A WEB OF VIOLENCE

Crime, corruption and displacement in Honduras

THEMATIC REPORT

iDMC internal displacement monitoring centre

Cristosal

REFUGEE LAW INITIATIVE | SCHOOL OF ADVANCED STUDY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

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Cover photo: Children look through the gates of a school that was used by the mara 13 in Tegucigalpa (Hato en el Medio, sector), Honduras. The military presence seeks to regain control of the school. Photo: European Union/ECHO/A. Aragon, 2016

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MARCH 2019

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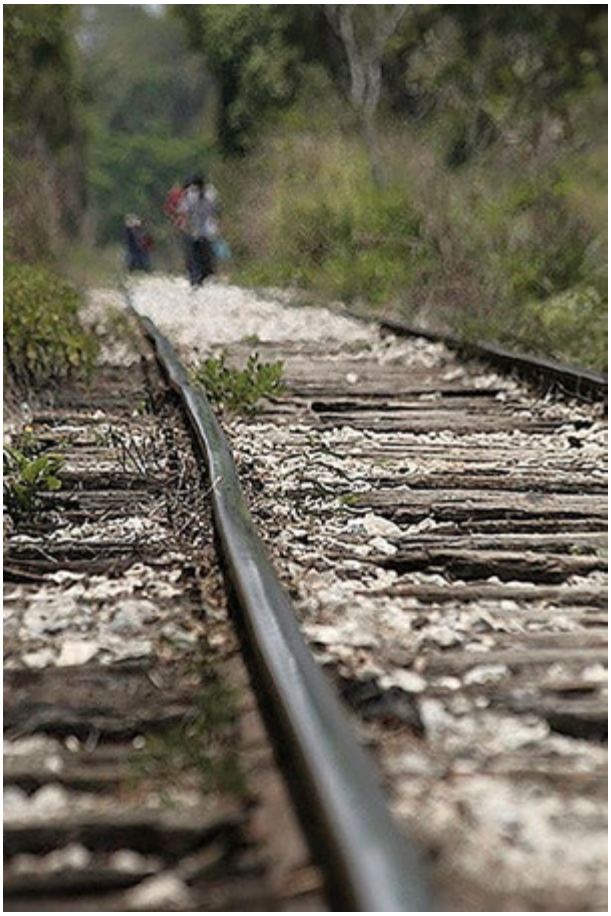
GLOSSARY

CA-4: The Central America-4 Free Mobility Agreement, the treaty El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua in 2006, establishing free movement across their borders
Campesinos: peasant farmers
Casas locas: 'crazy houses', houses taken over by street gangs for illicit activities
CIPPDV: the Inter-institutional Commission for the Protection of People Displaced by Violence, Comisión Interinstitucional para la Protección de las Personas Desplazadas por la Violencia
CIPRODEH: the Centre for the Investigation and Promotion of Human Rights, Centro de Investigación y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos
Clika: local cells or cliques of street gangs
CONADEH: the National Human Rights Commissioner of Honduras, Comisionado Nacional de los Derechos Humanos de Honduras
CRRF: Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
Ejido: communal property title
Garifuna: an indigenous people of African, Arawak and Carib descent who live mainly on the Caribbean coast of northern Central America
GBV: Gender-Based Violence
IDPs: Internally displaced persons
IHSS: Honduran social security institute, Instituto Hondureño de Seguridad Social
ILO: International Labour Organisation
Impuesto de guerra: 'war tax', extortion
INE: Honduran national institute of statistics, Instituto Nacional de Estadisticas
IOM: International Organisation for Migration
JIPS: the Joint IDP Profiling Service
LGBTI+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual, Intersexual and diverse sex, sexual and gender identities
MACCIH: Mission to Support the Fight against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras, Misión de Apoyo contra la Corrupción y la Impunidad en Honduras
Maquila: foreign-run factory, usually operating under favourable tax conditions, tariff-free or duty-free
MIAMBIENTE: Governmental institution responsible for promoting the sustainable development of Honduras
NRC: Norwegian Refugee Council
NTCA: Northern Triangle of Central America
OAS: Organisation of American States
PMH: the Church Ministry of Human Mobility, Pastoral de Movilidad Humana
SAG: Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Secretaría de Agricultura y Ganadería
SEDH: Human Rights Secretariat of Honduras, Secretaría de Derechos Humanos
SICA: Central American Integration System, Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana
Sicario: hired assassin
TPS: Temporary Protected Status
Transportistas: smuggling groups
UDFI: Forced Displacement Unit, Unidad de Desplazamiento Forzado
UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the UN Refugee Agency
ZEDEs: zones of employment and economic development, zonas de empleo y desarrollo económico

SUMMARY

Gang warfare and violence have transformed parts of Honduras into some of the most dangerous places on earth. As a result, many families have been forced to flee their homes and communities, both within Honduras and across its borders. Focusing only on displacement caused by criminal and gang violence, however, does not paint a comprehensive picture nor provide an effective response.

At least five types of violence cause displacement in Honduras: that perpetrated by street gangs; by drugs trafficking and transnational organised crime groups; gender-based violence (GBV) and violence on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity; violence associated with megaprojects; and state violence and political repression. These types of violence are distinct, but they are interconnected with endemic corruption and impunity, resulting in a tangled web of forced migration patterns that are mutually reinforcing.



A group of teens from Honduras walks under the fierce sun of Tenosique, México. They travelled by bus to México, and will have to cross the whole country in their pursuit of "The American Dream". Tomorrow they could be robbed, jailed, or murdered, but today they're full of hope, and scream full of smiles to the camera: "catrachos's pride". Photo: Francisco Cubas, May 2007

The available data shows that significant numbers of people have been and continue to be internally displaced. A 2015 study found that four per cent of people across 20 departments had been displaced between 2004 and 2014, which was extrapolated to 174,000 people nationwide.[2] Based on projections from this study and in the absence of more up-to-date data, IDMC estimates that 190,000 people were living in internal displacement as of the end of 2017.[3] Increasing numbers of Hondurans also flee the country. There were 14,427 refugees and 59,788 asylum seekers from Honduras worldwide in 2017, with almost 35,000 new claims registered that year alone.[4]

The Honduran government officially recognised displacement in 2013 and has since taken some important and promising steps, including the establishment of state bodies and the drafting of legislation to address internal displacement. It also refers internally displaced people (IDPs) and returnees with protection needs to civil society organisations and international agencies for assistance. However, the state has put in place few if any concrete programmes for the protection and assistance of IDPs, and has yet to develop a strategy to prevent displacement.

It is also important that the state's role in causing displacement is acknowledged, as well as the interplay of corruption and impunity in perpetuating and aggravating different forms violence and the displacement they cause. Acceptance of these dynamics and a better understanding of them is needed to paint a comprehensive picture of displacement in Honduras and inform an effective response.

This study seeks to reframe internal displacement in Honduras and establish a broader notion of violence in the country and how it causes displacement. Academic studies, civil society and ombudsman reports and recent government-led profiling studies have contributed to this end, but significant data and knowledge gaps remain. More insight and timely, reliable data is needed about the distinctions and commonalities between the various forms and perpetrators of violence, and how they connect with displacement.

The study draws on extensive desk research covering the academic literature and latest empirical reports, and qualitative data collected in 43 interviews with 61 experts in Honduras and Mexico City during April, October and November 2018. The research findings were analysed using a systems dynamics approach to look beneath the surface of the observable phenomenon to explain why it happens and identify its drivers and dynamics, commonalities and differences.

The study concludes with six key findings presented against the backdrop of the principle of national sovereignty as responsibility. They offer new insight into the phenomenon of displacement associated with violence in Honduras as a basis for guiding government and civil society responses, developing protection, assistance and prevention interventions, and informing policy recommendations.

SIX KEY FINDINGS

Key finding 1: Violence in all its forms is often highly targeted yet people's decisions about displacement are influenced by similar factors

Across all five types of violence, some risks involve highly targeted threats and persecution while others involve a more generalised increase in insecurity. Both state and criminal perpetrators target specific people, leading to their displacement, while others flee the more general effects of insecurity, political repression and state or criminal violence.

People's decisions about when and where to flee are influenced by similar factors regardless of the source of violence, and depend on their perceptions of risk, family links and economic and security considerations.

Key finding 2: Displacement linked to violence is provoked by a range of perpetrators, often with complex interconnections

A narrow focus on criminal violence as the main cause of people's flight conceals other types of violence, the intellectual authors, the state's role in provoking displacement and its failure to provide the protection required to prevent it.

Violence and displacement are provoked by private security, paramilitary and state forces as well as criminal groups. In some cases it may be difficult to clearly discern the perpetrator, the lines between state and criminal violence may be blurred, or violence may be the result of complex relationships between local elites, criminal elements and corrupt authorities. The result is a tangled web of violence underpinned and perpetuated by corruption and impunity.

Key finding 3: Corruption aggravates the drivers and triggers of displacement

Corruption aggravates some of the structural socioeconomic factors that drive displacement. It also enables the persistence of widespread criminal violence and severely limits the prospects of those targeted in securing protection in the country, often leading to repeated internal displacement and/or cross-border flight.

Corruption associated with megaprojects and the weakened separation of powers in Honduras have led to the development of legislation, processes and enforcement that favour commercial interests over citizens' rights. Displacement may be the result of forced evictions, or repression, threats and violence against those who resist. This violence has a range of perpetrators, often including the security forces. The failure to conduct environmental impact assessments and consult local communities may also lead to displacement as a result of environmental degradation.

Key finding 4: Displacement may result in ongoing and even increased insecurity and risk of violence

The same risks and threats that caused displacement may persist after flight, particularly for those persecuted by gangs because they are perceived to have committed an act of betrayal or enmity, those who flee political persecution, and survivors of domestic violence who are pursued by their former partners.

New risks may emerge when people flee from one marginalised and gang-controlled urban area to another, or from rural to urban areas. They may also arise as a result of people's economic coping strategies, which can make them vulnerable to extortion, dangerous work or violence in the workplace.

Cross-border flight brings additional protection concerns, particularly for those who travel irregularly, those who do not apply for or are unable to secure international protection, and people deported to Honduras who have ongoing protection needs.

Key finding 5: Displacement exacerbates insecurity and economic hardship, which can result in cross-border flight

People's inability to find safety and security within the country may make their situation unsustainable, leading to further displacement and psychological and economic harm. Some may eventually decide they have no option but to leave the country, while for others internal displacement may not be a viable option in the first place. Others still may resort to self-containment in an effort to escape their continued persecution.

Economic hardship may lead to repeated movements in and of itself, or it may combine with ongoing insecurity to make IDPs' situation untenable. Repeated displacement results in a downward spiral of deepening poverty and worsening living conditions. Many may eventually leave the country because of entrenched poverty and inequality, the lack of income-generating opportunities and increases in the basic cost of living.

Key finding 6: Challenges persist to gathering data on displacement and providing comprehensive protection

There is currently no systematic collection of data on displacement, and efforts are complicated by people's reluctance to report, which has its roots in fear of reprisals from criminal gangs, a lack of confidence in the state to provide protection or take effective action and the involvement of state entities in perpetrating violence and provoking displacement.

In the absence of comprehensive data, the different factors that lead to repeated displacement are not captured, and the reasons behind people's initial displacement may be obscured. This applies to both internal and cross-border displacement and means that its causes cannot be properly addressed.

Without such data and acceptance of a broader conceptualisation of violence that results in displacement, it will not be possible to protect and assist those affected. Nor can the state's role and responsibility be fully delineated. Robust data and renewed political will are needed to address the causes of displacement and develop a comprehensive prevention strategy.

INTRODUCTION

In 2013, the Honduran government recognised the phenomenon of internal displacement associated with violence in the country. The Special Rapporteur for the human rights of internally displaced people has welcomed the move as an important step forward, but also noted that "the extent of the violence and its impact in terms of deaths and displacement have parallels with some conflict situations, yet a lack of resources and attention means that most internally displaced persons are left to fend for themselves".[5]

The notion that violence which causes displacement in Honduras is only perpetrated by urban criminal gangs paints far from a complete picture. In reality, the violence takes many forms and has many perpetrators, including the state and private companies. People are indeed forced to flee their homes by street gangs' widespread criminal violence and targeted threats, but also by the activities of transnational organised crime groups, megaprojects, political repression, state violence and the lack of state protection against gender-based violence (GBV) and abuse based on people's sexual orientation or gender identity, as well as extreme poverty, disasters and climate change impacts.

A 2015 study found that four per cent of people across 20 departments had been internally displaced between 2004 and 2014, which was extrapolated to 174,000 people nationwide.[6] Sixty-eight per cent of those surveyed said they had fled acts of violence and insecurity. The study provides reasonably representative data, but its urban focus is a significant limitation. In the absence of more recent data, IDMC's estimate at the end of 2017 that 190,000 people were living in internal displacement in Honduras is drawn from a UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) projection based on the same study.[7] A follow-up was due to be published in early 2019.

The most recent study by the National Human Rights Commissioner of Honduras (*Comisionado Nacional de los Derechos Humanos de Honduras*, CONADEH) provides excellent insight into the situation in the country, but it clearly does not capture the full scale of displacement. CONADEH provided 1,424 people with assistance in 2017, based on 688 reports of displacement or risk of displacement received.[8]

The activities of three types of criminal groups are known to contribute to displacement in Honduras: street gangs, drugs cartels - organised crime groups involved in trafficking - and *transportistas* or smugglers.[9] The emerging role of private security, paramilitary and state forces in provoking violence and displacement must also be considered. These perpetrators may act separately,

FIGURE 1: Statistical findings on displaced households

< 3%
received assistance and this was from religious or community groups

35.9%
had been displaced twice or more

~50%
received assistance from family in Honduras or abroad

24
Average age of a displaced person

25.7%
had at least one family member separated in the displacement

43%
of displaced people are under the age of 18

67.9%
Violence or insecurity was the only reason for displacement

95.3%
did not plan to return to their original home

0% 100%

Source: IDMC and CIPPDV ('Characterisation of internal displacement in Honduras', 2015)

but they are not always distinct. They may be involved in overlapping activities, rely on other groups to act on their behalf or work in collusion with each other. This makes establishing the motives and those responsible for the violence all but impossible in some cases.

It is not unusual for internal displacement to lead eventually to cross-border flight, because people are unable to find safety and economic security within the country, even after repeated moves. The threats or persecution that led someone to flee may continue despite their displacement, or new risks may arise after displacement. If the threats and persecution are extreme or if the perpetrator is a state entity, they may flee the country directly.

There were 14,427 refugees and 59,788 asylum seekers from Honduras worldwide in 2017. The high-profile caravans of thousands of people leaving the country in late 2018 and early 2019 are "an expression of an economic, social and political situation in high conflict".[10] Given that hundreds of people leave Honduras every single day, these caravans also represent a graphic visualisation of the everyday reality.[11]

LEGAL AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

The Honduran government was the first of the three countries in the Northern Triangle of Central America (NTCA) to recognise internal displacement associated violence. Since official recognition in 2013, a number of bodies have been established to address the phenomenon. Forced displacement is also included as a crime under article 248 of the new penal code.

The Inter-institutional Commission for the Protection of People Displaced by Violence (*Comisión Interinstitucional para la Protección de Personas Desplazadas por la Violencia*, CIPPDV) was established in 2013 to develop policies, promote the adoption of measures to prevent displacement associated with violence and provide assistance, protection and solutions to those affected. The Directorate for the Protection of People Internally Displaced by Violence (*Dirección de Protección a Personas Desplazadas Internamente por la Violencia*) was also established to define and implement the state's response to protection needs.

Honduran civil society groups formed the Protection Network for Victims Displaced by Violence in Honduras (*Red de Protección a Víctimas Desplazadas por la Violencia en Honduras*) to advocate for these guarantees and monitor their implementation. In 2016, CONADEH and UNHCR formed the Forced Displacement Unit (*Unidad de Desplazamiento Forzado*, UDFI) to generate data on displacement patterns and trends, and the profiles of affected or threatened people and communities. UDFI continues to conduct a project on monitoring and preventing internal displacement, and CONADEH-UDFI published a comprehensive report in 2018 on the cases attended in 2017.

