

## Rights Action

### HONDURAS COUP RESISTANCE – LONG, SLOW, HARSH STRUGGLE AGAINST OLIGARCHIC-MILITARY REGIME

(October 4, 2009, Day 99 of coup resistance, Alert#76)

#### TERMS BEING OFFERED “AREN'T SINCERE”

By Jeremy Kryt Earth Island news

about the state-mated political situation in Honduras and the on-going state-repression against the pro-democracy movement

#### AT BOTTOM

- What to do
- How to donate tax-deductible funds to the pro-democracy movement

Please re-distribute this information

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

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

\* \* \*

#### TERMS BEING OFFERED “AREN'T SINCERE”

By Jeremy Kryt, in Honduras ([jkryt@aol.com](mailto:jkryt@aol.com))

[http://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/elist/eListRead/honduras\\_dipatch\\_interview\\_with\\_zelaya/](http://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/elist/eListRead/honduras_dipatch_interview_with_zelaya/)

Tegucigalpa, Honduras – “It’s like being trapped in some kind of Neo-Nazi concentration camp,” said ousted Honduran President Mel Zelaya, during a cell phone interview on Friday afternoon. Mr. Zelaya was referring to conditions inside the Brazilian Embassy, where he’s been holed up for almost two weeks, after sneaking back into the country on foot.

The president, known for his trademark cowboy hat and flamboyant mustache, said that the hundreds of soldiers surrounding the Embassy are very strict about how much food they allow into the building. “They also don’t let us have anything to read, or even important papers. And no visitors,” he said. “Only their people are allowed inside the perimeter ... Our supporters can’t even come near the building.”

The rest of the country, like the deposed president, also remains under lockdown. Friday saw another peaceful protest march dispersed by police, and unconfirmed reports that a teacher who had actively opposed the de facto regime was killed in an execution-style slaying. Civil rights, including freedom of the press and of assembly, were suspended last Monday, and the authorities have used their new-found powers to crackdown on the growing, pacifist anti-coup movement that swept the country in recent weeks.

Independent media outlets have been shuttered, and soldiers and police ordered to break up peaceful marches and rallies. The troops have repeatedly fired tear gas, rubber bullets, and even live rounds into the crowds of peaceful demonstrators.

Meanwhile at the Embassy, Mr. Zelaya reported that although the chemical weapons attacks against the compound ceased several days ago, the U.S.-developed sonic crowd-control device known as LRAD is still being deployed at irregular intervals.

"The machine is damaging our health," said Zelaya. "They also try to jam our phone calls." The quality of the audio signal fluctuated throughout our interview.

A young man arrested by police on the streets of the capital, after the dispersal of a peaceful protest. Hundreds have been arrested during the recent crackdown.

Despite the arrival, on Friday, of an Organization of American States envoy, and a flurry of rumors that mediators were engaged in diplomatic overtures, Mr. Zelaya indicated there has been little in the way of dialogue of between himself and Mr. Micheletti. "Their offers so far are unacceptable," said Zelaya. "The terms they've proposed aren't sincere," he said. "It is a false dialogue... aren't even allowed to be in contact with the rest of the country."

Mr. Micheletti's office did not respond to repeated requests for an interview, nor to e-mailed questions.

Zelaya was deposed by the military-backed regime in June, after he attempted to hold a public polling on the issue of constitutional reform. Since his surprise return to the country on September 21, scores citizens have been beaten and hundreds more detained illegally. The authorities, however, insist that the situation is under control.

“We police are very professional,” Inspector Rivera, of Tegucigalpa's First Precinct, told me in his office, earlier this week. “Our conduct all depends on the behavior of those in the streets. If they push us – we’ll react!” he said, bouncing his palm off the table top. I had come to the station to inquire about a mass arrest the day before, during a police raid on a nearby agricultural center. I would be allowed to see the imprisoned farmers, Rivera told me, if I were willing to surrender my camera.

Speaking of the general censorship of the media in Honduras, Inspector Rivera said it was only a matter of perspective. “If they would just put on the right kind of news, the good news, there wouldn’t be any problem with them being on the air.”

