

Rights Action

"THURSDAY, BLOODY THURSDAY IN HONDURAS"

Day 33 of Honduran Coup Resistance, July 31, 2009
(Alert#40)

THURSDAY, BLOODY THURSDAY IN HONDURAS

By Al Giordano, NarcoNews

Yesterday, July 30, was one of the worst days of repression since the June 28 military coup.

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THURSDAY, BLOODY THURSDAY IN HONDURAS

By Al Giordano, in Honduras (narconews@gmail.com)

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JULY 30, 2009, CUESTA DE LA VIRGEN, COMAYAGUA, HONDURAS

The first signs came in the form of tractor trailers, miles and miles of them, easily thousands, laden with melons and pineapples and bananas and sports apparel manufactured in the factories to the north, frozen in place, engines turned off, on the side of the road, about 80 kilometers out of the capital city of Tegucigalpa.

It was one p.m. today and there were no cars or trucks coming from the other direction. The oncoming lane was empty and that's the one your correspondent took.

The blockade had been in place since early morning. By 1:20 p.m., driving down from the mountain in the wrong lane, your vehicle still had not come to the blockage point. Finally, even the oncoming lane had become an endless traffic jam of more cars and trucks seeking the same southbound route, stopped cold.

A little after two p.m. the long line of vehicles began crawling forward again.

At a stretch of the road at the bottom of the miles-long hill stood three hundred or more military soldiers, National Police and specialized riot police with the acronym COEDO on their uniforms. They stood alongside the remains of burning matter, rocks and other debris that had just been cleared to the shoulders. The terrible sting of teargas clung to nostrils and throats and burned the eyes. But no remaining protesters could be seen anywhere.

The ANSA press agency would report that here, in Cuesta de la Virgen, the coup regime's show of force against the nonviolent blockaders wrought a toll of 156 arrests, including three seriously wounded.

In the same hour, Radio Globo – its northern signal at 101.1 FM had weakened at this point in the highway as its capital city signal at 88.7 FM became accessible – reported that the violent repression against the pacific demonstrators was not an aberration restricted to Cuesta de la Virgen.

Today's crackdown had been ordered nationwide.

Roger Abraham Vallejo Cerrado, 38, secretary of the San Martín high school, who had participated in a different anti-coup demonstration in Tegucigalpa, received a bullet wound to the head. That is him in the photo. [click on link to see AI's original article, with photos:

<http://www.facebook.com/ext/share.php?sid=106937444607&h=EqoY1&u=Mi6ld&ref=nf>

Another 88 arrests and 25 wounded was the body count from the illegitimate state repression on this same road, at El Durazno, five kilometers from the capital.

Among the arrested today were presidential candidate Carlos Reyes, beaten violently by the coup soldiers, left with a broken arm and a bloodied ear, and also arrested was national union leader Juan Barahona.

The news team of Venezolana de Televisión (VTV) was physically attacked by the police, TeleSur reports.

Those are just a few glimpses of the story as seen and reported from below, from the ground level in a country occupied by a military coup regime.

Meanwhile, up above, the illegitimate “president” Roberto Micheletti, continued to mock the neutered “peace process” championed in San José and Washington. With the left hand, he flashed a peace sign, while with the right hand, according to multiple press reports, he today ordered the police and military forces to “put a stop” to the peaceful blockades.

And in the next-door country’s capital of Managua, Nicaragua, the legitimate President Manuel Zelaya met with US Ambassador to Honduras Hugo Llorens, who led a delegation of US officials there for talks of which the details are not yet publicly known.

The full toll of Thursday, Bloody Thursday in Honduras has not yet been counted. “They treated us like animals,” Baranhona told Prensa Latina, while under arrest. The “forces of order” pursued and brutally beat the multitude in many locations across the land that had, for the fifth time in three weeks, successfully blockaded the key points of the country’s major arteries for most of the business day.

The logic of such ritual animalistic repression has never been clear to this observer. It never works to win hearts and minds. It very rarely works to cause protests to diminish. More often, it reminds the people that the repressive nature of the regime is a big part of why they are willing to risk life and limb for a just cause.

As events of the next few days will demonstrate, the civil resistance to the Honduran coup is visibly growing in size, organizational capacity and geographical scope. Today was the first time the people had put up a blockade in Cuesta de la Virgen. Despite the bloody repression – more likely because of it – don't make any bets that it will be the last.

