

## **Rights Action**

### **Recognition of elections equals legitimization of the military coup & justification of repression, by Rights Action**

Plus, articles about undemocratic and repressive elections held November 29 in Honduras.

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**FOR INTERVIEWS & MORE INFO:** Annie Bird, 1-202-680-3002, [annie@rightsaction.org](mailto:annie@rightsaction.org); Grahame Russell, 1-860-352-2448, [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org). ([www.rightsaction.org](http://www.rightsaction.org))

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### **RECOGNITION OF ELECTIONS EQUALS LEGITIMIZATION OF THE MILITARY COUP & JUSTIFICATION OF REPRESSION**

(Commentary by Grahame Russell & Annie Bird (Rights Action co-directors))

"ELECTIONS VALIDATED THROUGH BLOOD & REPRESSION"

Please see this 13-minute news report, to get an idea of "election" day in Honduras:

[http://therealnews.com/t/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=4550](http://therealnews.com/t/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=4550). (Produced by Jesse Freeston, [jfreeston@gmail.com](mailto:jfreeston@gmail.com), [www.therealnews.com](http://www.therealnews.com))

RE-STATING THE OBVIOUS

Rights Action is one of a number of organizations that had human rights delegations in Honduras (Quixote Center, Common Frontiers, Breaking the Silence, School of the Americas Watch, National Lawyers Guild, ...). These were NOT election observing missions. We do not recognize the validity of these elections.

Based on the findings of our human rights observer mission just back from Honduras, and based on 5 months of work Rights Action has done in Honduras since the June 28 military coup, Rights Action finds there were no conditions, whatsoever, to hold a free and fair electoral process over the past months, nor to hold free and fair elections on November 29th.

## THE NUMBERS GAME

We agree with a majority of observers and analysts that the turnout for these illegal and repressive “elections” was in the range of 30-35%. Approximately 1.7 million voters, of more than 4.6 million eligible voters, showed up, though an exact accounting will probably never be available given the corruption and repression of the coup regime itself and the manipulated role played by the TSE (Supreme Election Tribunal) that oversaw the “elections”. (See articles below)

Now, the “numbers game”.

All the powerful sectors that planned and supported the June 28th military coup (high command of the armed forces and police, most of the oligarchy, the National Party, part of the Liberal Party, the hierarchy of the catholic church, the most of the media ), and their international supporters, are claiming the elections were free and fair. Their hope is acceptance of these “elections” will effectively legitimize and justify the June 28 coup, after the fact, and put the past 5 months of repression behind them.

This will not happen.

These “elections” are not accepted by a majority of the Honduran population. Most governments in the Americas do not recognize or accept them.

## “SWEARING IN” CEREMONY / “TRANSFER OF POWER” - JANUARY 27, 2010

The pro-democracy movement and anti-coup struggle enters a next time-frame. The so-called formal “swearing in” “transfer of power” ceremony from the previous government to the incoming government is slated to happen January 27, 2010. This event promises to be as manufactured and manipulated as the November 29 “elections” and proceeding months of “electoral process” were.

AQUI NO SE RINDE NADIE (HERE, NO ONE IS GIVING UP)

The pro-democracy, anti-coup movement continues to be led by the National Resistance Front. They will adapt and announce their strategies on an on-going basis. President Zelaya, still 'jailed' in the Brazilian embassy in Tegucigalpa with some 45 supporters, and his government do not accept the "elections"; they will adapt and carry forth with their efforts to properly restore the constitutional-legal order in Honduras and then to plan and carry out real free and fair elections.

The Honduran people and legitimate government will continue with their struggle because they deserve their democracy and constitutional order and because there is far too much at stake (for Honduras and for peoples and democratic governments across the Americas) if the repressive coup regime and oligarchy are allowed to get away with their theft of democracy.

HUMAN RIGHTS DELEGATION - JANUARY 24-31, 2010

Rights Action will lead another human rights observer and accompaniment delegation to Honduras, to overlap with the so-called "transfer of power". For more information, contact: Grahame Russell ([info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)).

FOR INTERVIEWS & MORE INFO: Annie Bird, 1-202-680-3002, [annie@rightsaction.org](mailto:annie@rightsaction.org); Grahame Russell, 1-860-352-2448, [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org). ([www.rightsaction.org](http://www.rightsaction.org))

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## **MANIPULATING THE HONDURAN ELECTION RESULTS**

(By Belén Fernández (UDW); Les Blough (Axis of Logic), *Upside Down World*, [http://axisoflogic.com/artman/publish/Article\\_57656.shtml](http://axisoflogic.com/artman/publish/Article_57656.shtml), Wednesday, Dec 2, 2009)

Editor's Comment: At Axis of Logic, we have been searching for actual counts of the results of last Sunday's election results in Honduras, state by state; however the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) continues to withhold the results 3 days after the election. We've particularly been interested in finding out the percent of voters who abstained from voting. Abstentia was called for by the deposed president of Honduras, Mel Zelaya.

It's much easier for the coup regime in Tegucigalpa to manipulate and publish gross figures (percentage of the vote cast for the "candidates") than it would be for them to publish the actual count of votes in each pueblo, city (by barrio) and state.

However, we received via "Presente-Honduras", a list serve, a sampling of ballot boxes from Former Minister of Culture of the exiled government, Rodolfo Pastor who is currently at Harvard University. That sample shows that very high

percentages of voters abstained in various states, refusing to participate in the fraudulent election. Those results are provided at the bottom of this page and results like these appear to be precisely what the de facto regime is withholding.

[...]

Truth to tell, the people may never know the actual numbers of votes cast and the number of abstentions in Sunday's elections. But the people and the world know that Honduras now has a government run by thieves and liars, not unlike the one in Washington. Belén Fernández' article below shines some light into the dark corners of the real "electoral process" in Honduras.

