

## Rights Action

### HONDURAS, Day 103 –

#### **THE “BOTH SIDES” CHARADE: Rights Action commentary & various articles** (October 8, 2009, Honduras Coup Alert#78)

“Minister of State of Foreign Affairs Peter Kent ... tells us he's off to a meeting of the OAS in Honduras to set the matter straight. 'We are hopeful that the mission will help advance the process of national dialogue and reconciliation involving representatives of both parties,' said Minister of State Kent. Presumably by “both parties” Kent means, on the one hand, the party getting its teeth kicked in and their heads split open, on the other, the party doing the kicking and the splitting.”

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To donate tax-deductible funds to the pro-democracy movement in Honduras – see below

What to do – see below

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**FOR INTERVIEWS (English & Espanol) 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)

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#### **PETER KENT: MAN ON A MISSION**

By Douglas Bell, Globe & Mail, October 7, 2009,

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/blogs/douglas-bell/our-man-and-his-mission/article1315775/#comments>

Generally speaking, The New York Times is the avatar/quintessence of on-the-one-hand, on-the-other-hand journalism. That is to say, that when reporting any conflict wherein one side is perpetrating an obvious injustice on another, they'll twist themselves into editorial knots in order to create the appearance of disinterest, objectivity and balance.

With that in mind, I invite you to read the lead paragraphs of the following article that appeared in that paper yesterday, under the title "Honduran Security Forces Accused of Abuse",

[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/06/world/americas/06honduras.html?\\_r=2](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/06/world/americas/06honduras.html?_r=2):

"TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras — Rosamaria Valeriano Flores was returning home from a visit to a public health clinic and found herself in a crowd of people dispersing from a demonstration in support of the ousted president, Manuel Zelaya. As she crossed the central square of the Honduran capital, a group of soldiers and police officers pushed her to the ground and beat her with their truncheons.

"She said the men kicked out most of her top teeth, broke her ribs and split open her head. "A policeman spit in my face and said, 'You will die,' " she said, adding that the attack stopped when a police officer shouted at the men that they would kill her.

"Ms. Valeriano, 39, was sitting in the office of a Tegucigalpa human rights group last week, speaking about the assault, which took place on Aug. 12. As she told her story, mumbling to hide her missing teeth, she pointed to a scar on her scalp and to her still-sore left ribs.

"Since Mr. Zelaya was removed in a June 28 coup, security forces have tried to halt opposition with beatings and mass arrests, human rights groups say. Eleven people have been killed since the coup, according to the Committee for Families of the Disappeared and Detainees in Honduras, or Cofadeh."

Try as they might, even The Times is having trouble providing "balance" in what is rapidly turning into a hemispheric disgrace.

Today arrives a press release from our very own Dudley Do Right, Minister of State of Foreign Affairs Peter Kent (who's daring do I've discussed in these precincts before), telling us he's off to a meeting of the OAS in Honduras to set the matter straight.

'We are hopeful that the mission will help advance the process of national dialogue and reconciliation involving representatives of both parties,' said Minister of State Kent.

Presumably by "both parties" Kent means, on the one hand, the party getting its teeth kicked in and their heads split open, on the other, the party doing the kicking and the splitting.

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### **LEADER OUSTED, HONDURAS HIRES U.S. LOBBYISTS**

By Ginger Thompson and Ron Nixon, New York Times, October 7, 2009  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/08/world/americas/08honduras.html?ref=global-home>

WASHINGTON — First, depose a president. Second, hire a lobbyist.

In the months since soldiers ousted the Honduran president, Manuel Zelaya, the de facto government and its supporters have resisted demands from the United States that he be restored to power. Arguing that the left-leaning Mr. Zelaya posed a threat to their country's fragile democracy by trying to extend his time in office illegally, they have made their case in Washington in the customary way: by starting a high-profile lobbying campaign.

The campaign has had the effect of forcing the administration to send mixed signals about its position to the de facto government, which reads them as signs of encouragement. It also has delayed two key State Department appointments in the region.

Costing at least \$400,000 so far, according to lobbying registration records, the campaign has involved law firms and public relations agencies with close ties to Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Senator John McCain, a leading Republican voice on foreign affairs.

