

HONDURAS

POPULAR NATIONAL CONSULTATION,

JUNE 28, 2009,

CONCERNING THE FORMATION OF A CONSTITUENT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY THAT WILL CONSIDER SERIOUS CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

BELOW: An article about COPINH (a long-time Rights Action partner group in Honduras) and their work and struggle going on right now in favor of the peoples' right to a popular consultation, that the traditional, powerful elites of Honduras are opposing.

WHAT TO DO / SUPPORT IS NEEDED: See below

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COPINH (CIVIC COUNCIL OF POPULAR & INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATIONS OF HONDURAS) CALLS FOR INSURRECTION, IF THE PEOPLE ARE NOT CONSULTED

Monday, 18 May 2009, by Marvin Palacios (Translated for Rights Action by Rosalind Gill, RGill@glendon.yorku.ca)

There will be insurrection and civil disobedience if there are any attempts to impede the Executive Branch's promotion of a community consultation regarding the formation of a Constituent National Assembly.

Today, outside the Public Ministry, over one hundred campesino and campesina members of COPINH, machetes in hand, staged a protest. In a communiqué distributed to the press, COPINH sent out a

"call to all sectors of Honduran society, stating that if the obscurantist and power groups and the transnationals and their spokespersons deny us our right to a consultation and to reforms to transform Honduras into a people's democratic state, we will organize a massive popular insurrection. Our insurrection will be inspired by the spirit of Lempira, Francisco Morazán, Visitación Padilla, Graciela García and Juan Manuel Cálix, amongst others."

The communiqué states:

"For decades, the indigenous peoples have been subjected to killings, imprisonment, discrimination and torture of all kinds, ... We therefore maintain our conviction to struggle for true peace, with intercultural democracy, justice, liberty and development."

COPINH underlines the fact that community consultation is a basic right, as well as being an excellent opportunity to create a judicial constitutional context for recognition of linguistic rights and the territorial rights of indigenous and black peoples, as well as those of children, workers and youth.

The communiqué points out that the consultation will respond to the right of the people to direct democracy, to make it possible for the people to achieve self-determination, freedom of expression, public accountability, transparency and a justice system that does not tolerate abuse and impunity.

Berta Cáceres, co-founder of COPINH, maintained that

"not only do we want a popular consultation (known as the "Cuarta Urna", the fourth ballot box), but we also want a popular and democratic Constituent National Assembly. We want constitutional reform in favour of the majority."

When asked if she supports maintaining the present political parties, Cáceres answered

"we do not agree with continuismo because it means carrying on with the same neoliberal policies that place power in the hands of the transnationals, big business and the 25 rich families that have mercilessly sacked this country."

Cáceres explained that by insurrection, they mean that people will rise up to defend their legitimate rights, because

"we do not want this country to continue selling out to the transnational mining companies, Miguel Facussé, Fredy Nasser and the Roble y Coyolito group."

"The Honduran people have had enough of those tired old political sectors - they have no credibility; we are fed up with those corrupt political representatives who have sold this country to the maquileros. There are groups who want women to live like we did three hundred years ago in the time of the Inquisition, with no rights - this is why we must fight against the capitalist system." Cáceres stated.

The indigenous leader, Salvador Zúniga, said that

"reforming the constitution means writing a new constitution in which the state must institutionally respond to the need for justice in the country. It also means creating a context of justice that recognizes the rights of the indigenous people."

"The right to natural resources, freedom of expression, freedom of thought and the right to direct democracy - these are the rights that will form the basis of a new constitution."

He added that there is a general will amongst the people of Honduras to rid the country of obscurantist and powerful groups who want to impede the progress of democracy and the drive to create a state that will do away with alarming rates of poverty.

"We are being denied a basic right; democracy is the people's power and in a democratic system the people rule - not the queen, not the king, not the National Congress and the controlling power groups. Why, then, should the people be denied the opportunity to be consulted?" said the leader.

Last week, representatives of a number of civil society groups met to back up Manuel Zelaya Rosales' project to carry out a community consultation in June. The people would be consulted on the initiative to install a Constituent National Assembly and draw up a new political constitution.

On May 12, the Contentious Administrative Court found in favour of a request from the Public Ministry to declare the fourth ballot promoted by the Government of Manuel Zelaya null and void. The judge's resolution was emitted without suspension of the fourth ballot, which means that for the time being, the Executive Branch can continue with the campaign for a consultation regarding a Constituent National Assembly. The decision was read this morning by Judge Zelaya Saldana.

COPINH considers that the Public Ministry answers only to the power groups and to conservative political groups who do not want progress to create a true justice system and institutional structure that would benefit the people of this country.

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WHAT TO DO

TO MAKE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS

for COPINH, and other indigenous and community organizations in Honduras, educating and organizing for the right to establish a Constituent National Assembly, make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

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READ: 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"; Paolo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed"

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EDUCATIONAL DELEGATION TO GUATEMALA - JULY 6-14

Please join this trip that will investigate "Dam 'Development' Projects under-mining human rights & the environment". Over 9 days, delegates will meet with development, enviro and human rights activists; visit Chixoy hydro-electric dam affected Mayan-Achi communities; visit Mayan Q'eqchi communities that may well be harmed by the pending Xalala hydro-electric dam; visit Mayan-Mam communities being harmed by Goldcorp Inc's huge gold mine. Information: Karen Spring: spring.kj@gmail.com