Work started in June 2018 on a follow-up to the CIPPDV's 2015 profiling study on internal displacement associated with violence in Honduras. It aims to identify communities at risk and to deepen understanding of the scale of the phenomenon nationally, its impact at the community level and access to protection mechanisms and institutional services. The study is being conducted by UNHCR, the Human Rights Secretariat (*Secretaría de Derechos Humanos*, SEDH) and the National Statistics Institute (*Instituto Nacional de Estadística*, INE) with technical support from the Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS). Publication is planned in 2019.[12]

CIPPDV completed stakeholder consultation with civil society organisations in the last quarter of 2018 on legislation it has developed for the prevention of internal displacement, and the assistance and protection of those affected (*ley para la prevención, atención y protección de las personas desplazadas internamente*). SEDH has yet to agree the budget for assistance, and the legislative process will continue in 2019. The draft legislation is in line with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, but only provides for responses to displacement associated with violence and human rights violations.

At the regional level, the intergovernmental Plan for the Alliance for Prosperity for the Northern Triangle aims to address the poverty and violence that drive migration out of Central America. The initiative has been welcomed in principle, but serious concerns have been raised about its approach.[13] It is feared the plan may provoke further displacement because it reinforces the economic models that have previously led to forced migration, and proposes megaprojects with no requirements for prior and informed consent.

Honduras has been a case-study country for the United Nations Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) since early 2017 and is part of the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (*Marco Integral Regional para la Protección y Soluciones*, MIRPS). The latter is a state-led initiative supported by UNHCR, the Organisation of American States (OAS), the Central American Integration System (*Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana*, SICA), cooperating states and others. It "promotes shared responsibility mechanisms" between countries of origin, transit and destination, and "strengthens protection, and enhances solutions for refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, and returnees with protection needs". In doing so, it envisages collaboration between governments, civil society, international organisations, the private sector, academics and development banks.[14]

These steps are undoubtedly promising, but more research is needed to understand the scale and impact of forced displacement, guide responses and prevent the conditions that lead to it. Particular attention needs to be given to understanding the intersections between violence, corruption and impunity, broadening the conceptualisation of violence and the displacement it causes, and the role of the state in actively provoking displacement and failing to provide the protection required to prevent it.

This study examines widespread violence associated with street gangs, organised crime and drug trafficking groups, megaprojects, state entities and political repression, and GBV and violence on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, and the ways in which it leads to displacement in Honduras. It establishes a non-exhaustive but broader conceptualisation of violence in the country and its overlaps with other displacement drivers to enable a deeper understanding of the dynamics and protection concerns that result. The types of violence are distinct yet inextricably intertwined, with corruption and impunity as the common denominators that link and perpetuate them.

METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of this research was to gather evidence for a conceptual framework on the drivers, triggers, impacts and patterns of displacement in Honduras with the aim of establishing a shared understanding of the phenomenon in the country and the NTCA more widely. It sought to answer the following questions in four areas:

A recreation of IDMC's system dynamics model in the NTCA.

- What are the main drivers and underlying structural factors that combine to result in displacement?
- What are the main triggers or shocks that force people to flee their homes?
- What are the patterns of displacement? What are the main challenges to address and opportunities to explore in terms of durable solutions, and how does the failure to address protection concerns lead to protracted or repeated displacement? What are the tipping points for onward movement across borders? What happens to asylum seekers and migrants who are deported or return to their country, but are unable to go back to their place of origin?
- What are the individual and structural impacts of displacement, and who is most at risk of onward displacement, and abuse and harm once displaced? How do mixed migration flows affect the assistance and protection that displaced people receive?

The study is based on a comprehensive review of academic studies, empirical reports, investigative journalism and available data on criminal violence, corruption and displacement in Honduras, including its cross-border dimension, and on new data gathered from 43 semi-structured interviews with 61 key informants in the region. Experts and informants were carefully selected to generate data from a range of perspectives, and to provide insight into people's vulnerabilities before, during and after displacement. They included academics, government officials, representatives of

international agencies, international NGOs, civil society and human rights organisations, independent research centres, and LGBT+ and women's groups, and organisations representing the Garifuna, an Afro-Honduran indigenous people in the country.

The semi-structured interviews were tailored according to the informant's area of expertise and knowledge and orientated around the project's four research streams. They were conducted in Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula, La Ceiba and Santa Rosa de Copán in October and November 2018. Regional-level interviews were conducted in Mexico City earlier in 2018. The research also identified sources of quantitative and statistical data from agencies and organisations in Honduras that could contribute to a more comprehensive picture of displacement and its impacts.

The research adhered to ethical standards for guaranteeing confidentiality and managing data securely, and for working in a situation of high insecurity. Because of the nature of the study, the ethical and security concerns and the inevitability of sampling bias in conducting interviews with internally displaced people (IDPs) in Honduras, it is based on key informant interviews and secondary sources. Some participants, however, indicated during interviews that they had been victims of political repression and/or displacement. Several asked to remain anonymous, so sources are referred to only by their job title or by the type of organisation they represent, unless permission was given to identify them.

Conceptual framework and data analysis

Evidence about drivers, triggers, patterns and impacts was analysed using a systems dynamics approach, so as to build a new conceptual framework of internal displacement in the country. The analysis looked at how violence in different situations and with different perpetrators defines patterns of displacement, how government action or inaction affects these dynamics, impacts at the individual, community and national level, and protection risks that persist or arise after displacement because of highly targeted persecution.

REPORT STRUCTURE

The remainder of this report is made up of six sections. The second section examines the social, political and economic drivers, causes and structural factors that combine to cause displacement. The third examines the main triggers that force people to flee their homes.

The fourth section examines the displacement patterns that result and explains how the failure to address protection needs and achieve durable solutions results in repeated displacement and cross-border flight. It also addresses the situation of people who return or are returned to Honduras but have been unable to go back to their place of origin. The fifth section discusses the impacts of displacement and identifies how they may result in ongoing human rights violations and lead to further violence and displacement.

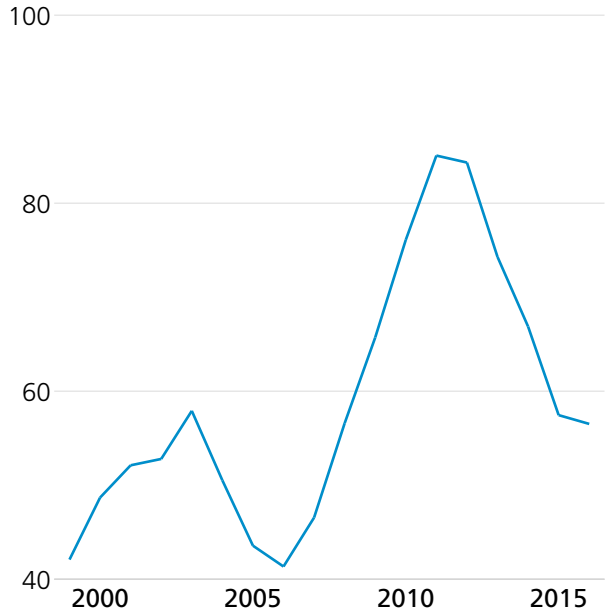
The report concludes by presenting key findings drawn from analysis and themes from the previous four chapters. They offer new insight into the phenomenon as a basis for developing protection interventions, guiding government and civil society responses, and informing policy recommendations.

DISPLACEMENT DRIVERS

There are a number of political, economic, social, environmental, geographical and development factors that drive insecurity in Honduras and make people vulnerable to displacement. These include entrenched and increasing poverty, food insecurity and inequality, disasters, extreme weather events and climate change impacts, but also endemic corruption and impunity, persistent crime and violence, the militarisation of the state and political repression.

These causes and structural factors may act as standalone drivers or may combine to aggravate and perpetuate each other, triggering displacement. Megaprojects, for example, may cause displacement and they may also increase people's vulnerability to environmental factors and weather events. Corruption and impunity perpetuate criminal violence, and corruption linked to megaprojects may result in campaigns of harassment or violent intimidation and evictions.

FIGURE 2: Number of intentional homicides in Honduras (per 100,000 people), 1999-2016



Source: UN Office on Drugs and Crime's International Homicide Statistics database

Displacement caused by widespread violence has risen to the level of a humanitarian crisis in Honduras.[15] Insecurity is a factor in many people's decisions to leave their homes. For some, particularly those who have been victims of crime or targeted persecution, it is the only or primary reason to flee whether within or beyond their country's borders. Much violence is perpetrated by street gangs, but displacement is also provoked by the activities of transnational organised crime groups, megaprojects, political repression and state violence and the lack of state protection against gender-based violence (GBV) and abuse based on people's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Widespread violence has provoked and continues to provoke displacement in Honduras, but the country's location and topography also make it vulnerable to extreme weather, disasters and climate change impacts. These result in periodic and mass movements and may cause more chronic displacement in the future.[16]

Honduras was the country worst affected by extreme weather events between 1997 and 2006, and is one of those most at risk from climate change impacts.[17] A fifth of the country is made up of an arid area known as the Dry Corridor, which has been affected by prolonged droughts since 2014. People's increased vulnerability to such events is linked to poverty, poor infrastructure and preparedness, megaprojects, corruption, deforestation and harmful agricultural practices.[18] A number of these factors combined to aggravate the impacts of hurricane Mitch in 1998, which led to the displacement of 2.1 million people.

These disaster risks have not yet been addressed. In fact, deforestation and hydroelectric dam projects have since made some areas more prone to extreme weather events, flooding and drought. Unplanned urbanisation and lack of robust infrastructure have left many communities with little resilience to weather events and unprepared for the impacts of climate change.[19]

Up to 47 per cent of people in the NTCA are currently affected by food insecurity, the highest incidence ever recorded, linked to the prolonged drought and poor socioeconomic conditions in the region. Vulnerability in the Dry Corridor, which stretches across the NTCA countries of Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador and into Nicaragua, is aggravated by 68 per cent unemployment, shifting labour demands and poor wages. This has been worsened by climate change and crop disease, which has affected the production of staples such maize and beans, and export crops such as coffee. There are reported correlations between the prolonged drought and emigration.[20]

Honduras's location has also led to it becoming a drug trafficking hub. A coup in 2009, which ousted Manuel Zelaya as president, has contributed to "the creation of one of the main cocaine routes from South America to the United States".[21] This has been precipitated in part by the involvement of the economic and political elite in drug trafficking. Members of the elite have been charged, arrested and in some case imprisoned for drug trafficking offences and money laundering connected to both drug trafficking and corruption.[22]

Displacement is also affected by changes in other countries' migration policies, such as asylum restrictions, Washington's revocation of temporary protection status (TPS) for Hondurans and the hardening of immigration rules and enforcement in both the US and Mexico. These have led to increasing numbers of deportations and returns, in many cases back to a situation of de facto internal displacement.[23]

Given the responsibility of the Honduran state in preventing and addressing displacement, the country's political history is relevant to the current situation. Honduras became independent from Spain in 1821, and by the start of the 20th century it had become an enclave economy with deep US influence that has continued since.

Much of the 20th century was marked by military rule and authoritarian regimes, and the 1980s and 90s by neoliberal restructuring, political repression and the use of Honduras by US-supported troops for attacks on neighbouring countries. Unlike in neighbouring countries, the Honduran economic elite was enriched by and continues to rely on international trade and investment. Enclave-style economics persist in factory or *maquila* areas and zones of employment and economic development (*zonas de empleo y desarrollo económico*, ZEDEs).[24]

The 2009 coup led to the reining in of democratic process, the co-opting of power and institutions and a loss of the separation of powers that "constitutes a further coup".[25] Elections in 2017 were widely acknowledged to have been fraudulent and unconstitutional and led to the president, Juan Orlando Hernández, remaining in power. This power grab and the ensuing post-election crisis represent "the third stage" of the coup.[26]

The 2009 coup has also led to higher levels of violence, poverty, inequality and displacement, a legacy described as one "of social crisis, impunity and lawlessness, demonstrated in the narrowing of democratic space and the killing of journalists, human rights activists and opposition politicians".[27] The mainstream media, owned and operated by the same economic elite that colludes with the government, has disseminated divisive messages and smear campaigns that facilitate the silencing of opposition.[28]

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL FACTORS

Poverty and inequality have deepened considerably since 2009 to the point of being extreme. Honduras is the most unequal and second poorest country in the Americas, with a Gini index that has fallen to 50. Sixty-three per cent of the population live in poverty, and 42 per cent in extreme poverty.[29] Around 19.5 per cent of the country's GDP comes from remittances. One in six Hondurans benefit from remittances, the majority of whom live in poverty. The money received tends to be used to meet basic needs rather than for investment, leading to a culture of dependence.[30]

Poverty and a lack of opportunities make people vulnerable to becoming involved in criminal activities as a survival strategy. Young people living in poverty may be impelled to join gangs both for economic and protection reasons. They are also vulnerable to forced recruitment and face threats and violence if they resist. Their vulnerability may be heightened by family breakdown or having parents who are absent because of work or emigration.[31]

In areas where gangs have territorial control, education and health service staff and users may encounter difficulties in accessing facilities. Gangs have also infiltrated schools throughout the country and particularly in marginalised and poor neighbourhoods. Violence, extortion, drug dealing and child recruitment take place in and around these schools. Schools also generally lack enough funding to invest in materials and staff. Many request additional payments from parents, which people living in poverty are unable to afford. School abandonment is high, and violence and displacement are key causes.[32]

Given young people's political, economic and social marginalisation and exclusion, joining a gang can offer identity, income and a sense of belonging. "In some cases, gangs serve as police auxiliaries. In others, gang membership can be understood as a reaction to the systematised corruption - an effort to build an autonomous social space."[33]

At the same time, gang activity has led the government and private sector to criminalise young people more broadly and treat them with suspicion. Those from affected areas are stigmatised and refused employment whether they are involved in gangs or not, causing further economic loss and marginalisation. They are also subjected to arbitrary state harassment and violence when the security forces raid their neighbourhoods.

Those able to afford it live in gated communities or safe areas with private security, leading to an inequality of security. The majority of the Honduran population, however, live in marginalised rural areas or poor urban neighbourhoods with little security and a gang presence. The government, police and military stigmatise these communities, and residents are unable to get work or bank loans because of negative perceptions. When people are displaced, they tend to have no other option but to move to such areas, given their lack of economic resources.[34]

There is deep discrimination against women, indigenous and Garifuna groups, LGBT+ people, children and young people, those with disabilities and the elderly. A draft law on equality is still at the consultation stage. Gender discrimination is fuelled by patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes. Honduras has a gender inequality ranking of 109, a global gender gap index ranking of 68 and an overall score of 0.706.[35] Women face discrimination in employment, and the majority who work do so in the informal sector where they are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

Such benchmarks do not, however, fully reflect women's and girls' experiences of endemic violence or their lack of bodily autonomy. Abortion and emergency contraception are banned in all circumstances, meaning that even children and rape survivors are obliged to carry their pregnancies to term. Gender stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes also contribute to gangs' extreme machismo and the likelihood of men becoming victims or perpetrators of violence. The rights of LGBT+ people are not respected, and the community is deeply affected by stigma and violence. Discrimination and exclusion limit their access to education, work and career opportunities.

