

## Rights Action

### Day 109, HONDURAS COUP RESISTANCE

#### STAND-OFF CONTINUES: PEOPLE VERSUS MONEY AND GUNS

(October 14, 2009, Honduras Coup Alert#79)

#### BELOW:

- interview with President Zelaya
- United Nations concerned about Colombian mercenaries in Honduras
- Honduran soldiers raid indigenous Garifuna hospital
- detention in Honduras of Canadian human rights observer-activist
- Berta Oliva (leading human rights defender in Honduras) coming to November Vigil to close the SOA (November 10-22, 2009)

The standoff between the economic elites and military high command of Honduras (the military high command are members of the economic elite) versus the Honduran people continues.

*"I want to show the de facto government that staging a coup is not a game, it's a serious matter. Anyone who stages a coup has serious problems with their perception of reality. I want to send a message to the coup leaders, and the world as a whole, that this kind of thing just isn't acceptable."* President Zelaya

YES! - Due to huge pressure from the Honduran people, and to pressure from the people's "international community", Agustina Flores Lopez has been freed. The regime and its manipulated legal system will still try to carry out a trial against her for "sedition" [it is the regime itself that is manifestly guilty of sedition, having conspired against and overthrown the constitutional, legal order!], but ... she is out of jail, and back with her family. There are more political prisoners ... and the repression continues.

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**FUNDS ARE NEEDED:** Thank-you everyone who has donated funds. It is the Honduran people's movement, with support from the people's "international community", that is holding this oligarchic-military regime at bay. To donate tax-deductible funds to the pro-democracy movement in Honduras – see below.

**DELEGATIONS ARE NEEDED:** The Honduran people's movement continues to call for international delegations to go to Honduras to observe and bear witness to their peaceful 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/>
- FOR INTERVIEWS & 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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### **ZELAYA FORECASTS DIM PROSPECTS FOR HONDURAS NEGOTIATIONS**

Posted: October 13, 2009, 12:15 PM ET

[http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/latin\\_america/july-dec09/zelaya\\_10-13.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/latin_america/july-dec09/zelaya_10-13.html)

Manuel Zelaya, who Hondurans elected president in 2005, has now been out of office for more than 100 days. Marcelo Ballve of New America Media spoke with him Monday night in the Brazilian Embassy there, where the deposed leader has taken refuge.

A military-backed coup toppled Zelaya on June 28 and flew him to a forced exile in Costa Rica the same day. Zelaya's opponents said it was necessary to remove him because he was trying to muster support for changing Constitutionally-backed presidential term limits. Zelaya denies this, arguing that a referendum he planned was intended only to gauge Hondurans' attitudes toward constitutional reform.

On Sept. 21, Zelaya was able to travel back into Honduras to rally his supporters, and sought refuge at the Brazilian Embassy, where he remains. Negotiations between Zelaya's representatives and the interim government, brokered by the Organization of American States, restarted in Honduras on Tuesday.

Following is a portion of Ballve's cell phone interview with Zelaya:

**QUESTION:** You have demanded that the international community and United States do more to push for your reinstatement. What more can they do, other than imposing sanctions and isolating the interim government, which they already have done?

**MANUEL ZELAYA:** The international community has done plenty. It has acted energetically like never before in its history. There are no precedents for this situation, we are trailblazing. We are all working together to teach the coup leaders a lesson, with the world as witness. Both the United Nations and the Organization of American States have condemned the coup, which is

unprecedented. The United States could do more, but I am grateful for what it has done up to now.

QUESTION: In negotiations this week, it's possible that your negotiators will strike a deal with the side representing interim President Roberto Micheletti and return you to the presidency.

MANUEL ZELAYA: That's a very hypothetical scenario. There are a whole series of obstacles and pitfalls that need to be surmounted before that could happen.

QUESTION: What will you do if negotiations fail?

MANUEL ZELAYA: That's the more probable scenario. Not because I lack the will to come to an agreement, but because the de facto government doesn't desire it. Basically, my position will remain the same, I will insist with my efforts. I want to show the de facto government that staging a coup is not a game, it's a serious matter. Anyone who stages a coup has serious problems with their perception of reality. I want to send a message to the coup leaders, and the world as a whole, that this kind of thing just isn't acceptable.

QUESTION: Your critics say that before the coup toppled you from power, you planned to transform Honduran society much like President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela has changed his country over the last decade.

MANUEL ZELAYA: To begin with, President Chavez has been used as a scapegoat to justify this coup. Invoking his name is not a valid justification for a coup, it's an irrational one. Secondly, in a 30-year political career, I have always defended democracy. I have participated in 12 elections. Reaching the presidency has been my life's work. I have never broken a law in my life. The coup organizers are simply an ambitious group of powerful people who want to hang on to their privileges and accumulate even more power.

