

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Honduras
CAPITAL: Tegucigalpa
SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT: Multiparty Republic
AREA: 112,088 Sq Km (43,277 Sq Mi)
ESTIMATED 2000 POPULATION 6,163,300



LOCATION & GEOGRAPHY: Honduras is located on the Central America Isthmus. It is bound by El Salvador to the southwest, Guatemala to the west, Nicaragua to the south and southeast, the Gulf of Honduras to the north and the Gulf of Fonseca to the south. The territory also includes the Bay Islands, the Swan Islands, as well as the Tigre, Grand Zacate and Guegueensi Islands in the Pacific Ocean. The country is generally mountainous with two main ranges, the Central American Cordillera and the Volcanic Highlands which cut the country into two halves. The lowlands consist of a southern coastal plain as well as the Uluá and Aguan River Valleys on the Caribbean coast. The country is drained by an extensive river system and the principal rivers are the Patuca, Uluá, Guayape and Aguan. In the northwest and northeast, Lake Yojoa and Laguna Caratasca are also important regions. Major Cities (pop. est.); Tegucigalpa 738,500, San Pedro Sula 353,800, La Ceiba 82,900, El Progreso 77,300, Choluteca 69,400 (1993). Land Use; forested 53%, pastures 14%, agricultural-cultivated 18%, other 15% (1993).

CLIMATE: Honduras has a tropical climate on the coast and a temperate climate inland. Both climatic zones have a wet season from April to October and a dry season from November to March. From October to April the northerly winds which are moderately cold, temper the heat while hurricanes are also quite common. Average annual precipitation varies from 1,770 mm (70 inches) to 2,540 mm (100 inches) in the north, while along the Pacific coastal plains it varies from 1,520 mm (60 inches) to 2,030 mm (80 inches). Average temperature ranges in Tegucigalpa are from 4 to 27 degrees Celsius (39 to 81 degrees Fahrenheit) in February to 12 to 33 degrees Celsius (54 to 91 degrees Fahrenheit) in May.

PEOPLE: The principal ethnic majority are the Ladinos who are all non Indians. The Ladinos who are mainly Mestizos of mixed Spanish and AmerIndian descent, account for 90% of the population. The remainder are pure blooded AmerIndians who account for 7% of the population while 2% are Black Africans and 1% are Whites.

DEMOGRAPHIC/VITAL STATISTICS: Density; 42 persons per sq km (109 persons per sq mi) (1991). Urban-Rural; 41.1% urban, 58.9% rural (1991). Sex Distribution; 50.1% male, 49.9% female (1990). Life Expectancy at Birth; 63.0 years male, 67.0 years female (1989). Age Breakdown; 45% under 15, 28% 15 to 29, 14% 30 to 44, 8% 45 to 59, 4% 60 to 74, 1% 75 and

over (1990). Birth Rate; 39.0 per 1,000 (1990). Death Rate; 8.0 per 1,000 (1990). Increase Rate; 31.0 per 1,000 (1990). Infant Mortality Rate; 48.0 per 1,000 live births (1991).

RELIGIONS: Mostly Christians with 85% of the population Roman Catholic while 10% are Protestant.

LANGUAGES: The official language is Spanish which is spoken by the Mestizos and the majority of the AmerIndians. Other principal AmerIndian languages include Lenca, Xicaque, Chorti, Carib, Miskito and Sumo while English is spoken by a few of the Bay Islanders and Black Africans.

EDUCATION: Aged 25 or over and having attained: no formal schooling 33.5%, incomplete primary 51.3%, incomplete secondary 4.3%, secondary 7.6%, higher 3.3% (1983). Literacy; literate population aged 15 or over 2,082,000 or 73.1% (1990).