Indigenous and Garifuna people also face discrimination and exclusion in accessing dignified work, education and health services. The Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous people has called their situation critical because "their rights over their lands, territories and natural resources are not protected, they face acts of violence when claiming their rights, in a general context of violence and impunity, and they lack access to justice".[36] Honduras is a signatory to Convention 169 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on indigenous and tribal peoples, but has not yet ratified it.[37]

POLITICAL DRIVERS

Honduras struggles with corruption, weak rule of law, extremely high levels of impunity and deepening political repression. This aggravates the drivers of displacement and stifles genuine prevention and response to the phenomenon. Institutions are also weak, and a mistrust of the authorities and the security forces has intensified since the 2009 coup and again since the 2017 elections.[38] Since the coup, power has increasingly been consolidated power in the president's hands, leading to a loss of the separation of powers.[39]

Corruption

Transparency International's corruption perception index for 2018 gave Honduras a score of 29/100, ranking it 132nd of 180 countries.[40] "Widespread nepotism and clientelism, entrenched organised criminal activities and political corruption" have led some to describe

Tegucigalpa (sector of La Sosa) in Honduras is a violent area. Three criminal groups dispute the area control. Due to violent murders in the sector, children do not feel safe when they walk to school. The military presence seeks to regain control of the school. Photo: European Union/ECHO/A. Aragón 2016

the country as a failed state that sells its land through concessions and has links with drug trafficking.[41] Rather than affecting just some aspects of Honduran politics, corruption has been described as "the operating system".[42]

Organised criminal groups have infiltrated state security institutions and the judicial system. Some members of the security forces, including the most high-ranking police officers, collaborate with such groups and engage in criminal activity to the extent that the "police are deeply embedded in the very criminal structures they are tasked with dismantling".[43] The families of officials at the highest levels of authority have been deeply linked to drug trafficking and money laundering since the 2009 coup.[44]

Investigations are under way into the embezzlement of hundreds of millions of dollars from the social security institute (Instituto Hondureño de Seguridad Social, IHSS). As a result of this corruption, many people have been unable to access health services and medicines and thousands of people have died because of exposure to fake medicines or because they did not receive treatment.[45]

The establishment in 2016 of the Mission to Support the Fight against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (*Misión de Apoyo contra la Corrupción y la Impunidad en Honduras*, MACCIH) was a promising development. The result of an agreement between the government and OAS, it seeks to "actively collaborate with the country's institutions and civil society to dismantle the scaffolding that promotes corruption and impunity, and strengthen mechanisms for judicial investigation, control of public resources and control of power".[46] The government, however, has sought to neutralise the body and undermine its work, including with introduc-

tion of an "impunity pact" to protect politicians from prosecution. MACCIH is investigating this too as an act of corruption.[47]

Impunity and lack of state protection

The impunity rate in Honduras fluctuates between 95 and 98 per cent.[48] Of 21,033 murders reported between 2010 and 2013, only 537 resulted in a trial or conviction.[49] There are many reasons for this impunity, which perpetuates persistently high levels of violence, insecurity and corruption, which in turn further weakens people's trust in the authorities, increases their risk of displacement and undermines access to justice.[50]

Many people do not report crimes because of a deep mistrust of state bodies and well-founded fear of reprisals. GBV and crimes of a sexual nature are under-reported because of "stigma, fear of retribution and further violence, and lack of confidence in the justice system".[51] LGBT+ people may be re-victimised when they report crimes and it can be impossible to report a crime for people who appear different in gender from their identity document.

There are also significant challenges in delivering justice, including weak institutions, a lack of resources and capacity and the sheer volume of cases. When reports are made, they may be refused or simply not processed and investigated.[52] This is particular so when the perpetrators are state entities or if the cases involve megaprojects. Victims have said "the inaction of authorities suggested that the lives of their relatives and colleagues had no value to the government, and that speaking out to demand justice was not only useless but dangerous".[53] Others have expressed reluctance to cooperate with the authorities, and those who do report crimes have "a strong fear that those responsible for killings, all of whom were still at large, would find out they had spoken and take revenge against them".[54]

Legislation exists to protect victims, witnesses and other people involved in the investigation of crime, their relatives and others linked to them. In practice, however, it has not proved effective and witnesses under the scheme have been threatened, attacked, forced into displacement and murdered.[55] Police officers, members of the security forces and justice officials who attempt to prosecute cartels and criminal gangs have also been targeted with threats and violence.[56] Lawyers, judges, public prosecutors and other members of the judiciary and attorney general's office have been threatened and killed.[57]

Impunity should be understood as the tip of an iceberg of much greater failings of the state in terms of its obligations under international conventions to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, most notably to deter and prevent violations, investigate and punish those that do occur and provide legal remedy. Prevention strategies are severely lacking, and this is particularly apparent in the state's persistent failure to address the causes of violence, whether by tackling the inequality, poverty and marginalisation that fuel the activities of criminal gangs or by remedying the deep discrimination and patriarchal attitudes that drive GBV and violence on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Militarisation and repression

The Honduran state has become increasingly militarised, with the establishment of military police and the use of the armed forces to fight crime and quell dissent. The US provides military aid and sells the country significant amounts of military equipment and weaponry.[58] The police and military have perpetrated human rights abuses, and there have been reports of death squads carrying out extrajudicial executions of suspected members of organised crime groups and gangs.[59] The military has also cracked down on and publicly threatened protesters, land defenders and people who oppose megaprojects.[60] Senior military officers have been apponted to key roles in various state institutions, including intelligence, migration, transport and ZEDEs.[61]

Honduras is ranked 141st of 180 countries in the 2018 World Press Freedom Index and has one of the highest numbers of journalists per capita murdered annually.[62] The situation for journalists has worsened since the 2009 coup, marked by political intimidation, abusive judicial proceedings and violence.[63] Journalists who report on corruption, crime and megaprojects are at high risk, resulting in a "climate of fear and self-censorship".[64] More than 49 journalists were murdered between 2009 and 2018, and others have been subjected to aggression, credible threats and intimidation such as smear campaigns or having their equipment sabotaged.[65] Independent media outlets were closed after the coup and the mainstream media is largely controlled by the

economic elite with deep political ties.[66] Fifty-nine per cent of the population believes there is little press freedom.[67]

A law to protect human rights defenders, journalists, media workers and justice officials was passed in 2015, and since then more than 325 requests for protection have been received, 75 of which were refused. As of June 2018, 217 people had been granted protection, including 133 human rights defenders, 42 journalists, 25 social communicators and 17 justice officials.[68]

Concern has been expressed about the implementation and effectiveness of protection mechanisms. Land defenders, human rights defenders and journalists have been detained by state agents or murdered by unknown assailants while under either regional or domestic mechanisms.[69] Others have been detained, assaulted or murdered after having been refused state protection, having it arbitrarily removed or having reported death threats or being on a state hitlist.[70]

DEVELOPMENT-RELATED DRIVERS

There are up to 1500 megaprojects under way or planned in Honduras.[71] The privatisation of natural resources has accelerated significantly since 2009 and more than a third of the country's territory is now under concession to national and transnational businesses. Projects include hydroelectric dams, solar parks, mines, agribusiness and tourism complexes, and flagship initiatives such as ZEDEs or charter cities.[72]

Projects involving transnational companies must include domestic partners to legalise the foreign investments, which may include funding from international development banks.[73] The transfer of land and its concentration in ever fewer hands has left people who rely on subsistence farming with little if any usable land. Megaprojects have also generated violence, conflict and displacement, but there are major information gaps on this phenomenon.[74]

Since 2009, however, the number of megaprojects has increased under the slogan "Honduras is open for business".[75] New laws have been introduced to facilitate this economic development model, giving national and transnational businesses free reign to exploit the country and its natural resources.

A ban on mining was rescinded after the coup and a new mining law was introduced in 2013. A law on ZEDEs or charter cities was also passed. There are concerns that there is no provision for consultation, that Honduran legislation will not apply in ZEDEs, which can create their own laws, and that the only beneficiaries will be investors. "The country has been raped," one interviewee for this study said.[76]

A law on prior informed consent is under development in congress, and this will also create a commissioner to oversee compliance with ILO Convention 169. Civil society groups and the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination have expressed concern, however, at a lack of genuine consultation with and participation of people potentially affected. Indigenous, Garifuna and other rural groups were not involved in the drafting process, and the commissioner will be appointed by the president.[77]

There are also concerns about the impact of land and titling reforms in the late 1980s and early 90s. These include changes that have made it harder for people in rural areas to secure titles, plots of land have been stolen, titles have been denied and responsibility for the management of communal *ejido* titles has been devolved to local level, making it subject to municipal corruption and abuse. People without titles for land in which there is a financial or business interest are liable to be evicted.[78]

Links with corruption and the consolidation of power

Corruption in megaproject processes is consolidated by laws that favour business interests rather than upholding people's rights, coerced negotiations rather than prior informed consent, failure to conduct the required consultations or environmental impact assessments, illegal land purchases, failure to pay reparations, the violation of *ejidos* and ancestral land rights, court rulings that are not impartial, forced evictions, violence and intimidation.[79]

The interests of big businesses and the economic and political elite are protected by corrupt officials and politicians and enforced by state agents, hired killers known as *sicarios*, private militias and paramilitary groups. The abuse of power and its consolidation in the hands of the president have led to "regressive laws, collusion

Tegucigalpa, Honduras. The neighbourhood is controlled by the Mara 13. The armed group does not allow access to the school of children living in the contiguous neighbourhood, as a measure of control. Photo: European Union/ECHO/A. Aragón, 2016

between powerful political and business interests, and a climate of near total impunity" that have "increased violence related to a surge in destructive agriculture, mining and dam projects in recent years".[80]

Officials at all levels seem to be involved in corruption linked to megaprojects. This includes conflict of interest and money laundering as well as state officials who pass laws permitting concessions that they own as private companies.[81] Many foreign companies have ties with officials at the highest levels of government, who invest in projects along with their families. They may also pay the government for land, from which people are then evicted without compensation. Resistance and protest are met with state-sanctioned repression, and state security forces are used to ensure compliance with megaproject plans. Some representatives of civil society organisations said this formed part of an unwritten agreement for such investments.[82]

At the local level companies are able to operate at will to push projects through with the complicity of municipal and state authorities. Local governments fail to consult the public, the police profit from and help to facilitate projects and the courts criminalise and prosecute land defenders and other local opponents. The government also controls influential organisations such as church-linked groups, and, in some cases, there are strong links between local government actors and organised crime. "While the main beneficiaries of this corruption are Honduran companies and individuals, the international community is complicit in this race to the bottom on rights and standards".[83]

Links with environmental factors

Megaprojects often cause direct environmental damage, and they may also reduce resilience to weather events and climate change. There is concern too about the government's attempts to grant concessions in protected areas. "This will have a devastating environ-

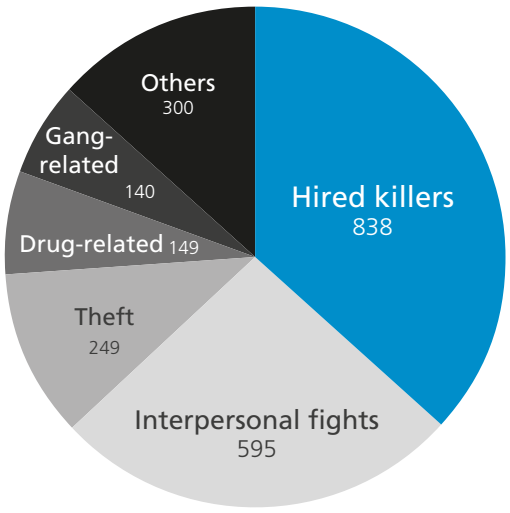
mental impact for Honduras. Any project that has an environmental impact will aggravate climate change, and Honduras is the most vulnerable country in world to climate change."[84]

Hydroelectric dams such as the one in the municipality of El Porvenir have caused rivers to dry up, and a solar energy farm in the department of Valle, one of the hottest parts of the country, caused deforestation.[85] It also led to a 1°C increase in temperature and increased water scarcity because it uses large amounts of water to cool its panels.[86] Both projects are reported to have aggravated the drought in the Dry Corridor and its impact on subsistence farming.[87]

WIDESPREAD VIOLENCE, ITS PERPETRATORS AND THEIR MODUS OPERANDI

Honduras suffers from endemic violence and insecurity. It has one of the highest murder rates in the world, and is acknowledged to be one of the deadliest countries outside declared war zones.[88] Persistently high levels of violence, the rule of *ver, oír y callar* - see, hear and shut up - and widespread impunity have led to a situation in which "violence is generalised, structural and normalised".[89]

FIGURE 3: Deaths by homicide in 2017, according to possible motive



Source: Observatorio de Violencia, UNAH

Aside from elevated levels of interpersonal violence, widespread violence is perpetrated by street gangs, organised crime groups linked to drug trafficking, state security forces and private security groups including paramilitaries. All use targeted violence as a strategy to impose compliance and to intimidate or eliminate those who resist, but their tactics also generate general insecurity for all citizens.

Increasing criminal violence in Honduras has its roots in organised crime, the militarisation of the state, the social and political structures that create some of the most extreme wealth inequality in the world and security policies that tend to increase rather than reduce humanitarian risks.[90] Gang activity and violence have risen dramatically since the 2009 coup to the point that gangs have de facto control of some parts of the country, where they have become more powerful than the state.[91]

Hiring a *sicario* is cheap even for private individuals, and organised crime groups, state entities and businesses may contract gangs to do their dirty work. In other cases, raids, threats and violence against people because of their political activity may be masked as anti-gang operations.[92] People in police jackets, particularly those of the Dirección Policial de Investigaciones, the force's investigative branch, have been seen to kidnap and attack people, but these could have been gang members in stolen uniforms. Many private security firms are also "suspected fronts for organised crime groups" to access weapons or conduct activities.[93]

Private actors are also able to take advantage of the presence of "heavily armed criminals and millions of dollars in illicit cash, accelerating a process of deforestation by affiliated ranchers, palm oil barons and loggers eager to exploit lands that have been under the de facto protection of indigenous peoples for centuries".[94] In parts of the country, "drug trafficking has been observed to accompany these activities which require control of extensive areas of land, and the tendency of traffickers to use arms also facilitates land grabbing".[95]

Added to this mix is the alleged involvement of the highest levels of political power in drug trafficking.[96] The economic elite also appears to be involved in drug-trafficking as well as megaprojects.[97] This tangled web of perpetrators of violence and activities reflects the complexity of displacement drivers, and hints at the significant challenges to resolving them.[98]

DISPLACEMENT TRIGGERS

Displacement triggers are the events that immediately precipitate people's decision to flee their homes. Their susceptibility to triggers is often heightened by the cumulative impacts of underlying drivers, as described above. Violence in various forms is a regular trigger of displacement in Honduras, while sudden-onset disasters brought on by weather events such as hurricanes and floods, and slow-onset phenomena such as drought and climate change impacts are more periodic triggers.[99]

More than two-thirds of IDPs surveyed in 2015 cited violence and insecurity as the sole reason for their displacement, though the study in question focused on urban areas where street gangs were the perpetrators.[100] Other forms of violence also regularly trigger displacement, including that perpetrated by organised crime groups, GBV, violence on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, state violence and political repression, and violence and land disputes associated with megaprojects.[101] The triggers for displacement described below are prominent examples of the complexity of the situation but are not necessarily exhaustive. There may therefore be further aspects of violence that cause displacement which are not captured here.

Regardless of the form of violence or the perpetrator, there are similarities in the way they trigger displacement. People most commonly flee a targeted threat to their personal safety, though others a general fear of violence, the economic effects of insecurity and inequality, rising violence in their neighbourhoods and battles over territory. The term "generalised violence" conveys the widespread, sustained and multi-faceted nature of the phenomenon in Honduras, but it does not adequately capture the highly targeted and individualised nature of much of the violence, threats and persecution, or the individual protection needs and displacement dynamics provoked.[102]

CRIMINAL VIOLENCE AND STREET GANGS

Street gangs pose the greatest risk of violence and displacement in urban areas. Triggers for displacement include a murder attempt or violent assault, the murder of a close relative or partner, death threats that may or may not extend to family members, forced recruitment, extortion and sexual violence including the sexual exploitation and abuse of minors. These may derive from gangs' everyday activities or from periodic incidents such as violent disputes and territorial battles between rival groups.[103]

Men aged 20 to 34 are the most vulnerable to gang-related killings. Children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to forced recruitment from as young as six, and to sexual exploitation from as young as eight. Death threats triggered 36 per cent of the displacements recorded by CONADEH-UDFI in 2017, and these threats may be related to work, extortion, refusal of gang demands or an act perceived as betrayal such as witnessing a crime.[104]

Gangs' victims broadly fall into two groups: those individually targeted and actively persecuted, and those more generally affected by criminal violence. People from both groups may have to flee, but the former have heightened security concerns before and after their displacement, and this results in different patterns of movement and outcomes. The extent to which an individual's risk persists after displacement depends largely on how serious the gang in question perceives their infraction to have been.

