

Honduras Coup Alert 16

TEAR-GAS, M-16 BULLETS & THE DEAD, IN MILITARIZED HONDURAS

By Grahame Russell (info@rightsaction.org, 011 504 9630-9507, 9507-3835),
Sunday July 5, 2009, Tegucigalpa "Toncontin" airport

At 3pm, Honduran soldiers opened fire with M-16s machineguns on an unarmed crowd. At least 2 are dead, and four wounded. One week after the military coup overthrew the government of President Zelaya, the military-oligarchic regime has furthered hardened its position against the pro-democracy movement.

As on Saturday, today as many as 100,000 pro-democracy Hondurans marched to the airport to welcome home President Zelaya. 1000s of heavily armed soldiers and police have militarized the airport – were waiting.

Again, President Zelaya was not able to return.

The Honduran army and de facto regime placed military trucks all over the run way. Protesters watched as the plane Zelaya flew around the airport, trying to land; they watched as the Honduran air force sent a fighter jet to shadow the plane; they watched as Zelaya's plane flew away.

Around 3pm, at the south end of the airport, soldiers began to fire tear-gas at the population. Some protesters threw tear gas canisters back. Some soldiers did not have gas masks. They open fire with live bullets. As of now, we know of two dead, and more wounded.

EMERSON

Emerson is a student leader and member of the protest discipline committee. (Due to the coup and repression, we do not use his proper name or show his photo. We are maintaining contact with Emerson)

At 4pm, we spoke on the second floor of the shot out Popeyes fast-food chicken restaurant.



(Popeyes restaurant. All photos: Rights Action)



(Looking out the 2nd floor window of Popeyes, back across to the soldiers and police guarding the airport runway)

Around 3pm, Emerson was eating chicken and fries on the second floor of Popeyes, across from the army-guarded airport, when the soldiers began firing tear gas into the protesters.

He ran out and across the road to the front of crowd, trying to control the anti-coup protesters. Tear gas canisters were thrown back into the soldiers. Then they opened fire.

With people fleeing in all directions, soldiers grabbed Emerson, put him face down on the ground, fired off rounds of live bullets all around him, terrorizing him, and kicked him in the ribs.



(Emerson's hand, with some of the bullet shells he collected that soldiers had fired all around him)

40 minutes later, he found me on the 2nd floor of Popeyes, riddled with M-16 bullet holes and broken glass.





He sat at the same table he had been at when the shooting began and all the patrons fled. Still hungry, he proceeded to eat his chicken and fries.

A 73 YEAR OLD CAMPESINO FROM OLANCHO

Sitting near Emerson in Popeyes, before the tear-gas and shooting, had been a mother and her little boy. They too had fled, when the bullets began flying through the windows and walls. Not long after, that 8 year old boy was cut down by an M-16 bullet in the head.

I spoke with Juan Angel Antunes Antunes, a 73 year old campesino from Olancho. He is here protesting, as well, when the soldiers opened fire. When he saw the little boy, who had just been eating in Popeyes and was struck in the head while fleeing, he picked him up to carry him to safety ... the little boy died, leaving his blood on Juan Angel's clothes.



(Juan Angel Antunes Antunes, with his identity card; a family member carries an M-16 bullet shell)



TRIED TO SAVE A TEENAGER

Just down the road from Juan Angel, 50 yards from the airport, I came across Cesar Silva, a journalist from Channel 8. He had picked up a teenager who had been shot in the head. He carried him to a vehicle ... and this youth reportedly died in the hospital, or on the way there.



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Tomorrow, the call is for the pro-democracy movement to meet again at the UPNFM (National Pedagogy University, Francisco Morazan). The FRCG (National Front Against the Coup) are meeting now, and will direct the pro-democracy movement tomorrow morning.

Another corner has been turned by the military / coup regime. They are defying international law; they have militarized their country; they are using live bullets against their own people.

The Honduran people are clear in their resolve.

They absolutely need the support and resolve of all other people and governments in the Americas. See the demands below and what to do below.

More to come

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Please re-distribute this information all around

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FUNDS ARE NEEDED FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE IN HONDURAS

Rights Action staff are in Honduras working with the pro-democracy and rule of law sectors. Funds are being sent to Honduras and used by community development and human rights organizations for: food and shelter, transportation and communication costs, urgent action outreach and human rights accompaniment work.

Make tax deductible donations to Rights Action and mail to:

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AMERICANS AND CANADIANS SHOULD CONTACT YOUR OWN MEDIA, MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, SENATORS & MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, TO DEMAND:

- unequivocal denunciation of the military coup
- no recognition of this military coup and the 'de facto' government of Roberto Michelletti and the unconditional return of the constitutional government
- * increasing economic and military sanctions against the coup regime
- respect for safety and human rights of all Hondurans
- justice and reparations for the illegal actions and rights violations committed during this illegal coup