

Rights Action

Day 49, Honduran Coup Resistance, August 15, 2009
(Alert#47)

MARVIN PONCE, MEMBER OF CONGRESS, HOSPITALIZED AFTER BRUTAL BEATING DURING PROTEST, By Karen Spring

Plus

Letter from Jenny, Quijote Center
Letter from Quijote Center
Report from 5th International Human Rights Delegation

The illegitimate coup regime in Honduras hangs on to power due to the wealth of the elite sectors and state repression. The onus is directly on the "international community" – particularly the USA and Canada - to take direct actions against the regime, particularly those countries and entities (private companies and banks, the "development" banks) that maintain financial and commercial relations, and military relations with the pro-coup sectors in Honduras.

SEE AT BOTTOM:

- to donate tax-deductible, urgently needed funds to pro-democracy movement in Honduras
- what to do?
- more information

Please re-distribute this information all around

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UPDATE FROM KAREN SPRING (RIGHTS ACTION), IN HONDURAS
(spring.kj@gmail.com, tel: 011 [504] 9507-3835)

MARVIN PONCE, MEMBER OF CONGRESS, HOSPITALIZED AFTER BRUTAL BEATING DURING PROTEST

The resistance movement suffered another day of severe repression yesterday.

Marching from the University of National Pedagogy to the Presidential Palace, the protesters changed their destination and headed to the Congress when it became known that a bill for obligatory military service was being debated and discussed by the coup regime's Congress.

In front of Congress, many were detained and severely hurt, including Marvin Ponce, a member of congress from the Honduran Democratic Union (UD) party.

Marvin recently went to Washington D.C. as a representative for the National Front Against the Coup to discuss the coup and the return of President Zelaya's government with the U.S. State Department, Congress and the World Bank.

Marvin was severely beaten and hit by rubber bullets in several areas of his body including his head. Today, he is scheduled to have an operation on his fractured left arm and is awaiting an x-ray to confirm the degree of head injuries he sustained.

As the crowd was violently dispersed, the downtown area of Tegucigalpa was totally militarized. Police roamed the streets, detaining any person they believed to be involved in the march. Many people were illegally detained, many hospitalized and the locations of others are still unknown.

International human rights observers, along with COFADEH (Committee for the Families of the Disappeared and Detained) and others searching for their family members and friends frantically attempt to gain entry to hospitals and police stations to confirm the names and whereabouts of groups of individuals detained or hospitalized during and after the march.

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LETTER FROM JENNY

Phil Stuart (fcstuartca@yahoo.ca) wrote: The cities of Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, have been militarized. In San Pedro Sula, helicopters dropped tear gas canisters on the city, over 300 people. This reminds me of Managua in late June-July 1979, although the Honduran army is not yet dropping ten-tonne bombs on working class barrios.

Dear Felipe Stuart,

Thank you for your calls to the US State Department and Ambassador Llorens to denounce the brutal repression unleashed on peaceful protestors yesterday in Honduras.

Today, people are stunned , injured and reeling from the impact of yesterday's attacks by Honduran police and military. The cities of Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, have been militarized.

In San Pedro Sula, helicopters dropped tear gas canisters on the city and have arrested over 300 people. The military has occupied centers in San Pedro that housed people participating in Tuesday's march. Lawyers are desperately working round the clock to secure the release of those detained.

In Tegucigalpa, the National Pedagogy University resembles a military base. Large numbers of people remain detained and missing. The use of 1980's torture centers as detention sites raises concerns that people are being tortured. COMAL and COPINH report that members of their organizations are missing and fear they may be disappeared.

Today our delegation is accompanying Honduran human rights workers to detention sites. See our Press Release detailing events.

Our partners in Honduras are deeply concerned about the rapidly deteriorating situation. They have asked us to sustain emergency accompaniment work through the end of this year. We need your help to stand with the courageous human rights workers and people of Honduras at this critical time. Please consider a donation of \$100 to support our accompaniment effort.

Also, please call the U.S. State Department (202-647-4000) and Ambassador Llorens 011-504-236-9320, ext. #4268 and demand that the U.S:

Publically denounce the extreme and widespread violations of human rights on the part of the coup government.

Publically state that it will not recognize elections sponsored by the coup regime.

Revoke U.S. tourist visas and freeze bank accounts of those involved in the coup.

Cut off all U.S. economic assistance for the coup regime in Honduras.

Thank you for accompanying us on this Quest for Peace in Honduras.

