

Rights Action

Day 50, Honduran Coup Resistance, August 16, 2009
(Alert#48)

Various

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EYEWITNESS REPORT - TEGUCIGALPA - WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12th BRUTAL REPRESSION & INTIMIDATION

(Translated from a telephone report filed by Alexy Lanza at 9:35 pm Chicago time - translation by La Voz de los de Abajo)

Tear gas was fired directly into the crowds of protesters, rubber bullets and truncheons were used to disperse the thousands of Hondurans who had marched through the city to the National Congress today to protest against the coup and demand restitution of the constitutional government of Mel Zelaya.

There were many injuries and arrests - The soldiers and police, heavily armed and in full combat gear acting against unarmed men and women of all ages. In an unforgettable moment, I watched as a congressional Deputy from the anti-coup leftist party the Democratic Unification (UD), Marvin Ponce, was attacked by at least 12 policemen and brutally beaten. He was seriously injured and was taken to the hospital; witnesses reported that at the hospital the police continued to beat and torment Ponce, interfering with his medical treatment.

As the police increased their violent sweep of the area I joined the rest of the protesters in fleeing the area; trying to avoid arrest or beatings or worse. I made my way to the Francisco Morazan National Autonomous University, which has been held by the students as part of the anti-coup resistance for weeks. The University has also been an organizing

center and has provided shelter for people coming in from the rural areas to join in the protest movement.

When I got to the University, people were trickling in from the downtown area. I saw one of the leaders from the Garifuna organization (OFRANEH) who told me almost that a large number of compañeros from their organization were detained in the repression at the Congress.

Suddenly a large number of heavily armed soldiers arrived and attacked with tear gas, and rubber bullets forcing their way into university. They began arresting and beating the students and were able to seize control of at least a large part of the university. As the attack continued, I was forced to run from the troops and got away.

Today's mobilizations were the second day of massive peaceful marches that began yesterday. Thousands of Hondurans responded to the call for increased mobilization by walking for as many as 5 days from the farthest corners of rural Honduras in order to get to one of the two major cities, Tegucigalpa or San Pedro Zula. Yesterday's protests were not repressed but today was another story. There have also been increasing attacks of the death-squad type. Today, I spoke with Rafael Alegria from Via Campesina in Honduras who told me that last night (August 11th) after the day of mobilizations, at about 11:30 pm, the Via Campesina center was riddled with bullets fired by men who pulled up in front of the center in a civilian SUV. No one was injured, but the message is clear.

Via Campesina is another organization that has offered its offices as an organizing center and shelter and Alegria has been detained and released and now has another threat of detention against him.

The defacto coup government and its military are increasing the violence again to try and do away with the resistance movement of the Honduran people who are the only real obstacle standing in the way of the oligarchy's plans.

The National Front for Resistance Against the Coup has called for the mobilizations to continue tomorrow beginning at 8 am.

Everyone from the social organizations to the people in the streets who don't belong to any organization, are calling for international solidarity to come to their aid in any way possible. They have been in the struggle for more than 40 days and need all of our help to continue.

(Alexy Lanza lives in Chicago and is a member of La Voz de los de Abajo, Casa Morazan and Producciones EN EL OJO-independent media)

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COUP REGIME TAKEOVER OF INDIGENOUS GARIFUNA COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

From: MEDICC Atlanta <admin1@mediccglobal.org>
Date: Tue, 11 Aug 2009 09:08:06 -0400 (EDT)

August 11 - Despite objections by local Garifuna communities, Honduras' defacto government is moving to take over the first and only Garifuna-managed hospital in the country, ousting its current staff.

The facility - built by Dr. Luther Castillo, other Garifuna doctors, local architects, and the communities themselves - is located in the remote coastal municipality of Iriona.

Last week, says Dr. Castillo, the defacto ministry of health notified hospital staff that the facility was being downgraded to a health center "under new management". "They told us that the Garifuna staff-both doctors and locally-trained nurses aides-will be fired," he told MEDICC. "These measures would condemn to death many of our old and seriously ill people, and stop all outreach and prevention services."

