



SUPPORTING
AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT
FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Overview of the Enabling Environment

Honduras

February 2026



Reporting period covered: November 2025 – February 2026

CONTEXT

Honduras enters 2026 with high levels of social and political conflict, marked by persistent criminal violence, corruption and impunity, and institutions subject to recurring tensions. The state of emergency, implemented as a temporary security measure in 2022, but now stopped on 26 January 2026, has created ongoing issues with human rights standards and the full exercise of political rights.

The 2025 electoral cycle and the handover of government in 2026 were marked by disputes over electoral administration, transparency and the timing of the release of results, as well as by protests. The election was described as fraudulent and as an electoral coup by partisan actors. In January 2026, the post-election crisis continued with institutional decisions and public appeals that have led to a reshaping of the governance landscape.

In this context, civil society continues to play a key role in supporting communities, monitoring, defending human rights and promoting transparency. However, the operational freedom of civic space is strained by physical and digital risks, stigmatisation, and administrative and financial obstacles. The combination of ongoing security measures linked to the state of emergency/exception, electoral polarisation and increased disinformation magnify the risks around social organisation and limit public dialogue with institutions.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT PRINCIPLES

1. Respect and protection of fundamental freedoms

Between November 2025 and January 2026, the environment for the exercise of civic freedoms in Honduras deteriorated in several respects. Firstly, restrictions stemming from the [state of emergency](#) - in force since 2022 and repeatedly extended – persisted. This state of emergency has led to the partial suspension of basic rights such as freedom of assembly and association, as well as certain safeguards against detention, by expanding the powers of the security forces in police and military operations. Human rights organisations have warned that this measure has led to reports of human rights abuses and violations: the National Human Rights Commissioner (CONADEH) reported more than 1,000 complaints of abuses committed by security forces under the state of emergency, including torture and inhuman treatment, reinforcing a perception of vulnerability among social and community actors. This state of emergency measure officially ended on Monday 26 January 2026, presenting a critical juncture for the enabling environment in Honduras. Civil society organisations had criticised the repeated extensions, arguing that they had turned this exceptional measure into a

permanent restriction on fundamental freedoms without the necessary legal justification, and have called on the newly elected government to develop a security policy based on respect for human rights.

Furthermore, [analyses by CSOs and journalists](#) raised concerns regarding the fact that the elections in late 2025 took place under this state of emergency. The elections were accompanied by the militarisation of public spaces, raising concerns about the impact on political mobilisation and protest.

Following the [murder](#) of journalist Javier Antonio Hércules Salinas in June 2025, [risks continued](#) for journalists, political activists and women, who are often victims of violence. Recent reports indicate that [attacks](#) against these groups persist and that those responsible are rarely brought to justice, reinforcing the perception of risk for those engaged in reporting or public scrutiny. In the context of the November 2025 elections, organisations defending press freedom [noted an increase](#) in violations, including attacks, harassment and threats on social media. These incidents have continued in the months following the elections, as exemplified by the [pepper spray attack](#) against a team of Telepaís journalists in January 2026.

Taken together, these factors reflect a de facto deterioration of civic space, particularly in areas affected by organised crime or socio-environmental conflicts, where the state's institutional limitations and high levels of impunity undermine the effective protection of fundamental freedoms.

2. Supportive legal framework for the work of civil society actors

In the reporting period of this research there were no legislative or administrative changes that altered the registration or operating procedures of CSOs in Honduras. The legal framework continues to be underpinned by the [constitutional guarantees](#) of freedom of association and by the existing legislation applicable to civil associations.

However, the institutional context was marked by ongoing legal debates surrounding the extension of the state of emergency. In November 2025, [new constitutional challenges](#) were filed against this measure on the basis of possible violations of constitutional guarantees. Although these actions have not altered the legal regime governing CSOs, they reflect an environment where the interpretation and application of fundamental rights continue to be the subject of litigation and public debate.

In summary, whilst the legal framework governing civil society action remains formally grounded in constitutional rights, its application is affected by security measures and by the legal uncertainty linked to disputes surrounding the state of emergency/exception regime.

3. Accessible and sustainable resources

Access to resources for civil society remains limited and volatile; characterised by persistent challenges amid isolated opportunities.

In the context of the elections, there were signs of international support focused on the integrity of information and the electoral cycle: the European Union Delegation [reported the signing of an agreement](#) to combat disinformation in the 2025 electoral process, within the framework of a coalition funded by the EU/AECID and implemented by the UNDP. This type of funding helps to strengthen civic capacities, although scope is usually thematic and short-term.

Access to resources for civil society organisations (CSOs) in Honduras continues to be characterised by a high dependence on project-based external funding and a limited availability of institutional or core funding, which restricts organisational sustainability and medium-term strategic planning. There are high transaction costs associated with administrative compliance, audits, procurement and reporting requirements, which absorb the operational capacities of organisations, particularly those with small institutional structures. These limitations are exacerbated in rural areas or those affected by illicit economies and violence, where insecurity increases logistical costs and reduces the capacity for territorial presence and community support.