QUESTION: Media accounts of your political trajectory say you began your presidential term as a conservative politician from a wealthy background who had a change of heart in office and became a populist.

MANUEL ZELAYA: That's not true. When in office, I didn't do anything I had not announced when on the campaign trail. I campaigned on direct, participatory democracy, a fair economy, dignified employment, anti-poverty programs, and global engagement. Everything I said I would do in my campaign I followed up during my presidency. The elite business interests became angry with me when I increased the minimum wage (in March 2009), and lowered interest rates. But I achieved more economic growth than Honduras had seen in a long time. Even in the middle of the financial crisis our economy was growing by 4.5 percent annually.

QUESTION: Your critics believe that if you are returned to power you may somehow try to remain as president, despite the elections scheduled for Nov. 29, and the end of your term in late January.

MANUEL ZELAYA: I think that's silly. It's silliness the size of Mount Everest. A person like me, a proven pacifist and democrat with thirty years experience, but who doesn't have the backing of the economic powers in Honduras, the big media, and the army, which is allied with the economic elite, how could I carry out a plan of that nature? I've never planned to remain in office for a single day longer than what is allotted by law, I wouldn't stay longer for all the money in the world, or if Pope Benedict XVI asked me to do it. I'm fighting against a government that usurped power. I've never usurped power. I'm only fighting for a right that is mine.

QUESTION: Costa Rican mediator Oscar Arias recently called the Honduran Constitution a "travesty." Do you consider the Constitution a travesty?

MANUEL ZELAYA: If you followed the events over the course of the three or four months that preceded the coup, you would know I was championing a popular referendum to find out what the people thought about the Constitution and its reform. I believed this to be necessary. I know the Constitution well. It has been continuously and flagrantly violated over the last 30 years. It fences politicians in to such a degree they see themselves obligated to skirt its provisions in order to advance their interests.

However, only the Honduran people can request a reform to the Constitution. I can't do it. That's why I created the idea of the fourth urn (the referendum), which would have asked Hondurans what they thought about the idea of Constitutional reform.

QUESTION: Along with a few dozen of your supporters, you have been refuged in the Brazilian Embassy for exactly three weeks as of this evening. Please tell us about the conditions inside the embassy, and the mood and morale inside its walls?

MANUEL ZELAYA: Spiritually, we feel very strong, because of the solidarity and support we've had from the international community and the Honduran people. But we're living under military siege, with soldiers surrounding the embassy at all times.

QUESTION: In the 1950s radical Peruvian political leader Victor Haya de la Torre was refuged in the Colombian Embassy in his own country for five years. Would you be willing to persist for that long to advance your cause?

MANUEL ZELAYA: On the one hand it's a good question, but it's also captious. It contains a masochistic component. I am not a masochist. I came here to resolve a problem, and that's what I intend to do.

QUESTION: What else can you tell us about American involvement in the events that took place in Honduras?

MANUEL ZELAYA: There are U.S. politicians who pretend to be champions of democracy but in reality have an antidemocratic vocation. The American voters should watch their politicians, because some are hypocrites, they express themselves in one manner to their voters, but send a different message to the rest of the world by supporting a coup. Several members of the U.S. Congress have visited the de facto government in Honduras, and some former officials ... have made statements supporting the coup. That's worrisome.

Editor's Note: Reporting from Honduras is a partnership between the NewsHour and New America Media. More interviews and coverage to come. -- By Marcelo Ballve for the NewsHour with Jim Lehrer

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## **U.N. EXPERTS CONCERNED COLOMBIA FIGHTERS IN HONDURAS**

(October 9, 2009)

GENEVA (Reuters) - U.N. human rights experts voiced concern Friday at reports that former paramilitaries from Colombia had been recruited to protect wealthy people and property in Honduras after that country's military coup.

The U.N. working group on the use of mercenaries said "information available to date" suggested that land-owners hired 40 former members of the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia as guards after violence erupted between supporters of the de facto government and backers of deposed President Manuel Zelaya.

They also cited reports that 120 paramilitaries from several neighboring countries had been brought in to support the late-June coup that has triggered Central America's worst crisis in years.

"We urge the Honduran authorities to take all practical measures to prevent the use of mercenaries within its territory and to fully investigate allegations concerning their presence and activities," the five independent experts said in a joint statement issued in Geneva.