MODERN HISTORY - WWII TO 1993: In 1963 a military revolt led by Col. Oswaldo Lopez Arellano overthrew the government and a new constitution provided for Lopez to become President. In 1969 a Honduran land reform law forced many families from El Salvador living in Honduras to give up their land. Also in the same year a war broke out with El Salvador after mounting economic tensions, although the war only lasted 2 weeks. In 1970 the Organization of American States (OAS) helped the two nations set up a neutral zone along their common border. In 1971 voters elected Cruz to the presidency, however, in 1972 the armed forces overthrew the Cruz government and Lopez again became President. In 1975 the military led by Col. Juan Alberto Melgar Castro ousted Lopez and took over the government. In 1978 Policarpo Paz Garcia led a military coup which removed Melgar from office. In 1980 Honduras and El Salvador signed an agreement to end their border dispute. In 1981 under US pressure Pres. Garcia prepared elections for the return of a civilian government and in Jan. 1982 Roberto Suazo Cordova was inaugurated as President, although the army commander-in-chief still retained considerable power. In Jan. 1986 another civilian government succeeded the other peacefully for the first time since 1929. In 1988 the Honduran-based Contras (Nicaraguan rebels) and the Sandinista government of Nicaragua signed a ceasefire agreement. In Nov. 1989 Rafael Leonardo Callejas won the presidential election and was inaugurated in Jan. 1990. During 1991 there were repeated attempts to reduce the army's autonomy while from May to August there were several murders including that of landless peasant farmers occupying uncultivated land, the assassination of a International Committee Against Torture member as well as the torture, rape and murder of an 18-year old civilian, all allegedly by military officers. In Sept. 1991 and in response to the allegations, three high ranking military and police officers were demoted. In Mar. 1992 the Congress passed the Agriculture Modernization Law in an attempt to attract further foreign investment and improve crop development. On Mar. 30, 1992 the

Nicaraguan Assembly dropped its International Court of Justice law suit against Honduras for supporting and training the Contras throughout the Nicaraguan civil war. In May 1992 military officials and officials from the National Agrarian Institute (INA) forcibly removed campesino groups that had occupied some 61,750 acres (25,000 hectares) of uncultivated land. In July 1992 there was a series of political assassinations as a result of trade union splits with the labor movement. In 1993 the military was implicated in murders, corruption and drug trafficking that resulted the military in Mar. 1993 agreeing to place the National Department of Investigations (DNI) under civilian control by Jan. 1994. Also during the first quarter of 1993 some 90 children disappeared in the capital, allegedly for organ trafficking. In April 1993 two bodies were found with obvious signs of organ removal that led to Pres. Leonardo appointing a commission to investigate the claims. On Nov. 28, 1993 general elections resulted in Carlos Roberto Reina of the Liberal Party (PL) defeating Oswaldo Ramos Soto of the ruling National Party (PN) through campaigning to attack government corruption and curb the military's influence in the government.

CURRENCY: The official currency is the Lempira (L) divided into 100 Centavos.

ECONOMY: Gross National Product; USD \$3,220,000,000 (1993). Public Debt; USD \$3,479,000,000 (1993). Imports; USD \$1,130,000,000 (1993). Exports; USD \$814,000,000 (1993). Tourism Receipts; USD \$32,000,000 (1993). Balance of Trade; L -113,100,000 (1994). Economically Active Population; 1,652,800 or 31.5% of total population (1993). Unemployed; 40.0% (1990).

MAIN TRADING PARTNERS: Its main trading partners are the USA and CACM (Central American Common Market) countries.

MAIN PRIMARY PRODUCTS: Bananas, Beans, Cattle, Coffee, Fruits, Gold, Lead, Maize, Rice, Silver, Shellfish, Sugar Cane, Timber, Tin, Tobacco.

MAJOR INDUSTRIES: Agriculture, Cement, Cigars, Fishing, Forestry, Mining, Textiles, Wood Products.

MAIN EXPORTS: Bananas, Chemicals, Coffee, Hardwoods, Meat, Natural Ores, Sugar, Timber.

TRANSPORT: Railroads; route length 996 km (619 mi) (1989), passenger-km N/A., cargo ton-km N/A. Roads; length 18,629 km (11,576 mi) (1989). Vehicles; cars 42,280 (1989), trucks and buses 69,653 (1989). Merchant Marine; vessels 754 (1990), deadweight tonnage 1,046,052 (1990). Air Transport; passenger-km 466,400,000 (289,807,000 passenger-mi) (1988), cargo ton-km 13,625,000 (9,332,000 short ton-mi) (1988).

COMMUNICATIONS: Daily Newspapers; total of 4 with a total circulation of 159,000 (1992). Radio; receivers 1,910,000 (1994). Television; receivers 160,000 (1994). Telephones; units 117,100 (1993).

MILITARY: 16,800 (1994) total active duty personnel with 83.3% army, 6.0% navy and 10.7% air force while military expenditure accounts for 1.4% (1993) of the Gross National Product (GNP).