It has also drawn support from several former high-ranking officials who were responsible for setting United States policy in Central America in the 1980s and '90s, when the region was struggling to break with the military dictatorships and guerrilla insurgencies that defined the cold war.

Two decades later, those former officials — including Otto Reich, Roger Noriega and Daniel W. Fisk — view Honduras as the principal battleground in a proxy fight with Cuba and Venezuela, which they characterize as

threats to stability in the region in language similar to that once used to describe the designs of the Soviet Union.

“The current battle for political control of Honduras is not only about that small nation,” Mr. Reich testified in July before Congress. “What happens in Honduras may one day be seen as either the high-water mark of Hugo Chávez ’s attempt to undermine democracy in this hemisphere or as a green light to the spread of Chavista authoritarianism,” he said, referring to the Venezuelan president.

Mr. Noriega, who was a co-author of the Helms-Burton Act, which tightened the United States embargo against Cuba, and who has recently served as a lobbyist for a Honduran business group, declined to comment for this article.

Mr. Reich, who served in key Latin America posts for President Ronald Reagan and President George W. Bush, said he had not lobbied officially for any Honduran group. But he said he had used his connections to push the agenda of the de facto government, led by Roberto Micheletti, because he believed that the Obama administration had made a mistake.

And Mr. Fisk, whose political career has included stints on the National Security Council and as a deputy assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs under Mr. Bush, had been promoting the Micheletti government’s case until two weeks ago as an aide to retired Senator Mel Martinez of Florida.

In addition to the support of such cold war veterans — and partly because of it — the de facto government has mobilized the support of a determined group of Republican legislators, led by Senator Jim DeMint of South Carolina. They are holding up two State Department appointments as a way of pressing the Obama administration to lift sanctions against the country.

“We have made a wrong call here,” Mr. DeMint said in an interview with Fox News after returning from a trip to Honduras last Friday. Referring to the de facto government, he said, “This is probably our best friend in the hemisphere, the most pro-American country, but we are trying to strangle them.”

Chris Sabatini, editor of *Americas Quarterly*, a policy journal focusing on Latin America, said the lobbying had muddled Washington’s position on the coup. The administration has said publicly that it sees the coup in

Honduras as a dangerous development in a region that not too long ago was plagued by them, he said.

But, he added, to placate its opponents in Congress, and have its nominations approved, the State Department has sometimes sent back-channel messages to legislators expressing its support for Mr. Zelaya in more equivocal terms.

"There's been a leadership vacuum on Honduras in the administration, and these are the people who've filled it," he said of the Micheletti government's backers. "They haven't gotten a lot of support, but enough to hold the administration's policy hostage for now."

After the June 28 coup, President Obama joined the region in condemning the action and calling for President Zelaya to be returned to power, even though the Honduran president is an ally of Mr. Chávez, America's biggest adversary in the region.

But Congressional aides said that less than 10 days after Mr. Zelaya was ousted, Mr. Noriega and Lanny J. Davis <<http://www.orrick.com/lawyers/Bio.asp?ID=149059>> , a confidant of Mrs. Clinton and a lobbyist for a Honduran business council, organized a meeting for supporters of the de facto government with members of the Senate.

Mr. Fisk, who attended the meeting, said he was stunned by the turnout. "I had never seen eight senators in one room to talk about Latin America in my entire career," he said.

As President Obama imposed increasingly tougher sanctions on Honduras, the lobbying intensified. The Cormac Group, run by a former aide to Senator McCain, John Timmons, signed on, records show, as did Chlopak, Leonard, Schechter & Associates, a public relations firm.

For his part, Mr. Reich sent his thoughts to members of Congress by e-mail. "We should rejoice," he wrote to one member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, "that one of the self-proclaimed 21st Century socialist allies of Chávez has been legally deposed by his own countrymen."

As is often the nature of lobbying, some messages have been sent without any names attached. Floating around Senate offices in the last few weeks, for example, was a list of talking points aimed at undermining the nomination of Assistant Secretary of State Thomas A. Shannon as

ambassador to Brazil. Two Congressional aides, who requested anonymity to speak candidly about matters related to the coup, said that Mr. Fisk wrote the talking points.

Mr. Fisk denied having done so. He also dismissed the notion that he was operating from an old playbook. "Someone else may be fighting over the '80s," he said. "I'm not."