A 2014 conceptualisation of acts that gangs perceive as grounds for displacement - betrayal, enmity, resistance, land appropriation and insecurity - is adopted below, with the acknowledgement that the distinction between them is not necessarily absolute.[105] This approach also helps to explain to whom a risk is extended, the urgency of flight and the likelihood of persecution after displacement.

Enmity

Enmity presents the greatest risk, and includes refusing to join a gang, leaving a gang, wanting to leave a gang, refusing to comply with a gang's demands and being suspected of belonging to a rival gang. It may also include having friends or family who are deemed to fall into any of these categories. People accused of enmity are highly vulnerable to extreme reprisals. They and/or their relatives may be killed, tortured, raped or disappeared, and gangs are equally brutal in their response to those who deemed to have disrespected them and their relatives. Those suspected of belonging to or associating with a gang, or having friends or family who do so, face persecution and murder by rival gang members, social cleansing squads and security forces conducting raids in gang areas.[106] People flee to avoid this fate, or if a family member has fallen victim.[107]

Reporting a crime or being suspected of passing information to the authorities or a rival gang violates the code of ver, oír y callar and also invites extreme retaliation. Even the mere fact of witnessing a crime, particularly a murder, may put people at risk, and the threat of reprisals is meant to terrorise and exert control. People who live in areas where bodies are dumped are terrified of being considered a casual witness if, for instance, they see a car pull up. Witnesses and informants are regularly killed, disappeared, tortured or raped. Given the acute risks they face, witnesses to crime may be forced to flee.[108]

Reporting a crime is doubly risky, given that gangs have infiltrated the police, who are often also inefficient and may leak information, unwittingly or otherwise. A witness protection scheme exists, but there is understandably little confidence in it, leaving those who do report crimes no choice but to flee immediately, most often outside the country. In the rare event that the authorities secure a conviction, witness protection ends, but orders to kill witnesses and their family members may still be issued from prison.[109]

Betrayal

Street gangs demand absolute loyalty from members and their partners and families, and from people who live in the areas they control. Perceived acts of betrayal carry extreme risk and may be punished with death. Such acts include owing money, particularly for people who collect extortion payments or sell drugs, refusing the recruitment of a child and refusing sexual involvement with a gang member. People accused of betrayal tend to flee rather than filing a report, which may aggravate the threat even after displacement. This in turn may prejudice a future asylum claim because of a lack of evidence.[110]

Young people are particularly vulnerable to forced recruitment, which may start with grooming when children are given small gifts and attention in return for involvement. Boys are targeted from as young as six to act as lookouts, make deliveries and collect extortion money. Girls are targeted from the age of eight for sexual exploitation by the clika, and from 11 or 12 years to be sexually involved with a specific gang member.[111] Forced recruitment in schools has triggered significant displacement. Gangs have infiltrated many education centres, particularly in urban areas, and pupils are targeted by their peers who try to convince them to become involved in gang activities. They must comply with the gang's demands or leave.[112]

All involvement of minors must be understood as forced recruitment because of their age. Some parents may try to negotiate directly with gang members, but refusal generally carries significant risk. Children may be sent away to stay with relatives or leave the country to avoid forced recruitment, or the whole family may flee.[113]

Women and girls who refuse sexual involvement with gang members or who want to remove themselves from such a situation are at high risk of extremely violent reprisals. This includes former partners and those forced or coerced into sexual involvement. Failure to comply with demands may be met with murder, sexual violence or death threats that extend to the whole family. Killings tend to involve torture and the mutilation or dismemberment of the victim's body. People flee in response to such risks, but may also do so pre-emptively if, for example, parents have been told to bring their young daughter to a gang leader.[114]

Because gangs perceive failure to comply as an act of betrayal, the risk of those who flee being sought out and persecuted is high, making safe options within the country extremely limited. The risks before and after displacement are even more acute if a gang leader is involved.[115] The murder, attempted murder, disappearance, violent assault or rape of a relative, partner or

A UNHCR-supported youth centre in a high-risk area of Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Youths in high-risk neighbourhoods are often affected by the territorial violence of local gangs. As a result, the older children drop out of school early to avoid the risk of being killed for wandering onto the wrong block or forcibly recruited into gangs. Photo © UNHCR/Santiago Escobar-Jaramillo, June 2018

friend perceived to have committed and act of enmity or betrayal often triggers the displacement of whole households, because its members fear the risk will extend to them.[116]

Resistance

Contravening the rules or resisting the authority of a gang or organised criminal group, which includes unwillingness or inability to pay extortion or *impuesto de guerra,* carries severe consequences and often leads to displacement to avoid risk and threats. People in certain lines of work, such as market stallholders, informal street vendors, transport workers, teachers and owners of small and micro businesses, are particularly vulnerable to extortion. People who receive remittances and those who have returned from abroad may also be targeted because they are presumed to have money.

Residents of gang-controlled areas may also be charged the *impuesto de guerra*. The level of risk depends on the area people live in and the type of business they run, with payments for businesses such as car dealerships running into tens of thousands of lempira, or hundreds of dollars, a week.[117] Recent research found that some gangs focus more on local and small-scale extortion than others. "Barrio 18 relies much more on micro-extortion – targeting the street vendor, corner store or the local mechanic – than MS13. This puts them at odds with the community".[118]

Missing an extortion payment may lead to higher sums being demanded next time round. Subsequent failure to pay may result in an order to leave the neighbourhood or, more likely, threats of death or violence. People flee these threats and their imminent realisation, or if a relative has been killed for failing to pay. Extorted business

owners often abandon their businesses and leave the country because of threats and their ensuing economic situation.[119]

Adults and children may be forced into undertaking work for gangs such as collecting extortion in markets or at taxi ranks. This may appear to be involvement in gangs, but it is only carried out under duress and the threat of violence if they resist. Those unwilling or unable to comply with a gang's demands must flee to protect themselves and their family.[120]

Expropriation of property

People who have their home or land expropriated have little choice but to flee. Gangs generally dispossess people of their property in marginalised urban neighbourhoods for strategic purposes, to use as lookout posts or *casas locas*, or to store weapons and drugs. Properties on street corners are particularly sought after as lookouts. This is a distinct and deliberate act of forced displacement, in which people are usually given little time to leave and the demand is often accompanied by a threat. The police tend not to intervene, making displacement all but inevitable.[121]

Insecurity

Some people flee because they know their level of personal risk or that of their family has risen. This may happen after the murder or disappearance of a relative. Displacement may also be triggered by an event in the wider community or deteriorating local security situation. This may involve a massacre, the murder of a neighbour or community leader or state security operations. People may also leave because they witnessed an act or are related to a witness, know the assailants or victim, or fear the implicit threat.[122]

Journalists who report on crime have fled after being targeted with violence and threats or after the murder of a colleague. They have also been killed after their displacement and as far away as Veracruz in Mexico while waiting for their asylum claim to be processed.[123] People who work in law enforcement and the judicial system and handle crime cases are at risk and may flee if they feel that the level of risk is rising. Whole families may leave for fear that those left behind will be persecuted.[124] Health workers have also fled threats after treating victims of violence, gang members or victims of sexual abuse and exploitation. Teachers who are at risk because of gangs' infiltration of schools have been forced to displace or request a transfer elsewhere.[125]

Territorial battles trigger the displacement of individual families and occasionally the wider community. Confrontations between gangs on the invisible borders between their territories or over markets for extortion or drug sales cause heightened insecurity and violence. They often mean that people either have confine themselves to their homes or leave the area.[126]

TRANSNATIONAL ORGANISED CRIME GROUPS, *TRANSPORTISTAS* AND DRUG TRAFFICKERS

Drug trafficking has become more established in Honduras since 2000 and since the 2009 coup in particular. National and transnational cartels and smuggling groups known as *transportistas* all operate in the country. These organised crime groups have international networks and operating revenues of millions of dollars, and they are well armed. Aside from drugs, they are often also involved in people and arms trafficking and modern forms of slavery such as forced prostitution.[127]

Drug-trafficking groups are active in the border areas, including the coast, and in Honduras' larger cities. Residents of these border and coastal areas - largely indigenous and Garifuna groups and *campesinos* or subsistence farmers - are "subjected to threats, evictions and violence by members ... of organised criminal groups wishing to use the lands for drug-trafficking".[128]

Some groups do not necessarily cause displacement with their day-to-day activities. Aside from their violent means, they may use development as a strategy to ensure a compliant and loyal local population, offering economic opportunities and providing some basic services in rural areas that have no effective state presence.[129]

Fleeing organised crime

There are four main displacement triggers associated with transnational organised crime groups and drug trafficking: direct threats, the expropriation of homes, heightened violence and a militarised presence

in response. All border zones including coastal areas are affected, particularly in the north and west of the country. The worst affected areas tend to be isolated, the state largely absent and local residents marginalised and reluctant to report, so a clear picture of the violence and displacement that take place is hard to ascertain.[130]

Harassment and threats are highly targeted on individuals and families. People flee if they receive a serious threat or if they refuse a group's demands. People in rural and Garifuna areas leave if they know their children are about to be co-opted or because of a more general fear of them falling into the drug trade. Victims and witnesses of crime have a well-founded fear of reporting and state protection because of complicity and tolerance and the fact that drug-trafficking groups have infiltrated the police and military. If someone reports a crime, they most often will flee.[131]

People are also forced to flee when organised crime groups demand their homes or land as strategic points or for the consolidation of territory. Death threats, harassment and murder attempts are used to ensure compliance, and people who refuse have been killed. Groups take not only the land, but also people, such as young girls, as property. People leave for fear of their lives and their children's safety. Indigenous groups have also suffered food insecurity because drug-trafficking groups have seized the land they used to cultivate.[132]

Displacement is also triggered by territorial battles and confrontations in the border zones, resulting in heightened violence and risk. Communities have been partially or completely abandoned because of such violence in which some of their members have been killed.[133] People may also flee if there is a massacre or if violence directly affects community members.

The militarisation of territory and heavy-handed counter-narcotics operations have also triggered displacement, particularly in north-eastern coastal region of La Mosquitia. Such state responses have resulted in the death of community members and led indigenous groups to partially or completely abandon their communities.[134]

VIOLENCE BASED ON GENDER AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Gender based violence (GBV) and violence on because of sexual orientation or gender identity might normally be expected to be considered individual acts, but violence against women and girls is widespread and systematic in Honduras, and "a climate of fear, in both the public and private spheres, and a lack of accountability for violations of human rights of women are the norm, despite legislative and institutional developments".[135]

Honduras has one of the highest femicide rates in the world, and incidents of GBV and sexual violence, although under-reported, have risen by 390 per cent in the last decade.[136] They include domestic violence, rape and sexual assault, human trafficking and the sexual abuse and exploitation of girls and adolescents. GBV is the second most common cause of death among women of reproductive age. Levels of violence including femicide and sexual violence are particularly high in the maquila zone in Cholula.[137]

Levels of domestic and intrafamilial violence are also extremely high, to the extent that "domestic violence has been normalised".[138] It is one of the most frequently reported crimes in Honduras, but like sexual crimes it is still under-reported. Victims' reluctance to report may stem from mistrust of the police and judicial system, economic dependence on the perpetrator, their role in caring for children, a lack of shelters, and fear of stigma, reprisals and more violence.[139] Those who do report may be derided and re-victimised, and their cases are unlikely to be investigated or prosecuted.

Street gangs' territorial control extends to all people within their area, and particularly women and girls. Girls are forced into sexual involvement with individual gang members from the age of about 12 and subjected to sexual abuse and exploitation by the entire clika from as young as eight. Girls who live in gang-controlled neighbourhoods "receive clear messages that they and their bodies belong to the gang, and that gang members have power to exercise sexual violence with complete impunity".[140] Refusal can result in death.[141]

Sexual violence is used as a message to other gang members and as a punishment directly against women or

indirectly against their partners or relatives.[142] The territorial control that organised crime groups exert over border areas means that women and girls who live there are also vulnerable to human trafficking and forced prostitution as well as sexual abuse by the groups' members.[143]

LGBT+ people are deeply affected by stigma and violence. Signs of torture were found on the bodies of all LGBT+ people examined at autopsy in 2017.[144] Violence and abuse is particularly extreme for those who do not conform to patriarchal gender norms and for LGBT+ rights defenders.[145] Street gangs' macho codes or códigos mean LGBT+ people living in areas they control face particular risks and movement restrictions. They may simply not be allowed to live in some areas, or they may face violence. They may also be forced to sell drugs or store illicit goods, and trans women who engage in sex work may be extorted.[146]

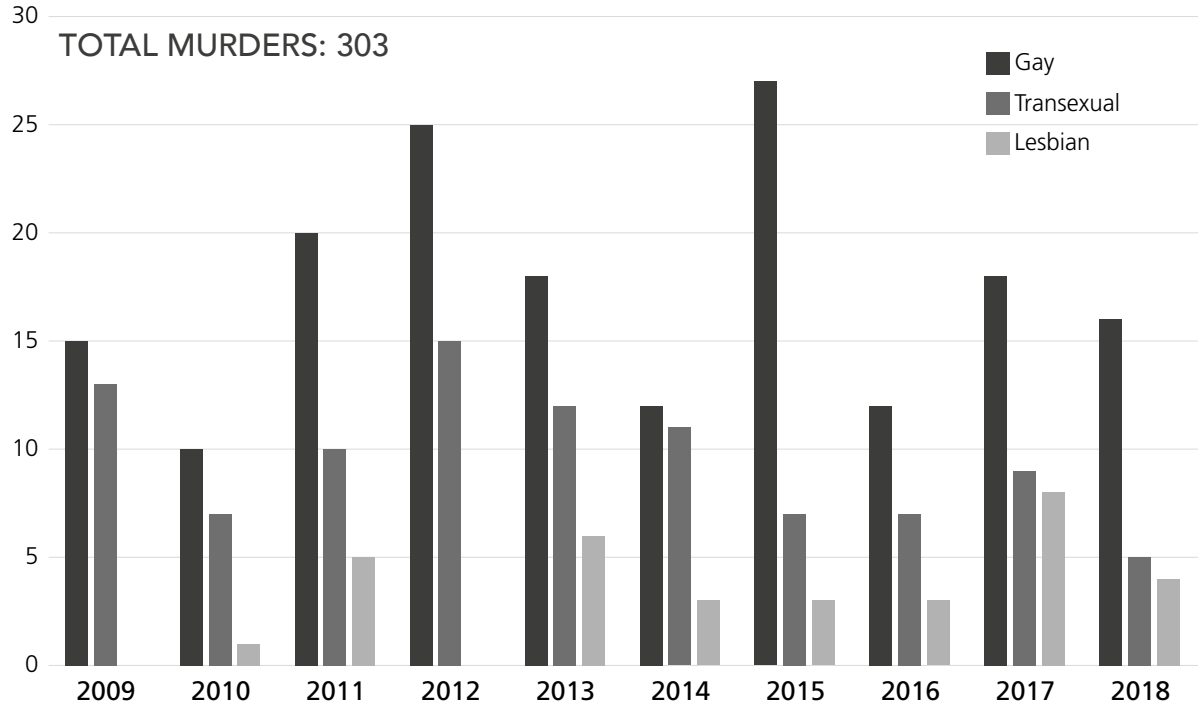
Gender-based violence

GBV is a major trigger of displacement for women, both internally and across borders. It includes domestic violence, intimate partner violence, intra-familiar violence and sexual violence perpetrated by partners, family members, community members and criminal groups. Domestic violence is endemic nationwide and increasing in terms of the number of incidents, the degree of violence and the younger age of victims. It is particularly prevalent in more generally violent places such as Cholula.[147] People may flee a particularly violent incident such as rape or attempted murder, or to escape the cumulative effect of abuse over time.

Gangs and organised crime groups perpetrate sexual abuse and violence in several forms connected to their assertion of power and territoriality. These include the direct punishment of a woman who has offended a gang, reprisals against men meted out against their female relatives, the gang rape of kidnapped minors in casas locas, forced or coerced involvement with gang members, sexual slavery and forced prostitution. Threatened girls may be hidden or resort to self-containment before fleeing elsewhere in the country or abroad, and in some cases whole families may leave because risk extends to them. The femicide or disappearance of a close female relative may also lead to the displacement of whole families.[148]

The state's failure to provide an effective response and protection to victims of all types of GBV contributes to displacement. A lack of independence, resources, capacity, specialised units and training results in "a dysfunctional and corrupt judiciary and an overall culture

FIGURE 4: Number of LGBT murders



Source: Cattrachas/Observatorio de muertes violentas de personas LGBTTI.