(Les Blough, Editor )

On the evening of November 29, the Honduran Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) announced that a technical error had impeded the “second verification of data” in the tallying of the day’s election results. The error had occurred despite repeated TSE claims that the efficiency of its tallying process would enable Honduras and the world to become acquainted with the country’s next president within hours of the closing of the polls; not explained was the reason for urgency, as Honduras and the world already had two Honduran presidents to keep track of—one elected (Mel Zelaya) and the other the product of the June 28 coup (Roberto Micheletti).

In a televised presentation at the Marriott Hotel in Tegucigalpa, TSE President Saúl Escobar declared that, instead of concealing the day’s technical error, the institution had “made the decision to exactly what had happened.” Whether this triumph in TSE transparency was intended to serve as compensation for the lack of transparent election results was not clear, nor was why transparency did not extend to a revelation of what exactly the “second verification of data” consisted of or why it was not possible.

Other attempts to pass off failure as victory in the Honduran context included coup regime glorification of elections as the remedy to all political, social, and economic ills. During the Marriott presentation, TSE magistrate Enrique Ortez impassionedly decreed that the elections had been won by the “Honduran people” and that November 29 would be a date “recorded in gold letters.”

As for inferior records, TSE vote tallies for the presidential race were for the moment replaced with results offered by the TSE-approved association Hagamos Democracia, which assigned 55.77 percent of the vote to National Party candidate Porfirio (Pepe) Lobo and 38.58 percent to Liberal Party candidate Elvin Santos.

Additional technical failures on the part of the TSE were observed on its website, which I visited the morning following the elections only to find that the link to

“VOTE COUNTING AND THE TRANSMISSION OF PRELIMINARY RESULTS” did not exist.

Of the links that did exist, the one entitled “Virtual Observer: Watch the elections online” consisted of three live video options featuring different electoral scenes such as a desk with a scanner. The Virtual Observer had been advertised by the TSE as a way for the international community to witness Honduran democracy; as for non-virtual election observers, these included Israeli Ambassador to Guatemala and non-resident Ambassador to Honduras Eliyahu López and organizations such as the International Republican Institute, which in addition to supporting the 2002 coup against Hugo Chávez happens to have also cooperated in election-related projects in Venezuela and Nicaragua with Hagamos Democracia.

When I initially clicked on the Virtual Observer link I found not only the three videos but also election results for the five presidential candidates, although the figures listed for the total number of votes counted and the overall percentage of voter participation were both 0. A subsequent visit to the site revealed that the tallies had been removed and that only the videos remained; other technical inconsistencies included the TSE’s announcement that voter participation had been over 61 percent, despite Hagamos Democracia’s calculation of 47.6.

The Virtual Observer section did not include an option to watch oral cellular phone transmission of electoral data, which was the process that had been hyped by the TSE and the Honduran media as enabling rapid determination of the next president and that was based on the distribution of 20,000 specially-purchased phones to electoral tables around the country. Rapidity was less of a priority among other organs of the Honduran state such as the National Congress, which had postponed consideration of Zelaya’s restitution until December and thus underscored the illegitimacy of the elections; as for the effectiveness of cellular transmissions of critical data, this was called into question by the frequency with which Honduran cell phone communications were reduced to such phrases as: “Can you hear me?”

The system lost further credibility yesterday at one of the electoral tables at the Tegucigalpa polling station of Iglesia Vida Abundante, where the woman in charge of reporting the results to the main TSE computing center proved less than certain as to reporting protocol but agreed that numbers involving multiple digits would probably be reported one digit at a time. She additionally assured me that whatever she reported would be recorded and shrugged at the possibility of a lack of cell phone reception at the time of recording; other technical obstacles were identified at a voting station in the lower-class neighborhood of El Pedregal, where the cell phones at several electoral tables were not functioning.

TSE President Escobar’s declaration that there was “absolutely nothing to doubt about these elections” was aided by Honduran media traditions of

obsequiousness, manifestations of which included radio commentators vying to provide the most euphoric fabrication of Honduran hordes descending upon voting centers and the daily El Herald's "minute by minute" election updates such as: "9.41 p.m.: Day of glory. Honduras is one big carnival." Not explained was whether Honduran carnivals always entailed military and police repression of peaceful election day protests in San Pedro Sula.

A citizen at one of the voting centers claimed that past elections had been more celebratory in nature and cited the current absence of vehicular caravans—an absence that persisted until the following day when the Resistance proved its adeptness at organizing large numbers of like-minded automobiles. As for TSE magistrate Ortez' proclamation that the countries of the world had the moral obligation to recognize the Honduran electoral process, it would seem that moral obligations might also be assigned to electoral magistrates claiming to speak for 7 million Hondurans.

(Upside Down World)

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## **COMMENTARY: EL ORGANIZADOR, NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD, CONGRESSWOMAN ELVIA ARGENTINA**

**1- From Alan Benjamin, El Organizador, San Francisco, CA,  
[elorganizador@earthlink.net](mailto:elorganizador@earthlink.net)**

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

You will find below -- following the press release by the National Lawyers Guild -- a letter and report in Spanish by Elvia Argentina Valle, a member of the Honduran Congress from the Department of Copan, regarding the vote totals in the Honduran election.

Taking the total number of registered voters presented to the Congress prior to the elections, and then comparing that total with the number of voters reported at 9 p.m. on Nov. 29 -- when the military-controlled Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) reported that 98% of the votes had been counted -- Congresswoman Elvia Argentina Valle demonstrates that the real abstention rate -- that is, registered voters who did not vote -- was 62% (i.e., only 38% of the people had voted).