Honduras has signed an international convention barring the recruitment, use, financing and training of mercenary fighters, noted the group members: Shaista

Shameem of Fiji, Najat al-Hajjaji of Libya, Amada Benavides de Perez of Colombia, Jose Luis Gomez del Prado of Spain and Alexander Nikitin of Russia.

The experts also raised concerns about "allegations of discriminate use of long-range acoustic devices" by police and mercenary forces to harass Zelaya and his supporters who have taken refuge in the Brazilian embassy in Tegucigalpa.

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## **HONDURAN SOLDIERS RAID INDIGENOUS GARIFUNA HOSPITAL**

October 8, 2009 -- Garifuna communities in Honduras are protesting an October 6th Honduran military police invasion of the only indigenous-directed hospital in the country, located in remote Ciriboya. According to eyewitnesses, 15 armed military police broke into the hospital in the early morning hours, later claiming they were searching for illegal drugs. No one was injured in the raid, which was timed during a hospital shift change.

The hospital, staffed by Garifuna doctors recently graduated from Cuba's Latin American Medical School (ELAM), along with Cuban doctors, has treated over 300,000 cases since its inauguration in December 2007. "We are not just providing health care to a forgotten people," said Dr. Luther Castillo, an ELAM graduate who has led the project and community construction of its building. "We are creating a new model of free health care, an example for other poor regions in Latin America."

A statement by the Garifuna organization OFRANEH (Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña) called the military action "a clear message to the Garifuna people (in response to) their participation in the resistance movement against the coup, and particularly to Dr. Castillo and hospital personnel. For OFRANEH, such a punitive action against the hospital is one more indication of the prevailing racism among the coup leaders and their military".

Constitutional President Manuel Zelaya officially opened the hospital, which serves many of the poorest coastal communities in Honduras, and his government signed an agreement affirming the right of the indigenous Garifuna to direct and administer their own health care in the region. Since the June military coup, the defacto government has cancelled the accord, eliminated physician stipends, and has attempted to downgrade the hospital to health center status.

However, the hospital has kept its doors open, thanks to local communities' support and health workers who have stayed on the job. In addition to patient services--such as birthing, surgeries, hospitalization, dental care and laboratory tests--hospital physicians have established courses for nurses' aides and midwives, staffed eleven satellite clinics, and organized home visits and health

promotion activities throughout the area. "Since they haven't been able to shut us down," charged Dr. Castillo, "those who plotted the coup are now trying to use the military to intimidate our health professionals."

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.

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- 1) Circulate this release to listservs, blogs, press and human rights organizations.
- 2) Sign--and ask your organization or institution to sign--the following letter to the Secretary General of the Organization of American States. To sign, just reply to this alert or send an email to [admin1@mediccglobal.org](mailto:admin1@mediccglobal.org) indicating your name, your title and the name of the organization you represent. Please reply by Thursday, October 15 in order to be included.

October, 2009  
Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza  
Organization of American States  
1889 F Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C., 20006

Dear Secretary General Insulza:

It has come to our attention that on the morning of October 6, 2009, armed military invaded the premises of the indigenous Garifuna Hospital in Ciriboya, Iriona Department, Honduras, on the pretext of a search for illegal drugs. They found none.

We join with local Garifuna communities in demanding an end to such intimidation of health workers and patients, and call upon you to redouble your efforts to guarantee the human, political and civil rights of all Hondurans, in particular of the Garifuna people. The right of indigenous peoples to establish their own health care services is enshrined in an International Labor Organization covenant subscribed to by the government of Honduras. The raid on their hospital constitutes a violation of their rights as human beings, Honduran citizens and indigenous people.

We urge you to take whatever measures necessary to protect the lives of hospital staff and community members in the Garifuna regions of Honduras, as you seek to uphold the rights of all Hondurans put at risk by the military coup and defacto government.

Sincerely,

Peter Bourne, MD, MA, Chair

Medical Education Cooperation with Cuba (MEDICC)

Kathleen Hower, Executive Director and Co-Founder, Global Links

Dabney Evans, MPH, CHES, Founder and Director, Institute of Human Rights, Emory University

Dan Kovalik, Senior Associate General Counsel, United Steelworkers, AFL-CIO (USW)

Bill Camp, Executive Secretary, Sacramento Central Labor Council

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. MEDICC | 1814 Franklin Street | Suite 500 | Oakland | CA | 94612

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### **VANCOUVERITE DETAINED BY INTERPOL IN TEGUCIGALPA SPEAKS OUT**

by Dawn Paley, <http://vancouver.mediacoop.ca/story/1961>, October 12, 2009

Over one hundred days after the June 28 military coup in Honduras, news about the coup regime, the status of President Zelaya and the continued repression of resistance movements has all but fallen off of the North American media map.