Update II: Today in the state of Olancho, home of President Manuel Zelaya, coup supporters (popularly called "los perfumados" by many in Honduras) had announced a march in the President's home town of Catacamas, and loaded two busloads from the Tegucigalpa to play the role of local citizens two hours away. The authentic local citizens caught wind of it, though, and went to the town before Catacamas - La Real - and set up this blockade:

The coup supporters never made it past the blockade, which was held peacefully and successfully without incident. Lacking local participants, the announced pro-coup march in Catacamas never happened.

Update III 10:44 Tegucigalpa Time, 12:44 a.m. ET: The legitimate First Lady of Honduras, Xiomara Castro, who has been in the border regions with Nicaragua for the past week, is right now entering the city of Tegucigalpa in a caravan and heading for Radio Globo, where she will make an announcement tonight. You can listen to it here. Lord knows, most of Honduras will be.

There is a certain optimism, if not giddiness, in the voices of the radio announcers telling this story. Remember that her husband, Mel Zelaya, met with a US delegation today in Managua. Oh my, here she is...

Update IV: There are conflicting reports about the status of schoolteacher Roger Abraham Vallejo Cerrado with some media saying he passed away tonight and others saying he is still fighting for life. Neither version is confirmed.

Update V: The Zelaya family has been on the air with a supporting cast of hundreds on Radio Globo for 70 minutes now, with some very moving moments, but no "hard news," at least none announced. Tomorrow will be a most interesting day.

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EXTREME MILITARY AND POLICE REPRESSION IN HONDURAS

By Karen Spring, in Honduras (spring.kj@gmail.com)

Oscar Canales, standing 10m from where a teacher, Roger Abraham Vallejo Cerrado, age 38 that was shot today at a protest: "I was 10m ahead of him, I saw a man fall and then they started hitting people ... they are going to kill everyone and because of this the people are going to take more drastic measures. We are not going to accept that they kill our population."

The protest at Mercado Belén or El Mayoreo (a main market in the city) where Cerrado was killed, followed the repressive protest at El Durazo (northern exit of main highway leaving the capital), where police and military shot at, used tear gas and encircled the protesters.

People calling into Radio Globo, while at El Durazco, reported brutal beatings, sexual abuse and many injuries.

After leaving the police station where he was being detained in El Mayoreo among roughly 150 others, 20 year-old Carlos Alberto Cuello Canales lifted his shirt to show the welts on his back from where the police had beaten him.



(Photos: Karen Spring, Rights Action)

As people stood outside the Fourth police station located in El Mayoreo, they screamed 'freedom, freedom, freedom', demanding that those detained at the protest be released.



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(Police officers standing on top of station intimidating the crowd)

One man detained after the protest for a short period, left the police station with blood dripping down his face after receiving several blows to the head.



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One man described to me, shaking with fear and anger shortly after the protest, ““we were in a peaceful protest. The Constitution of Honduras says we have the right to protest. They have weapons. They have tear gas. They are killing people. Right now, they just killed a teacher. Many people were hit.”

One Honduran journalist, Oscar Estrada from ‘Talk Honduras’ sent to cover the protest was beaten while the police took his camera away.

“We went to cover the repression that the people were suffering from the police. The patrollers, M01 received the orders to take away our cameras because we were recording. All the police around us began trying to pull the camera away. We were hit, I have 4-5 marks on my back where they hit me and my friend was hit in the head. We couldn't pull out the cassette out the camera .. I was well identified and they told me that because of us, the country is in the state it is. When I told them we have to report what is happening in the country, they began hitting us with their baton.”

Tomorrow is the second day of the national strike. Some Honduras predict that more people will take to the streets to protest and violence and repression against the people will increase.

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WHAT TO DO

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

- an end to police, army and para-military repression
- respect for safety and human rights of all Hondurans
- unequivocal denunciation of the military coup
- no recognition of this military coup and the 'de facto' government of Roberto Micheletti
- unconditional return of the entire constitutional government
- concrete and targeted economic, military and diplomatic sanctions against the coup plotters and perpetrators
- application of international and national justice against the coup plotters
- reparations for the illegal actions and rights violations committed during this illegal coup

TO DONATE FUNDS TO PRO-DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT IN HONDURAS, MAKE TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS TO “RIGHTS ACTION” AND MAIL TO:

UNITED STATES: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887

CANADA: 552-351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8

CREDIT-CARD DONATIONS: <http://rightsaction.org/contributions.htm>

Upon request, Rights Action can provide a proposal of which organizations and people, in Honduras, we are channeling your funds to and supporting.