This figure is a far cry from the figure presented in the official declaration by the military-controlled TSE, which, using the exact same official data, reported that the abstention rate was only 38.14% (that is, 61.86% of the Honduran people had voted).

The international news media all reported this official 61.86% participation rate in the election uncritically, not even bothering to check, count, or challenge the

official numbers. This figure was used worldwide to show that the majority of the people had voted and that this election marked an "important step on the democratic path toward resolving the political crisis in Honduras," as the U.S. State Department put it.

When Congresswoman Elvia Argentina Valle and others went public to point out the giant discrepancies in the TSE's own official reports, the TSE was in a terrible bind. They met behind close doors for three hours on Nov. 30 to discuss what to do. Indeed, the figures released showed that only 38% of the registered voters had voted, not close to 62%. After three hours of deliberations they went public to announce that ... oops, the TSE had made a mistake when they announced the vote totals at 9 p.m. on Nov. 29. It turns out that the total percentage of votes counted when the election results were announced the evening of Nov. 29 was not 98%, as reported, but only 56%.

But, as the note from Congresswoman Elvia Argentina Valle goes on to point out, this creates a new contradiction and problem for the regime and for the TSE: How can they officially announce a winner in the election with only 56% of the vote counted?

Her conclusion: The whole election, from beginning to end, was one big farse. How true! In solidarity, Alan Benjamin

## **2- THE NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD CALLS FOR THE UNITED STATES TO DISAVOW THE LEGITIMACY OF THE NOVEMBER 29, 2009 ELECTIONS IN HONDURAS**

For Immediate Release - November 30, 2009

CONTACT:

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Susan Scott, Co-Chair, NLG International Committee 415 669-1745,

[sysscott@prodigy.net](mailto:sysscott@prodigy.net)

National Lawyers Guild member Tanya Brannan stood outside the US Embassy with other US citizens on Sunday – “Election” Day in Honduras - protesting the US government's apparent support of the presidential elections conducted by the military coup and calling on President Obama and the US Department of State not to recognize the elections conducted under the control of an illegitimate coup government.

The demonstration drew substantial attention from the Honduran national police, who came out in force, including their elite riot squad, the Cobras. As one bystander observed, "The U.S. government has brought out their helicopters and Honduran riot police to repress a handful of their own citizens trying to exercise their right to free speech. What are they afraid of?"

The National Lawyers Guild has been monitoring the situation in Honduras since the military removed the duly elected president, Manuel Zelaya, on June 28. A climate of fear, intimidation, and the suppression of the most basic rights of free association and speech has resulted from the closure of media outlets that are opposed to the coup. There has been widespread militarization, along with assassination, detention, threats, rape, surveillance and harassment of the leadership and supporters of the coup resistance.

Having analyzed the legal and constitutional issues involved and after sending two delegations to Honduras - one in August and one in the past week - the NLG has verified the obvious, that the election of November 29, 2009 could be neither free, fair, nor transparent, and the United States government should join the other countries in the hemisphere in not recognizing its legitimacy and should speak out more forcefully against the coup, close down all US military operations in Honduras, and block all US aid and trade that benefits the illegal coup and its supporters.

Last August, the NLG sent a joint delegation to Honduras with the Association of American Jurists and International Association of Democratic Lawyers to meet with members of the Honduran Supreme Court and other government officials supporting the coup and leaders of the coup resistance and social movements. Their preliminary report, including an analysis of the constitutional issues, is available on the website of the NLG International Committee: <http://www.nlginternational.org/com/main.php?cid=1>.

In the week leading up to Sunday's elections, several NLG members have gone to Honduras to document conditions surrounding the election, including Brannan and Kevin Breslin. They have reported numerous repressive measures taken by military and police under command of the Coup government.

"While CNN reports a 70% turnout at the elections, even the official Honduran electoral agency admits a mere 1.7 million Honduran voted yesterday," said Tanya Brannan. "So even by the government's own admission, some 70% of Hondurans voted not to legitimize the military coup. Can our government do any less?"

### **3- ABSTENCIONISMO REAL 62%**



From: elvia argentina  
Date: November 30, 2009 6:13:43 PM GMT-06:00  
Subje ABSTENCIONISMO REAL 62%

Respetados Amigos /as, Les reenvio este correo con datos que demuestran el abstencionismo en este proceso Electoral viciado de Nulidad al haberse nombrado Magistrados en el Tribunal Supremo Electoral, a quienes la Constitucion de la Republica les prohíbe ostentar esos cargos, los Medios de Comunicacion Locales y Extranjeros filmaron la ausencia de Electores en los Centros de Votacion , pero los Observadores Intercionales de Derecha ocultan la verdad.

Atentamente, Elvia Argentina Valle, Diputada por el Departamento de Copan

El lun 30-nov-09

COMPANEROS, ESTA ES LA REALIDAD, NO ENTIENDO COMO EL TSE PODRA SOSTENER LA GRAN FARSA MONTADA AYER. PERO EN UN REGIMEN DE FACTO, CUALQUIER COSA ESTA EN DERECHO.....

Me encontré con este resumen del día de las elecciones, y lo comparto;

Ayer a las 9:00 pm Hrn, Radio America, Televisión, Canal 11, Paradigma e Ingeniería Gerencial manejaban las mismas cifras cuando ya se habían escrutado el 98% de los actas para presidente:

Votantes 1,716,000

Nacional 897,335

Liberal 613,154

Pinu 35,154

DC 31,174

UD 29,006

La información que proporciono Ingeniería Gerencial y la Empresa encuestadora que contrato el TSE fue de 62 % de Abstencionismo de los 4,600,000 que contenía el padrón electoral.

David Matamoros Batson reconoció que la empresa encuestadora contratada por el TSE reflejaba los mismos datos suministrados al centro de cómputo del TSE a excepción de la participación de los votantes.

