission is looking for candidates that will lead the police force with a dynamic and innovative vision.

The National Police Purification Commission was formed in April of last year, under a national emergency law to purge the police force. The commission's members were appointed by the Executive Branch. Under a direct mandate from President Hernández, the commission is charged with determining suitability requirements for police service, judging the integrity and loyalty of Honduran police, and implementing mechanisms for follow-up and oversight.

###

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Yael Wolfstein  
Media Contact  
(617) 452-4000

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Dear [Name],

I am writing to you regarding the [Project Name] project. I have reviewed the [Document Name] and have some feedback for you. I will be happy to discuss this with you in more detail.

The [Document Name] is well-written and provides a good overview of the [Project Name]. However, I have a few comments on the [Section Name] section. I think it would be helpful to [Action Item].

I have also reviewed the [Section Name] section and have some feedback. I think it would be helpful to [Action Item]. I will be happy to discuss this with you in more detail.

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## **Honduran Police Arrest Suspect in Murder of Journalist Víctor Fúnez**

Tegucigalpa, Honduras, June 16, 2017 -- Honduran authorities have arrested a suspect in the murder of journalist and congressional candidate Víctor Fúnez.

Fúnez, running for Congress as a member of Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández's National Party, was murdered in his home on June 15 in the port city of La Ceiba, Honduras.

Police arrested the suspect, Álvaro Euceda Cruz, aka Edwin Reynieri Suazo, aka "el pájaro," in La Ceiba's La Julia neighborhood after a stand-off that left two officers wounded. According to intelligence units, Euceda is a known hitman and drug dealer in the area.

A quick response from Honduran specialized forces and evidence collected during the investigation, helped authorities identify and capture the suspect. The two wounded officers were immediately transferred to a treatment center.

During the investigation, police seized the following pieces of evidence from the suspect: two firearms that will be tested for ballistics evidence to determine which one was used to kill Fúnez; one mobile phone, and the green and black motorcycle ridden to and from the crime scene.

Authorities are still investigating whether or not Euceda was working with an accomplice. If so, concrete steps will be taken to make a timely arrest.

The event has led the Honduran National Police to recommit to fostering security in their country by fighting common and organized crime.

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Sandra Ramos

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## **Honduras and Guatemala Launch Historic Customs Union**

**TEGUCIGALPA (June 28)** -- On Monday, Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández and Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales launched a customs union predicted to boost both their countries' economies by over one percent. They kicked off the union at the Corinto border post connecting their nations.

"We believe this union will bring a new chapter of economic growth and cooperation to our region," said President Hernández. "We are excited to open up avenues for trade, travel and cultural exchange with our Guatemalan neighbors."

Under the new agreement, Guatemala and Honduras will allow 80 percent of exports and travelers to cross their borders free of charge. Ten access points along the border, built under regulations agreed to by both nations, will facilitate easy passage.

The customs union is expected to raise tax revenue by about \$40 million a month, according to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Since Honduras and Guatemala comprise 42 percent of Central America's population and 46 percent of its GDP, the customs union will also attract investment and grow the entire regional economy.

Camilo Atala, president of the Latin American Business Council, praised the union as the first customs partnership on the continent. "The customs union will increase the flow of trade between both nations and set an example for Latin America," he stated. By fostering economic growth, he noted, the union "will create more and better jobs in both countries."

"Central America has sought economic unity for over 50 years," said Hernández. "We believe that this unprecedented agreement will allow us to make progress toward that goal."

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**Honduran Government Clears Over 25 Percent of Backlogged Court Cases**  
*48,668 of 180,000 pending cases have been closed, according to a judicial report*

**TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras (June 30)** --This week, Honduran Chief Justice Rolando Argueta announced that the country's entire justice system reduced its court backlog by 26.3%. The Supreme Court presented these findings in its biannual report.

"We are proud of the strides we have made toward closing all of the country's pending cases," said Argueta. "We will continue moving forward in our efforts to make our justice system fair for all Hondurans."

Court backlogs have historically plagued Honduras' justice system. The country's judicial branch approved a plan to remedy the issue last year, and has achieved significant progress.