However, he said the staff is staying put, and vows to continue working, even without the small stipend the government had provided in the past and with no guarantee of medicines or vital supplies.

"We will not abandon our people," said Dr. Castillo. "These are the poorest of the poor, the invisible poor. They are the real victims of the coup," he told MEDICC. "And they are the reason so many of our young people decided to become doctors in the first place."

Some 300 representatives of local Garifuna governments gathered last week to support the hospital and its staff, and have declared they will not recognize the defacto government's takeover move.

The Garifuna hospital officially opened in December 2007, under an agreement with the government of President Manuel Zelaya, and in accordance with an International Labor Organization covenant that supports locally-managed health services for indigenous and tribal peoples.

Since then, according to Dr. Castillo, the ten Garifuna doctors staffing the hospital have treated over 175,000 cases. The physicians - all graduates of the Latin American Medical School in Havana - attend patients at outlying clinics and on regular home visits. The original government agreement permitted this medically underserved region to rely on hospital services, including birthing, surgeries, hospitalization, dental care and laboratory tests.

TAKE ACTION NOW!

MEDICC is joining other U.S. organizations to stand with the staff and over 30,000 patients of the only Garifuna Community Hospital in Honduras. Here's what you can do:

- 1) **DONATE** to keep the hospital alive. Your donation to Honduras' First Garifuna Hospital will help pay small stipends to physicians and nurses' aides, and help stock the hospital with essential medicines and supplies. (Donate Here <<https://secure.groundspring.org/dn/index.php?aid=18349>>)
- 2) **SPEAK UP!** Take this message to your city council, labor union, student or professional organization, asking them to pass a resolution in support of the Garifuna Indigenous Hospital in Honduras. Send these resolutions to us, and publicize them in your local media and on the web.

3) GET READY TO GO on a delegation to Honduras as a "Witness for Health" to help guarantee the safety and rights of the Garifuna hospital staff. More information coming soon.

4) Urge the US government to act: Contact the White House, the State Department and your Congressional representatives. Press them to use the US government's influence to guarantee respect for the lives of Dr. Castillo, his colleagues and all those protesting the coup. State Department: 202-647-4000 or 1-800-877-8339. White House: Comments: 202-456-1111, Switchboard: 202-456-1414.

Contact your Senators here:

www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm
<http://rs6.net/tn.jsp?et=1102666071232&s=3305&e=001Ba222MrT3bL3qaxf3r9E0Xv2SNrnU66fP82Mje-xb9LBZ4sdWxQqrKb7Q_neY3g5S-BrNQWtQf9ZUUuONGyippX02Z_DGDEiuN0QHO4_wKkYnpBtGHVnNWgOr0093RDeqWFJDKqoMU0XXpt-uACBubCnpNvrsC6ukdyOBcOWWm_9F6aO80tcUg==>>

Contact your Congresspeople here: <https://writerep.house.gov/writerep/welcome.shtml>
<<https://writerep.house.gov/writerep/welcome.shtml>>

5) Keep Honduras in the public eye: Circulate this alert widely. GO ON THE WEB: use your blogs, listservs and networks to get the word out.

MORE BACKGROUND

Since 1999, Luther Castillo has directed the Luaga Hatuadi Waduheñu Foundation ("For the Health of our People" in Garifuna), dedicated to bringing vital health services to isolated indigenous coastal communities. After his 2005 graduation from the Latin American Medical School in Havana, Dr. Castillo returned to the Honduran coast, where he led construction of Honduras' first Garifuna Rural Hospital, now serving some 30,000 in the surrounding communities. The hospital opened in December 2007, just months after Dr. Castillo was named "Honduran Doctor of the Year" by Rotary International's Tegucigalpa chapter. "Thank you for inspiring me," said California Lieutenant Governor John Garamendi, speaking at the hospital's opening ceremony.