Jenny

[Contact - Tom Loudon:toml@quixote.org]

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4th Int'l Human Rights Delegation

[Contact - Tom Loudon:toml@quixote.org]

August 7, 2009

Luis Alberto Rubi

Attorney General of Honduras

Tegucigalpa, Honduras

As the fourth consecutive International Human Rights delegation present in the country since the coup d'état, we are writing to express our deep concern regarding the grave and rapidly deteriorating situation of human rights in Honduras, beginning with the events which occurred early in the morning of June 28th.

In the name of the human rights observation groups which have visited (The Bi-Regional European Network Linking Alternatives in Latin America and the Caribbean, The Human Rights Delegation Headed by Rigoberta Menchu, The Center for Justice and International Law, and the Quixote Center/Quest for Peace), we ask that you provide us information about the following cases, and indicate what your office has been doing regarding the troubling human rights situation in Honduras.

We are arranging a continuing presence of delegations for the foreseeable future, and among their principal roles will be following up on these cases on the national level with your office, as well as on the international level. They will monitor your response to this communication, as well as new cases of human rights abuses which may occur.

· What are the investigations which you have initiated and at what stage are the cases of the kidnapping and expatriation of José Manuel Zelaya Rosales, President of the Republic, and the Foreign Minister, Patricia Rodas? What have you done to investigate and hold accountable the military and the intellectual authors of these illegal actions?

· We are concerned about the multitude of reports of violations of the right to information which we have heard about.

What is the state of investigation of who ordered the temporary cancellation of the program of Hedras Amado Lopez on channel 36, Edgardo Castro from channel 27 as well as the suspension of the radio program "Voices to assure we don't forget"? Who gave the order for the suspension of Radio Global? We ask you to clarify who is behind the shooting of Radio Juticalpa and Channel 23 in Olanchito. We are also interested in what you have discovered related to the threats being received by journalists in Santa Rosa de Copan. We would encourage you to begin an investigation of these cases if you have not already done so.

· We are also concerned about the suspension of freedom of movement and other constitutionally guaranteed liberties.

· What actions will the public ministry undertake to investigate and prosecute the police and the military given their serious violation of the sovereignty and autonomy of the National University of Honduras, and physical aggression of the rector of the university on August 5th 2009? Police also threatened students, saying that "for every visa that gets revoked, one of you will die."

· What actions will the public ministry undertake to investigate the forced disappearances of civilians, especially the case of Samuel David Flores Murillo, age 24, of San Pedro Sula?

· What actions will the public ministry undertake to investigate the deaths of, and prosecute those responsible for the deaths of the following nine people:

1. Isis Obed Murillo Mencias, 19 years old
2. Gabriel Fino Noriega, journalist from Radio Estelar, in the department of Atlántida, killed by 7 bullets on July 3rd, as he left his work.
3. Ramón García, leader in the Democratic Union (UD), forced off of public transport when he was coming back from a protest, and riddled with bullets in the area of Santa Bárbara.
4. Roger Iván Bados, former unión leader of the textile sector and current member of the UD and Popular Bloque (BP), threatened with death immediately after the coup, and shot to death after being pulled from his own house on July 11 in San Pedro Sula.
5. Vicky Hernández Castillo (Sonny Emelson Hernández), member of the LGTB community, dead in San Pedro Sula from a gunshot to the eye.
6. Alexis Fernando Amador, dressed in a "4th Urna" T-shirt, found dead on Saturday July 3 in the "Agua Blanca" area of Tegucigalpa.
7. Roger Abraham Vallejo Soriano, killed on Julio 29, 2009.
8. Martin Florencio Rivera Barrientes.
9. Pedro Magdiel, killed in El Paraíso.

· We're concerned about the case of Osman Fajardo, the judge assigned to follow up with the writs of habeas corpus filed on behalf of those detained illegally in San Pedro Sula on August 3rd 2009, who was threatened and assaulted by police when he appeared at the police station. What actions will the public ministry undertake to investigate this case and to ensure the safety of all public officials, especially those working to see that the rule of law is upheld in Honduras?

· We are concerned about the case of David Murillo, who was detained after leaving the COFADEH office where he was filing a legal denunciation of the murder of his son at an anti-coup demonstration (listed above). Mr. Murillo is imprisoned in Juticalpa, which he believes is for political reasons. What actions will the public ministry undertake to investigate this case and to ensure that all citizens have access to an efficient and effective justice system?

· A teacher in San Pedro Sula showed us eight anonymous death threats received on his cell phone, including threats against his children. These threats mentioned his past and present political work. He and others believe their names to be on a "death list," and believe that they are targets for disappearance or assassination. We understand that the staff of the Honduran Institute for Rural Development (IHDER) has also been threatened. What actions will the public ministry undertake to investigate and prosecute those making these threats, as well as to ensure the safety of those threatened for their nonviolent work?

