

Rights Action

January 5, 2010

HONDURAS –

Struggle for real democracy and justice continues

BELOW:

- Report by COFADEH, a leading Honduran human rights group
- Sign-on letter concerning repression in Honduras

DELEGATION TO HONDURAS, January 24-31, 2010

More than an educational delegation (anyone who comes will learn a huge amount about the military-oligarchic coup and the courage and vision of Honduras' pro-democracy movement), this will be a human rights accompaniment and observation delegation. IF INTERESTED: Grahame Russell, info@rightsaction.org

FOR INTERVIEWS & MORE INFORMATION

Annie Bird, annie@rightsaction.org, 202-680-3002; Grahame Russell, info@rightsaction.org, 860-352-2448

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January 1, 2010

COFADEH (Committee of the Families of the Disappeared and Detained of Honduras) reports ...

FROM MILITARY COUP D'ETAT TO ILLEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT OF FORCE – ENTERING 2010

(Translated by www.quixote.org)

This week's kidnapping, disappearance, torture and interrogation of journalist Cesar Omar Silva by a street patrol with military training confirms the existence of a pattern of systematic violations of human rights committed by the same structure that violated the constitutional order on June 28, 2009.

This pattern is the responsibility of the “hard hand” of the coup regime that imposes state violence on a citizenry that resists through popular, non violent insurrection.

The related, recent murders of Walter Tróchez and Edwin Renán Fajardo (editor of documentaries and reports produced by the journalist Cesar Omar Silva for various international media outlets), the sustained kidnappings and attacks on the staff of El Libertador and Radio Globo and in recent days against journalist Rony Martinez whose tires were slashed and has experienced constant persecution by unknown individuals as well as police, confirms that a death squad with a terrorist infrastructure is operating in the country with the knowledge of the Police and the Army.

In addition, the violent deaths of other members of the National Popular Resistance Front carried out in a selective manner by hit men in the service of the de facto regime, the pursuit, disappearance, torture and interrogation of independent journalists repeats the pattern of the 1980s-1990s which left a tragic legacy of political assassinations and hundreds of forced disappearances.

As in the “dirty war” years (1980s-90s), today the people are organized in Committees of Imprisoned and Pursued and Political Exiles, Committees for the Defense of Life, Students for Freedom and the broad based National Popular Resistance Front, all of which are pushing for the emergence of a new Social Pact that will re-found our country.

In response to this unstoppable mobilization on the part of the population the government of the National Party, which emerged from the coup, offers systematic violence as the only alternative for staying in power given its enormous social and political illegitimacy.

Today we enter the first hours of 2010 in an atmosphere of terror with which the coup regime – civilian and military, national and international – intend to silence the voices of millions of legitimate Honduran citizens who reject the use of violence as a means of coercing consent and governing the state.

COFADEH calls on the international community to keep its eyes on this Central American country and to declare maximum alert in terms of the human rights situation. The economic, political and diplomatic isolation of the coup regime, and its successor as of the 29th of November, reduces its ability to maneuver in the civilized world although it adds to the vulnerability of the population.

It is extremely urgent that multilateral organizations send delegations to Honduras before and after the sham “transfer of power” on January 27th, in order to help save the lives of social and political leaders opposed to those who have seized power.

Honduras is advancing at an accelerated pace, far from the international eye, towards a state of absolute defenselessness.

Today, we share the Plaza of the Disappeared with members of the Committee of Imprisoned and Pursued and Political Exiles, their families, friends and some of those who are currently pursued by the dictator. For them we demand fair trails and respect for the due process of law, freedom for the four political prisoners in the National Penitentiary and the return of over one hundred people who have been forced to leave Honduras to save their lives.

Without a popular Constituent Assembly, peace and tranquility are not possible; without a new Social Pact and minimal political consensus governability will not be possible.

Freedom for political prisoners /
Impartial trails for those who are pursued by the dictatorship /
Stop political persecution /

FOR THE VIOLATIONS AND FOR THOSE RESPONSIBLE, NO FORGETTING,
NO FORGIVENESS

COFADEH, Tegucigalpa, January 1, 2010

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SIGN-ON LETTER

Deadline: Monday January 11th. To sign as a group, send email to:
elektrodread@gmail.com

LETTER AGAINST THE HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN POST-COUP HONDURAS

We, the undersigned workers, artists, & intellectuals, strongly condemn the widespread human rights atrocities against the Honduran people, beginning with the military coup on June 28th of 2009. Reports from human rights organizations emerge every day detailing state repression, from rape to assassination, of members of the non-violent resistance, whose aim is to restore constitutional order to their country and foster the creation of a more just society.

These abuses by the Honduran state violate nearly every article of the American Convention on Human Rights, to which Honduras is a signatory, beginning with the rupture of constitutional order and resulting in thousands of rights violations.