The hospital and its community health outreach are supported by a number of U.S. and other international organizations, including the Sacramento, California Central Labor Council, Global Links, The Birthing Project, and MEDICC. Several US medical schools also have cooperative arrangements with the Garifuna hospital, including Johns Hopkins, Emory, Charles Drew and University of California (SF). Eight Cuban physicians and nurses also provide specialized services and academic training at the hospital.

A few weeks before the coup, Dr. Castillo was named director of International Cooperation in the Honduran Foreign Ministry. Since July 3rd, he has been included on a list of persons whose lives and safety were declared "at risk" by the OAS Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

Dr. Castillo is featured in ¡Salud! (www.saludthefilm.net <<http://www.saludthefilm.net/>>), a documentary film that received the Council on Foundations Henry Hampton Award for Excellence in Film Digital Media (USA).

MEDICC (Medical Education Cooperation with Cuba), www.medicc.org <<http://www.medicc.org/>> , is a US non-governmental organization working to enhance cooperation among the U.S., Cuban and global health communities aimed at better health outcomes.

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ATTACK AGAINST OFFICES OF VÍA CAMPESINA, August 12th 2009

From: Phil Stuart C [mailto:fcstuartca@yahoo.ca]

Below is an urgent appeal from Via Campesina regarding a steep, brutal escalation of death squad killings and military-police repression against grassroots organizations and leaders, ordered by the coup regime.

This ferocious escalation of the repression can have many intended and unintended consequences, and brings the Honduran crisis to new levels of danger to peace in the region, and to a complete smashing of democratic rights.

The National Resistance Front, and the Zelayist government in exile are now calling on Washington and the OAS not to recognize the legitimacy and outcome of any elections scheduled by the coup regime.

This appears to reflect a growing fear both within Honduras and across Latin America and the Caribbean that the coup regime can and may hold on the power, mainly because Washington fears what would happen in the power vacuum that could ensue if the Arias Plan to return Zelaya to office, but not to power, is executed.

Rights Action will very likely file a report on these highly inflammable events tomorrow. Check their website if you want more information: at <http://rightsaction.org/>

Stay alert. Felipe Stuart

ATTACK AGAINST OFFICES OF VÍA CAMPESINA, August 12th 2009

Last night at 11:23 pm, during curfew which began at 10pm, unknown individuals driving a cream colour Toyota Turismo with the license plate PCA1981 fired bullets at the office of Vía Campesina, located in the Alameda neighbourhood of Tegucigalpa, Honduras which is coordinated by Rafael Alegría.

The act was a clear attack against our social organizations and leaders who are part of the National Front Against the Coup.

In addition to the recent attack on Vía Campesina, a bomb capable of killing 15 people went off in the building of the Beverage Workers Union (STIBYS, by its Spanish initials) on July 26th 2009. Both organizations are part of the National Front Against the Coup.

We condemn this incident given that the activities of Vía Campesina and the National Front Against the Coup are completely peaceful. It is important to mention that during curfew only police are permitted to be in the street.

Vía Campesina of Honduras calls for support from national and international human rights organizations to remain attentive and to continue following attacks taking place not only against these organizations and their leadership, but also against the human rights of the entire Honduran people and all those who have been protesting in the streets against the coup for the last 46 days.

Rafael Alegría comments, "People's rights are being violated and it's a truly unfortunate situation at the moment. People have been wounded, jailed and killed."

According to a preliminary report from lawyers assisting the National Front Against the Coup today, hundreds of people were wounded and more than forty people detained following violence occurring after a peaceful mass mobilization in the capital city on Tuesday. The group of lawyers is seeking the liberation of those arrested through Habeas Corpus. The leadership of the Front insists that the disturbances were carried out by people who were not part of the protest, but rather infiltrators interested in provoking confrontations and disparaging the peaceful protests that the Front has been mobilizing.

The people detained are accused of rebellion, terrorism and treason among other crimes.