The Supreme Court's report analyzed data from courts throughout the country. According to its figures, nearly 50,000 cases were resolved and eight trial courts now have no backlog at all.

Between August 2016 and April 2017 the courts resolved a total of 96,671 cases, which is impressive considering it received about 100,037 new cases during that period.

"I'd like to congratulate the judicial branch on this enormous step toward justice and social peace," said Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández. "We respect the separation of state powers, but are also pleased to celebrate the progress the entire government has made toward a new and better Honduras."

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## **Honduran President Urges Central American Neighbors to Join Customs Union**

**SAN JOSÉ, COSTA RICA** (July 3) -- Last week, while attending the Central American Integration System (SICA) Summit in Costa Rica, Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández proposed expanding the Honduran-Guatemalan customs union to include other Central American nations.

"Guatemala and Honduras would like to invite our neighbors to share in the growing market that our countries are creating," said President Hernández. "The customs union is a boon for the economy, benefiting consumers, producers, and businesspeople alike."

The 49th SICA Summit addressed trade, cooperation, and regional security. President Hernández met with Salvadoran President Salvador Sánchez Cerén at the summit, and then traveled to Nicaragua to meet with President Daniel Ortega. Honduran officials hope that both El Salvador and Nicaragua will soon begin proceedings to join the union.

Presidents of SICA's member countries, including Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Belize, and the Dominican Republic, appointed former Guatemalan President Vinicio Cerezo as secretary of SICA. The heads of state also supported the appointment of Honduran Vice Minister for Foreign Trade Melvin Redondo as the secretary general of the Central America Economic Integration System (SIECA), which oversees the economic integration of SICA's member countries.

Redondo will help oversee all expansions of the Honduran-Guatemalan customs union. President Hernández hopes to work with the vice minister to establish a plan for expanding the union within 45 days.

"If we unite Central America, our region will prosper together," said Hernández. "This summit marks a new era for SICA, and an unprecedented economic opportunity for its member countries."

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## **Honduras Improves Transparency on Public-Private Infrastructure Investments**

**TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras (July 6)** — Honduras has achieved an information disclosure rate of 85.3 percent regarding its public-private partnerships (PPP) -- up from just 27 percent in 2014. The finding comes from a report issued by Construction Sector Transparency Initiative (CoST) Honduras, an effort to increase the nation's public infrastructure transparency.

The report also found that Honduras is currently investing \$1.3 billion in infrastructure projects under PPPs.

"By engaging stakeholders from both the public and private sectors, our country can develop infrastructure that will benefit Hondurans for generations to come," said President Juan Orlando Hernández. "Substantial PPP investments will improve quality of life, increase commerce, and facilitate transportation."

Among the projects highlighted in the report are a bus terminal in the city of Danlí, which will serve over 200,000 people, and the Centro Cívico Gubernamental, a building complex that will include 40 government offices and save over half a million dollars each year in rent expenses.

Transparency efforts on such projects are achieving tangible results. Nearly 300 documents regarding Honduran PPPs are now publically available, according to the CoST report.

"We've achieved unprecedented levels of infrastructure project transparency," said President Hernández. "That's proof that the rigorous anticorruption policies I committed to when elected are paying off. My government is delivering on its promises."

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## **Honduras Rises Five Places in Global Peace Index**

**TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras** (July 7) -- Honduras has improved its national safety more than any Caribbean or Central American country, according to the Global Peace Index (GPI), recently release by the Institute for Economics and Peace. Honduras rose five places in the 163 country index.

"Honduras is working hard to defend the rights and safety of its citizens by confronting transnational crime and delinquency in all its forms," stated Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández. "According to the GPI, Honduras is no longer among the world's most violent countries. Achieving this has not been easy, but we are proud of our accomplishments and committed to further advancing our national wellbeing."

Released annually, the GPI analyzes 23 indicators of peace including domestic security, scope of internal conflicts, and degree of militarization. The index reports that Honduras has "benefitted from government efforts to combat crime," and notes that the country is becoming more peaceful "thanks to improvements in political violence, strong anti-corruption policies, financial contributions to UN peacekeeping missions, and impact of terrorism [indicators]."

The GPI also credits Honduras with confronting regional security challenges through the Alliance for Prosperity, a plan to stem U.S. migration from the Northern Triangle.