LGBT refugee from Honduras hanging up the rainbow flag at the LGBT module at La 72 migrant shelter in Tenosique, Tabasco, Mexico. Photo © UNHCR/ Markel Redondo, December 2016

of impunity".[149] Ninety-five per cent of femicides in 2017 remained in impunity at the start of 2018.[150] The normalisation of domestic violence also indicates the state's failure to prevent such crimes and eliminate the patriarchal and discriminatory attitudes that drive them.[151]

GBV is under-reported, and survivors are rarely able to access support and protection. Those who do report often face re-victimisation and derision in police interviews. Lengthy and inefficient investigations delay legal proceedings, and this is aggravated by a lack of effective witness protection and survivor support programmes.[152] There are no state shelters for women who flee domestic violence. Those provided by NGOs and civil society only operate in eight of the country's 298 municipalities and have capacity for no more than 150 women and their children nationwide.

Given these considerations, many survivors conclude their only option is to flee, and those who have the resources are likely to move as far away as possible. Women and girls fleeing domestic violence or intimate partner violence have continued to be persecuted by their assailants within the country. Some women have even been persecuted even after fleeing the country, and after being returned to Honduras. [153]

For those who have survived sexual violence or domestic violence perpetrated by a gang member, the risks they face in displacement are increased. They are more likely to be located and persecuted and face violent reprisals from other gang members if they report the crime and even more so if it is prosecuted. This is likely to mean the risk will extend to their whole family and may trigger cross-border flight.

Despite the lack of protection, survivors of GBV in its various forms often face challenges in claiming asylum, particularly if they have not filed a report.[154]

Sexual orientation and hate crimes

Hate crimes on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity also trigger displacement. Many LGBT+ people are forced to flee discrimination and acts violence perpetrated by their families and communities, gang members and state entities. Discrimination is particularly extreme and support lacking in rural areas, but those who flee to urban areas often continue to experience abuse and marginalisation, potentially leading to further displacement.[155]

In Honduras' capital city, Tegucigalpa, the front cover of a newspaper reports the latest murder victim. Photo © UNHCR/Tito Herrera, August 2016

Others are displaced in fear of their lives after violent attacks or death threats. LGBT+ rights defenders are doubly at risk of violence and persecution and have also fled attacks and threats.[156] Discrimination in the health service means that some people may leave in search of care.[157]

Gangs may forbid LGBT+ people to live in areas they control and may harass them and order them to leave. They may also flee to avoid being forced to undertake criminal activities. Trans women engaged in sex work flee if they are experience difficulties in paying extortion or if they are targeted with violence as a result.[158]

Many LGBT+ people feel they have no option but to leave the country after suffering hate crimes or violence, given the lack of state protection or support from their families and communities.[159] Those who have been the victim of crimes perpetrated by state entities, particularly the police and military police, have reasonable fear of extreme reprisals, including death, if they file a report. If they do so, they are highly likely to leave the country.[160]

MEGAPROJECTS

Megaprojects trigger significant displacement, but there is little recognition of this in the mainstream media, and a total absence of government policy or programming to address this issue. Megaprojects cause primary or direct displacement when people are forced off their land, and secondary or indirect displacement due to environmental damage or disruption of access to productive land. Corruption associated with megaprojects is also rife, and may manifest in unjust legal processes, direct violence and adverse environmental impacts. Indigenous, Garifuna and *campesino* communities are disproportionately affected. Trade unionists in the agribusiness industry may also be targeted by those with commercial interests.[161]

Evictions and land seizures

People may be dispossessed of their homes, land and common goods without negotiation, and the state has the option of relocating or displacing them under the mining law and the ZEDEs law. There is disregard for ILO Convention 169 and any obligation to ensure free, prior and informed consent. Many affected communities may be isolated and politically marginalised, making it easier for municipal authorities to persecute and criminalise them and initiate court proceedings. People have been coerced into allowing the illegal purchase of communally-owned ancestral land, such as Garifuna communities affected by the Indura tourist development in Tela.[162]

Judicial rulings and evictions ordered by the courts are marked by the abuse of power. Communities' concerns are ignored by legal instruments and institutions aligned with commercial interests and courts "are obliged to rule in favour of the companies".[163] Given the lack of separation of powers, the legitimacy of eviction orders is debatable because they are issued by courts that are neither impartial nor independent.[164] They are, in essence, "ordered by government".[165]

Most evictions are conducted by the army or police in accordance with judicial rulings. Some, however, have been carried out without a court order but following a declaration by a government official, amounting to "forced eviction by security forces".[166]

Intimidation and violence

Strategies employed by companies to polarise and divide communities lead to tensions, weakened social fabric and communal violence, which in turn may trigger displacement. People may also flee if they believe relatives or neighbours might inform on them for opposing projects.[167]

Berta Cáceres

Photo of Berta Cáceres by UN Environment - ONU Brasil - CC BY 3.0

The murder of the indigenous and environmental rights activist Berta Cáceres highlights the complex, potentially dangerous, interests invested in mega-development projects in Honduras. Berta's murder was one of numerous violent attacks against people opposing the Agua Zarca hydroelectric dam, which threatened the land and water sources of the indigenous Lenca communities. Berta Cáceres was head of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organisations of Honduras (COPINH) and, supposedly, under the protection of the IACHR when she was shot dead in her home in March 2016.

The domestic and international outcry and media exposure that followed this high-profile murder led to an investigation and court case. This was an unusual move, given that impunity for such murders is commonplace and previous murders linked to the dam had not been investigated.

Seven men were found guilty of her murder in November 2018, including the material assassins and two managers of Desarrollos Energéticos SA (DESA), the company behind the dam. Serious concerns remain that the instigators and financers of the murder are still free. Concerns have also been raised that the trial excluded evidence, lawyers for the Cáceres family and witnesses, including Gustavo Castro who was shot at the same time as Berta but survived.

Political and economic elites involved in the project, including senior politicians and powerful families, have not been held to account. Criticism has also been directed towards international financial institutions, which continued to invest in the project despite COPINH's requests to withdraw and the previous murders of people opposing the project. These financiers only withdrew in the aftermath of Berta's murder.[168]

Community and social leaders are persecuted judicially. They may also be criminalised, charged and imprisoned in maximum-security jails for opposing projects. Both physical attacks and the psychological stress of living under threat may trigger displacement.[169]

Those defending land or opposing projects may be subjected to defamation campaigns that develop into increasing harassment, persecution and violence. This may include threats by phone, tyres being slashed and arson attacks on homes. Those targeted often resist for a while, but many eventually reach a breaking point, triggering their displacement. Other flee for fear that the persecution will escalate into more extreme violence, forced disappearance or murder against themselves or their family members.[170]

Increased military presence and planned megaprojects represent a rising risk of violence, as does the involvement of state forces in harassment and repression. Paramilitaries also use violence to intimidate people and clear land, triggering displacement. Whole families flee, sometimes temporarily, as was seen in 2018 in Guipinol in Bajo Aguán and La Unión in Copán.[171]

Community leaders and activists who oppose megaprojects or are involved in land disputes are subjected to intimidation, threats, raids on their homes and physical violence. They may initially stay put and continue their resistance, but persistent or increasing violence, death threats or attempted murder eventually force many to flee. Whole families and sometimes communities may be displaced if the threats extended to those associated with the person targeted.[172]

The assassination of a community leader or activist may trigger displacement in two ways. Their family members and/or other people opposed to the project may flee because actual or implied threats extend to them. For other people in the community, this results in family-by-family displacement. The entire community leaves if their leaders and defenders have been killed, especially if they fear that further threats will be realised.[173]

Those who witness crimes such as the murder of a community leader or activist are also at risk and may be displaced for the same reasons as witnesses to gang crimes. They may face intimidation and violence from the perpetrators in an effort to silence them, and the risks they face are heightened if they report a crime.[174] After the leader of a *campesino* organisation was murdered in Tocoa, Colón, dozens of witnesses were forced to flee, their displacement "connected with the total lack of trust in the authorities. They are afraid of the police and state because they know they are complicit".[175]

Fleeing the impact of megaprojects on livelihoods and health

The expropriation of land needed for subsistence farming and the environmental effects of megaprojects have led to reduced crop yields, food insecurity, water shortages and pollution. Land needed for growing produce may be inaccessible, flooded or polluted and water sources may be diverted for use in mining, agribusiness and hydroelectric dams. Such impacts, along with air, water and soil pollution may make impossible for communities to sustain their livelihoods and may have adverse health effects, potentially leading to displacement. Some projects, such as wind farms in the south of the country have a slow-burn effect on health and lead to displacement. Individuals and families may leave in trickle, including across borders, but whole communities may eventually be displaced.[176]

STATE VIOLENCE AND POLITICAL REPRESSION

There are deep parallels between political repression and the persecution of people who oppose megaprojects in Honduras. Similar strategies are employed and a number of different perpetrators are involved in material acts, which may conceal their intellectual authors. Activity tends to start with highly targeted smear campaigns and divisive discourse, escalating into harassment, threats, criminalisation, persecution, raids and violence.[177]

Human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists

The use of harassment and persecution to create a climate of fear in people's day-to-day lives has a cumulative psychological impact that may force people to flee or restrict their freedom of movement. Defamation and smear campaigns in the media and criminalisation are often precursors to threats, violence, attacks and illegal raids. People may move in fear of this rising risk. For others, there tends to be a breaking point when they can no longer tolerate the threats and harassment and they flee when these escalate.[178]

Given the state's involvement in such abuses and wider mistrust of its institutions, those targeted are unlikely to turn to it for protection. Nor is there much confidence in the measures it offers, which include six months of protection but no investigation. Many conclude that leaving the country is a less risky option.[179]

Political repression since the 2017 elections

Many young people have fled state reprisals, harassment and disappearances, particularly in the north of the country, since the 2017 elections and ensuing protests. The violent repression and criminalisation of political activism has continued into 2019, with the arrest and in some cases torture of protesters, human rights defenders and observers, the arbitrary use of teargas and rubber bullets, and other serious human rights violations by state security forces.[180] Civil society organisations have identified 41 people displaced by "violence perpetrated by state actors in the post-election context".[181]

The state's violent crackdown on dissent and the criminalisation of protesters, political activists and trade unionists means many have had no option but to flee their homes and go into hiding before leaving the country. Targets' details and photographs are circulated in courts and police stations nationwide, meaning internal displacement provides little if any respite from persecution. Some people may continue to be pursued abroad with the public prosecutor's office issuing extradition requests.[182]

Protests have been infiltrated and protesters incriminated.[183] Criminalisation includes charges for minor transgressions and blatantly false accusations. Some people have been accused of crimes alleged to have taken place after they had already left the country.[184]

Operations by the security forces ostensibly targeting gangs have also been used to crack down on dissent. Political activists have received threats purported to have come from gangs but which in reality were issued by state officials. Others still have fled after being subjected to illegal raids and falsely accused of being a gang member and dealing drugs, based on allegations filed by people with financial and political interests in the projects they were campaigning against. These raids and accusations make imprisonment more likely if they later have charges filed against them related to protesting.[185]

Witnesses to crimes perpetrated by police officers, soldiers and other state officials are at risk, particularly if they report what they have seen. As in other situations, this is due to inefficiency, leaked information and ineffective witness protection. Efforts to ensure that evidence is erased at any cost puts their lives in serious danger.[186]

Social cleansing and arbitrary state responses to criminality

Anti-gang operations by the security forces also trigger displacement. Officers tend to enter neighbourhoods at night and knock on doors demanding information. This has a potentially terrifying impact on the communities concerned, who are bound by the code of *ver, oír y callar* and know they face serious consequences, including death, unless they remain silent. People are essentially caught in the middle and flee for fear of persecution from one or other party.

Death squads also conduct "social cleansing" by killing suspected gang members and criminals who live in affected neighbourhoods. Paramilitaries, private security firms, vigilante groups and state forces are implicated, and in some cases there are deep connections with local elites, who may go as far as contracting such operations. Boys and young men who are targeted may flee, as may their families.[187]

DISPLACEMENT PATTERNS

Internal displacement in Honduras has many trajectories - rural to urban, rural to rural, urban to urban and intra-urban - and there is also significant cross-border movement. Some people have been displaced repeatedly, while others have had their freedom of movement restricted. Deportees and returnees from abroad may have unresolved protection needs that mean they are unable to go back to their places of origin, while others may confront new risks once back in the country. This is of particular concern given the high and growing number of returns and the toughening of US immigration policy, including the revocation of temporary protective status (TPS).

Some steps have been taken to develop state and civil society responses to internal displacement, but many IDPs have to rely on their own economic resources and social capital. They tend to suffer severe economic hardship and few if any are able to achieve durable solutions. Like those returning from abroad, many also continue to face the same protection concerns that they fled to escape, or new ones that arise after their displacement. If their precarious situation becomes unsustainable they may be displaced again, either internally and across borders. Lack of state protection means internal flight is not a viable option for some.

AFFECTED PROFILES AND POPULATIONS

Violence and displacement largely affects low-income families with few resources and low education levels who live in marginalised urban or poor rural areas. All people who live in these areas are affected by violence, and young men particularly so. More women than men are recorded as internally displaced, but this may not reflect reality given that many IDPs choose to stay under the radar and only those who request assistance from agencies are recorded.[188]

People who witness incidents or simply live where they are perpetrated are increasingly at risk. Women, girls and LGBT+ people face GBV and violence on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity at the hands of gangs and other perpetrators, and are also at risk throughout the country. Single mothers often flee the threat of their children, of which they typically have four or five, being forcibly recruited. Young people, and particularly young men, are increasingly affected by political repression and state violence.[189]

People with more economic resources are also forced to flee, but they tend to be affected differently by violence or threats and will use their resources to move and re-establish themselves somewhere more secure or travel to another country using regular means.