Alegría emphasizes that "The National Front Against the Coup is not responsible for these incidents. On principle the front supports peaceful marches, peaceful demands and peaceful mobilization. At no point do we use or call for violent acts. It appears that these incidents are the responsibility of groups interested in ruining the social mobilization and they have taken it upon themselves to provoke this situation for which we categorically deny any responsibility."

Given what has taken place in the last 24 hours, Vía Campesina of Honduras calls out to the entire Vía Campesina network, social movements, as well as national and international human rights organizations to send messages or delegations in solidarity with the resistance against the coup and for the defence of human rights in Honduras, and to assist in bringing about an end to so much injustice and violence against the Honduran people.

Please send complaints and messages of solidarity to the following addresses:

Coronel Jorge Rodas Gamero
Fax: (504) 237-9070/ 220-55-47
E-mail: sseg.06@hotmail.com

Lcda. Sandra Ponce, Fiscal Especial de Derechos Humanos
Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Fax: (504) 221-3656
E-mail: ponce10s@yahoo.com.ar

Committee for the Defense of Human Rights (CODEH)
President Andrés Pavón
E-mail: andres@codeh.hn, codeh@codeh.hn

The Committee of Relatives of People Detained-Disappeared in Honduras (COFADEH), Coordinadora Bertha Oliva
E-mail: mail@cofadeh.org

Vía Campesina of Honduras
E-mail: laviacampesina@cablecolor.hn

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THE ELECTIONS ARE ILLEGAL

TEGUCIGALPA, August 12.— The National Front Against the Coup d'Etat in Honduras condemned the electoral process now taking place in the country with the support of the de facto government, and said it was illegal, Prensa Latina news agency reported today.

For the social organizations united in the struggle against the regime of Roberto Micheletti, these elections make no sense, after the violent expulsion from the country of Manuel Zelaya, a president who had been elected constitutionally.

The restitution of Zelaya in his post, the people's movement says, is the only way to validate the results of the elections, with the supervision and acknowledgement of the international community.

The presidential candidate for the Democratic Unification Party, Deputy César Ham, invited the people to unite and take part in the elections, as a way to defeat the coup supporters. He also said he was willing to renounce his candidacy if it were necessary to achieve this objective.

Due to their position regarding the complot that overthrew Zelaya, many Hondurans consider Elvin Santos, candidate of the Liberal Party, and Porfirio Lobo, candidate of the National Party, as coup supporters.

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THE CARDINAL OF THE HONDURAN POOR CLAIMS THE RIGHT TO INSURRECTION

<http://iglesiadescalza.blogspot.com/2009/08/cardinal-of-honduran-poor-claims-right.html>

Thursday, August 13, 2009

My fellow blogger, Hermano Juancito, has already picked up on this story which I had gathered from Adital about the march and open air Mass celebrated on August 11th in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, by Fr. Fausto Milla.

Daniel Valencia (translation by Rebel Girl)
El Faro Digital, August 12, 2009

In the central park of San Pedro Sula nobody in the crowd could sing "La marcha de la unidad" ("The march of unity") completely because they did not know the lyrics. So,

dissimulating, this Tuesday the 11th they hummed in anticipation of the excitement that would thunder out seconds later in the most famous line of that song. And when it came time to sing, many showed that they were not very able at left-wing paraphernalia and wrongly raised the right fist instead of the left one.

At that rally, on the dais, without raising his fists, but forcefully holding a microphone with both hands, an old man of 81, a Honduran with Spanish roots, tall, white skin tanned by the sun and wearing a white cassock with a pink stole, screamed out the chorus at the top of his lungs without any complex: "The people united will never be defeated!"

Coming from a priest and not real politician, it becomes more important. At least that's what more than 10,000 demonstrators believed, those who accompanied Father Fausto Milla - "the shepherd of the poor", as his followers call him here -- in taking over the center of the second largest city in Honduras, San Pedro Sula. The gathering took place in the park, opposite the cathedral in that city.