In his own references to the de facto regime’s suspension of civil rights, President Zelaya cited grave concerns for common citizens. “In Honduras there is no longer separation of powers. No freedom of expression. No right to assemble. The only thing we have here now is brutal repression.”

Zelaya suggested that the best solution to the current crisis might be to give the people what they wanted in the first place: the right to convene a popular assembly, to discuss constitutional reforms that would allow a more participatory form of democracy.

“A constitutional assembly is the right of the people,” Zelaya said. “It’s not my idea. When the country decides the time has come, a legal solution will be found.”

The president also made it clear that the movement against the coup should remain nonviolent, even in the face of increased aggression from authorities. “I am a peaceful man,” he said, “I came here to talk, not to start a war. I’m here to find a solution to the problem of popular sovereignty, and to resume my duties as president of the country.”

But Zelaya did admit that the current media censorship made it difficult for his supporters to organize. “We must struggle against them with other peaceful strategies, in the small towns and villages. Today alone there were two hundred rallies, all across the nation.”

But Mr. Zelaya conceded that, in some form or another, political intervention was needed. “I’m waiting for international pressure to incite a real dialogue,” Zelaya said, speaking calmly, but clearly working hard to hide his fatigue. “I am the president,” he said defiantly, “the one who is recognized by all the countries in the world, the only president chosen by the people of Honduras.”

Later on Friday, in a separate interview, one of the chief architects of the anti-coup movement, Rafael Alegria, echoed Zelaya's assurance about the high levels of popular support. "We'll be in the streets again this weekend," Alegria said, "maybe in smaller groups than before, but still on a nation-wide level." Alegria is the president of the prominent farmers' union Via Campesina. "The Resistance," he said, "will not be broken."

Maybe not, but it is taking a nasty beating. According to the Committee for Human Rights in Honduras (CODEH) 46 people have been seriously injured by police or soldiers, during violent but one-sided clashes. Twenty-two of the 46 have received bullet wounds from armed officers firing into crowds of unarmed demonstrators. At least three people have died in recent days, which brings the death toll since the inception of the coup to 14. Dozens more anti-coup activists have been rounded up and detained, and will be charged with sedition.

"Everyone who lives here has rights – that's why it is a free country," Inspector Rivera said to me the other day in the First Precinct, before confiscating my camera and forbidding me to use a tape recorder when I went to view the prisoners. "This is a country of peace and tranquility," he went on. "There is no repression here."

Then the Inspector led me through a locked door, into the interior. In the cramped compound behind the station, all 38 men were jammed into a primitive, unlighted holding cell that was built to house about a dozen prisoners. The heat and smell were overpowering, but the farmers put on a brave face. The men did have water to drink, but they wanted no food, as they were engaged in a hunger strike against their "illegal detention".

Despite the bravado, they seemed as isolated and trapped as the beleaguered president they support.

"Eat, or you'll get weak," Inspector Rivera said, kicking the iron door of the overcrowded cell, "Don't say later that we didn't give you food."

One of the farmers – middle-aged, haggard and sweating – had come forward out of the dark cell to act as spokesperson, and he politely asked me to take a message to their families: "Viva la Resistencia," he said, with his fist upraised, then stepped back into the shadows.

(Jeremy Kryt, a graduate of the Indiana University School of Journalism and the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop is writing his first novel. His journalism is forthcoming in publications like *In These Times*, and *Narco News*.)

\* \* \* \* \*

## WHAT TO DO

**FOR INTERVIEWS (English & Español) AND MORE INFORMATION:** Grahame Russell, Rights Action, 1-860-352-2448, [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org), [www.rightsaction.org](http://www.rightsaction.org)

**MAKE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS** to 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.

**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](mailto:spring.kj@gmail.com)) in Ontario

Francois Guindon ([francois.guindon@gmail.com](mailto:francois.guindon@gmail.com)) in Quebec and eastern Canada

Grahame Russell ([info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)) in north-east USA

**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

Thank-you for your on-going support for our work and for this amazing struggle - [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org), [www.rightsaction.org](http://www.rightsaction.org)