Steve Stewart, a Vancouver based solidarity activist who works with CoDevelopment Canada, a small non governmental organization, traveled to Honduras in early September as part of a human rights delegation.

"I did get to experience first hand the levels of paranoia in the coup leadership," Stewart told the Vancouver Media Co-op by phone from his office in East Vancouver.

"Upon leaving the country, myself and a Colombian delegate were taken for questioning at a police base."

Stewart's briefcase containing documentation of the delegation was stolen and later turned out to be in the possession of INTERPOL, who detained Stewart and Colombian educator Guillermo Baquero. The two men were later turned over to the Honduran Special Intelligence Forces (COBRAS), taken to a military base and interrogated. They were held for more than seven hours.



Stewart wrote his name on a piece of paper, which was smuggled out of the interrogation room by a member of the resistance. Within one hour, lawyers arrived to assist Stewart and Baquero, who were eventually released.

"Through a chance encounter we were able to access a lawyer and leave the country, but there are thousands of Hondurans who have been illegally detained and suffered a worse fate," stated Stewart in a press release after his detention.

As for his visit to Honduras, "we participated in one march that wasn't massive, but it was large, it had about 5,000 people in it," said Stewart. "Then we discovered that they do that every single day, and not just in Tegucigalpa but in a number of the other primary cities around the country."

"The ability for them to sustain this struggle was quite impressive," he said.

Stewart talked about how the demands of the popular movements have changed since the initial days of the coup.

"The primary demand in the streets now is -whether Zelaya comes back or not- to go straight to creating a new constitutional assembly. The coup and it's aftermath have really put into stark contrast the contradictions in the country, and people strongly feel that the whole system needs to be refounded now."

Media coverage of the coup in Canada has been waning, but when there is coverage, Stewart noted there tends to be misinformation about the constitutional reform process Zelaya was proposing when he was removed from the country to Costa Rica.

The media has placed "a real kind of focus on what ousted President Zelaya is doing, what the coup leaders are doing, and much less on the size and scope of the social movements," said Stewart.

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## **NOVEMBER VIGIL TO CLOSE THE SOA (NOVEMBER 10-22, 2009)**

Hello Supporter, we just talked with Human Rights Defender Bertha Oliva from Tegucigalpa, Honduras. She is planning to come to the United States to stand with thousands and to speak out at the gates of Fort Benning, Georgia during the November Vigil to close the SOA (November 10-22, 2009). She will bring the call for accountability and the anti-coup resistance to the place where the coup plotters received their training: the School of the Americas (SOA/ WHINSEC)!

Bertha wanted to relay her gratitude for all that people here are doing in solidarity with Honduras. We have kept her abreast of our efforts, and she senses the outpouring of solidarity, along with concrete actions.

She told us that, although she and everyone else are exhausted, and a few pounds lighter, that they are exhilarated at the energy and hope and spirit of the resistance movement. She feels so proud of her people at this moment.

I asked Bertha how we could be of help in addition to what we are doing. Her response was: Send concrete reports (photos, places, statements) about Honduran solidarity events that have taken place in the U.S. International solidarity is having a huge impact on Honduran society, and is putting pressure on the coup govt. By sending info about these expressions of solidarity throughout the U.S., you would make a huge contribution, according to Bertha.

COFADEH's press team is very effective in getting things out widely there, as Father Roy and Lisa Sullivan have experienced in several visits, and they would get this info out. She mentioned several times that this would be very helpful.

Tom Loudon, who was part of the first SOA Watch Emergency Response Delegation right after the coup just returned to Honduras, where he is going to meet and strategize with members of El Frente Nacional de la Resistencia (English: National Resistance Front), a wide coalition in Honduras of grassroots organizations and political parties and movements that aims to restore elected President Manuel Zelaya, using the methods of massive civil disobedience, marches and strikes.

Wednesday, October 28, marks the 4 month anniversary of the SOA graduate-led military coup in Honduras. After consulting with our partners in Honduras, we are calling for local actions to mark that day with expressions of solidarity with the Honduran people and to close the SOA. You can organize creative street art actions or organize a vigil in your community. Please let us know what you are planning and email photos and report backs that we can post online and send to our partners in Honduras. We are looking forward to see you at the gates of Fort Benning, Georgia from November 20-22, 2009.

Abrazos, Hendrik Voss, School of the Americas Watch, 202-234-3440,  
<http://www.SOAWLatina.org>

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## **WHAT TO DO**

**FOR INTERVIEWS & 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.

**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

### **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.