That type of behavior is what his followers appreciate, and they let it be known. "Here is our archbishop, the archbishop of the poor and not the rich. Out with Rodríguez Maradiaga, out with the coup leaders!," shouted a man from the center of 3rd Avenue, the road that separates the central park from cathedral, which was guarded by about 100 "chepos" (riot police) who trembled at the sight of that wall of people in front of them.

The man contrasted Milla and Honduran Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga, who almost immediately after the coup was branded as a coup backer by supporters of deposed president Manuel Zelaya.

Then, before the inflamed crowd, to calm the situation -- the crowd was already receiving the first news of the disturbances in Tegucigalpa, where supporters of the Resistance had set fire to a Popeyes restaurant and a bus on Avenida Juan Pablo Segundo -- Milla raised his voice and said: "Brothers, let us make peace and not violence. Repression can only be fought and overcome through peace. Here we do not have to face the oppressive families, we do not have any famous last names. The police are our brothers, they are López, they are Ramos, they are Pérez," he told them, prior to an outdoor Mass, since the cathedral was closed and guarded by police.

Milla, along with a large group of people appeared marching along 3rd Avenue at 4 pm. The priest had walked from Santa Rosa de Copán, where he is pastor, and along the way he joined the marches that came to the city from the villages of Yoro, Colón, Atlántida, Ocotepeque, Lempira, Santa Bárbara and Cortez.

Before their arrival, San Pedro residents allied with the Resistance had come to the central plaza of the city, and they waited with a meal, water and food for the demonstrators who also marched from Progreso, Lima and Ceiba.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PRIEST

Fausto Milla has been in hiding, according to some supporters of the Resistance. The priest, however, though he confesses that he has received many threats, has always been where you can find him: in his church, in his territory rich in indigenous, peasant culture.

Since the coup, Milla has been one of the main Catholic religious leaders who has criticized -- and condemned -- the "abuses" in the interior regions of the country, and who has publicly opposed the position of the highest leader of the Catholic Church, Cardinal Rodriguez Maradiaga.

And Milla's position was not born at this juncture. During the seventies and eighties, while defending the rights of indigenous peasants, Milla endured persecution from the Honduran army in his Corquín parish in Santa Rosa de Copán.

In his curriculum vitae prepared by the NGO Comunicación Comunitaria it is written that he was among the first priests to publicly denounce the Río Sumpul Massacre, which occurred in El Salvador on May 14, 1980. According to Milla, both the Honduran and Salvadoran armies participated in that massacre.

As he did then, today Milla insists that the true Church is in the people, not in churches or cathedrals, and so, he says, he defends the people. A people that deserves to have their stolen sovereignty returned to them. "I have been a Honduran for 81 years. And I have lived and seen many things, but never anything comparable to what we are all seeing this day," said Milla, at the beginning of his message.

"When there is inequality there is no freedom," he added. "And this people is no longer fighting a civil war between supporters of two political parties. This people is in a fight to achieve this equality, generated by those oppressors who have robbed us now of what we have the most right to: sovereignty. They are criminals, and I am not the one who says it, Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution say it: the people are sovereign, whoever steals that sovereignty is a traitor to the motherland, he is a criminal!"

Then, raising his voice even louder, the priest threw out the message that received ovations from the protesters: "Some of those who participated in the drafting of the Constitution have told me that they now regret having written Article 3, because Article 3 calls for insurrection, brothers, for returning this sovereignty to the people of Honduras from whom it has been stolen!"

The action lasted about 30 minutes more, because a torrential rain fell on the city. And as the city has no drainage, right in the center, around the plaza, the river of people in San Pedro Sula had to face a river of water.

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THE COUP IN HONDURAS, ALBA, AND THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING CARIBBEAN

by Faiz Ahmed, MRZine [<http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/ahmed130809.html>]

The military coup carried out by masked soldiers in the early hours of June 28 against the democratically elected President of Honduras, José Manuel Zelaya Rosales, was a bandit act with differing messages intended for different audiences.