As recognized by the Interamerican Commission on Human Rights, and documented extensively by COFADEH, Honduras' leading human rights

organization, the coup regime has demonstrated a premeditated pattern of violent tactics with which it aims to quell the resistance to the coup:

- Mass detentions in subhuman prison facilities
- The repression of assembly and mobility by means of excessive force
- The establishment of curfews and the suspension of constitutional guarantees
- Rape and gang rape
- Targeted assassinations
- The censorship of media by means of threatening and killing journalists, employing blackouts, confiscating equipment, & the outright closure of anti-coup TV and Radio stations
- Torture
- Disappearance and kidnapping
- Psychological warfare
- Impunity for the perpetrators of these crimes

Though these acts have been carried out by the police and the armed forces, there has been an alarming increase in the use of paramilitary personnel. The United Nations reported that some 40 ex-members of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia — Latin America’s largest paramilitary outfit, & terrorist organization as designated by the US State Department — had been employed by Honduran landowners. An increasing number of assassinations and abductions have been carried out by unidentified agents.

This repression has disproportionately targeted marginalized communities, such as indigenous, campesino, & afro-Honduran groups. The LGBT community, for one, recently lost one of its young leaders, Walter Trochez, 27, gunned down by masked assailants on December 13th. Trochez’ murder is the sixteenth suffered by the LGBT community since the overthrow of Zelaya.

On December 11th, the body of Santos Corrales Garcia appeared decapitated in a neighborhood outside of Tegucigalpa. Garcia was a local leader of the non-violent resistance, and had been detained six days earlier by heavily armed members of the National Criminal Investigation Division. Garcia’s body showed signs of torture, indicative of a low-intensity campaign to create collective fear, according to human rights advocate Andres Pavon.

Violence against women has also escalated greatly. As written in the Christian Science Monitor: “As of August, women’s groups in Honduras have documented 249 cases of violations of women’s human rights, including 23 cases of beatings and sexual assault and seven gang rapes by police explicitly trying to “punish” women for their involvement in demonstrations. The number of femicides – the violent murder of women because they are women – has tripled since the coup, with 51 cases reported during the month of July alone.”

In the face of all this, the regime held elections on November 29th, resulting in the “victory” of Pepe Lobo of the National Party. The sharp rise in brutality in the aftermath of the elections indicates that this may have been the worst thing for the human rights situation in Honduras, as powerful governments in the hemisphere — namely the United States, Canada, and Colombia — have used the elections as an opportunity to whitewash the coup. An ardent supporter of the overthrow of Zelaya, Lobo is already pursuing a general amnesty for its perpetrators.

For those governments that deal with Honduras, particularly the United States, this must be considered unacceptable and dealt with according to national and international law. The unwillingness to condemn the military regime for its thousands of human rights abuses demonstrates a capitulation to the coup, its repressive tactics, and its impact on Honduran democracy and civil society. To remain silent here is to condone the use of military repression against unarmed populations, and to encourage its use in future instances.

It is the moral imperative of the international community to demand the immediate end of the brutality in Honduras, and that the human rights of all citizens, particularly those involved in political activity, be respected without conditions.

Signed,

Noam Chomsky, Professor of Linguistics
National Committee in Solidarity with the Honduran People
National Lawyers Guild
School of the Americas Watch
Aviva Chomsky, Professor of History
Hondurans for Democracy
Alliance for Global Justice
Nicaragua Network
Campaign for Labor Rights
Venezuela Solidarity Campaign
La Voz de los de Abajo
Rights Action
Boston May Day Coalition
Proyecto Hondureño
Mass Global Action
Boston Liberation Health Group
United for Justice with Peace, the Greater Boston coalition
Somerville/Medford United for Justice with Peace
Greater Boston Stop the Wars Coalition

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TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS

Since the June 28th military coup, Rights Action has channeled over \$75,000 of your donations and grants to Honduran civil society organizations doing pro-democracy, pro-rule of law, and human rights defense work. Make check payable 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>

Complete proposal-report available on request.

WHAT TO DO

There is no reason for North Americans to write the "government" of Honduras to demand they respect human rights and properly investigate these political crimes. They won't. The military coup regime in Honduras is carrying out State repression on purpose; repression will absolutely continue in Honduras.

North Americans must send these informations to our politicians and governments. We must hold our governments partially and significantly accountable for Honduras' State repression.

The United States and Canada are the main governments that have accepted and endorsed the November 29th "elections" as legitimate ("elections" that have served to legitimize the June 28th military coup and sweep under the rug 5 months of repression and killings).

Now, the illegitimate government continues with its repression. But for the legitimization and support that the Honduran regime is receiving from the USA and Canada, it would not be able to repress with such impunity.

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- RECOMMENDED BOOKS: Eduardo Galeano's "Open Veins of Latin America"; Howard Zinn's "A People's History of the United States"; Naomi Klein's "The Shock Doctrine"; Paulo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed"; Dr. Seuss's "Horton Hears a Who"