Es ahí donde existen las discrepancias, ya que después de 3 horas de deliberar a puerta cerrada el TSE no podían salir a dar resultados oficiales en vista que solo el 38% de la población participó en las elecciones.

Ahora los medios de comunicación oficialistas y el TSE quieren hacer creer al pueblo hondureño que estos datos solo reflejan el 56% de las actas escrutadas para presidente.

Si esto fuese así, entran en una gran contradicción ya que ellos mismo no pueden declarar ganador a nadie sin tener el 100% de los votos escrutados y no basados en una tendencia o en un 56% que según ellos es lo que se ha escrutado, ya que violentan la Ley Electoral que ellos mismos dicen cumplir al pie de la letra aunque en un Gobierno de Facto todo es posible.

Los resultados fueron claros:

Abstencionismo 62.0%

Nacional 19.5%

Liberal 13.4%

Pinu 00.8%

DC 00.7%

UD 00.6%

Blancos 1.3%

Nulos 1.1%

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## **EDITORIAL FROM THE 'EL TIEMPO' NEWSPAPER**

(Editorial de diario Tiempo, lunes 30 de noviembre de 2009, <http://ellibertador.hn/Nacional/3541.html>).

[This newspaper is owned by one of the wealthiest families in Honduras. El Tiempo encouraged Hondurans to vote, and has never supported the National Resistance Front. Even the El Tiempo admits that 65-70% of Hondurans did not vote, pointing out that the “election” winner, Pepe Lobo of the National Party, received less than 20% of all eligible voters.]

## **VEREDICTO ELECTORAL**

Del resultado preliminar de la votación en las elecciones de ayer, domingo, el Partido Nacional (PN) logró una victoria arrasadora, frente a su adversario tradicional, el Partido Liberal (PL), cuya militancia optó básicamente por la abstención electoral en repudio al régimen inconstitucional encabezado por Micheletti, creado y sostenido con la fuerza militar.

Falta todavía establecer el porcentaje de la abstención electoral, la cual promete ser enorme, posiblemente en el rango de 65-70%. De ser así, o cercana a este volumen negativo, la situación política de Honduras –con la crisis intacta– estará muy lejos de despejarse y requerirá de extraordinarias medidas para conseguir la indispensable legitimación del resultado en las urnas.

Desde la perspectiva de los votos emitidos, el licenciado Porfirio Lobo Sosa (PN) es, con mucho, el presidente electo. En condiciones normales, esto significaría la elección de un presidente con un poderoso mandato, pero en circunstancias

de facto y de amplio rechazo ciudadano al proceso electoral, más bien hace suponer una débil plataforma de respaldo popular, no más allá del 20% de la voluntad general.

El Partido Liberal, sin embargo, ha demostrado en esta prueba crucial su lealtad sin límite a su tradición democrática, al decidir su militancia la pérdida, antes que validar un régimen dictatorial con unas elecciones orientadas a exculpar el rompimiento de la Constitución producido por el golpe de Estado militar del 28 de junio.

En consecuencia, el resultado de estas elecciones no podría ser analizado con objetividad y suficiente lógica política si, como hasta el momento de hacer este comentario, la información oficial queda constreñida a los datos de los votos emitidos sin relacionarlos con el porcentaje –fundamental, en este caso– de abstención en la concurrencia a las mesas electorales.

Parece probable, por otra parte, que en lo concerniente a la votación de las diputaciones y de las municipales el patrón será similar al de la votación presidencial. Esto es así porque, de acuerdo con el comportamiento electoral en estos comicios, prácticamente fueron los militantes y simpatizantes del Partido Nacional quienes se volcaron sobre las urnas electorales.

Esto querría decir, al ser de esta manera, que las otras votaciones –de diputados y alcaldes– tenderían a ser “en plancha”, sin mucha vocación de los electores para ejercer el voto cruzado. Esta característica resultaría preocupante para la estabilidad y el equilibrio político-social del país, en virtud de que la verdadera integración en nuestro sistema político se realiza mediante la proporcionalidad del producto electoral.

Está visto que el esfuerzo mediático, dentro de nuestro sistema de propaganda, estará enfocado en maximizar los resultados electorales de urna, tratando al mismo tiempo de esconder o disfrazar la abstención. En términos reales, ambas partes, la abstención y la votación en sí, son parte de un todo, principalmente si la primera es superior a la segunda en un sistema electoral de una sola vuelta.

Pero lo fundamental es, a final de cuentas, la legitimidad y el reconocimiento de los resultados electorales, dado que, en el Caso Honduras, ambas cuestiones son esenciales para resolver la crisis política y el futuro democrático del pueblo hondureño, con indudable proyección continental.

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**THE HONDURAN RESISTANCE WINS THE “ELECTIONS”**

[By Julie Webb ([jwebbp@gmail.com](mailto:jwebbp@gmail.com)). From New Zeland, Julie was a member of the Rights Action human rights observer delegation in Honduras. Sunday, November 29, 2009 8:57 PM]

As the polling booths closed this evening in Honduras, there didn't need to be a vote-count to declare the winners. With an abstention rate of at least 65%, the people in resistance have the overwhelming majority.

The National Resistance Front Against the Coup said in a press conference at 4.30pm that the dictatorship has been soundly defeated by such a small turnout that the Supreme Electoral Tribunal had to extend the voting by one hour in an attempt to get more votes.

"They were raffling off home appliances such as fridges, and even houses, for those who voted in an attempt to get them into the booths," informed Rafael Alegria of Via Campesino.

Monitoring by the National Resistance showed the level of abstention was at least 65%, the highest level of abstention in the history of Honduras. "In this way the Honduran people have punished both the candidates and the dictatorship, who are now in a tight spot to try to demonstrate a mandate that doesn't exist," said Rodil Rivera Rodil, lawyer and member of the National Resistance Front who read the press release.