The new ranking follows a wave of successful anticorruption efforts in Honduras. Between 2011 and 2015, Honduras' homicide rate dropped 30 percent. And between January and June, the country experienced a historic reduction in homicides compared to the same period last year.

Overall, the global state of peace and safety rose this year, according to the GPI report.

Syria held its spot as the most dangerous country in the world, while Iceland remained the most peaceful.

"The fact that Honduras is showing improvement in a highly professional and independent report is noteworthy" said President Hernández. "Through diligence and hard work we have reduced violent crime, removed corrupt officials, and promoted peace throughout the country. We are delivering tangible results to our people."

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## **Honduran Government Tells U.N.: We've Made Strong Progress on Human Rights**

**TEGUCIGALPA (July 12)** -- The government of Honduras has successfully completed its second periodic report to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. In his testimony, Rolando Argueta Perez, President of the Supreme Court of Justice of Honduras, shared the concrete steps that the Central American nation has taken to protect human rights within its borders.

"We are pleased that the U.N. Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner has recognized our tireless efforts to address corruption and impunity in Honduras," said Ricardo Cardona, minister of the presidency of Honduras. "This official testimony provides a strong rebuke to the misinformation that several non-governmental organizations have disseminated about the state of human rights in our nation."

Chief Justice Argueta delivered his report before a panel of 18 human rights experts in Geneva, Switzerland, on July 5. He detailed Honduras's progress regarding human rights, security, the fight against organized crime and corruption, and the treatment of vulnerable sectors of society.

The government currently has eight suspects in custody, including two criminal organizers, for the 2016 murder of well-known Honduran environmental activist Berta Cáceres, and has issued an executive order to provide her family with official protection from special security forces.

In addition, President Juan Orlando Hernández decided to elevate the current office of the undersecretary for Human Rights to a national cabinet department. He also has enacted the Law on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Journalists, Media Professionals and Judicial Officers, which provides government protection to activists and journalists who request it.

Honduras has also made strides tackling crime and corruption. The nation's homicide rate plummeted 30 percent between 2011 and 2015, and a national purge of the police force has been underway since April 2016.

Honduras is committed to issuing accurate and transparent information on its human rights progress, its fight against organized crime, and on the Berta Cáceres case.

"We recognize that we have work to do, but we are steadfastly committed to improving the respect for and protection of human rights in Honduras," said Cardona. "The U.N. has recognized the progress that we have made. It's time for the rest of the international community to take notice."

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## **Honduran Government Welcomes Investigation into Allegations of Corruption with Dam Project**

**TEGUCIGALPA** (July 17) -- Today, Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández announced that he welcomes an investigation into allegations of corruption in the awarding of contracts and concession agreements for the *Agua Zarca* energy project in western Honduras.

Renowned environmental activist Berta Cáceres made these allegations before her untimely death last year. The Mission to Support the Fight Against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH), an independent group created by the Organization of American States, will conduct the investigation, in conjunction with the Honduran Attorney General's Special Office for Ethnic and Cultural Heritage.

"My administration is committed to rooting out corruption in Honduras, and this investigation will help us fulfill that commitment," said President Hernández. "No one is above the law in our nation, and we will aggressively prosecute any crimes unearthed by the investigation."

The MACCIH has indicated that it will examine the way in which the contract for *Agua Zarca* project was awarded to *Desarrollos Energetics SA (DESA)*. Two of the eight suspects the Honduran government has detained as part of the investigation in to Berta Cáceres's murder have been linked to *DESA*.

The Mission will also be looking for any irregularities in environmental licenses and studies regarding property titling. In addition, the investigation will explore how the environmental licenses were granted. Darío Roberto Cardona Valle, the former deputy minister of the Secretary of Natural Resources and Environment, has already been detained for acts related to granting a license without properly informing and consulting indigenous peoples in the area.

"Honduras asked the Organization of American States to create the MACCIH, and it's been operating with the full support of our government since the beginning of last year," said President Hernández. "If the MACCIH uncovers any evidence of wrongdoing, we will work to bring those responsible to justice."