· What actions will the public ministry undertake to investigate and prosecute the police and the military for their attack on the life of Carlos H. Reyes, especially given that he was under preventive measures under the Interamerican Human Rights Commission with its headquarters in DC?

· Have you begun investigations into the various people who have received death threats, like Xenia Sagrado Flores Hernández, who is publicly known, of the teacher Sergio Rivera, who is also publicly known, of the youth Ricardo Antonio Medida, as well as Osman Montecino, to mention just a few.

· What has the Public Ministry done with respect to the torturous treatment suffered by those detained at the 3rd Cell of the Comoyagua Regional Police headquarters and who will be held responsible for the violent eviction?

Thus, Attorney General Luis Alberto, we will be very attentive to your actions regarding the investigations which you undertake in accordance with the pertinent legal requirements should you find sufficient evidence. We are giving you an enormous opportunity for proving your capacity to do your job with objectivity and Independence.

Sincerely,

[Contact - Tom Loudon:toml@quixote.org]

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REPORT OF THE FIFTH INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS OBSERVATION DELEGATION, 9 – 15 August 2009
[Contact - Tom Loudon:toml@quixote.org]

We are the fifth International Mission that has been present in Honduras since the coup d'etat which took place on June 28th. Members from the United States, Canada, Guatemala, and France are here in Honduras from the 9th to the 15th of August observing first-hand the human rights situation in the streets, and informing the world of our observations.

The principal points we would like to make based on our direct observation are the following:

1. STRONG REPRESSION AND ACCELERATING INCREASE IN HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

We are seeing a steady decrease in the possibilities for the exercise of human and constitutional rights, principally the right to peaceful assembly. Repression increases as the political problem continues. Hundreds of military and police have strongly repressed the mobilizations, have criminalized protest, and have used highly excessive force with instruments such as tear gas bombs, pepper gas, and metal batons. The police and military are currently even present behind the marches, another violation of the right to free assembly and free movement. In addition, they have unjustly detained dozens of people for hours; many of them have been serious wounds which required medical care, which they were denied. Some people remained detained overnight. This is added to the rising toll of violations which have been accumulating since the coup itself, including many detained, disappeared, and murdered – especially among peasant farmers and teachers. The detained are being charged with crimes such as sedition, illicit protest, and damage to private property. We are especially worried about the daily use of the elite police force, COBRA, as well as the naming of ex-“316” death squad member Billy Joya as the President’s chief of security. This could be interpreted at best as a lapse in judgment, and at worst as an intentional decision to terrorize the population.

2. VIOLATION OF THE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

This has been evidenced by the temporary closing of channels and the cancellation of programs; as well as by multiple attacks on journalists in the course of their work; attacks on leaders such as Carlos H. Reyes, independent presidential candidate; Marvin Ponce, Congressperson of the Democratic Unification party; and attacks on the offices of different popular organizations (Via Campesina, STIBYS, SITRAIHSS). Additionally, journalists from Canal 36 and Radio Globo have been denied entrance into the Casa Presidencial to provide media coverage there. These acts seem to part of a strategy to criminalize protest and to close off spaces for public expression.

3. We have sent a communication directly to the Attorney General, Luis Antonio Rubi, in which we related our findings, and requested information about his work regarding the thousands of cases of violations of human rights, and requesting that he guarantees citizens security from the Attorney General of Human Rights. To date we have received no response.

4. THE DETERIORATING HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION, PLUS THE POLITICAL REPRESSION AND AGGRESSION, HIGHLIGHT THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL PRESSURE IN ORDER TO REESTABLISH CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AND TO AVOID WORSENING ACTS OF VIOLENCE. However, at this moment, when greater presence and pressure is needed on the part of international organizations such as the OAS and UN, they have seemingly

weakened their efforts. On the other hand, we recognize the initiative of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in sending a commission to verify the situation. We urge other international bodies to undertake similar actions out of respect for the lives of the Honduran people. The situation is quite grave, and the more time that passes under this policy of repression, the more human rights violations that could occur, and possibly the loss of more lives.

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WHAT TO DO

TO DONATE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE FUNDS TO PRO-DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT IN HONDURAS, MAKE CHECK 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>

For foundations and institutional donors, Rights Action can – upon request - provide a full proposal of which organizations and people we are channeling funds to and supporting.

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 and 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

no recognition of the November 2009 elections, that candidates are campaigning for, even as the country is militarized and repression is widespread

unconditional return of the entire constitutional government of President Zelaya

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

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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See Rights Action's previous Honduras Coup Alerts: www.rightsaction.org