Contrary to coup-sponsored electoral observer reports of a peaceful election, the days leading up to, and of, the 'electoral farce' were characterised by repression and violence in many places, particularly resistance strongholds such as San Pedro Sula where resistance members were beaten, injured, and detained, and one is reported to be disappeared. Among the injured is a Reuters reporter, and two religious workers from the Latin American Council of Churches working as human rights observers were detained.

There have also been reports of rapes, beatings and detentions from other districts, which human rights groups will be following up in the days to come.

"They have put civilian clowns in office to put a clean face on the military coup," commented Bertha Oliva, Director of the Centre for Families of the Disappeared and Detained of Honduras (COFADEH).

Despite protestations to the contrary by the international corporate media, there is a wealth of photographic and first hand accounts from the polls - including documents shown to international observers by polling booth staff - that the turnout was considerably less than 50%, and in the northern part of the country, less than 20%.

The only winners in this electoral circus are the Honduran people and the resistance movement, who intend to celebrate with a victory march in Tegucigalpa tomorrow, 30 November.

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## **DOUBTS OVER THE LEVEL OF ABSTENTION**

(By Christian Korsgaard, correspondent, MS Central América, of the Danish Association for International Cooperation, translated into English by the Alliance for Global Justice, <http://www.ms.dk/sw148422.asp>)

November 30, 2009

The polling places in Honduras closed at 5:00pm on Sunday after a day of conflicting reports that raised questions about whether the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) and the Resistance were referring to the same election.

Meanwhile, most of the local media reported early on of a massive participation, the Resistance has stayed firm during the whole day, arguing that the level of abstention was the highest in history. The Resistance had recommended a boycott of the elections, since due to numerous violations of the human rights, they consider do not consider them to be not valid nor democratic.

At 2:30pm the TSE decided to extend the time for voting by one our supposedly because many voters were still in line and because in some tables the indelible ink had become run out due to the large number of voters.

Where are the voters?

Nevertheless, during a tour of polling places at the end of the afternoon, we did not manage to confirm the information of the TSE and of the local media – which are mostly controlled by pro-coup groups.

Half-empty and with election officials with their feet up making amiable conversation among themselves, by no means gave the impression that Honduras was on its way to a “super-election.”

In two polling places in central Tegucigalpa with nine and seven voting tables respectively, we manage to count five and seven persons in process of voting or in line. The voters' long lines that the TSE and the media had mentioned the whole day was not in sight. On the other hand, we meet election officials yawning and looking impatiently to their watches.

Pepe Lobo on the road to victory

But in Honduras nothing is as it seems to be and the TSE presented the first preliminary, but official results. According to the TSE, the nationalist Pepe Lobo gains a comfortable victory with 55 per cent of the vote, followed by liberal Elvin Santos with 38 per cent. None of the three other candidates seem to have achieved more than three per cent of the vote.

This result is no surprise. What is a surprise is the prediction of the TSE over the level of participation which it hoped would break all records and reach 61 per cent.

The resistance immediately rejected this information and instead estimated that the level of abstention was the highest in history.

"It does not take glasses to see. The monitoring by our organization at a national level shows us that the level of abstention is like a minimum of 65 to 70 per cent, the highest in the national history, which implies that scarcely 30-35 per cent of the electorate voted. In this form the Honduran people have punished the candidates participating in a coup and the dictatorship, those who now are in the predicament of how to show before the international public opinion a voters' volume that did not exist," expressed the Resistance in a press release.

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## **LETTER FROM LAURA CARLSEN, ABOUT DIRECTION AGGRESSION & HARRASSMENT SHE SUFFERED**

### INCIDENT IN THE MARRIOT HOTEL

From: [carlsenster@gmail.com](mailto:carlsenster@gmail.com)

Sent: Monday, November 30, 2009 9:27 AM

(Laura Carlsen is director of the Americas Program, [www.americaspolicy.org](http://www.americaspolicy.org), Mexico DF)

Dear friends,

This is the letter that I sent to Nathan of the U.S. Embassy. I hope to have the tape of the incident soon. I am fine and in good hands, but eager to get home. These people are out of control, I guess I already knew that but it's different to see it up close and personal. (Laura)

Dear Nathan,

I still have not been able to get a hold of the tape of what happened at the hotel but they tell me that it went out over Honduran television. I don't know who else was filming--there were quite a few journalists around. Here's what I was telling you last night, in writing.

I was asked to appear as an analyst on Al Jazeera television, out of Washington, on a live block at 8:00 p.m. We were filming in the middle of the hotel Marriott, second floor hallway, where the Electoral Tribunal and the media were announcing preliminary results. There were many people around and although I didn't notice at the time, apparently many gathered to watch the filming.

When asked by the interviewer my opinion of the elections, I stated that I did not think that the elections could resolve the deep political crisis in the country, that many people were not satisfied with the process since democratic order was not restored prior to the elections and that many countries were not recognizing the process. It was only about 4-5 minute interview.

As soon as we were off the air, the people gathered around pressed in on me and began to scream "liar" "why do you lie to the world" "here we have democracy" etc. A national observer, and many other people were yelling that I had given false information (I actually gave no information on elections results since there are no reliable data out yet and said that we would be seeing a war of statistics where one side will proclaim high abstention and the other high turnout, and indeed that is already happening).

They began to literally scream in my face, especially an "international observer" who said he was from the Chamber of Commerce. The press continued to ask questions, in part to shield me from the hostility of the crowd. I was willing to engage in conversation despite the aggressiveness and ugliness of the mob at first.

Then the crowd, led by national observers began to chant "democracy" to which I replied that there we were in complete agreement. They pressed in more and more, screaming louder and louder at me, everyone chanting "fuera del Pais" "que se vaya" "sacala de aqui" etc.