As perpetrators of violence change targets and modus operandi, so does the profile of those displaced. Forced recruitment and sexual exploitation of very young children by street gangs means that whole families are affected unless the child in question is sent away to stay with relatives. Other gang-related triggers of displacement may also extend risk to the whole family, who may flee after threats, the attempted murder or the murder of a family member. Women often lead land defence movements, and their whole families too are often affected. The same applies to others threatened because of their work.[190]

Nuclear families move as a unit when one of their members is at risk, and extended family groups move if a risk broadens to affect those who would have stayed behind. Not all family members may be able to move together, resulting in the break-up of the unit. Commonly, the mother will often go one way with the family's small children, while the adolescents and young people may flee elsewhere, perhaps with the father. Families from rural areas may travel as a unit or the head of the household may go ahead and send for the rest of the family later.[191]

Megaprojects are often located and planned in areas that traditionally belong to indigenous, Garifuna and *campesino* communities, and any members of these communities may be displaced.[192]

WHAT MOVEMENT LOOKS LIKE

Although levels of violence in Honduras are as high as those in an armed conflict zone, displacement tends to be a "drop by drop" phenomenon.[193] Individuals or families abandon their homes swiftly and discreetly so as to stay under the radar of those they are fleeing. This atomised movement is the predominant pattern for displacement associated with widespread violence, regardless of the perpetrator. That said, there have also been a few mass displacements from both rural and urban areas provoked by megaprojects and gang violence.[194]

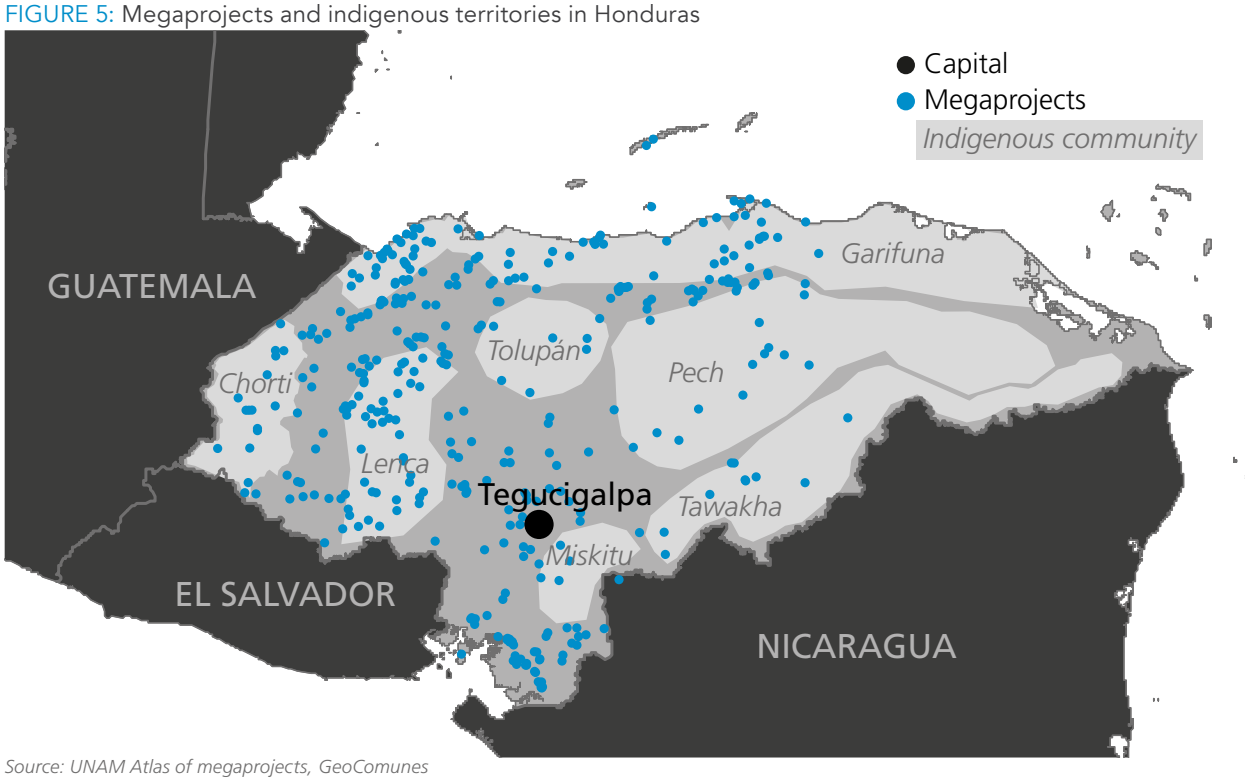
Where people flee from depends largely on the source of violence. Marginalised urban areas tend to be affected by gangs, rural and coastal areas by megaprojects and border zones by drug trafficking. State violence and political repression affect all areas but has been particularly prevalent in the north and in major cities. Interpersonal violence, GBV and violence on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity are an issue throughout the country.

People's decisions about displacement tend to have elements in common regardless of the source of violence they are fleeing. Their decisions depend on their perceptions of risk, family links and economic and security considerations.[195] It is "a difficult decision and often a last resort when it is a question of life and death. People try to stay as long as they can".[196]

Speed and discretion of movement

People tend to flee quickly, discreetly and individually or in small numbers. They may be ordered to leave within 24 or 48 hours, or they may choose to go immediately if they or their children are facing imminent risks to their wellbeing or safety. They often leave in the middle of the night or at dawn without telling people where they are going. Others try to make it appear as if they are on their way to work or flee after collecting their children from school. They often leave with nothing more than the clothes they are wearing, perhaps a small rucksack or suitcase at most, to avoid attracting attention and raising suspicion.[197]

FIGURE 5: Megaprojects and indigenous territories in Honduras



Source: UNAM Atlas of megaprojects, GeoComunes

Urban and rural displacement dynamics

Many people who flee urban areas often try to remain within the same municipality or local area in an effort to maintain their work, socioeconomic ties, education and social networks. If they are unable to find safety and security nearby, they will look further afield. Others, however, flee as far as possible in the first instance, though they almost invariably head for other urban areas. Flight to rural areas appears to be a last resort given the limited economic opportunities there.

A recent study found that a third of municipalities had reported residents forced to flee either within the same municipality or further afield in the previous six months, and a similar number had received IDPs over the same time period.[198]

Displacement from rural areas does not follow a distinct pattern. Those with family connections or social networks in other rural areas may stay in the countryside. Others may move to urban centres in search of economic opportunities, though they may end up in unsafe and marginalised areas. Some may leave the country in the hope of finding agricultural work abroad, taking their family with them.

Despite the fact that individuals and families leave little by little, the process sometimes leads over time to the displacement of whole communities. There have also been incidents of larger-scale displacement. Street gangs' territorial battles and threats issued to communities as a whole have forced as many as 300 people at a time to flee urban areas, and likewise evictions for megaprojects and conflicts over land for agribusiness in rural areas. Large-scale displacement leaves a community's social fabric in tatters because families disperse all over the country or abroad. This is particularly so for rural communities displaced by megaprojects, although those that resist try to stay together, particularly if they have a strong leader.[199]

Factors that influence destination

Family links, economic opportunities and safety influence people's choice of destination regardless of where they flee from, though each factor may be given different weight in different situations. Family links and social capital are highly important in IDPs' choice of destination and in post-displacement outcomes. Attempts to move nearby are influenced by a desire to remain near work, education and other services and to retain family and social networks. Urban areas also offer a degree of anonymity.[200]

People who have received death threats from criminal groups, however, and particularly those suspected of having passed information to the authorities, tend to flee to places where they have no family members so as to not spread the risk of threat and pursuit. They may also sever contact with their families.

People unable to find safety locally look for family links further afield, but they still tend to prefer destinations that are similar to their places of origin, whether they be urban or rural. Wherever they may be, at home or abroad, family links open up options and factor strongly people's choice of destination. There may be a limit, however, to the support family members feel able to provide IDPs, whether for fear of being associated with someone under threat or because they have few economic resources.[201]

Threatened land defenders and community leaders tend not to leave the country because they want to continue their work. Instead they may rely on informal protection networks of family members, friends and associates to leave temporarily within the region. When they return, however, the threats often continue and they may be killed. Human rights defenders, unionists and journalists may also rely on support networks to help them relocate to safe houses.[202]

Challenges to finding safety in displacement

People's chances of finding safely in displacement vary significantly depending on their economic resources. Many poor IDPs are restricted in terms of destination to areas that are equally if not more dangerous than their places of origin. Safer neighbourhoods are more expensive, and they are often gated or reserved for long-term residents. The majority of IDPs experience insecurity, crime and lack of services in the areas they move to.[203]

Effective protection is elusive. The state is largely unable or unwilling to protect its citizens, and people have a deep mistrust of the authorities and fear of reprisals. The state is also often all but absent in urban areas under gangs' control and border areas where organised criminal groups operate. This lack of security often means displacement fails as a protection strategy.

Repeated displacement

People unable to find safety in displacement are often forced to flee again. Many are displaced internally several times before deciding they have no choice but to leave the country. The risk that led to their initial displacement may persist or they may face new risks that arise in the areas they seek refuge. Economic challenges can also make displacement unsustainable, and these increase with each new movement, creating a downward spiral in IDPs' living conditions.[204]

If gangs and other criminal groups believe someone is guilty of betrayal or enmity or they have another serious grievance, they may track that person down in their place of displacement. Their extensive network of lookouts, strong communications networks and the fact that Honduras is a relatively small country combine to mean that internal displacement may not be a viable option for many people. Those who have fled political repression may also face continued threats or persecution from state forces and paramilitaries because the authorities circulate their details nationwide.[205]

If a person moves to an area controlled by a different gang, they risk being challenged because it is unlikely to accept someone from an area controlled a rival and may suspect them of being an infiltrator. That said, if someone does manage to move from one gang's territory to another's, "they know that the persecutor cannot enter so have some degree of feeling of safety".[206]

Many people encounter new risks that arise after displacement that may lead to onward movement. Garifuna families, for example, may flee border areas to prevent their children becoming involved with drug trafficking groups, but they may only be able to afford to move areas affected by gang violence.[207] IDPs who find work may become targets for extortion, or they may engage in inherently risky work such as construction, domestic employment where they are exposed to violence in the workplace or a factory job in the violent *maquila* zone.

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT RESTRICTIONS

People's freedom of movement may be restricted when the level of risk they face is high, whether it comes from state or criminal perpetrators. The most severe form of restriction is self-containment, in which someone confines themselves to the house and does not go out. It may be a protection strategy to avoid displacement, or it may precede flight. It is most common among directly threatened men between the ages of 15 and 29 before they flee. Families may also try to avoid displacement by taking their children out of school and confining themselves to the home, or they may send their children to stay with relatives. These tend to be short-term measures, and if the level of risk increases they may be forced to flee.[208]

People may also resort to self-containment after displacement to keep a low profile in their new community or to avoid risks that have persisted despite their flight. Human rights defenders, journalists and others forced to flee because of their work and to live secretly in safe houses may not be able to go out or work. Likewise, some political protesters have had no option but to hide inside the country and then leave because of persisting risk. People may also confine themselves to their homes if they have to return, whether from internal displacement or cross-border flight.[209]

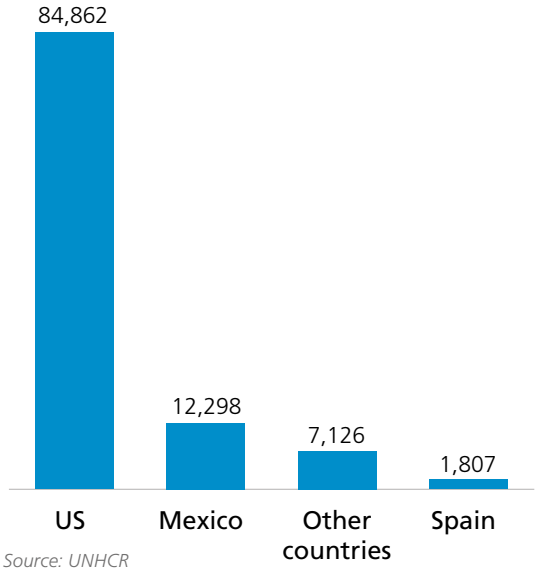
CROSS-BORDER FLIGHT

Forced displacement in Honduras includes a significant cross-border element, the result not only of the absence of effective state protection and security but also economic conditions. Some people flee the country directly, and others after internal displacement proves unsustainable. Not all of those who leave claim asylum or are aware of their right to do so, but since the 2013 there has been an unprecedented increase in the number of Hondurans seeking asylum in Mexico and the US, and in the number of families and unaccompanied minors presenting themselves at the US border.[210]

Fear and ongoing security concerns drive much cross-border flight. A recent study found that three out of ten people deported to Honduras said they had been internal displaced before fleeing the country.[211] People are afraid of being found within the country because of strong communications networks, and this applies equally to persecution by state actors as to that by street gangs. [212]

Others leave directly for fear of being unable to find safety in internal displacement because of the highly targeted nature of the threat they face and the likelihood of it persisting. This is particularly the case for

FIGURE 6: Asylum claims by Hondurans, 2012-2018



Source: UNHCR

people who have received credible death threats from gangs. For those targeted by the state because of political activity or work, external flight may be the only option. Agencies working on the ground in Mexico note that many Hondurans are reticent to attempt internal displacement prior to external flight, and this is largely due to a deep lack of trust in the authorities and an understanding that the whole country is affected.[213]

Events that may prompt direct cross-border flight when the perpetrators are criminal groups include refusing to pay extortion, the murder of a family member and resisting forced recruitment or sexual advances. Witnesses to either gang crime or state violence are particularly vulnerable inside the country, and more so if they have reported a crime. Police and military officers have also fled abroad, either on their own or with their families. Some people leave after the death of a family member because they fear rest of the family will be targeted, particularly in relation to criminal violence and megaprojects. [214]

Some people's profiles make them more unlikely than others to receive state protection, which limits their options for internal displacement. People persecuted for political reasons can be tracked down within the country, particularly if they are recognisable public figures such as journalists. State violence and political repression have been a significant cause of cross-border flight since the 2017 elections.[215] Nor can LGBT+ people expect to receive state protection, and the fact that they suffer persistent abuse from a range of sources and are often estranged from their families makes their cross-border flight more likely.[216]

Other people leave the country because of poverty, hunger and the lack of economic opportunities. There is also deep pessimism about the political situation and the likelihood of change, and concern about children's safety. Many Hondurans are reticent to attempt internal displacement because of their deep mistrust of the authorities and an understanding that the whole country is affected.[217] This feeling is aggravated by the fact that areas unaffected by violence that people can afford to flee to have no economic opportunities.[218]

The few who have the resources to obtain a passport and buy tickets may travel by regular means to Europe or North America, but poorer people almost invariably leave in an irregular manner.

People who flee overland may be forced to pay bribes to border guards to be able to leave, and they also run the risk of their details being passed on to criminal groups or the authorities. This prompts many to try to leave without trace, by crossing at remote, unmanned border points. Doing so, however, carries its own risks, because criminal groups and drug traffickers are active in these areas.

People are increasingly leaving the country en masse in "caravans" organised by citizens on social media. This provides safety in numbers, and avoids having to pay large sums of money to coyotes or people smugglers. Caravans of between 7,000 to 9,000 people left Honduras in October 2018 and January 2019.[219]

The Honduran authorities took measures to prevent the January 2019 caravan from leaving the country, despite the Central America-4 (CA-4) agreement that supposedly guarantees open borders between El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. The government threatened to jail anyone who took their children out of the country. The authorities stopped buses, the DPI checked people near the border, and police fired teargas at people trying to leave.[220]

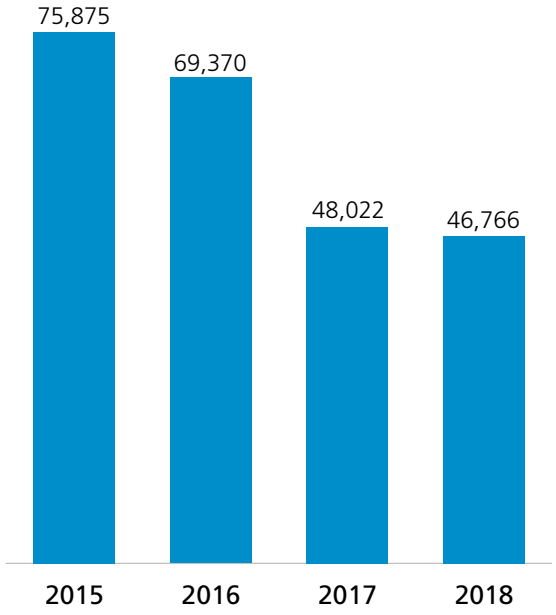
The US is the preferred destination for people leaving Honduras irregularly, while European countries such as Spain seem to be favoured by those able to afford the journey. Thousands of other Hondurans have requested asylum or humanitarian visas, or have settled irregularly

in nearby countries, particularly Mexico. Some people, however, are wary of doing so for fear of being pursued. This applies to those fleeing both criminal and state perpetrators of violence, whose influence reach far into the region.[221]

RETURN TO HONDURAS

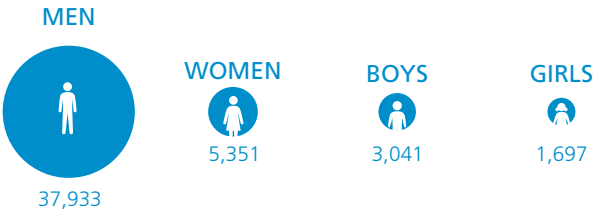
The US and Mexico deported 75,105 Hondurans in 2018, of whom 9,406 were minors.[222] People who have fled across borders face serious harm if they are returned to Honduras, and deportees have been killed and targeted with violence once back in the country.[223] This includes state agents who had fled after reporting corruption, and people who left to escape gang violence and threats. Deportees and returnees may be unable to return to their places of origin because of ongoing risk, effectively leaving them internally displaced.[224]

