

## Rights Action

### DAY 71, HONDURAS COUP RESISTANCE

[Alert#58, September 6, 2009]

#### BELOW:

- Interview by Karen Spring with Marvin Ponce, about November "elections" and about beating he suffered in August
- Statement by National Front Against the Coup concerning "elections"
- Article: "Honduran coup has been far from bloodless", By Dana Frank,
- New York City presentations, September 16th & 17th
- What to do, How to support, More information – See at bottom

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Grahame Russell (Rights Action co-director) in Honduras: 011 [504] 8865-2527, [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)
- [spring.kj@gmail.com](mailto:spring.kj@gmail.com), Karen Spring (Rights Action) in Honduras: 011 [504]9507-3835

#### SPEAKING TOURS: "RESISTANCE TO MILITARY COUPS & GOLD MINING DEVASTATION IN HONDURAS & GUATEMALA"

In October, activists with Rights Action will be on speaking tours in Ontario, Quebec and eastern Canada (and parts of north-east USA), showing slides and short documentaries and speaking

- about the on-going pro-democracy, anti-coup movement in Honduras
- about indigenous and community resistance to Goldcorp Inc.'s open-pit, cyanide leach mines in Guatemala and Honduras

Karen Spring will be travelling in Ontario; Francois Guindon will be travelling in Quebec and eastern Canada; Grahame Russell will be in the north-east USA. For more information: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org).

Please re-distribute this information all around

To get on/ off Rights Action's email list:

<http://www.rightsaction.org/lists/?p=subscribe&id=3/>

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“Without the restitution of constitutional order, the general elections would be the legalization of the military violence against the state; for that reason, they are unacceptable.” – National Front Against the Coup

**FROM HONDURAS, KAREN SPRING WRITES:** Leaders and individuals involved in the resistance movement in Honduras, including Bertha Caceres of COPINH (Counsel of Indigenous and Popular Organizations of Honduras) and Marvin Ponce, deputy of the Democratic Unification (UD) party, continue to receive death threats and believe they are being targeted for repression by the military and police officials in Honduras.

Reports received by people in the resistance movement speak of strange individuals taking photos outside of offices of social organizations heavily involved in the movement, bugged telephone conversations, targeted acts of violence and fear of leaving their houses and of being seen in public.

The de facto Micheletti regime has announced their plan to go ahead with elections scheduled for November 29th despite the militarization of much of the country and widespread documented human rights violations, including the violation of the right to freedom of expression and political association.

Along with the calls of the return of President Zelaya, graffiti on the streets of Tegucigalpa read “No to the elections” as the National Front Against the Coup declare that in no way are there conditions to hold elections in the near future in Honduras (see the National Front's declaration below).

Since the coup on June 28, the Inter-American Human Rights Commission has called for the protection of 106 persons for which they received information that there existed a situation of “imminent risk” against their lives.

There can be no democratic elections held in Honduras so long as the illegitimate de facto regime continues to militarize the country and targets leaders of the popular movement.

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Below is a conversation I had with Marvin Ponce describing his account of August 12th, when he was brutally beaten by military and police during a peaceful protest outside of the National Congress.

For his public opposition to the coup and his work in opposing the financial interests of national elite and multinationals in Honduras, Ponce, among other leaders, believes he is being targeted for repression by the military and de facto regime.

### **CONVERSATION WITH MARVIN PONCE, DEPUTY (MEMBER OF CONGRESS) FOR THE DEMOCRATIC UNIFICATION (UD) PARTY**

1. WHAT IS YOUR ROLE IN CONGRESS? WHAT ARE SOME OF THE FOCUSES OF YOUR WORK AS A DEPUTY?

Essentially my role is basically to defend the interests of the poor. I have been working for the right to land for campesinos, access to water for people in the community and the management and protection of natural resources and biological resources. Also fighting for a just minimum wage for the working class and our role has also been to fight against corruption in the country which has been well documented.