One such audience is the oligarchical groupings throughout the hemisphere, who will be emboldened by Washington's tacit tolerance of the coup makers. Another audience is the Latin American leftist and popular governments, who are being told that their agendas can be trumped by non-democratic means.

And there is yet another audience: the predominantly English-speaking Caribbean governments who, like Zelaya, are far from ideologically opposed to capitalism, but are aware of their inability to improve the overall quality of life of their societies within capitalism's current configuration.

As a result, many of these island governments are edging towards regional agreements based on principles antithetical to the capitalist system.

This is perhaps why English-speaking Caribbean nations account for ten of the eighteen countries participating in the Venezuelan-led regional agreement PetroCaribe. Launched in 2005, PetroCaribe enables Caribbean governments to purchase oil and natural gas on terms that allow for the financing of upwards of 60 percent of the costs over a twenty-five year period at interest rates close to one percent.

Also included in the agreement are mechanisms to finance costs associated with building energy infrastructure projects such as refineries and fuel storage facilities, as well as costs of fertilizer purchases to increase food production.

These Caribbean countries typically have been grappling with debt-to-GDP ratios ranging between 50 percent and 150 percent for the better part of the past two decades. They are economically dependent on tourism and the export of a very narrow range of agricultural commodities and natural resources.

They remain highly vulnerable to the effects of hurricanes, tropical storms, sea level rises, and climate change. As a result, this new ability to finance a large portion of their energy requirements creates much needed economic space to pursue domestic agendas which, among other objectives, include: creating national food security; repairing and maintaining physical infrastructure such as roadways and airports; and strengthening social services such as healthcare and education.

Or more simply, building some degree of self-sufficiency, albeit within a program that does not deviate from a capitalist approach to development.

The ability to more freely pursue their domestic agendas is the main reason why, over the past eighteen months, three English-speaking Caribbean states have developed a rather perspicacious outlook and become members of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA -- an acronym that also means "dawn"). In their view, the regional bloc is not oriented towards a competitive model that exploits weaknesses but is instead an example of a cooperative model that creates space for states to cultivate some degree of self-sufficiency.

The coup against Zelaya, the utterly illegal removal of Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide five and a half years before that, and the short-lived coup against Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez two years before that all show that international capitalism cannot tolerate any domestic agenda which includes an objective of self-sufficiency. Added to this intolerance is capitalism's long-standing fear of the threat of a good example.

Located in the Eastern Caribbean, the three English-speaking states of Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines form one-third of the nine-member ALBA. In fact, these islands are also members of three other important regional

blocs, namely: the fifteen-member Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the twelve-member Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME), and the nine-member Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS).

All of these groupings, composed mainly of English-speaking Caribbean islands, have done much to create a unified relationship among its members. As such, the experiences of Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines within ALBA will undoubtedly be watched by other islands in the region.

Each of these islands has been trying to mitigate the myriad challenges facing them over the past two decades, yet are experiencing very little success, as demonstrated by their weakening economies, degrading environments, and alarmingly, declining social indicators such as mortality.

By one measure, life expectancy in the English-speaking Caribbean has fallen by four years over the past decade.¹

ALBA AND THE ROAD TO SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Alongside the commitment to facilitate cooperative development, ALBA's strength lies in its ability to identify member-states' weaknesses within capitalism and devise projects to mitigate and overcome their challenges.

This analytical quality has allowed for the emergence of a large number of projects organized under ALBA's four main institutions: the ALBA Oil Agreement, the Bank of ALBA, the ALBA Peoples' Trade Agreement, and the ALBA Cultural and Sport Initiative.

The sometimes overlapping projects are in various stages of development and implementation and are free to be used or ignored, at will, by any member state.

ALBA Oil Agreement

Modeled on the principles governing PetroCaribe, the ALBA Oil Agreement is a mechanism for member states to finance their oil purchases on a long-term, low-interest basis, of which a portion can be repaid in goods and services. For countries in the Caribbean, whose annual energy costs represent expenditures between 15 percent and 30 percent of their GDPs, the agreement is quite attractive.

