

Rights Action

THERE IS NOTHING TO “NEGOTIATE” WITH THE HONDURAN REGIME: Its Calls for November Elections Is A Further Subversion of Honduran Democracy

By Grahame Russell, September 25, 2009

Day 90 of resistance to the coup and military regime

On September 23rd, following the return to Honduras of the legitimate President, Manuel “Mel” Zelaya, the illegal oligarchic-military regime again used lethal repression against the pro-democracy, anti-coup movement.

Different voices in the international community – notably the governments of the USA and Canada – again called for “both sides” to refrain from provoking violence and to “negotiate” a solution to the crisis.

These ostensibly neutral and reasonable-sounding calls to “both sides” for non-violence and negotiations serve to legitimize and prolong the regime which will again, sooner or later, carry out repression against the Honduran people. There is only one side using violence; there is only one side refusing to discuss, in any way at all, the restoration of the democratic, legal-constitutional order

THERE IS NO DEMOCRATIC, CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER

When the foxes are in the hen house, one doesn't call on both sides to step back from violence and work “their” problems out peacefully. If armed criminals break into your home and announce they are there to stay, one does not call on both sides to step back from violence and work “their” problems out peacefully.

There is one major problem in Honduras that needs to be resolved. 90 days ago, an oligarchic-military regime overthrew the democratic and legal-constitutional order. Since then, the regime has used repression against Hondurans protesting in favor of democracy, against the coup.

Despite what the regime claims, and what some international supporters repeat, there exists neither a democratic nor a legal-constitutional order in Honduras. It is an illegal, military State.

Until President Zelaya and his entire government have been returned to power - full power, including complete control over the Armed Forces - and until they have worked through a period of political transition,

repairing the extensive harms and damages done by the regime, and are towards the re-establishment of the democratic and legal-constitutional order, nothing positive can happen, the situation can only deteriorate.

THE ELECTIONS END-GAME

This includes, notably, the presidential elections slated for November 29, 2009. To pretend to carry out a fair electoral process in a country with a broken democratic and legal-constitutional order, controlled by an illegal repressive regime, is a contradiction in terms. Yet, this is what the regime is aiming for.

On June 28, 2009, the Honduran oligarchy conspired with the high command of the Armed Forces, and with the participation or acquiescence and support of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and a majority of the Congress, and with the participation or acquiescence and support of wealthy and conservative ideological sectors across the Americas, to militarily oust the government of Honduran President Zelaya.

Those directly and indirectly supporting the conspiracy obviously thought the Honduran people would protest for a few weeks, and then fade away. No doubt they assumed that the international community - governments and institutions such as the Organization of American States, United Nations, World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, etc. - would (sooner or later) accept that a while some sort of 'coup-lite' had taken place, in the end what came about was a constitutional move to a transitional, civilian government headed by Roberto Micheletti.

All along, the regime has seen the elections as their end-game to legitimize the coup and fully "restore" the democratic order, thus ending the 'constitutional transition period'.

A NOBEL PRIZE MOVEMENT

While the oligarchic-military regime received public support from powerful political sectors linked to the Democratic and Republican parties in the USA, and indirect but crucial support due to the equivocating positions of the governments of the USA and Canada, they utterly miscalculated the strength, dignity and creativity of the peaceful and still growing pro-democracy, anti-coup movement in Honduras.

The people's movement in Honduras, guided by the National Front Against the Coup, is deserving of the Nobel Peace prize. This movement exemplifies 'another-world-is-possible-and-necessary'.

For 90 days, Hondurans have suffered waves of brutal repression. Dozens have been killed, hundreds illegally detained and tortured (including rape), many more have suffered injuries due to tear-gas, rubber and live bullets and beatings on the streets, and more.

Despite this, the movement – guided and encouraged, but not directed by the National Front Against the Coup - continues to protest peacefully, creatively and forcefully, day after day, in the poor barrios all around Tegucigalpa, in the centers of major cities, and spreading throughout Honduras to villages and remote mountainous regions.

THE “OTHER” INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

The regime also miscalculated the reaction of the “other” international community. Across the Americas, and inside Honduras, solidarity activists, NGOs, alternative media journalists, religious communities, human rights accompaniers and more are working directly with and/or supporting the National Front Against the Coup and community based organizations across Honduras in the pro-democracy, anti-coup movement.