FIGURE 7: Deportees to Honduras, 2015 - August 2018



Source: CONMIGHO

FIGURE 8: Deportees to Honduras by age and gender, 2015 - 2017



Source: CONMIGHO

The Honduran state has full responsibility for identifying and addressing returnees' protection needs before or upon their arrival, and all the more so when a Honduran consul has signed the person's deportation papers. Procedures at Central American consulates in Mexico tend to fall below expected standards, however, and consuls have authorised people's deportation while their asylum claim are still in process.[225] Nor are people always informed about their right to international protection before being deported, and consular authorities have tried to dissuade some from seeking asylum by telling them that doing so would mean a longer stay in migration detention. Others who have asked for international protection are not offered the opportunity to claim asylum and deported anyway.[226]

The main reasons returnees with protection needs cite for having fled the country are to protect children and young people from criminal gangs, to escape extortion or direct threats, because of their attempted murder or because a friend or family member had been killed. At least some of these people are likely to be in danger once back in the country, and they may have been refouled by their deportation.[227] Some people are so afraid of being back in Honduras that they set out immediately from return centres to leave the country again. This applies to those fleeing violence and persecution by both criminal and state perpetrators, and particularly those who also have family outside the country or have lived in the US before.[228]

Those who become internally displaced upon return because they are unable to go back to their places of origin may find their situation unsustainable and leave again. Those who remain may face the same risks that they fled to escape, leading to restrictions on their freedom of movement. They may resort to self-containment, going out as little as possible, or move frequently between friends' and relatives' homes. Others may not be able to attend school, health centres or church because gangs' territorial control means they are unable to cross or enter certain neighbourhoods.[229]

Return to Honduras may also present new risks. Gangs may target returnees and deportees for extortion because they believe them to have financial resources, and this may lead to further displacement. Others may be vulnerable to gang recruitment if they lack connections to family or social networks and economic stability in the country.[230]

Some people are able to access support from humanitarian organisations, but this depends largely on their

ongoing protection needs being identified in the return centre. Between 4 and 10 per cent of deportees were identified as having protection needs in 2016 and 2017, but the true figure may be higher. Return centres are not the ideal setting for screening those who fear persecution and they "do not have the necessary capacity for the identification and monitoring of deported people who need protection" (see box). [231]

More than 10 per cent of deportees said they had left the country to escape direct violence perpetrated by street gangs or criminal groups, but many may not cite such violence as the reason for their flight because it has become so normalised.[232] Those who fled state violence or political persecution may be reluctant to say for fear of being identified by authorities and any reprisals that might entail. One international agency said that no deportees had named the state as perpetrator or said they had fled political repression since the 2017 elections, despite people reporting this as a cause for their displacement to organisations in Mexico since early 2018.[233]

Washington's revocation of TPS for Hondurans, which will apply from 2020, and Donald Trump's toughening of US immigration policy more broadly will lead to more people being deported. The US government continues to lobby Mexico to process migrants and refugees as a safe third country and increase deportations. Despite this, there is "no comprehensive mechanism or protocol to detect and address in a systematic manner the protection needs" of people returned to Honduras.[234]

Migrant return centres

People returned to Honduras are received in return centres or *centros de atención al migrante retornado* in Omoa, La Lima and San Pedro Sula. The government provides the physical space, but the centres are administered by international agencies and humanitarian organisations. New arrivals are given access to key services, such as medical attention and the reissue of lost identity documents, and they receive basic necessities such as a meal, a hygiene kit, a phone call and a voucher for bus travel home. They also undergo a registration interview that screens for protection needs.

Medical personnel providing initial health support and medicine to deported protection seekers and migrants after they have been brought to the 'Edén', this State-run reception facility in San Pedro Sula. Photo © UNHCR/Roland Schönbauer, September 2014

Steps have been taken to improve the centres and the capacity of staff, but there are still challenges inherent in identifying deported migrants with protection needs. They spend little time in the centre, and the limitations of the screening interviews include a lack of privacy, particularly for children, inexperienced staff and survey-style screening that focuses on the registration of personal data and socioeconomic background rather than a more personal interview that seeks to understand the reasons for migration.

There are also serious security concerns both within and immediately outside the centres, which are located in areas with significant levels of violence and near highly militarised zones. According to press reports, 62 of 75 people murdered after their deportation from Mexico and the US between 2007 and 2015 were killed within 50 kilometres of the centres.[235] Single-road access to the centres makes monitoring easy and this may have been a factor in the murder of at least nine people within 48 hours of their deportation in 2014 and 2015.[236] One deportee was shot recently as he left the airport, and another as he left the return centre.[237]

DISPLACEMENT IMPACTS

Displacement has significant impacts at the individual, community and national level. IDPs suffer severe economic losses and face numerous challenges. They abandon their property and often all their other assets when they flee. They lose their employment and income, and have difficulty in accessing education, healthcare, justice, protection and security. Those who are only able to move to marginalised, insecure areas are vulnerable to ongoing risk, new manifestations of violence and deepening poverty.

These factors often mean that internal displacement fails as a protection strategy, leading to further movement and cross-border flight. Violence and displacement also have a detrimental effect on the mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of those affected, including family members who are left behind. This is aggravated by the loss of social networks and further worsened by each new displacement.

Communities' cohesion breaks down as people leave, making them less resilient to future shocks, while new arrivals in host communities may be viewed with suspicion and unable to integrate. Tensions may arise if local resources and services are overstretched or there is competition for employment. Displacement also has a deep economic cost at the national level, perpetuating and aggravating poverty and inequality. Significant spending on security and the military has failed to make the country safer for the vast majority of its citizens.

SECURITY

IDPs' inability to find safety and security may make their displacement unsustainable and lead to further movement and psychological harm. More than 95 per cent of those surveyed in 2015 did not plan to return to their places of origin.[238] This is a significant finding, and different from many other countries, where return is the desired objective of many IDPs. It reflects the chilling effect of widespread and systematic violence on prospects for return, and a lack of confidence in the state to resolve the situation in the foreseeable future.

New risk after displacement

New security risks can arise after displacement. Many people who flee gangs are only able to afford to move from one marginalised and insecure area to another. In this sense "poverty punishes you with violence".[239] If their new area in controlled by a different gang, they are likely to be challenged as an outsider and potential infiltrator. If their situation proves to be unsustainable, they may have to flee again. [240]

People displaced from rural areas by violence associated with megaprojects or drug trafficking may flee to urban areas in search of work. As with other poor IDPs, however, they may only be able to afford to live in marginalised communities affected by gang violence, where they become targets for extortion and "security payments" or are forced to become involved in gang activity.[241] When people eventually flee abroad, only the reason for their latest displacement may be recorded. "This obscures the real reasons and by obscuring them, facilitates them".[242]

Risk from coping strategies

Economic coping strategies can also give rise to risk and violence after displacement, even if they are not ostensibly harmful. People who engage in informal work such as street trading are vulnerable to extortion and exposure to criminal groups. Men may have to undertake inherently risky work such as construction, and women may have to do domestic work, where there is a risk of violence, including sexual violence, in the workplace. Women who work in the *maquila* zone are exposed to extremely high levels of violence both in the workplace and the residential areas near the factories. Trans women and gay men may have no option but to undertake sex work in the streets in extremely vulnerable conditions.[243]

Community education centres run by volunteers support those at risk or displaced by violence. Photo © UNHCR/Santiago Escobar-Jaramillo, June 2018

Risk after cross-border flight

Cross-border flight involves additional protection concerns, particular for those who travel irregularly through Mexico. Some people may try to apply for asylum, but their right to do so is not always upheld. Tougher migration policies in Mexico and the US have led to an increase in the number of NTCA citizens detained and deported despite having protection needs that mean they may not be able to return to their places of origin. Some may be able to secure international protection, but for most its absence means their displacement continues to be precarious, particularly given the hostile environment in the US. [244]

Some people may continue to be pursued and persecuted outside Honduras if the threats that forced them to flee the country were highly targeted and the perpetrators perceive their "offence" as serious enough to warrant it. Honduran gangs are present in the US and in the migration detention centres and shelters and their surroundings in Mexico, particularly in the south.[245]

LIVING CONDITIONS

Displacement causes financial losses and economic challenges and aggravates poverty and inequality. Most IDPs had few economic resources before their flight, and displacement leaves them poorer still. The more urgent their displacement, the more acute their losses tend to be. People forced to flee immediately have no time to sell property or gather their belongings. For those displaced repeatedly, their losses are replicated each time they move on, resulting in a downward spiral of deepening poverty and worsening living conditions.[246]

Violence and displacement also have a high economic cost at the national level. More is spent on security and the military than on key services such as health and education, and there are indirect costs associated with loss of productivity and the migration of people of working age.

Housing

People often abandon their home and belongings when they flee. Gangs may forbid them from selling or renting their property or simply take it for their own use. Other people may be forced to sell their homes for very low prices. A third of the displaced households surveyed in 2015 said they had lost their home and income when they fled. IDPs also struggle to find decent housing compared with non-displaced households, and are more likely to live in boarding houses, makeshift shelters or otherwise inadequate and overcrowded conditions.[247]

Displacement also has an impact on housing in areas of origin, where many homes are abandoned or expropriated. Gangs often take over these abandoned homes use them for *casa locas* or for their families to live in. Gangs may gradually take over whole neighbourhoods, causing more fear and insecurity and driving down property prices in areas where no one wants to invest. UNHCR and the Institute of Property of Honduras are working to establish a register of property abandoned as a result of displacement, including homes, land, businesses and belongings.[248]

Livelihoods

People lose their work, employment and businesses when they flee. IDPs may not be able to earn income immediately after their flight, and many struggle to re-establish their livelihoods or adopt new ones in the longer term, which may make their situation unsustainable. Some head to *maquila* zones in search of work and others to urban centres. People who flee rural areas, however, rarely have transferable skills and some leave the country to look for agricultural work. Many displaced women, particularly single mothers with children, are unable to find work, and this may lead them to leave the country irregularly despite the risks.[249]

The unemployment rate among IDPs is higher than that of the general population, and they tend to have more unstable and informal jobs.[250] Many have only limited education, making it hard to find formal work. Starting a micro or small business may be an option for some, but doing so may also expose those in areas where gangs are active to new risks such as extortion and associated threats and violence. There are some limited humanitarian programmes to help with micro-businesses, but their focus is on training rather financing and the latter is indispensable for people who have been left with nothing.[251]

Displacement from rural areas drives down agricultural production, particularly among subsistence farmers and smallholders, which may lead to food insecurity and shortages for those left behind. It also deepens the inequity of land distribution, concentrating it in the hands of the economic elite and transnational companies and fuelling an economic model that aggravates poverty and inequality.[252]

SOCIAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPACTS

As well as material losses, people suffer "a loss of belonging, of identity, of the person".[253]

Mental health

Displacement has significant psychosocial and mental health impacts.[254] People are uprooted from their homes, communities and way of life, and carry with them the trauma of the threats and violence they have experienced or witnessed. They also face the uncertainty and economic challenges of displacement without support networks and in some cases with ongoing risk, resulting in "an epidemic of mental health issues".[255]

Many displaced people suffer severe stress, depression and anxiety which, combined with feelings of impotence and hopelessness, may manifest in psychosomatic symptoms ranging from headaches, insomnia and tearfulness to suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts. There is also great pessimism in the country as a whole about the political situation and the absence of possibility for change.[256]

These acute and widespread issues could be categorised as a national mental health crisis, but responses are far from adequate. ICRC and PMH have organised and trained a national network of psychologists to provide psychosocial and mental health support to IDPs, which is supported by a network of NGOs and the authorities. In the country in general, however, there are not enough mental health experts able to provide the specialist help that people including children need. Psychosocial support is thin on the ground and the witness protection programme does not have an integral mental health component.[257]

Breakup of family and social networks

Displacement often causes family breakup and estrangement, and more than a quarter of displaced households report being separated from at least one family member.[258] This may come about because only one or two family members are displaced, or because its members are displaced to different places. Relationships may also be affected if families fear maintaining contact with displaced members who have been threatened. Family breakup and changes to family structure and functions have a significant psychosocial impact.[259] Children and adolescents are particularly affected by separation from their parents, which may disrupt their personal development and increase their vulnerability to gang recruitment or activity.

Displacement disconnects people from their social networks and thrusts them into unfamiliar surroundings, which may amplify their psychosocial and mental health issues. New arrivals often face stigma, fear and suspicion from their host communities, rather than understanding that they are victims. They may try to keep a low profile or struggle to integrate and develop a sense of belonging, and may ultimately decide to move on. New arrivals may also increase pressure on already scarce resources and competition for work, which has the potential to create social tensions. That said, many IDPs are well received and assisted by their host communities.[260]

Communities of origin also suffer fear and a loss of resilience. People worry about the rising risk of violence when they see a family has had to leave, and become more susceptible to displacement themselves. Some may leave when child reaches a certain age in effort to pre-empt their becoming involved in or targeted by gangs, and others when they receive their first threat. As more people leave, a community's social fabric may gradually unravel.[261]

Indigenous, Garifuna and *campesino* communities

Displaced indigenous and Garifuna people have the same basic needs as other IDPs, but they also face additional challenges. Moving from a rural to urban area may have a significant psychological impact. Not only are they unable to pursue their traditional lifestyles and livelihoods, but they also lose land to which they have a deep cultural and spiritual connection. They may have suffered the trauma of violent forced evictions. Indigenous and Garifuna people face widespread institutional discrimination and racism, which may limit their access to work, justice and basic services such as education and healthcare.[262]

Whether they leave individually or en masse, families tend to disperse in different directions, leading to the breakdown of the community. This loss of social cohesion is also a cultural loss for Garifuna and indigenous people, who have a strong sense of community and identity with their lands.[263] Displaced *campesinos* also face some of the same issues.

ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES

People's lack of access to basic services is both a cause and consequence of displacement and violence. Education and health services are underfunded in Honduras and corruption diverts some of the funds they do receive. Access is also affected by gangs' violence, infiltration and the invisible borders between their territories. These issues affect displaced and non-displaced people alike, but they are more acute for the former.

Healthcare

Displaced people tend to have more health issues than the general population but are less likely to be able to afford healthcare services.[264] Access may also be hampered by freedom of movement restrictions, whether the result of gangs' territorial control or self-containment. The embezzlement of funds from IHSS has also made accessing healthcare and medicines more difficult, which disproportionately affects older people and those with complex health needs.[265]

Education

School abandonment levels have been very high in Honduras since 2014, particularly in areas where violence is prevalent, and displaced children are particularly affected.[266] Thousands drop out of school each year because of insecurity or because their family has been forced to flee.[267] Parents may also curtail their children's education to send them out to work to support the family, or to take on the carer's role while their parents work. Girls who fall pregnant are often taken out of school too. Insufficient state funding and corruption also

Patients wait to be seen at the UNHCR-supported Holy Trinity Comprehensive Care Centre in Chamalecón, San Pedro Sula. The centre provides a safe space for at-risk and displaced residents as well as a clinic, access to social programmes, recreation and counselling. Photo © UNCHR/Santiago Escobar-Jaramillo, June 2018

mean that schools do not have enough money to pay for staff and materials, leaving them to impose charges on parents that many are unable to afford.

Schools have been infiltrated by street gangs for recruitment, extortion of students and teachers, drug dealing and surveillance activities. "Schools have become an epicentre for these criminal markets."[268] This affects marginalised areas most, where there is a "permanent climate of violence" in education centres and gangs may even intervene in lessons and undermine teachers' authority.[269] The authorities recognise that gangs' presence, threats and intimidation are barriers to enrolment and retention. [270]

The invisible borders between gangs' territories cause children to leave the formal education system if their school is in an area controlled by a rival gang. Some may apply for distance learning provided privately by local NGOs and international humanitarian organisations without state funding.