(Barclay Walsh contributed research.)

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### **POLL: WIDE MAJORITY OF HONDURANS OPPOSE COUP D'ETAT, WANT ZELAYA BACK**

by Al Giordano - October 6, 2009

<http://narcosphere.narconews.com/thefield/3511/poll-wide-majority-hondurans-oppose-coup-d'etat-want-zelaya-back>

Finally, hard and reliable data - by a legally certified Honduran polling company - provides a clear measurement of how the Honduran people view the June 28 coup d'etat, its "president" Roberto Micheletti, President Manuel Zelaya and the national civil resistance.

The polling data - which we make public for the first time here - shows that Hondurans widely (by a margin of 3 to 1) oppose the coup, oppose coup "president" Micheletti by a margin of 3 to 1 and favor the reinstatement of their elected President Manuel Zelaya by a clear majority of 3 to 2.

On February 9 of this year, the Gaceta Oficial of the government of Honduras published the Supreme Electoral Tribunal's certification of a Tegucigalpa polling company, COIMER & OP (Consultants in Investigation of Markets and Public Opinion), as a legally authorized pollster for the November 29 elections.

The Tribunal inspected the company's polling methodology, its offices, its staff, gave it the stamp of approval and the green light to survey the Honduran electorate.

The Field has obtained the full results of a recent COIMER & OP survey of 1,470 Honduran citizens over 18 years of age at randomly selected homes (no more than one respondent allowed from each home) proportional to national, state and municipal population and matching other

demographic measurements (gender, age, etcetera) in the country, from August 23 to 29 of this year. The poll has a margin of error of four percent.

This is the first survey to be made public since a July Gallup poll showed a plurality of Hondurans opposed the coup d'etat and Roberto Micheletti, and a plurality wanted Zelaya back as president.

What is interesting from this survey is that opposition to Micheletti and the coup increased between early July and late August from mere pluralities to a punishing majority: evidence that the nonviolent civil resistance movement has worked effectively to strip legitimacy from the coup regime.

As of late August, only 17.4 percent of Hondurans favor the coup d'etat, only 22.2 percent believe Micheletti should remain as president, and only 33 percent oppose the restitution of President Manuel Zelaya.

And those were the numbers before Micheletti's very unpopular "state of siege" decree of September 29 began to divide his supporters even further.

For Spanish-language readers, political reporters and analysts, The Field and Narco News today make available the full survey and all its cross-tabulations for your analysis.

For English speakers, we will translate the survey questions and the results here, adding some analysis:

Are you in favor of the June 28 coup d'etat against President Manuel Zelaya Rosales?

In favor of coup: 17.4 percent  
Opposed to coup: 52.7 percent  
No response: 29.9 percent

Strip away the "no response" and the percentages among those with an opinion reveal a stunning 75 percent percent against the coup with only 25 percent in favor: an anti-coup margin of 3 to 1.

Meanwhile, coup "president" Micheletti remains a very unpopular man among Hondurans:

Should Micheletti stay in power or leave the current government?

Micheletti should stay: 22.2 percent  
Micheletti should leave: 60.1 percent  
No response: 17.7 percent

Among those who express an opinion, Micheletti's opponents outnumber his supporters by a margin of nearly 3 to 1.

A clear majority supports Manuel Zelaya's return to the presidency – 60 percent of those who express an opinion:

Do you support the return of Manuel Zelaya Rosales to the Presidency of the Republic?

Support Zelaya's return: 51.6 percent  
Oppose Zelaya's return: 33 percent  
No response: 15.4 percent

Even the National Civil Resistance - maligned daily in the pro-coup media, portrayed sensationally as lawless and threatening of the civil order - enjoys a plurality of support from the Honduran population:

Do you agree or disagree with the marches by the national resistance throughout the country against the coup d'etat?

Support the marches: 45.5 percent  
Oppose the marches: 41.8 percent  
No response: 12.7 percent

By a more than 2 to 1 margin, Hondurans view the police and military as overly repressive against the national resistance:

Do you think that the Armed Forces and National Police are engaging in repression or not against the National Resistance?

Yes, there is repression: 54.5 percent  
No, there is not repression: 21.8 percent  
No response: 23.7 percent

When asked their opinion about that repression, an overwhelming majority of Hondurans opposes that repression:

Do you agree with the repression or condemn the repression that the Armed Forces and National Police have engaged in against the National Resistance?