4. Open and responsive state

The relationship between the state and civil society has progressed in some areas, but a reactive dynamic undermined by low trust has prevailed overall. These tensions were exacerbated by the electoral context. In the 2025 electoral cycle, the transparency and accountability of electoral authorities became a critical issue. International media reports documented significant delays in the release of results. There were resultant calls from the Organisation of American States (OAS) for further transparency and non-violence, pushing for results that were [credible and accepted by all](#).

In January 2026, the [National Congress](#) published proceedings and reports relating to the 2025 electoral process, including decisions on investigations and public statements. Whilst these mechanisms contribute to accountability, the perception that they are being used for political ends undermines their legitimacy and makes it difficult for civil society to act as a broker of consensus.

In terms of access to information, Honduras has a legal framework in place (the [Law on Transparency and Access to Public Information](#)) and a specialised institution, the Institute of Access to Public Information (IAIP), to manage the process. However, the effectiveness of the law depends on response capacities, compliance within public bodies, and relies on there being a political climate that does not penalise those who request, or disseminate, information.

An assessment of the period suggests a state with formal openness, but with inconsistent practices of dialogue and responsiveness, particularly in security and governance.

5. Political culture and public discourses on civil society

Within the electoral cycle, that spanned from October 2025 to January 2026, public discourse in Honduras was marked by strong political polarisation. Journalists reported specific pressures linked to political coverage, leading to increased self-censorship and biased public discourse. In November 2025, international freedom of expression organisations [warned](#) of a growing climate of harassment and stigmatisation against journalists in the run-up to the elections, including narratives aimed at delegitimising those journalists. The tense environment of polarisation and electoral crisis [continued after the elections](#), with protests and unrest during the vote-counting process and accusations of an “electoral coup” and foreign interference, which further eroded public confidence in democratic processes, and affected levels of participation.

As a result, positive public perceptions of civil society, and of the media, showed signs of deterioration. The climate of harassment reduced organisations’ ability to promote agendas on rights, transparency and the fight against corruption, thereby affecting public discourse related to the work of civil society. Furthermore, the public debate on NGO funding and accountability, as exemplified by statements by the Minister of the Interior and Justice mentioned in July 2025, [remained a sensitive issue](#). The national media reported on discussions regarding public funds channelled to organisations and their oversight by the Supreme Court of Auditors (TSC), which, whilst a legitimate part of accountability, created some incentives for further stigmatization, or selective scrutiny. Framing the debate on NGO funding as one of suspicion also fuelled negative stereotypes that erode public trust in genuine community work.

Although some initiatives aimed at strengthening media integrity and countering disinformation were observed during the electoral process - including by coalitions led by international organisations and national actors to promote responsible practices within the media ecosystem - the overall picture for the period continues to be dominated by dynamics of political polarisation, public discrediting, and the attribution of partisan or illegitimate motives to civic actors and journalists, particularly in contexts of political or electoral crisis.

6. Access to a secure digital environment

The digital environment has presented a series of opportunities to civil society (mobilisation, reporting, social monitoring) but, at the same time, growing risks to the exercise of rights. During the 2025 electoral process, [disinformation narratives and smear campaigns](#) on social media intensified, prompting the creation of specific initiatives to protect the integrity of information, with international support (EU/AECID) and implementation by the [UNDP](#).

In November 2025, press freedom organisations reported an increase in [digital intimidation and stigmatisation](#) against journalists. This pattern of stigmatisation also affects human rights defenders and community leaders and included some coordinated attacks and threats.

On the regulatory front, 2025 saw a potentially positive development with the introduction of a draft [Personal Data Protection Act](#), spearheaded by the Institute for Access to Public Information (IAIP) and presented to the plenary session of the National Congress on 17 June 2025. The initiative was shared with members of the National Congress with the aim of establishing a regulatory framework to govern the processing of personal data in the public and private sectors. If designed in accordance with international standards (lawfulness, proportionality, independence of the supervisory authority and procedural safeguards), it can strengthen rights and reduce abuses in the processing of personal information. At the same time, there remains a risk of regulatory proposals which introduce disproportionate controls on online speech and digital media under the pretext of combating “hate”, “defamation” or “cybercrimes”. However, at the close of the National Congress sessions on 25 January 2026, which marked the end of the legislative cycle under the previous government, the Bill was still under legislative review and had not been passed into law, meaning the country continues to lack comprehensive legislation on personal data protection.

Challenges and opportunities

Over the next four months, the central challenge will be to manage the political transition and post-election unrest without prolonging the state of emergency. The continuation of the state of emergency and its possible extension could restrict protest and hinder on-the-ground work of organisations. Furthermore, polarisation may increase stigmatisation and risk further violence against human rights defenders and the press.

Key opportunities include:

1. Establishing a formal space for dialogue between the state and civil society on guarantees for the exercise of rights, public safety and the protection of human rights defenders
2. Designing rights-based security alternatives to the state of emergency

3. Consolidating the agenda for media integrity and media literacy as public policy
4. Strengthening digital security capabilities, information verification and the comprehensive protection of media professionals and organisations
5. Making progress on drafting a Personal Data Protection Act that respects the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality, and which includes an independent authority and redress mechanisms.



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