

Rights Action
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Ousted President's Return To Honduras Doesn't Mean Repression Is Over

By Dana Frank

Karen Spring & Annie Bird, of Rights Action, are in Honduras and will report on the return of President Zelaya. Rights Action will continue to support efforts by the amazing pro-democracy movement to put an end to the illegitimate, military-backed regime (and their systematic use of State-sponsored repression) and to re-found the country and re-build a just democracy and legal order. Another world is possible and necessary. CONTACT: Spring.kj@gmail.com, [504]9507-3835; annie@rightsaction.org

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OUSTED PRESIDENT'S RETURN TO HONDURAS DOESN'T MEAN REPRESSION IS OVER

By Dana Frank, May 27, 2011

The return of deposed President Manuel Zelaya to Honduras doesn't mean democracy, civil liberties and the basic rule of law are returning to that country any time soon. Far from it.

The very same oligarchs who launched the coup remain in power, and in the past two months the government's repression has accelerated. That's why more than 70 members of Congress are calling for a suspension of U.S. military and police aid to Honduras.

On May 22, Zelaya and the current president of Honduras, Porfirio Lobo Sosa, signed a pact permitting Zelaya to return free of the trumped-up charges the coup makers leveled against him when the Honduran military packed him onto a plane to Costa Rica on June 28, 2009. Lobo also promised to allow plebiscites and to recognize the National Front of Popular Resistance, the broad coalition uniting labor, women's groups, peasant organizations, gay alliances and Afro-indigenous movements.

But both of these "concessions" are already legally on the books, and grant nothing concrete to the opposition.

Zelaya's return itself does have enormous popular significance. For hundreds of thousands of Hondurans, including those who are quite critical of him, he is the grand symbol of resistance to the ongoing military coup. He represents constitutional order, the rule of law and a hope for a different Honduran future based on social justice.

But neither Zelaya's return nor the pact address the horrific human rights situation in the country. Lobo appointed the same officers who ran the coup to control the armed forces, the state-owned telephone company, the airports and the immigration service. And the government's authoritarianism in the past two months now exceeds the period right after the coup.

Police and the military now routinely shoot tear gas canisters directly at peaceful demonstrators at close range. Paramilitary gangs have killed more than 40 peasant activists since Lobo took office, including four in the last three weeks. Since Lobo came to power in the coup, more than 300 opposition members have been killed, according to human rights groups. Impunity reigns. You can drive by and shoot a teacher, an indigenous activist or a trade unionist, and nothing – nothing — will happen to you.

Lobo, in the accord, promised to create a new ministry overseeing human rights. But his promise means nothing. Indeed, three days after

the accord, his police launched live bullets and tear gas against a group of high school students protesting the suspension of their math teachers.

Despite growing congressional recognition of the crisis, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton keeps insisting that “democracy has been restored” and that Honduras should be readmitted to the Organization of American States at its June 5-7 meeting.

Rather than join Clinton in whitewashing a repressive regime, we should unite with members of Congress in demanding an immediate suspension of U.S. military aid to Honduras — and an end to support for the ongoing coup government of Porfirio Lobo.

[Dana Frank is professor of history at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and the author of “Bananeras: Women Transforming the Banana Unions of Latin America”. She can be reached at: pmproj@progressive.org]

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WHAT TO DO

WWW.RIGHTSACTION.ORG

Rights Action is a not-for-profit organization, with tax charitable status in Canada and the USA. We directly fund and work with community-based development, environmental, disaster relief and human rights projects and organizations fighting to eliminate poverty and impunity and the underlying causes of poverty and impunity in Guatemala and Honduras, as well as in Chiapas [Mexico], El Salvador and Haiti. We educate about and are involved work aimed at critically understanding unjust north-south relations and global development, environmental and human rights issues and the challenges of poverty eradication.

TO MAKE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS

for indigenous and campesino organizations working for community-controlled development, environmental justice, human rights & justice in Guatemala & Honduras, make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

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

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SPEAKERS: Contact us to plan educational presentations in your community, school, place of worship, home (info@rightsaction.org)

EDUCATIONAL DELEGATIONS TO CENTRAL AMERICA: Form your own group and/ or join one of our educational delegation-seminars to learn first hand about community development, human rights and environmental struggles (info@rightsaction.org)

CREATE YOUR OWN email and mail lists and re-distribute our information

RECOMMENDED DAILY NEWS: www.democracynow.org /

www.upsidedownworld.org / www.dominionpaper.ca

RECOMMENDED BOOKS: Eduardo Galeano's "Open Veins of Latin America"; Howard Zinn's "A People's History of the United States"; James Loewen's "Lies My Teacher Told Me"; Naomi Klein's "The Shock Doctrine"; Paolo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed"; Dr Seuss's "Horton Hears A Who"

FOR MORE INFORMATION (www.rightsaction.org):

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