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## **Honduran President Touts Nation's Improved S&P Credit Rating**

**TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras** (July 20) -- Yesterday, at a joint press conference with Honduran Minister of Finance Wilfredo Cerrato, Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández highlighted that Standard & Poor's raised Honduras' credit rating from B+ to BB-, and changed the country's outlook from stable to positive.

Hernández congratulated his economic cabinet and the Honduran people, noting that the new rating is "the result of hard work and discipline."

According to S&P, Honduras can "expect broad continuity in economic policies and contained debt increases following national elections in November 2017."<sup>1</sup>

Standard & Poor's provides national credit ratings on the basis of long-term economic outlook. The jump from B to BB indicates Honduras' lower vulnerability to nonpayment.<sup>2</sup>

Hernández stated that the new rating is "the highest in Honduras' history," and puts Honduras "on par with Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic."

The president also stressed that this financial upgrade is a direct result of his administration's fiscal policies, reasserting his government's commitment to keeping the economy on track while addressing crime and poverty.

For his part, Cerrato expressed confidence in the nation's economic future. He commended the government for its responsible economic strategy, and for keeping the nation's finances in order.

The S&P, which examined Honduras' economic outlook last June, also noted that the nation's agricultural, manufacturing, commerce, and tourism growth is poised to keep the nation's GDP growth at 3.6 percent in 2017.

"The future looks bright for the Honduran economy," concluded Hernández.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/international-business/sp-says-honduras-long-term-ratings-raised-to-bb-on-improved-fiscal-flexibility-and-limited-debt-increases/articleshow/59658239.cms>

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## **Honduran President Urges National Congress to Approve Tourism Incentives**

**TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras --** (July 21) This week, President Juan Orlando Hernández urged the National Congress of Honduras to approve the Tourism Incentives Act. The legislation would help create 250,000 jobs by 2019 as part of Honduras' 20/20 growth plan.

"Honduras is becoming a highly desirable destination for tourists," said Hernández. "This new legislation would provide \$165 million USD in tourism incentives over 18 years -- an investment set to generate about a quarter billion dollars for Honduras."

Honduran Tourism Institute Director Emilio Silvestri recently met with Hernández, National Congress Speaker Mauricio Oliva, and tourism sector representatives to discuss the legislation at the Legislative Palace in Tegucigalpa.

The act includes tax incentives for the tourism industry, financial support for land and air travel to Honduras, and funds to increase and improve lodging options in the nation over the next 10 to 15 years.

The Honduran tourism industry is poised to take off. The number of stayover visitors to the country has jumped 4 percent since 2015, and international tourism spending is on the rise. Compared to 2015, 14.7 percent more passengers arrived to the country via cruise ship last year.

Oliva has assured members of the national tourism industry that "Congress will not fail them." "We are going to proceed with the responsibility and commitment this country needs," he said.

"Honduras has enormous growth potential," Hernández stated. "This legislation will be a turning point for Honduran tourism."

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## **Honduran Naval Forces Receive International Training to Combat Drug Trafficking**

**TEGUCIGALPA** (July 28) -- More than 250 members of the Honduran Navy (FEN) just completed a rigorous training program led by military instructors from the United States, Colombia, and Chile at the Naval Training Center in Trujillo Bay, Honduras.

"Honduras has made a steadfast commitment to stamp out organized crime and drug trafficking," said Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández. "Our naval forces, who work hard to keep our borders secure, will help us fulfill that commitment."

Most of the cocaine that passes through Honduras enters by sea, according to the U.S. Defense Department's latest International Narcotics Control Strategy Report.

The training in Trujillo Bay focused on "operational readiness," according to Captain Héctor Manuel Tercero López of the Honduran Navy. He expects the trainees to share their new knowledge with their home units.

A well-trained navy is a key component of the Honduran government's strategy for fighting crime. Between 2013, the year FEN was established, and 2016, Honduras's murder rate dropped by more than 30 percent.

The Trujillo Bay training isn't the first time that FEN has worked with navies from other countries. In 2013, members of the U.S. Naval Special Warfare Task Element Alpha spent six months in Honduras teaching FEN some of the most cutting-edge military techniques.

"Honduras is committed to ensuring peace and protecting human rights," said Hernández. "We are accomplishing these goals by giving our armed forces the tools they need not just to fight crime but to eliminate it."