Furthermore, and similar to what exists under PetroCaribe, infrastructure projects designed to facilitate or increase oil delivery, oil storage capacity, and oil refining capabilities have been undertaken, all of which have the explicit goal of reducing the overall cost of each barrel of oil these countries import.

Also within the ALBA Oil Agreement is a project that sees 25 percent of every oil receipt accumulate in what has come to be known as the ALBA fund, which is designed to be loaned to member states to pursue social development projects.

Bank of ALBA

In line with the objectives of the ALBA fund, and probably because of the example set by the fund, the Bank of ALBA was established in 2008 to offer member states access to

capital to pursue social development projects. Although the Bank has a total capitalization of only a small fraction of the value of other regional multilateral lending institutions, it offers a far more egalitarian governance structure, exemplified by a rotating directorship among member states, and a decision-making structure where each member has an equally weighted vote.

Established in the shadow of the ongoing global food crisis, the Bank's first projects have been the establishment of a food-distribution company tasked with creating an efficient distribution network between member states and a regional food-production fund meant to be allocated to member states to assist them with domestic agricultural initiatives.

Both projects have an explicit goal of creating some degree of regional food security.

ALBA Peoples' Trade Agreement (ALBA-TCP)

Devised to coordinate the trading of goods and services within the bloc, ALBA-TCP outlines the specific obligations in the form of actions to be taken by each participating member state.

The actions stipulated in the agreement attempt to locate areas of need within each participating state and then to match these areas with goods and services available in partnering member states. The result is a series of bilateral agreements between participating member state.

To date, only Bolivia, Cuba, and Venezuela are active in ALBA-TCP.

ALBA Cultural and Sport Initiative

The ALBA Cultural and Sport Initiative takes the form of developing localized independent media outlets and cultivating cultural exchange through sport. The most developed of these initiatives is the ALBA Games project, which has been held on a biannual basis since 2005 and is meant to facilitate competition and training among the hundreds of athletes from around the world who participate.

There are very good reasons to project that, left unmolested, ALBA has the potential to offer Caribbean states a space where self-sufficiency can be striven for. An appealing quality of ALBA and its sister initiatives such as PetroCaribe is that they do not have political strings attached to them.

Countries are signing on because the regional arrangements primarily offer economic flexibility. Countries are able to follow development paths of their choosing, which in the Caribbean still seem to be a Keynesian-inspired form of state-capitalism. For most countries in the region, this means establishing a much greater degree of self-sufficiency, in the form of food security, social development, and economic growth.

In keeping with imperialism's sordid history, the reactionary forces in Honduras have demonstrated the lengths to which they are prepared to go to obstruct any goal of self-sufficiency that excludes oligarchical domination. The government of Zelaya was not revolutionary. However, it was looking to better the lives of the people who elected it and saw that ALBA was one mechanism by which it could fulfill this objective.

This is precisely why the coup against the democratically elected government of Honduras is rightly being seen as a threat against the bloc, and it should also be seen as a threat against like-minded governments throughout the region, who are slowly edging towards ALBA.

Life expectancy estimates for the English-speaking Caribbean were taken from United Nations Human Development Reports. Taken in the aggregate, life expectancies in the region have fallen by roughly 6 months over the past decade. However, when the populations of these islands are assigned values based on their proportion to the entire population of the English-speaking Caribbean, we see that life expectancies have fallen by 4 years.

(Faiz Ahmed is a doctoral student in sociology and focuses on the study of islands and the political economy of capitalist-led sustainable development plans. His master's thesis titled "An Examination of the Development Path Taken by Small Island Developing States" can be downloaded at <www.islandvulnerability.org/m/ahmedm.pdf>. A shorter version of this article was recently presented to the Coalición Venezuela Estamos Contigo / Venezuela We Are With You Coalition of Toronto.)

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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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