

Rights Action
March 13, 2018

U.S. and Canada Governments enabling “Culture of Corruption” in Honduras (New York Times)

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/us-and-canada-governments-enabling-a-culture-of-corruption-in-honduras>

Below:

U.N. blames Honduras security forces for killing electoral fraud protesters

Reuters, March 12, 2018

Deadly Corruption in Honduras

New York Times, The Editorial Board, March 13, 2018

Political Prisoners’ Families Abused when Trying to Visit Prisoners in El Pozo

March 11, 2018, By Riccy Ponce

U.N. blames Honduras security forces for killing electoral fraud protesters

Reuters Staff, March 12, 2018

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-honduras-election/u-n-blames-honduras-security-forces-for-killing-electoral-protesters-idUSKCN1GO22F>

GENEVA (Reuters) - Honduran security forces, especially the military police, used excessive and lethal force against protesters demonstrating against President Juan Orlando Hernandez’s disputed re-election in November, the United Nations said on Monday.

The security forces shot dead at least 16 people, including two women and two children, out of at least 23 people known to have died during the protests, the U.N. human rights office said in a report. “These cases raise serious concerns and may amount to extra-judicial killings,” the report said. Seven people were killed by shots to the head, it said.

“Analysis of the type of injuries suffered by the victims indicate that the security forces made intentional lethal use of firearms, including beyond dissuasive or self-defense (legitimate) purposes, such as when protesters were fleeing.”

Hernandez, a conservative supported by the United States, appeared set to lose the Nov. 26 election until an abrupt halt in the vote count and a shift in the results took victory away from his center-left rival, Salvador Nasralla.



Gilberto Ríos grillo
@Grillo779

Condenamos el asesinato de la compañera Kimberly Dayanna Fonseca, por la Policía Militar en la Col. Honduras. ¡#JOH Asesino!



(Kimberly Fonseca, 19, was shot December 2, 2017 by government forces during an anti-electoral fraud protest.)

[...] U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein said in a statement that things were likely to get worse unless Honduras prosecuted people for the killings. "The already fragile human rights situation in Honduras, which suffers from high levels of violence and insecurity, is likely to deteriorate further unless there is true accountability for human rights violations, and reforms are taken to address the deep political and social polarization in the country," he said.

Deadly Corruption in Honduras

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/13/opinion/honduras-corruption-berta-caceres.html>

New York Times, The Editorial Board, March 13, 2018

The killings might have succeeded in crushing indigenous opposition to a proposed dam in Honduras if Berta Cáceres had not been one of the victims. Her leadership

of a campaign against the construction of the dam, on the Gualcarque River, which is sacred to her Lenca people, garnered a prestigious international award and international attention, and her murder by gunmen two years ago generated intense pressure to find her killers.

Now the Honduran police have arrested the man who at the time was chief executive of the company building the dam, Roberto David Castillo Mejía. He is at least the ninth person arrested in the killing, but, more important, he was identified as an “intellectual author” of the crime, or a mastermind behind the company employees, hired assassins and members of the army already under arrest for the murder.

The arrest offers a glimpse into the links between government, military and business elite in a culture of corruption. Honduras is the deadliest country in the world for environmental activists. Ms. Cáceres and two other members of her organization were among 14 killed in 2016.

After her death, a team of international lawyers found that the killing had been months in the planning. The United States joined in pressuring the Honduran government to solve the case. Mr. Castillo’s arrest suggests the pressure worked.

Far less clear is whether the arrest represents a fundamental change in Honduras or merely the sacrifice of a scapegoat in a case that got too big.

As the Cáceres investigation was making headlines, the president of Honduras, Juan Orlando Hernández, twisted the law to run for re-election and win a vote so dubious that international observers called for a new election. Yet the Trump administration kept quiet.

Mr. Hernández, who came to power in a 2009 coup supported by the Obama administration, has been a willing ally of Washington, whether fighting terrorism and drugs or stopping migrants.

Mr. Hernández may not be directly involved in the murder of Ms. Cáceres. But for the United States to demand that her murder be solved while cynically enabling the corrupt politics behind it makes it more likely that hers will not be the last killing.

Political Prisoners’ Families Abused when Trying to Visit Prisoners in El Pozo
March 11, 2018, El Pozo Prison, Tegucigalpa, By Riccy Ponce

<http://defensoresenlinea.com/malos-tratos-reciben-familiares-de-los-presos-politicos-en-el-pozo-al-querer-visitarlos/>

Family members of political prisoners from Pimienta, Cortés, held in the maximum security prison in Llama, Santa Bárbara, have lived the last two months in despair, unable to see their imprisoned loved ones.

Melvin Mauricio Chávez Pérez, Francisco Miguel Gómez and Lourdes Yojana Gómez, are all members of the same family. The two men are held in the maximum security prison known as El Pozo, and the woman in the Tela penitentiary, due to their participation in the peaceful demonstrations against the electoral fraud of November 26. They have not received the visits of family members for more than two months.