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## **Honduran Government Welcomes UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights**

**TEGUCIGALPA and GENEVA – (August 1)** Honduran state officials and civil society representatives shared their country's progress on human rights with United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Andrew Gilmour during his three-day visit to Tegucigalpa last week.

"Honduras is making undeniable strides in the human rights realm," said President Juan Orlando Hernández. "My administration will continue to fight for the security of all Hondurans."

Gilmour cited the Mission to Support the Fight against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH) as vital to the nation's human rights efforts.

"We are glad that the direct link between corruption and human rights abuses is increasingly recognized," Gilmour noted in the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner's official press release on the visit.

The Hernandez administration founded the MACCIH in January 2016 with the support of the Organization of American States. The Mission aims to reduce corruption, maximize public accountability, and strengthen the integrity of public institutions in Honduras.

In its account of the Assistant Secretary-General's visit to Honduras, the OHCHR said, "Gilmour welcomed the strengthened cooperation between the newly-established UN Human Rights Office in Tegucigalpa and state institutions," and reasserted the UN's role in helping the Honduran government guarantee human rights.

During Gilmour's visit, the government also highlighted President Hernández's decision to promote the Vice-Ministry for Human Rights to a cabinet-level position and institute the National Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders. Gilmour praised these moves in the OHCHR's press release, noting that human rights defenders "are doing a tremendous service for the long-term future of Honduras."

"This administration values the safety and well-being of its citizens above all else," said President Hernandez. "We are pleased that the United Nations is recognizing our efforts, and will always welcome the UN's expert counsel."

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The Hernandez administration founded the MACCIH in January 2016 with the support of the Organization of American States. The Mission aims to reduce corruption, maximize public accountability, and strengthen the integrity of public institutions in Honduras.

In its account of the Assistant Secretary-General's visit to Honduras, the OHCHR said, "Gilmour welcomed the strengthened cooperation between the newly-established UN Human Rights Office in Tegucigalpa and state institutions," and reasserted the UN's role in helping the Honduran government guarantee human rights.

During Gilmour's visit, the government also highlighted President Hernández's decision to promote the Vice-Ministry for Human Rights to a cabinet-level position and institute the National Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders. Gilmour praised these moves in the OHCHR's press release, noting that human rights defenders "are doing a tremendous service for the long-term future of Honduras."

"This administration values the safety and well-being of its citizens above all else," said President Hernandez. "We are pleased that the United Nations is recognizing our efforts, and will always welcome the UN's expert counsel."

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## Honduras Enacts New Laws to Strengthen Civilian Oversight of Police

TEGUCIGALPA -- (August 3) The Honduran National Congress has approved several portions of the new Law on Police Careers, a major step forward in the government's efforts to reform the National Police.

"This law will help restore public faith in the National Police," said President Juan Orlando Hernández. "I applaud Congress for empowering the public to hold the police in their communities to the highest standards of conduct."

The Law on Police Careers installs greater citizen oversight over police conduct and clarifies that the National Police is a civilian institution, not a branch of the military. It also eliminates lifetime appointments and prohibits officers with disciplinary issues or those who fail background checks from being promoted.

The new law is a supplement to the Organic Law on the National Police, which was revised earlier this year.

The Law on Police Careers is the latest in a long-term drive by the Hernández administration to reform and improve the National Police. Last year, President Hernandez began a wide-ranging purge of corrupt individuals from the police force by establishing the Special Commission for the Purging and Transformation of the National Police. This past January, he announced that the Commission would continue its work through the end of this year.

"Ensuring the safety and well-being of the Honduran people remains my primary goal," said President Hernández. "Our efforts to end corruption within the ranks of our National Police are working -- and are making our nation safer and more prosperous."

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## **Honduras Partners with Central American Neighbors, U.S. to Fight Gang Violence**

TEGUCIGALPA (August 4) -- The Honduran government is tackling violence and going after gang leaders with renewed vigor following a meeting last week with top law enforcement officials from the United States, El Salvador, and Guatemala.