Some school transfer requests run smoothly, but there is no straightforward process for reintegrating into school, and no programme for internally displaced children as there is for their returned counterparts. Children may also be denied enrolment at a new school or have to wait until the next academic year.[271]

The disruption or abandonment of education represents a backwards step in a child's attainment and development with long-term consequences for their life outcomes. The completion of basic education, which is defined as graduation from the 9th grade, is a minimum requirement for jobs in the formal labour market. Any ensuing lack of employment and income-earning opportunities will also heighten their vulnerability to violence and criminal activity.[272]

POLICY VS. PRACTICE

The Honduran government's official recognition of internal displacement associated with violence and the establishment of CIPPDV in 2013 were important and positive developments. A comprehensive response to the phenomenon, however, including addressing its causes, is still lacking. Nor has the broad range of perpetrators or the "intersectionality of the violence" been acknowledged.[273]

Honduras has not yet passed a law on internal displacement but can rely on the international framework in the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the regional Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action. Honduras has made commitments under the San Jose Action Plan, which specifically addresses protection needs in the NTCA, and the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (*Marco Integral Regional para la Protección y Soluciones*, MIRPS). MIRPS is a state-led initiative, supported by UNHCR, OAS and SICA, that "strengthens protection, and enhances solutions for refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, and returnees with protection needs" through collaboration between governments, civil society, international organisations, the private sector, academics and development banks.[274]

CIPPDV has delivered inter-institutional working, studies on the number, needs and location of displaced people and the development of draft legislation on IDPs. A protocol for emergency humanitarian assistance has been developed and consultations were underway in late 2018 on specific interventions for women, children and young people, LGBT+ people and indigenous groups.[275] Services and protection are best delivered at the municipal level, so CIPPDV has planned for the national response to be implemented locally.[276] In line

A Honduran family crosses the Suchiate river into Guatemala in the middle of the night. Photo © UNICEF/Daniele Volpe, July 2016

with its commitments under MIRPS, the government has also developed guidelines for the identification and reception of returnees with protection needs and launched a project to protect abandoned property and land.[277]

Concerns have been raised, however, that CIPPDV lacks capacity. This reflects a lack of political will to invest in institutions that address displacement effectively.[278] The resulting absence of a state response has left intergovernmental organisations, NGOs, churches and civil society to try to provide IDPs with assistance.

Nor has the state implemented reparation measures ordered in 2015 by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in two cases of displacement. The court ruled that Honduras had violated the collective land rights of the Barra Vieja Garifuna community and another along the same coastline with the Indura Beach Resort tourism megaproject.[279] Investigations subsequently found that the economic and political elite had invested in the project and unearthed evidence suggesting that funds embezzled from IHSS had been used.[280]

DATA

Robust information on the number of people affected by displacement and their profiles is limited by the lack of systematic data collection. Nor does a registration system for IDPs exist, though the draft law on internal displacement provides for one. In the meantime, data is only captured by state and non-state agencies that provide services to people who approach them.

Those who do not come forward in search of assistance or protection, either because they are unaware of services or they choose to remain off-radar, are not recorded. Those who go into hiding before fleeing the country and those trying to escape political repression are particularly unlikely to approach the authorities for assistance, as are many others who fear reprisals. Nor is there an effective mechanism for capturing the different reasons for repeated displacements, whether internal or cross-border, meaning that some – particularly the cause of the initial displacement – may be obscured. Overall, neither the true number of people who flee their homes is captured, nor the full range of reasons for their doing so.[281]

STATE, NGO AND CIVIL SOCIETY SUPPORT

Despite the positive steps Honduras has taken, "the state is not prepared to deal with internal displacement and victims are often sent from one state institution to another in order to find a solution for their displacement, to no avail".[282] That said, recent advances have been made.

People who have been displaced or are at risk of displacement can record their situation with CONADEH, one of the few trusted state institutions. They can make confidential reports in person, by phone, online, by email or by WhatsApp. CONADEH is present throughout the country and works closely with UDFI, intergovernmental organisations, national civil society organisations and NGOs to make rapid referrals for appropriate support. It also proactively looks for potential victims of displacement if increased risk has been reported and conducts community outreach work to develop systems to protect and promote human rights at the municipal level.[283]

UNHCR, IOM, NRC and ICRC are among the international organisations that receive referrals from CONADEH, UDFI and CIPPDV. They run a range of assistance programmes, including the provision of food, household items and school equipment, specialised services for children and more integral responses that cover protection, physical and mental health support and income-generating initiatives. People unable to find safety in the country and who need to claim asylum can access UNHCR's protection transfer arrangement (PTA) and receive assistance in leaving through CONADEH, PHM and other civil society and church groups.[284]

There is some state provision for people working in certain professions. Threatened medical staff are able to request transfers to other health centres, but if the perpetrators discover their home address they may be forced to flee. Teachers are also able to request transfers, but these are not always granted despite the threats and risk faced. Protection measures are in place for human rights defenders, trade unionists, journalists and communications workers, but these too are not always granted and may not be effective.[285]

Women who have experienced domestic violence rarely receive either justice or practical support, because of

discriminatory practices, the inefficiency of the judicial system and a lack of specialised shelters. Impunity and the public's deep mistrust of state institutions also mean that support and protection networks for children tend to be limited to family ties.

LGBT+ people generally do not receive support from either their families or the state but rely instead on the broader LGBT+ community. This includes a strong network of LGBT+ organisations in the region and abroad, which helps them plan and prepare for cross-border flight, including the asylum process, and to find sympathetic hosts in their destination country. Given the lack of protection and persistent abuse they face in Honduras, LGBT+ people are among those most likely to flee the country.[286]

People targeted and displaced because of the political nature of their work, such as human rights defenders, environmental activists, journalists and trade unionists, may be able to access safe houses run by organisations and support networks. Some may also receive financial assistance from civil society organisations or international funds to support them in displacement if they are unable to work. This type of support, however, is limited to three months and tends only to cover the needs of the affected person or at most a couple of family members. This is problematic for the many people in Honduras who have large families.[287]

The Honduran authorities and church organisations run a programme, together with ICRC, the Honduran Red Cross, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and UNHCR, to support deportees. Assistance for those with protection needs and those unable to return home because of security issues is mainly provided by organisations such as NRC, the Church Ministry of Human Mobility (*Pastoral de Movilidad Humana*), the Centre for the Investigation and Promotion of Human Rights (*Centro de Investigación y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos*, CIPRODEH) and ICRC. One of the organisations assisting deported families with protection needs said they were the most serious cases it had attended to. The organisations can also refer those with protection needs to UNHCR to claim asylum. [288]

The support available, however, is time-limited and until 2018 was focussed only on addressing emergency needs. ICRC has since started to offer income-generating activities and training in an effort to also facilitate longer-term solutions for the resettlement of IDPs.[289]

Shortfalls in support

Less than three per cent of displaced households surveyed in 2015 had received help from church or community groups, and half relied on assistance from their families in Honduras or abroad.[290] Given the public's deep mistrust of state institutions, many displaced people are reluctant to approach them for support and prefer instead to turn to civil society organisations. CIPPDV tries to work around this issue by ensuring that assistance is provided by agencies that are trusted as well as by the state, according to individual preference.[291]

There is concern that state protection measures are insufficient, that many people are unaware of them and that those who are do not trust them. Nor are there any measures in place to prevent displacement by addressing its causes rather than its impacts. NGOs are developing strategies to this end, but the state's response is very weak. In its current form it will neither prevent or resolve displacement, nor reduce the number of people affected.[292]

Ongoing risk, the lack of effective protection mechanisms and the absence of strategies for durable solutions results in cross-border flight, either temporarily or to claim asylum. Those forced to leave the country may seek assistance from defenders-of-defenders or rely on support networks elsewhere in Latin America or in Europe. They are also able to apply for an assessment of their protection and resettlement needs through PTA, but this has only helped a limited number of people.[293]

CONCLUSION

Despite some positive policy steps, there are still many significant challenges to overcome in addressing displacement in Honduras, particularly displacement associated with violence in the country. Acknowledging and understanding the many forms of violence and its many perpetrators beyond criminal groups is vital. In the meantime, persistent insecurity means that repeated displacements, freedom of movement restrictions and cross-border flight are common. The situation is aggravated by worsening poverty, inequality and political repression.

The state does not systematically collect data on displacement, nor has it reduced the scale of the phenomenon or delivered a comprehensive response to the needs of those affected. Instead it has failed to provide protection or prevent displacement caused by criminal and other forms of violence, and has itself provoked displacement through violent political repression and corruption and violence associated with megaprojects.

The findings below examine how different manifestations of violence cause displacement and provide new insight about their differences, commonalities and interconnections. They aim to contribute to a better understanding of the likely effectiveness and potential adverse consequences of future policy, and in doing so to inform an effective state response. It must be noted that the triggers for displacement and drivers of violence described in this study are prominent examples of the complexity of the situation but are not necessarily exhaustive, and there may be further drivers, triggers, impacts, and patterns of displacement which are not captured here.

KEY FINDINGS

Key finding 1: Violence in all its forms is often highly targeted and people's decisions about displacement are influenced by similar factors

There are at least five main forms of violence that cause displacement in Honduras: violence perpetrated by street gangs; violence perpetrated by drug trafficking and transnational organised crime groups; GBV and violence on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity; violence associated with megaprojects; state-sponsored violence and political repression.

In all these forms, violence is sometimes highly targeted towards specific individuals and sometimes is more generalised, resulting in increased insecurity. Both state and criminal perpetrators target specific people, leading to their displacement and often that of their families. Other people flee the more general effects of insecurity caused by both state and criminal violence.

People's vulnerability to each form of violence depends largely on where they live. Marginalised urban areas are most at risk from gang violence, while border zones including coastal areas are at risk from violence linked to drug trafficking. Rural areas are most at risk from violence associated with megaprojects, from tourism complexes and hydroelectric dams to agribusiness and resource extraction. People in all parts of the country may be exposed to GBV, violence on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity and political repression.

Displacement has many trajectories - rural to urban, rural to rural, urban to urban, intra-urban and significant cross-border movement. People's decisions about when and where to go in displacement are influenced by similar factors regardless of the source of violence they

Tegucigalpa, Honduras. The neighbourhood is controlled by the Mara 13. The armed group does not allow access to the school of children living in the contiguous neighbourhood, as a measure of control. Photo: European Union/ECHO/A. Aragon, 2016

flee. Their decisions depend on their perceptions of risk, family links and economic and security considerations.

Key finding 2: Displacement linked to violence is provoked by a range of perpetrators, often with complex interconnections

Violence and displacement are provoked by private security, paramilitary and state forces as well as criminal groups. In some cases it may be difficult to clearly discern the perpetrator, the lines between state and criminal violence may be blurred, or violence may be the result of complex relationships between local elites, criminal elements and corrupt authorities. State and politically-motivated violence may be also concealed behind widespread violence, gang violence or anti-gang raids.

Perpetrators may act separately, but they are not always distinct. They may be involved in overlapping activities, rely on other groups to act on their behalf or work in collusion with each other. This makes establishing the motives and intellectual authors of violence all but impossible in some cases, particularly when *sicarios* are used or when people are targeted with threats and violence because of their political activities or resistance to megaprojects. The lack of clarity about perpetrators and motives feeds a climate of acute fear, suspicion and uncertainty.

State forces may conduct the material acts of violence in the case of political repression, but in other scenarios the perpetrators may be private security firms, paramilitaries or *sicarios* operating with complicit state authorities. The situation is particularly complex in this sense if the violence is associated with megaprojects, when the state security forces may also be involved.

The multiple perpetrators reflect the complexity of displacement drivers and hint at the significant challenges to addressing the phenomenon. A unique focus on criminal groups as the main cause of people's flight conceals other types of violence, the intellectual authors, the state's active role in provoking displacement and its failure to provide the protection required to prevent it.

Key finding 3: Corruption aggravates the drivers and triggers of displacement

Corruption has a systemic effect on displacement by aggravating some of the structural socioeconomic factors that drive it. Corruption and impunity also enable the persistence of widespread criminal violence and severely limit the prospects of those targeted finding safety within the country. They also combine with discriminatory practices to mean that many survivors of GBV and violence on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity are unable to secure protection in the country, often leading to repeated internal displacement and/or cross-border flight.

Corruption associated with megaprojects arises from the loss of separation of powers in Honduras and political elites with personal links to economic projects, which in turn has led to the development of legislation, processes and enforcement that favour commercial interests over citizens' rights in contravention of the Guiding Principles and the state's obligations under international law. This corruption perpetrates displacement through forced evictions, threats and violence against those who resist megaprojects, or failure to conduct environmental impact assessments or consult local communities leading to environmental degradation, lack of access to water and productive land or the aggravation of climate change impacts.

Key finding 4: Displacement may result in ongoing and even increased insecurity and risk of violence

Individuals who have fled their homes to escape threats and insecurity often continue to face the same risks that led to their flight, or may face new risks that emerge in their place of displacement.

IDPs may face the same ongoing risk after their displacement. People most likely to experience this include those persecuted by gangs because they are perceived to have committed an act of betrayal or enmity, those who flee political persecution, and survivors of domestic violence who are pursued by their former partners. State entities and criminal gangs have strong communications networks and are able to track people down. Ongoing insecurity and persistent risk mean that people are unable to find safety and may move five or six times before deciding they have no option but to leave the country. Nonetheless, these risks may also continue even after someone has left the country.

After displacement, new risks may arise that are unconnected to the reason for initial displacement. People may move from one marginalised and gang-controlled urban area to another area of high violence and insecurity, and encounter similar risks to the ones they fled. People who are displaced from rural to urban areas to escape violence associated with megaprojects or drug trafficking may face entirely new risks because they can only access marginalised communities affected by gang violence.

New threats can also arise from people's economic coping strategies, since displaced people often have limited options for income generation. They may have to undertake informal work that makes them vulnerable to extortion, only to be able to secure inherently dangerous work such as construction, or be exposed to violence in the workplace when in domestic or *maquila* work.

Cross-border flight brings additional protection concerns, particularly for those who travel irregularly through Mexico. Only very few people are able to secure international protection or seek asylum, so for most people their displacement across borders continues to be precarious. They may be pursued by those who threatened them even if they leave the country. Many people who are deported back to Honduras face extreme danger from the same and persistent risk that caused their displacement.

Key finding 5: Displacement exacerbates insecurity and economic hardship, which can result in cross-border flight

People's inability to find safety and security within the country may undermine displacement as a strategy, leading to further displacement and psychological and economic harm. Some may eventually decide they have no option but to leave the country, while for others internal displacement may not be a viable option in the first place. Others still may resort to self-containment in an effort to escape their continued persecution.

Economic hardship may lead to repeated displacement in and of itself, or it may combine with ongoing insecurity, making displacement an unsustainable option to try to escape threats. Many IDPs lose not only their home but also their assets, employment and income when they flee, and struggle to re-establish their livelihoods or adopt new ones, which may make their situation untenable. For those displaced repeatedly, their losses are replicated each time they move on, resulting in a downward spiral of deepening poverty and worsening living conditions. Many may eventually leave the country because of entrenched poverty and inequality, the lack of income-generating opportunities and increases in the basic cost of living. Others flee the country without attempting to move internally, because they know they would be unable to find safety and security and because of the bleak outlook for securing work and economic stability.

Key finding 6: Challenges persist to gathering data on displacement and providing comprehensive protection

There is currently no systematic data collection on displacement, although the draft law on IDPs provides for a register. It does not, however, address displacement associated with megaprojects.

Data collection is complicated further by people's reluctance to report, which has its roots in fear of reprisals from criminal gangs, the culture of silence this imposes and concerns about the infiltration of state institutions. Similar concerns apply when the perpetrators are state entities or linked to powerful elites. Reluctance also stems from a lack of confidence in the state to provide protection or take effective action, leading many people to stay off radar for their own safety. This is particularly true for victims of state violence and political repression. People's knowledge of their rights is also generally poor.

In the absence of comprehensive data, the different factors that lead to repeated displacement are not captured, and the reasons behind people's initial displacement may be obscured. This applies to both internal and cross-border displacement, and means that its causes cannot be properly addressed.

Without such data and acceptance of a broader conceptualisation of the factors that result in displacement, including multiple forms of violence, effective protection and assistance cannot be provided to those affected. Nor can the state's role and responsibility be fully delineated or a robust prevention strategy developed. Instead, human rights violations and displacement will continue to take place, and the precarious nature of internal displacement will continue to expose people to the ongoing insecurity and risk that leads to repeated displacement, restrictions on freedom of movement, and cross-border flight.

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