I said I felt in danger and wanted to leave. Some people including a man who apparently was from security of the Electoral Tribune escorted me downstairs and we managed to get out of the crowd, which followed me to the elevators, still screaming. When I got downstairs, I was shocked and dismayed to discover that people on the ground floor who had not even taken part in the incident upstairs knew me and began yelling for me to leave the country as well. No-one followed me or physically assaulted me and I was able to leave the area.

Later many people called to say they saw a clip of the incident on television. It really was a small riot in the hotel. Despite the fact that I clearly identified myself as a US citizen and political analyst, the Honduran press reported that I was Venezuelan--a complete fabrication of course--I've never even set foot in that country. Some apparently said I was with Telesur, and others that I was an Al Jazeera reporter, when in fact this agency simply engaged me as an analyst.

The level of intolerance and aggression was totally unexpected and disconcerting. I have never in my life encountered such a hostile response to a difference of opinion or been punished for expressing my views like this. I have been reporting on the lack of freedom of expression, the censoring and shutting down of media here in Honduras as a serious violation of basic civil liberties, and now I understand the context of intolerance and violence in which it takes place firsthand.

Analyzing international relations is my job at the Center for International Policy and I have every right as a professional to interpret world events and opine on them. I understand that many can disagree but do not understand why that disagreement should devolve into aggression and hostility.

I am profoundly upset by the attitude of these national and international observers who are supposed to be impartial but are unable to accept an opinion different from their own, and have demanded that I be thrown out of the country for expressing my opinions.

I am not an electoral observer and was not here as an electoral observer, but I have seen many heated elections in my life but never been the victim of a verbal lynching like the one I experienced last night, and much less from individuals charged with validating the fairness and openness of the electoral process. Political differences are not the issue here, the issue is tolerance and respect for others.

I am now concerned for my safety under a coup regime that has carried out massive human rights violations with impunity that I myself as a member of the international delegation on women's human rights have documented in our delegation in August. My face has been broadcast over national television, accompanied by lies and distortions. I can take care of myself and have no reason to consider myself to be in imminent danger that I know of, but I ask the US Embassy to be aware of my situation and warn that if anything does happen to me it will be necessary to investigate the implication of the coup regime and its supporters, given the threats that I have received.

Thank you very much for your attention to this matter,

Laura Carlsen

\* \* \*

**ELECTIONS IN HONDURAS: WHITEWASHING THE PATH TO A PAST OF HORRORS**



(by Lisa Sullivan, November 29, 2009, [lisavenezuela@gmail.com](mailto:lisavenezuela@gmail.com), <http://soaw.org/article.php?id=1786>. Lisa was in Honduras as part of a delegation organized by the Quixote Center, [www.quixote.org](http://www.quixote.org))

I came to Honduras to participate as a human rights observer of the electoral climate in a delegation organized by the Quixote Center. Several delegations converged, connecting some 30 U.S. citizens with dozens more from Canada, Europe and Latin America.

In the days prior to the elections we scattered to different cities, towns and villages, meeting with fishermen, farmers, maquila workers, labor leaders, teachers and lawyers, as well as those who were jailed for carrying spray paint, hospitalized for being shot in the head by the military, and detained for reporting on the repression. It was, most likely, a bit off the 5-star, air-conditioned path of most of the mainstream journalists who are filling your morning papers with the wonders of today's elections.

But by the evening of the day of the elections, what we had witnessed in previous days pushed those of us from the U.S. directly to the doors of our embassy in Tegucigalpa. We realized that this place, not the polling stations, was where this horrific destiny of Honduras, and perhaps all of Latin America, was being determined. And so the U.S. citizens among us took our statements and signs and determination there.

We were, indeed, greeted by many: dozens of guards with cameras, some 30 journalists, Honduran police with guns and also cameras, as well as a low flying helicopter that at least made us feel important. While the journalists let us read our entire statement of why these elections should be not be recognized by our government because of the egregious repression, the embassy guards wouldn't even let us leave our slip of paper. That, in spite of the fact that the embassy's human rights officer, Nate Macklin, told our delegation leader to make sure to let him know if there were any human rights abuses.

Any? In each of the many corners of the country visited by the 70-plus international observers, we witnessed the fear, repression, intimidation, bribery and outright brutality of the government security forces (note: we were there to observe the electoral climate, not electoral observers, since we consider the elections to be illegal. Likewise, the UN, OAS, and Carter Center and other bedrock electoral groups boycotted "the event" as many Hondurans called the day.)

As elections were in full swing in the morning, our delegate and nurse practitioner, Silvia Metzler visited Angel Salgado and Maria Elena Hernandez who were languishing in the intensive care unit of the Hospital Escuela in Tegucigalpa. Both had been shot in the head at one of the many military checkpoints, no questions asked. Doctors give Angel a zero possibility of

survival and he leaves behind a 6 year old son. Maria Elena has a better chance of recovery, but it will be a long road. She was selling snacks on the side of the road to support her teenage children when caught by military bullet.

Tom Loudon was on the streets of San Pedro Sula when police tanks and water trucks and tear gas canisters attacked a peaceful march of the resistance movement. It took him a long time to find other members of his delegation who had scattered in the frenzy, but they were luckier than two observers from the Latin America Council of Churches who were detained or a Reuters photographer who was injured in the massive display of repression. Dozens of cell phones captured the police beating anyone they could catch with their billy clubs.

The first person I thought of as I awoke on election day was Wilmer Rivero, a fisherman in a small town with the big name of Puerto Grande. I kept thinking of the fear in his eyes as he relayed how the police have been visiting his house and asking for him, ever since he trekked 6 days on foot to greet a returning President Zelaya.