Honduran Prosecutor General Óscar Fernando Chinchilla, U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions, El Salvadorian Prosecutor General Douglas Arquímedes Meléndez Ruiz, and Guatemalan Prosecutor General Thelma Esperanza Aldana convened in El Salvador to discuss how to better battle organized crime in the three Central American countries, collectively known as the Northern Triangle.

Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández celebrated the gathering as a step toward quashing the "illegal, disruptive, and violent gang networks in the Northern Triangle." "In the fight against organized crime," he said, "Northern Triangle countries can accomplish a lot more together than alone."

One topic of particular focus was Mara Salvatrucha, or MS-13, a multinational street gang that has committed heinous crimes in both Central America and the United States.

"Attorney General Sessions praised Prosecutor General Óscar Chinchilla for his efforts in the fight against MS-13, such as Operation Avalancha," U.S. Chargé d'Affaires in Honduras Heide Fulton tweeted.

Under the leadership of the Office of the Special Prosecutor for Transparency and Fighting Corruption and the Technical Criminal Investigation Agency (ATIC), Honduras has made significant progress suppressing gang violence.

In February 2016, ATIC arrested several MS-13 gang leaders and seized over 1,500 MS-13 assets -- including 43 residences, 61 land plots, 17 businesses, and over 1,400 vehicles. In October 2016, the Honduran government searched over 60 properties in San Pedro Sula, an MS-13 hotspot. Last month, the government weakened the gang's financial arm by arresting a notorious MS-13 drug trafficker and money launderer.

The meeting attendees also discussed strengthening extradition relationships between their countries. Honduras has surrendered 15 Honduran nationals to be tried in the United States and is planning to send three more.

"When it comes to addressing violence, Honduras is setting an example for its Northern Triangle neighbors," President Hernández stated. "We must continue to work with the United States to tackle gang violence. That is only way to defeat an enemy that does not respect national borders."

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## **Honduras Celebrates Lower Crime Rates, Vows to Keep Fighting**

TEGUCIGALPA (August 7) -- Last week, Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández announced that Honduras is on track to cut its 2011 homicide rate nearly in half by December.

"This is a momentous achievement for Honduras," said President Hernández. "The government's actions to combat violence and arrest criminals have saved lives. But our work is not done."

Hernández stressed that Honduras must continue its efforts to reduce violence in the country. He vowed to curb domestic violence, construct new prisons, and arrest corrupt former public officials.

President Hernández said that he intends to fight gang violence by developing community spaces and expanding economic opportunity for young people.

One initiative that's already been launched is Vida Mejor, or A Better Life. The program works with the Inter-American Development Bank to provide cash transfers, housing assistance, and family counseling to poor Honduran families. Since its inception in 2015, Vida Mejor has reached 2 million Hondurans.

In addition, President Hernández stressed the importance of education, saying, "Parents must work closely with teachers and community leaders to bring principles and values back to schools."

The president also pushed for other reforms to enhance public safety, including the construction of new prisons. He noted that Honduran prisons were essentially crime planning centers and drug trafficking stations before he took office.

The Hernández administration has transferred dangerous prisoners from San Pedro Sula to maximum-security prisons El Pozo 1 and 2, with the goal of stopping prison breaks and isolating prisoners from their criminal networks. The government is also building El Pozo 3 and 4 in some of the remotest areas of the country.

"My administration's efforts have made Honduras a much safer place," Hernández said. "But we will not rest until all Honduran families feel secure in their homes."

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## **Honduran President Lauds Nation's Law and Order Gains**

TEGUCIGALPA (August 9) -- Today, Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández praised his country's performance in the newly released 2017 Gallup Global Law and Order Index. Honduras gained eight points in this year's index -- and tied with Chile as the highest-ranking country in Latin America.

"My administration has worked diligently to stem violence within our borders," said President Hernández. "Today's report verifies what Hondurans already know -- that our nation is a safe place in which to live, work, and conduct business."

This year's Global Law and Order Index is based on 136,000 interviews conducted in 2016 across 135 countries. It surveys people on how safe they feel "walking alone at night" in their respective cities, how much confidence they place in the local police force, and whether they have been mugged, robbed, or assaulted within the past year.

Honduras received a score of 72 out of 100. Notably, the level of confidence Hondurans have in their local police force jumped from 29 percent in 2015 to 50 percent in 2016.