2. WHAT HAPPENED ON AUGUST 12TH WHEN YOU WERE HURT IN THE PROTEST IN FRONT OF THE NATIONAL CONGRESS?

The march left from the National Pedagogy University and went to the National Congress (close to central park). When we were in front of the Congress, I noticed three men get out of a car, who were not part of the march, and from their backpacks they pulled out rocks and advanced on the military, 20 metres from where we were walking.

The infiltrators started throwing rocks at the military and they started pursuing the protesters as they were arriving .

When they were almost about to hit a women with a child, I put myself between them and the officers to protect them. After, when I continued running, a military officer tried to hit me with his baton. I dodged it and crossed running to the side but in the scattering, I collided with another protester that was running and fell to the ground.

When I fell, more than 25 military soldiers started coming towards me and one said, "This deputy is a trouble maker. Give it to him good." They hit me with whatever they had, their batons and kicked me while I was on the ground, defenseless. They hit me for roughly 5 minutes.

When they got tired, the boss said "Leave him" even as they continued to hit me. When they stopped, the boss kicked me in the head and I passed out.

When I arrived at the hospital, I found out that my arm was badly broken, I had various marks where they had hit me all over my body and they were unsure if I had suffered a concussion.

The following day, they operated on my arm for 4.5 hours.

Afterwards, I received a lot of visits from the media, friends and family. Many people had been informed that I had been shot, and I was, but with one rubber bullet to my leg (shin), and I was hit really hard in my side (rib area), my arm, and also was hit by a rock in the face (below the left eye).

3. SO THE MILITARY KNEW WHEN THEY WERE HITTING YOU THAT YOU WERE A DEPUTY?

Yes, they knew I was a deputy and they gave it to me hard.

4. DO YOU BELIEVE THAT LEADERS OF THE MOVEMENT ARE BEING TARGETED BY THE MILITARY AND THE POLICE?

One week before, during the same type of mobilization, the media, the police and the Honduran Commission of Human Rights did a stigmatization campaign against me saying that I was scaring the people into doing things like painting the walls (with graffiti) and committing acts of vandalism, and this is not true.

They were just going around looking for a way to identify people so they could act against them, like they did with Carlos H. Reyes.

One month before, Romeo Vasquez Valesquez mentioned my name, saying that I had offended him and that I was going to pay for it at any moment.

So I do not know exactly if there were instructions to attack me from high levels of the military. Normally with the protesters when they beat them with their batons on the back of their legs, they are then put in vehicles and detained. But with me, they beat me but did not imprison me. They left to go strike against others.

I have been told that the coup government was preparing to create a special prison for all the leaders of the popular movement.

The people that were infiltrated that were throwing rocks could have been a planned act. We have verified that the men that were going around painting walls (graffiti) against Zelaya were accompanied by police patrollers in order to cover the graffiti of the resistance.

There was a plan of two things, one, to target and beat the leaders, and two, to vandalize, like burning the bus, the businesses, with the intentions to change the image of the movement and to say that we are vandalers.

The movement of the resistance is peaceful and they are worried because they know that there are not any police or military who have been hurt or beaten - all of this happens to us.

The army and police have working with them men who were part of "Battalion 3-16" that organized the counter insurgency repression in the 1980s, including [Micheletti's] "security adviser" Billy Joya, well know as a repressor from the 1980s. I imagine that these people have a plan and their plan is to say that what is happening here is a "transition" and to say that we are a group of bandits that are breaking windows.

But we are controlling it with our discipline committees to make sure that the rallies are peaceful and to make sure there are no infiltrators.

But regardless, this day in August was tragic because they captured a great deal of campesinos and now they are being accused of being terrorists but they are really political prisoners. They are trying to blame them saying that they are the ones responsible for these incidences, when we all know that what is actually going on are infiltrators that have been paid by the municipality.

4. DO YOU HAVE SOME TYPE OF PROTECTION, MAYBE NOT FROM THE STATE, BUT HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS OR ACCOMPANIERIS?