Against repression: 65.4 percent  
For repression: 8 percent  
No response: 26.4 percent

Strip away the non respondents, and a whopping 89 percent oppose the repression against the civil resistance, including many Hondurans that do not themselves support the resistance marches.

Here's another interesting question and result:

Who promoted and financed the coup d'etat that toppled President Manuel Zelaya Rosales? Among the political, business, military sectors or foreign capital, which was behind the coup?

All of the above: 23.6 percent  
Business sector: 16.8 percent  
Political sector: 15 percent  
None of the above: 9.5 percent  
Military sector: 6.7 percent  
International capital: 2.4 percent  
No response: 26.8 percent

The COIMER & OP survey also reveals a chilling fact regarding freedom of the press under the coup regime: that the two national TV and radio stations shut down by the coup regime happen to be the most trusted news sources in the entire country, out rating all other media outlets:

Which radio news do you prefer to inform you of events in the country?

Radio Globo: 23.4 percent  
HRN: 22.4 percent  
Radio América: 13.7 percent  
Radio Cadena voces: 0.7 percent  
Local station: 10.3 percent  
No answer: 29.5

Which television news program do you prefer to inform you about the happenings in the country regarding the coup d'etat against President Manuel Zelaya Rosales?

Channel 36 Choluta: 18 percent  
Channel 6: 16.9 percent  
TNS: 15.7  
Abriendo Brecha: 10.7

Hable como Habla: 7.8  
TVC: 7.3  
Once Noticias: 3.7  
Local and regional channels: 9.5  
No response: 11.4

The survey also shows that only 53.9 percent of Hondurans read daily newspapers, and that only 55.2 percent prefer any newspaper at all to inform them of happenings in the country:

Which newspaper do you prefer to inform you about the happenings in the country regarding the coup d'etat against President Manuel Zelaya Rosales?

No response: 44.8 percent  
La Prensa: 22.6 percent  
La Tribuna: 12.2 percent  
Tiempo: 9.9 percent  
El Herald: 9.3 percent  
El Libertador: 1.2 percent

Interestingly, prior to June 28, the daily Tiempo of San Pedro Sula was the fourth most read paper in the country. Since the coup it has now surpassed the daily Herald and is catching up on second place La Tribuna – both of Tegucigalpa – and Tiempo is in striking distance for second position.

Tiempo is the only newspaper of the four that has not offered extremely dishonest pro-coup spin.

The results of the next question should indicate why the Micheletti regime keeps talking so loudly about the November 29 elections which the rest of the world has said cannot be recognized as fair or free under the repressive conditions imposed by the coup regime. However, a strong majority of Hondurans still favor those elections:

Should the general elections organized by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal for November 19 happen even if the institutional crisis isn't resolved?

Yes, have elections: 66.4 percent  
No, don't have them: 23.8 percent  
No response: 2.9 percent

The 23.8 percent that oppose holding the elections before the crisis is resolved is actually a very high number compared to general public opinion: Elections are like mom and apple pie. Only a very highly politically conscious citizen would make the leap of understanding that elections are not fair and free under a coup regime and therefore openly oppose them happening.

I would venture an estimation that that number of 23.8 percent represents participants in the Civil Resistance movements, who have universally argued that the conditions do not exist to hold free elections given what the coup regime has done to censor and violently repress all dissent. That would represent an unusually strong base from which to continue organizing.

Here are some questions about those elections:

What political party do you belong to or sympathize with?

Liberal: 38.5 percent  
National: 28.5  
Democratic Unification: 1.4  
PINU: 1.1  
DC: 0.9  
Independent Candidate: 2.9  
None: 21.5  
No response: 5.0

Will you vote in the General Elections to elect President, members of Congress and Mayors?

Yes: 53.8 percent  
No: 18.8 percent  
Maybe: 12.5 percent  
Don't know: 9 percent  
No response: 3.5 percent

What is your opinion of Independent Candidates?