Each local mayor has been asked to put together a list of resistance leaders, and his name was one of 22 from his town. We suggested to Wilmer that he not sleep at home during the electoral days. He called the next day to thank us for our advice. The police had ransacked his home, and that of many of his neighbors, the night before elections, threatening his life. But, he wondered, what will he do now.

I also thought of Merly Eguigure who I had visited 2 days earlier in a cold and crumbling jail cell, reeking of human waste. She had been captured for having a can of spray paint in her car. Though she was released shortly before elections, she will face trial and probably prison for defacing government property. Merly claims that the spray paint was to be used in an activity to raise awareness of violence towards women. Perhaps authorities worried that the paint was destined to add a new message to the city walls.

Every square inch of blank wall space in the city is covered with powerful graffiti against the coup. In spite of government to whitewash over it, the blank spaces are filled in again within hours.

So, now I wonder what the Honduran people will do to overcome the massive whitewash that just took place in their country. Not of walls, but of coups.

The military coup led by SOA graduates Generals Vasquez Velasquez and Prince Suazo first had a quick bath of whitewash by placing a "civilian" leader as the figurative head of government: President of Congress and business mogul Roberto Micheletti. The whitewash used at the moment was mixed ahead of time, and quite abundant. It was the excuse that Zelaya was preparing a vote to

call for his re-election and had to be removed quickly. (Never mind that the consultative vote actually had nothing to do with a re-election. It was a consultative vote to ask Honduras whether they wanted to vote on convening a Constitutional Assembly). I call this first whitewash the "transformation from military coup to civilian coup".

And now, the second bath of whitewash was even more challenging, especially since the first whitewash proved to be kind of thin and exposed the words from below. Thus, it didn't really convince many. As a matter of fact, it didn't convince anyone except the United States government (or woops, maybe they actually helped to stir the first batch). Now, the challenge of November 29th whitewash was to transform the civilian coup into a shining electoral display of freedom, fairness and grand participation so that all the world would say, "wow, that Honduran coup is gone. Now Honduras has a real and wonderful democracy, End of story".

Except that it's probably the beginning of a story. One that we thought had been left to rest in Latin America years and years ago. One of fear and repression and deaths and disappearances. We know the litany all too well, and we remember the names of its thousands of victims each November. This year we had to add too many new names from Honduras. And, if our government chooses to recognize these elections, this massive whitewash, I fear that many more names will be read from the stage in front of Ft. Benning next year. And perhaps not just from Honduras.

So, when I said that I wonder what Hondurans will do in the face of this whitewash what I really wonder is what I will do, what we will do U.S. citizens. Because, this whitewash will only have the formula to whiten and brighten this military dictatorship if our government chooses to accept the results, as they have indicated that they will likely do.

Today the headlines in most of the U.S. media reiterate the official Honduran statistics that 60% of Hondurans went to the polls yesterday. Our delegates visited dozens of polling stations, finding them almost empty, in most places counting more electoral monitors and caretakers than voters.

The resistance movement puts abstention at 65-70%. Which statistic do we prefer to believe?

I have lived in Latin America since 1977. I was called to stay in this land when I saw how young and idealistic youth such as myself at the time, were being taken from their homes, never returned. Somehow, I felt called to continue the steps they would never take. And so I stayed 32 years. I have witnessed hope rising from the South in the past 10 years, in ways I never dreamed. I have seen efforts of building dignity and sovereignty rise high, inspire millions, and make a difference.

And so, maybe this explains the anger that rose from within me yesterday, in front of the embassy. That anger surprised even me. I am ashamed of our government. Ashamed that we are in great part to blame for pushing this country back 30 years into dark and deadly times. And I worry that Honduras is just the beginning.

CRLN ACTION ALERT: Please contact President Obama and the State Department this week urging them to reject these coup regime-sponsored elections and their results, and to instead encourage constitutional reform in Honduras to make more inclusive participatory democracy a reality.

Call the White House: (202)-456-1111 or (202)-456-1414 (to email go to [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)) Call the State Department: (202) 647-4000 (to email go to [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov))

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### **WHERE ARE THE PEOPLE?**

(By Tyler Shipley. Ty is a graduate student and activist from Toronto, Canada. He was in Tegucigalpa with a delegation organized by Rights Action. December 1, 2009, [tyshipley@hotmail.com](mailto:tyshipley@hotmail.com), <http://canadiandimension.com/blog/2609/>)

It is perhaps fitting that my time in Honduras should end right where it began – facing a lineup of police in riot gear in front of the Brazilian embassy where the elected President of the country remains in exile. There is much that can be said about what Honduras was like under Zelaya – it certainly was no paradise for the millions of people who struggle to survive from day to day – but it was not a police state.

Honduras today is like an Orwellian nightmare. A façade of calm as soldiers patrol the streets with automatic weapons; a theatrical production of democracy in a state that no longer has a functioning code of law; a discourse of peace that so completely fails to convince, it almost seems like it is intended to mock its victims. Indeed, one placard yesterday read, “2 + 2 = 5? Do not insult us, golpistas.”

And Canada is already falling all over itself to recognize the ‘elections’ as fair, free and legitimate. No doubt the United States will follow suit – it appears the North American strategy on Honduras is to have Canada jump in first and take whatever heat comes from it. We don’t care, evidently, that our already souring international reputation (as a result of the occupation of Afghanistan, our participation in the 2004 coup in Haiti, the brutality of our mining operations in Central America, etc) will be even further damaged by playing along with a lie that is painfully obvious to most of Latin America.

Then when the road has been cleared, Prince Obama will give his blessing and everyone will go home and forget that any of this ever happened.