Well I am cooperating with the Inter-American Human Rights Commission but that does not guarantee my safety. I gave my testimony to the Inter-American Human Rights Commission, but I do not know what they are going to say over my work in parliament or my work with the Front or the repression that I received.

My family is psychologically impacted by it with all the repression and death threats by telephone. I received death threats before the coup and continue to receive them. I do not have private security, I do not have body guards and I do not have any guns or weapons in my house.

When I went to the Attorney General's office they said that they could put a police officer at your home or give you a military body guard that could follow me around but right now I am going to investigate to see what kind of protection I can get because I do not trust the police and the military.

So I will have to find out what kind of protection I can get, if its necessary to get private security that could guard my house at the very least because on the street I do not like being followed around by body guards.

#### 7. HAVE THERE BEEN THREATS OR REPRESSION AGAINST OTHER DEPUTIES?

There has been repression against other deputies. A son of a deputy had his car shot at. José Rodríguez Troches was working with the fourth ballot movement. After the coup, they machined gunned his son's car. He denounced that publically that he was being persecuted for supporting the fourth ballot and President Zelaya.

And that will continue happening because the people that are controlling the military and the security of the state are the military, the police are in the secondary role.

And the people that have the ability to put an end to conflict or confront delinquency are the police but the military are not trained for this. Moreover, the military are tired psychologically, they don't want to attack the people but they have received the orders. So from what I have heard, they are giving them drinks that are almost like drugs so that they have more strength so that they can repress the people.

The state has become militarized. But now that the Inter-American Commission was here, they put all the soldiers away, hid them in the barracks. We hear that they are preparing 150 hired assassins (sicarios) with the intention of hurting or killing people that are 'inconvenient' to the coup supporters.

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**POSITION OF THE "NATIONAL FRONT AGAINST THE COUP" WITH THE RESPECT TO THE 2009 ELECTORAL PROCESS** [Translated by: Jose Luis Granados Ceja]

Without the restitution of constitutional order, the general elections would be the legalization of the military violence against the state; for that reason, they are unacceptable. As a result, the National Front Against the Coup:

1) declares a lack of recognition of the presidential campaign, the electoral process and the electoral results, if the constitutional order is not restored - the fundamental base of which is the reinstatement of legitimate Constitutional President, José Manuel Zelaya Rosales to his rightful place.

2) demands that the Democratic Unification Party, independent candidates and candidates against the coup involved in the elections on behalf of the Liberal Party and the PINU, manifest their political position with respect to the electoral process.

3) Condemns the militarization of society and of the so called "electoral process" by the coup supporters that, with their armed presence, introduces an additional element of political violence that exacerbates the conditions of exclusion, darkness and repression.

4) Reiterates the call to promote the direct installation of a National Constituent Assembly that is popular, participatory, inclusive, non-discriminatory and democratic.

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**HONDURAN COUP HAS BEEN FAR FROM BLOODLESS**, By Dana Frank,  
Special to the Mercury News, 09/03/2009,  
[http://www.mercurynews.com/opinion/ci\\_13264397](http://www.mercurynews.com/opinion/ci_13264397)

A myth has already taken root about the June 28 military coup in which Honduran President Manuel Zelaya was carted off to Costa Rica: that it's been a quiet, peaceful affair and hardly anyone's been hurt. Despite enormous evidence to the contrary, many commentators are now even referring to a "bloodless coup," or, worse, suggesting that Honduras is already such a violent country that any further violence is just normal.

But human rights groups and numerous other outside observers report that at least a dozen people have been killed for their political activities since the coup, more than 3,500 detained for peacefully demonstrating, and hundreds beaten while in custody. There's plenty of blood flowing, just one indication of the massive wave of repression ripping through Honduras.

In the face of these crimes, President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton need to stop equivocating and not just withdraw aid but also immediately withdraw the U.S. ambassador, freeze the bank accounts of the oligarchs running the coup and immediately restore President Manuel Zelaya to his full powers.