The Hernández administration has waged a multifaceted campaign to reduce violence and corruption in Honduras. It has created the OAS-backed Mission to Support the Fight against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras, or MACCIH; purged the police force of corrupt officers; given civilians greater oversight of the police; and arrested dangerous gang leaders.

"This is a proud day for Honduras," stated President Hernández, "We are glad that an organization as well-respected as Gallup has recognized our hard-won progress."

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## **Honduras to Champion Transparency in Construction at Regional Meeting Next Month**

TEGUCIGALPA (August 11) -- Next month, the Honduran government will host a meeting of the Construction Sector Transparency Initiative, or CoST, an international organization dedicated to maximizing the value of public works projects via data reporting and project monitoring. The gathering will take place September 4-5 in Tegucigalpa.

"President Juan Orlando Hernández has spent years fighting to make the construction sector more transparent," Honduran Infrastructure Minister Roberto Pineda said. "This meeting will showcase the tremendous progress our administration has made."

The meeting will include fellow CoST members Panama, Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Each country's CoST program consists of representatives of public, private, and civil society organizations that work with the national government and CoST headquarters in London to collect data, conduct oversight of public works projects, and ensure that taxpayer dollars are used wisely.

September's meeting will focus on the System for Information and Follow-up on Public Works and Supervision Contracts, or SISOCS, a program co-managed by CoST Honduras and the Honduran General Directorate of Highways. SISOCS is a model for other CoST members of how to provide government support for construction data disclosures. In the last three years, the program has successfully overseen construction projects valued at over \$60 billion.

Since CoST Honduras was founded in 2015, the share of projects reporting their costs has more than tripled, from 27 percent to 84 percent. In 2016, on the recommendation of CoST Honduras, the government founded the Honduran Roadways Fund Auditing Committee to increase financial disclosure for transportation projects.

CoST Honduras also closely monitors the Honduran government's commitments to disclose spending in the energy, telecommunications, and housing sectors.

"CoST has helped Honduras responsibly manage government funds and develop high-quality public infrastructure," President Hernández said. "This meeting will reaffirm our pledge to be transparent with our citizens about how we're investing government resources."

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## Honduran President Hernández Lauds Country's Progress on Criminal Justice

ZAMBRANO, HONDURAS (August 17) -- Last week, in a speech to the incoming class of agents for the country's Office of the General Prosecutor, Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández applauded the Office for its efforts fighting corruption.

"In the last few years, the Office of the General Prosecutor has achieved what was previously thought impossible," Hernández said. "It has brought peace and security to Honduras."

In the 2017 Gallup Global Law and Order Index, Honduras's score surged eight points; the country tied with Chile as the highest-ranking in Latin America. The annual index examines public perceptions of safety and police integrity.

Additionally, Honduras rose five places in this year's edition of the Institute for Economics and Peace's Global Peace Index. The Index analyzes 163 countries on their "level of societal safety and security; the extent of ongoing domestic and international conflict; and the degree of militarization."

The president also highlighted the Office of the General Prosecutor's contributions to Honduras's 30 percent reduction in the homicide rate.

The new class of agents is backed by the International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in Honduras, or INL. INL was created in 2001 as a partnership between the U.S. Department of State and the Honduran government to fight drug trafficking and enforce the law in Honduras.

President Hernández thanked the aspiring agents for their service and commitment to Honduras. "We will always support you," he said.

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## **Honduras Hosts Technology Camp for Youth in Response to Skills Gap**

TEGUCIGALPA (August 21) -- HONDUCAMP.TECH, Honduras's largest-ever technology camp for youth, will take place August 25-28 in the San José de Carmen Institute's Sports Arena in Tegucigalpa. The camp is co-run by the Honduran Institute of Science, Technology and Innovation, or IHCIETI, and the Honduran government.

"Honduras is eager to join the world's technology leaders," President Juan Orlando Hernández said. "HONDUCAMP.TECH will train Honduran youth to confront the world's most pressing challenges with modern technological resources."

At the three-day, overnight camp, 20,000 of Honduras's brightest young minds will attend workshops in robotics, computer programming, hardware design, and technology entrepreneurship led by international tech leaders.