But Hondurans cannot go home – their home has been stolen. In a literal sense, their homes are not safe. Police raids on private residences are a daily occurrence; warrants rarely provided or obviously faked, protocols on human rights of people who have been proven guilty of nothing patently and brutally ignored, people involved in the peaceful resistance targeted and terrorized ruthlessly.

It is the heliotype of a totalitarian state, everything we are led to believe our governments oppose and, indeed, everything we are said to be fighting against in Afghanistan and Iraq.

And in the larger sense, the country they call home has been taken from them. Even according to the official numbers, barely 10% of Hondurans voted for Porfirio Lobo (Pepe Robo - Pepe the Robber - as the walls call him) on Sunday.

There are nearly 8 million Hondurans, and only 1.7 million voted. By a manipulation of how many people are considered 'eligible' to vote, the golpistas have claimed that there was a 60% turnout (Fox News in the United States, in a comical display of disregard for anything resembling truth, is reporting 70%. Not even the golpistas in Honduras have claimed anything so stupid.)

Pepe is to be sworn into 'office' on January 27th, but even the notion that he is being sworn into something is absurd – the coup on June 28th marked the end of constitutional order and rule of law in this country.

But no matter how the golpistas and their North American allies spin this, Nov. 29th was a small victory for the Resistencia, in that the massive rejection of the election spoke eloquently to the support behind the movement.

I was back in the capital on Nov. 30th, and I attended an assembly at the STIBYS union hall in Tegucigalpa, where members of the Frente gave a press conference responding to the pantomime elections, followed by a massive rally and a caravan through the city.

After five months of almost-daily protest, people still found the energy to take to the streets; thousands of Hondurans cheering, singing, waving flags, honking horns and - in what may yet become the most poignant symbol of the movement – waving their un-inked pinky fingers high to show that they had not voted.

Manuel Zelaya spoke to the assembly as Juan Barona held a microphone up to his cell phone. But Zelaya is overshadowed by what he represents. Zelaya, himself a junior member of the oligarchy gone rogue, is only a figure who has opened the floodgates of popular resistance in Honduras.

“Where are the people?” asks Rafeal Alegria. “The people are in the streets, demanding their freedom!” comes the reply. When it comes from thousands of enthusiastic people, in a crowded union hall, in direct defiance of the state, the sound is truly electrifying.

As we paraded through the streets of Tegucigalpa, it became clear that this was not, as the coup regime keeps saying, a movement of a few thousand Melistas. In neighbourhood after neighbourhood, people streamed into the streets to greet the caravan, cheering and waving their un-inked fingers.

Riding on the back of a falling apart pickup truck through the barrios and colonias, I felt like I was bringing home the Stanley Cup. In a way, I was; riding shotgun in our truck was Bertha Oliva, the founder and director of COFADEH, a human rights group that has been at the center of the struggle against oppression for the last 27 years.

When we finally arrive at our destination, the Brazilian embassy, the police line has already formed. Over the next couple of hours, thousands of Hondurans filled the spaces between the banks and the Burger King, while more and more police and soldiers arrive on the scene. The protest is peaceful, as usual.

The police didn't fire tear gas at this gathering, the way they did in San Pedro Sula the day before, but they made a point of loading up the cannons and aiming them at the crowd. Even with my 'international observer' badge displayed prominently, I found my video camera staring into the barrel of a water cannon that had been adjusted to set its sight on me, and felt my heart start racing at the idea that they might actually fire. And that was only a water cannon.

I didn't get hammered with water, no one was hurt, the protest was slowly disbanded on its own initiative. But the scene was both intimidating and inspiring, and it made me wonder what would have happened if there hadn't been such a huge presence of international press, with cameras and notebooks at the ready. That presence is leaving, to most people, the story is over. I worry about what will happen now, when the world turns its back on Honduras and the golpistas are given a free hand to terrorize their opponents – the people – as they see fit.

“We will keep fighting for the constituyente,” announces Carlos H. Reyes, an independent candidate who has withdrawn from the elections in protest weeks earlier. “People keep saying the election is the solution to our crisis, that there is no alternative to move forward in Honduras. Of course there is an alternative, there has always been an alternative. We want the constituyente, like we've been saying for years. We want to write our own laws. We don't want the golpe laws, we don't want Facusse's laws, we want the people's laws.”

The crowd erupts, un-inked fingers point to the sky, a 'no vote' chant builds up, and a small man in a crisp white shirt idles up beside me. "I'm Donzalo Rosales, I teach at the autonomous university. I see you are taking notes, so you must be a writer. I'm a writer too. Someday, I will write a book about our struggle, you see, it is not over. You see that, don't you? I think you see that. This is only the beginning. I will write the book and it will have a great ending, where the people will finally have the power in our state. I hope you will read it when it is finished."

\* \* \*

## **FUNDS NEEDED**

Since the day of the coup, June 28, Rights Action has been providing funds to organizations working in the pro-democracy, anti-coup movement, and to victims of repression and family members of victims of repression. To support this ongoing work and struggle, make your tax-deductible 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 provide a Proposal-Report of which organizations and people we are channeling funds to and supporting.

## **WRITE OR CALL**

**ANY RECOGNITION OF THE HONDURAN ELECTIONS  
EQUALS LEGITIMIZATION OF THE MILITARY COUP & JUSTIFICATION OF  
THE REPRESSION**

For reasons set out in this alert (and previous Alerts found at [www.rightsaction.org](http://www.rightsaction.org)), a majority of Hondurans and most of the international community have concluded the November 29th elections (for President, Congress members, and Mayors) are neither free nor fair in any way. Please contact your own politicians (members of parliament, congress members and senators) and insist on:

No recognition of the November 29 elections

The unconditional return of President Zelaya and his government to full constitutional power and authority

Justice for the plotters and perpetrators of the military coup, and  
Reparations for the victims of the regime repression

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