Yojana Quiroz, sister-in-law of one of the political prisoners, Melvin Mauricio Chávez Pérez, expressed “we haven’t seen them since December 31, when they let us in. We have tried to see them but they haven’t allowed us. They tell us, why do we want to look for them if we know that they are criminals, but we know they are not criminals, and that the only thing they’ve done is participate peacefully in a demonstration to defend the rights of all Hondurans, not how they’re being accused.” Quiroz added that the families waiting for the release of their loved ones are facing a critical situation, and some are suffering severe health problems.

“My mother-in-law, who is the mother of Melvin Chávez, had a stroke after seeing her son in prison, and without being able to know more about how he’s doing, she has gotten worse; she knows that her son and all of the political prisoners are innocent and we are all suffering because we don’t know what is going on with them, and we can only ask God and shed our tears, because we cannot find a solution.”

Astrid Ortega, the wife of Francisco Miguel Gómez Martínez, explained that the situation is very difficult because they went to the El Pozo facilities one Sunday and authorities wouldn’t let them get past the door, and they spoke badly of their incarcerated family members, and in front of their children.

“It’s very hard, we went to see them in Llama, Santa Bárbara last Sunday, and the director there told us that they were going to make fried meat of them along with the children, and that we’d never get in since gang members didn’t have permission to receive visitors; and we really didn’t like that because they aren’t gang members, they are political prisoners who were protesting.”

“Family members like us hope and expect that they’ll get out soon, because they’ve been there for more than two months. The children ask for their father, my son is intelligent and when I tell him that his father is not here, he responds that it’s because the police took him away, that the police have him,” Ortega adds.

She also adds that she is surviving thanks to the support of others, since she is also taking care of the children of her sister-in-law Lourdes, imprisoned in the Tela Penitentiary, including her own son, she cares for four children now.

Speaking to defensoresenlinea.com, Julio Chávez, brother of Melvin Chávez, spoke positively of the National Committee for the Liberation of Political Prisoners, promoted by the Convergence against Continuation in Power which brings together several human rights organizations. He explained that the creation of this committee is wonderful, because we need help, we are unprotected, and now with a committee concerned about the prisoners, one can be less concerned. When we went to Tegucigalpa and they said they would form this committee to help prisoners, it was excellent news for us, that makes us happier, and gives us some peace of mind.

More Information

- Karen Spring, Edwin Espinal’s partner & Coordinator of Honduras Solidarity Network
spring.kj@gmail.com / (504) 9584-8572 /
<https://freedwinespinallibertad.blogspot.com> / [Free EDWIN ESPINAL Libertad](#) / #FreeEdwinEspinal #LibertadEdwinEspinal /
- Grahame Russell, Rights Action, 1-416-807-4436 / info@rightsaction.org /
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KEEP ON writing

If U.S. and Canadian citizens don’t succeed in pressuring our governments to advocate openly for the release of political prisoners, if our media continues to cover-up Canadian and U.S. complicity with repression and corruption in Honduras, the violence and suffering will continue unabated.

United States

Contact directly your elected Senators, Congress members:

<https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>

- Heide Fulton: US Chief of Mission, Honduras, BronkeHM@state.gov
- Jason Smith, Human Rights and Labor, SmithJA6@state.gov

Canada

Ambassador James Hill, Embassy of Canada in Costa Rica, Honduras and Nicaragua, James.Hill@international.gc.ca, tg1pa@international.gc.ca
Minister Chrystia Freeland, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Global Affairs Canada, chrystia.freeland@parl.gc.ca, chrystia.freeland.c1d@parl.gc.ca,
chrystia.freeland@international.gc.ca,

- Canadian embassy for Honduras: Bertrand-Xavier Asselin, Bertrand-Xavier.Asselin@international.gc.ca; Isabelle Solon Helal, Isabelle.SolonHelal@international.gc.ca; Kyle Sundstrom, Kyle.Sundstrom@international.gc.ca

Directly contact your Member of Parliament and ask them as well to write Chrystia Freeland and James Hill:

<https://www.ourcommons.ca/Parliamentarians/en/members>

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To support the work and struggle of our long-term partner groups in Honduras, responding to the human rights and repression crisis, including the political prisoners, make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

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- Canada: (Box 552) 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8

Credit-Card Donations: <http://rightsaction.org/donate/>

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Other organizations

- Honduras Solidarity Network: <http://www.hondurassolidarity.org>;
<https://www.facebook.com/HondurasSolidarityNetwork>;
<https://twitter.com/hondurassol>
- Witness for Peace: www.witnessforpeace.org;
<https://twitter.com/WitnessforPeace>

- School of Americas Watch: www.soaw.org; <https://twitter.com/SOAWatch>
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