HONDUCAMP.TECH is a direct response by the Hernández administration to the region's education skills gap. Nearly three in four Latin American youth lack the education necessary to find quality jobs. Over 20 million children in Latin America are at risk of dropping out of school each year. HONDUCAMP.TECH aims to bolster the region's labor force by introducing young people to careers in technology.

"HONDUCAMP.TECH is one of many actions this administration is taking to equip its young citizens to find gainful employment and to compete economically on an international level," Honduran Secretary of Science and Technology Ramón Espinoza said.

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## **Honduras Holds Festival for LGBTI Rights**

TEGUCIGALPA (August 24) -- Honduras recently hosted the Diversity in the Arts and Culture Festival in Tegucigalpa's Parque Central Amphitheater. The festival aimed to showcase talent from the country's Lesbian, Gay, Trans, Bisexual and Intersexual community, and to encourage the public to safeguard LGBTI rights.

"I am extremely grateful for the artists and organizers who made this event a success," said President Juan Orlando Hernández. "Your stories, poems, plays, and dances are an integral part of Honduras's cultural identity."

In May, the president announced the creation of the Ministry for Human Rights as part of a larger effort to defend and promote human rights in Honduras, as well as boost government protections for vulnerable groups, including LGBTI activists. In its efforts to secure human rights for its citizens, Honduras is working with the U.S. Agency for International Development, the European Union, and Freedom House.

The festival featured live performances from LGBTI artists, as well as information on human rights and sexual health.

Attendees included LGBTI rights organizations, members of the diplomatic community, representatives from international aid organizations, human rights advocates, and Honduran government officials. The Embassy of Chile helped sponsor the event.

"This festival served as an important reminder that our human rights work is not done until every single Honduran citizen feels safe and respected," Hernández said.

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## **Honduras Peace Forum Marks National Progress in Crime Prevention**

TEGUCIGALPA – (August 29) Last week, Honduras welcomed officials from the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) to the Honduras Peace Forum in Tegucigalpa.

"Honduras is moving in the right direction," said IEP Mexico Coordinator Patricia de Obeso. "Having a cabinet that invests in [crime] prevention is a good indication that the country is making progress."

In the last three years alone, the homicide rate in Honduras dropped 30 percent.

Obeso commended Honduras for reducing terrorism and internal conflict, and for creating safe spaces for citizens. Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández has launched an initiative to build secure, peaceful parks for citizens.

"We recognize Honduras' advances in security over the last few years," said IEP Director Michelle Breslauer.

The Hernández administration recently strengthened civilian oversight of the national police, and revamped its Navy's drug trafficking unit.

Thanks to such initiatives, Honduras rose five places in the IEP's Global Peace Index, which ranks 163 countries on 23 indicators of peace. Honduras improved its national safety more than any Caribbean or Central American country in the index.

"Receiving such high praise from an institute that once dubbed this country the most violent in the world is extremely significant," said President Hernández. "My administration will keep fighting to protect all Honduran citizens."

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## **Honduras Peace Forum Marks National Progress in Crime Prevention**

**TÉGUCIGALPA – (August 29)** Last week, Honduras welcomed officials from the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) to the Honduras Peace Forum in Tegucigalpa.

"Honduras is moving in the right direction," said IEP Mexico Coordinator Patricia de Obeso. "Having a cabinet that invests in [crime] prevention is a good indication that the country is making progress."

In the last three years alone, the homicide rate in Honduras dropped 30 percent.

Obeso commended Honduras for reducing terrorism and internal conflict, and for creating safe spaces for citizens. Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández has launched an initiative to build secure, peaceful parks for citizens.

"We recognize Honduras' advances in security over the last few years," said IEP Director Michelle Breslauer.

The Hernández administration recently strengthened civilian oversight of the national police, and revamped its Navy's drug trafficking unit.

Thanks to such initiatives, Honduras rose five places in the IEP's Global Peace Index, which ranks 163 countries on 23 indicators of peace. Honduras improved its national safety more than any Caribbean or Central American country in the index.

"Receiving such high praise from an institute that once dubbed this country the most violent in the world is extremely significant," said President Hernández. "My administration will keep fighting to protect all Honduran citizens."

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