Good opinion: 51 percent  
Bad opinion: 16.2 percent  
No response: 32.8 percent

If the elections were held today for President, who would you vote for:

Pepe Lobo (National Party): 28.2 percent  
Elvin Santos (Liberal Party): 14.4 percent  
Carlos H. Reyes (Independent): 12 percent  
César Ham (Democratic Unification): 2.2 percent  
Bernard Martinez (PINU): 1.2 percent  
Felipe Avila (Christian Democrat): 1 percent  
None of the above: 24.7 percent  
No response: 16.3 percent

We can see from those combined numbers that while Zelaya's Liberal Party remains the most popular, its pro-coup nominee Elvin Santos is rejected by about two-thirds of his own party members. We can also see very low interest in participation by voters, with only 53.8 percent saying they will definitely vote. And – should there be a negotiated solution in time for the resistance movements to participate in clean elections (a very big “if”) – Independent candidate Carlos H. Reyes is very well positioned to supplant the Liberal Party nominee to become one of the top two candidates, the most viable alternative to Lobo, especially if, as has been talked a lot about, the Democratic Unification Party of candidate Cesar Ham joins in coalition behind Reyes.

But, of course, such talk is way premature, since conditions do not at present exist for fair and free elections, and its not clear there is enough time in the next 53 days to fix that.

This chart measures the popularity (“Excelente y Buena opinion”) against the negative rating (“Mala opinion”) along with the middle category of “regular opinion” and “don't know or no response”):

The most popular political figures in the country are:

President Manuel Zelaya: 44.7 percent (to 25.7 percent negative)

And...

First Lady Xiomara Castro de Zelaya: 42.6 percent (to 17.9 percent negative)

That they enjoy the highest favorability compared to any other national figure - after a massive PR ad campaign all summer long on TV, radio and in the pro-coup dailies to portray Zelaya as a national villain - is also an indication of the pro-coup media's own crisis of credibility with the public.

The least popular political figures in Honduras are those perceived as coup leaders:

Coup “president” Roberto Micheletti: 56.5 percent negative (to just 16.2 percent positive)

Liberal Party candidate Elvin Santos: 45.2 percent negative (to 18.6 percent positive)

Cardinal Oscar Andres Rodriguez: 42.6 percent (to 26.1 percent positive)

General Romeo Vasquez: 40 percent negative (to 19.1 percent positive)

National Party candidate Pepe Lobo: 34.1 percent negative (to 30.5 percent positive)

Interestingly, Independent and anti-coup presidential candidate Carlos H. Reyes is more popular (24.6 percent) than unpopular (14.1 percent) as are anti-coup media voices like Radio Globo’s Eduardo Maldonado (31.4 percent positive to 23.2 percent negative) and Channel 36’s Esdras Amado Lopez (23.5 percent positive to 17.3 percent negative). They are, along with the Zelayas, the only national public figures to enjoy a significantly more favorable rating from Hondurans than negative.

The bottom line: A majority of the Honduran people oppose the coup, oppose Micheletti and a wide majority oppose the regime’s repression against the national resistance. And a plurality openly support the civil resistance movement.

So when Republican US Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen yesterday issued a “Twitter communiqué” claiming that “nobody wants Zelaya back,” she was blowing smoke out of the wrong air hole. All those - from the regime, to the oligarch diaspora to Lanny Davis and the US political consultants they hire, to the spoiled brat class of some (but not all) gringo expats in Honduras that repeated unsupported claims that a majority of Hondurans favor the coup, or support Micheletti, or oppose Zelaya’s return, now end with egg on their faces, their credibility shot. They just made it up and thought you would be gullible enough to believe them. But here we’ve given you, finally, the hard numbers, now available in full public view.

What’s more is that these results explain why the coup regime and its chambers of commerce and other big business organizations – the forces in the country that can afford to hire pollsters - have not released any of their own internal polling data to the public: Because they, too, know that a majority of Hondurans oppose them, and they are less popular even than the national nonviolent civil resistance movement that they treat with such disdain.

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**WHAT TO DO**

**FOR INTERVIEWS (English & Espanol) 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)

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

- Public pressure for release of all political prisoners
- Public and unconditional support for the return of the constitutional government of President Zelaya
- Unequivocal pressures from international community for regime to relinquish power
- No recognition of the November 2009 elections, that candidates from the dominant Nationalist and Liberal parties are campaigning for, even as the country is militarized and repression is widespread
- 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

**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

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