Most Americans are not aware that when the coup began, the military immediately occupied all major government buildings, took over hospitals, the immigration service and border enforcement, and, most ominously, superseded police and elected authorities.

Media outlets opposed to the coup were shut down immediately, and freedom of the press and airwaves has been suspended ever since. In El Progreso, soldiers occupied and closed Radio Progreso, a Jesuit-owned station.

Roberto Micheletti's military government has been suspending civil liberties guaranteed by the Honduran Constitution. Four days into the coup, his rump Congress passed laws outlawing any meeting of more than three people, limiting freedom of movement and making it legal to search homes without a warrant.

Yet these repressive measures have failed to deter Hondurans from protesting. Remarkably, they have mounted larger and larger peaceful demonstrations throughout the country. Although rarely reported in the U.S. press, all three union federations have repeatedly pulled off nationwide general strikes with more than 30,000 teachers and even 300 police officers and the capital's taxi drivers.

In response, repression has escalated dramatically. Nonviolent demonstrators are routinely rounded up, beaten while in custody and denied medical care, while never charged with a specific crime. The military routinely launches tear gas at protesters without provocation. As Amnesty International reports, "beatings and mass arrests are being used as a way of punishing people for voicing their opposition to the military-backed coup."

Women protesters can face worse. On Aug. 14, a young mother was grabbed by police while participating nonviolently in a large protest. They separated her from male detainees and drove her out of town, where four officers of the National Police raped her and then raped her again with a baton.



Rapes while in custody, assassinations and disappearances that are terrorizing Hondurans remain largely unreported in the U.S. press. On July 11, for example, Roger Ivan Bados, a longtime trade unionist and activist in the opposition party Union Democrática, was forcibly removed from his home and killed. Others who participate in demonstrations or other activities have been kidnapped, then found dead.

The goal of all this is intimidation: stop Hondurans from protesting and create the illusion of acquiescence.

Americans need to demand a full condemnation of the regime's violent repression and a restoration of President Zelaya. If we don't, even more people will die or be brutalized. Honduran opposition isn't going away, nor is the worldwide condemnation of the coup regime.

[DANA FRANK is a professor of history at UC-Santa Cruz. She wrote this article for the Mercury News]

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## **NEW YORK CITY PRESENTATIONS**

University of California history professor Dana Frank, who has worked extensively with the Honduran labor movement and is the author of a book on organizing by women banana workers, will be speaking in New York City on September 16 and 17 about the past and present of the Honduran social movement.

### **WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN HONDURAS**

Wednesday, September 16, 2009 at 7 pm

At Bluestockings Bookstore and Café

172 Allen Street, New York, NY

(at Stanton Street, one block south of Houston Street. Take the F or V to Second Avenue)

\$5 suggested donation.

Information: 212-777-6028, [info@bluestockings.com](mailto:info@bluestockings.com) &

<http://www.bluestockings.com> &

### **THE AFL-CIO'S COLD WAR IN HONDURAS: THE EARLY YEARS OF INTERVENTION, 1954-1959**

With comment by Barbara Weinstein, New York University

Thursday, September 17, 2009 at 5 pm

At Tamiment Library, NYU Bobst Library, 10th floor

70 Washington Square South, New York, NY

(between LaGuardia & Greene Streets. Take the A, C, E, B, D, F, V to West 4th Street, or the R, W to 8th St-NYU)

Information: 212-998-2471, [Michael.Nash@nyu.edu](mailto:Michael.Nash@nyu.edu)

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## WHAT TO DO

AMERICANS & CANADIANS should contact our members of congress, senators & members of parliament every day, day after day, send copies of this information, and demand:

- an immediate suspension of the release of the IMF funds to the coup regime unequivocal denunciation of the military coup
- no recognition of this military coup and the regime of Roberto Micheletti
- an end to police, army and para-military repression and respect for safety and human rights of all Hondurans
- 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 and perpetrators
- reparations to the victims for the illegal actions and rights violations committed during this illegal coup

TO DONATE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE FUNDS to the peaceful, people's 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.