The regime and its supporters inside the country and internationally got it all wrong. Yes, they are carrying out widespread repression. Yes, the Honduran people are suffering a great deal, for their dignity and heroic struggle. But, the regime and its supporters are wrong; they will not prevail.

THE LANGUAGE OF POWER

All of this has come to a point of maximum tension when the regime unleashed another wave of massive repression on Wednesday, September 23rd. They did so because President Zelaya came back to Honduras. Enthralled that their President was back, thousands of Hondurans gathered around the Brazilian embassy.

Enraged that Zelaya was back, after almost 3 months of keeping him out, and enraged that Hondurans were in the street, defying yet another military curfew (many staying over-night outside the embassy), the regime did the only thing it knows how to do: repression. The result: more tear-gas, more rubber and live bullets, more wounded, more illegal detentions, more torture, more deaths.

The regime showed, again, it has no interest in democracy, the rule of law, international law and human rights. The regime showed, again, there

is only one way it can remain in power – repression, repression and more repression.

NO MORE APPEASEMENT

Only concrete political, economic and military pressures from the OAS, the UN and the international community, particularly countries of the Americas, particularly the United States (that for generations has trained, funded and armed the Honduran army and police), can put an end to this regime.

The “San Jose Accords” – mediated by President Oscar Arias - failed and have been by-passed by events. They no longer offer even a framework for discussion, which President Zelaya had accepted in July.

President Zelaya and regime leader Micheletti have said they will talk and try to find a way out of the brutal impasse faced between the military regime and the Honduran people, but any talks must be based on acceptance of the re-establishment of the democratic and legal-constitutional order.

This fundamental basic point cannot be “negotiated” with the illegal regime; they must relinquish power.

Once they have done so, there will plenty for President Zelaya and his government to discuss and negotiate amongst themselves, with the National Front Against the Coup, with the Honduran people, and even with some people and sectors that supported the coup:

- A comprehensive transition plan to re-establish the legal-constitutional and democratic order
- Criminal legal processes against the coup plotters and perpetrators
- Reparations for the victims of repression committed by the regime
Perhaps the establishment of a “Truth Commission”
- The re-setting of an election timetable
- And, most importantly, the establishment of a framework for the National Constituent Assembly

There is a lot to do ... but there is nothing to “negotiate” with the regime. Until it has completely relinquished power and the democratic and legal-constitutional order is fully restored, the amazing pro-democracy, anti-coup movement will continue to lead the struggle for their democracy and for the remaking of their Honduras ... and they very much need the support of the international community.

* * *

(Grahame Russell is Rights Action co-director: info@rightsaction.org, www.rightsaction.org. Feel free to re-publish and re-distribute this article)

**View excellent news coverage about “The Siege of Tegucigalpa”,
September 24:**

http://therealnews.com/t/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=4265

FOR INTERVIEWS (English & Espanol) FROM HONDURAS:

Andres Tomas Conteris, 011 [504] 9777-8514
Dr. Juan Alemendares, , 011 [504] 9985-4150
Sandra Cuffe, 011 [504] 9525-6778

WHAT TO DO?

MAKE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS to directly support Honduran organizations and people working with the National Front Against the Coup. 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 & CANADIANS should contact our members of congress, senators & members of parliament every day, day after day, send copies of this information, and demand:

- unconditional and public support for the return of the entire constitutional government of President Zelaya
- unequivocal denunciation of the military coup and no recognition of the illegal oligarchic-military regime of Roberto Micheletti and General Romeo Vasquez
- unequivocal demand and pressures from international community for regime to relinquish power
- no recognition of the November 2009 elections, that candidates from the traditional Nationalist and Liberal parties are campaigning for, even as the country is militarized and repression is widespread

- immediate suspension of all international funds and loans to the regime, 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 of harms and damages (including loss of life, torture, rape) committed by regime

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 north-east USA, showing slides and short documentaries and speaking about the on-going pro-democracy, anti coup movement in Honduras and about indigenous and community resistance to Goldcorp Inc.’s open-pit, cyanide leach mines in Guatemala and Honduras.

Karen Spring (spring.kj@gmail.com) in Ontario

Francois Guindon (francois.guindon@gmail.com) in Quebec and eastern Canada

Grahame Russell (info@rightsaction.org) in north-east USA

Thank-you for your on-going support for our work and for this amazing struggle.