

Rights Action
June 5, 2011

The Return Of President Zelaya: A Struggle in Honduras of the Americas, for the Americas

Rights Action commentary & reports

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Rights Action Commentary:

A STRUGGLE IN HONDURAS OF THE AMERICAS FOR THE AMERICAS

RA thanks and honors the amazing Honduran pro-democracy movement, for the return of President Mel Zelaya, ousted by a US and Canadian backed military coup in June 2009; and

RA thanks and honors the role played by North American people, organizations, journalists, politicians, etc, that have worked not only in solidarity with the Honduras pro-democracy movement but in alliance with them, North Americans knowing the role played by the governments of the USA and Canada in legitimizing and supporting the military-backed regime in Honduras.

No, no justice has yet been done for the military coup itself, let alone the suffering and death caused by State repression since the coup.

No, the governments of the USA and Canada have not been held to account for their direct and indirect support for the coup itself, and the ensuring 2 years of repression.

Yes, it has come at a great cost of repression and suffering to Honduran women and men, boys and girls in the pro-democracy movement.

But, even given all this, this is an important step forward. The coup regime (and its co-conspirators inside Honduras, and outside) have not gotten completely away with their crime. Repression and State terrorism have not won the day.

ANOTHER AMERICAS IS POSSIBLE

Rights Action thanks those individual and foundation donors that helped us channel over \$200,000 to the pro-democracy movement in Honduras since the coup. Our work and struggle continue. We ask for your continued support.

Annie Bird, annie@rightsaction.org

Grahame Russell, info@rightsaction.org

Karen Spring, spring.kj@gmail.com

- Please re-distribute and re-post this information all around
- To get on/off Rights Action's listserv: www.rightsaction.org
- Rights Action's Facebook group:
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Rights-Action/176850879028427?ref=ts>
- To fund Honduras' amazing pro-democracy movement: See below

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The Real News VIDEO REPORT:

"MASSIVE TURNOUT FOR ZELAYA LAUNCHES NEW CHAPTER OF HONDURAN STRUGGLE"

From: Jesse Freeston [jfreeston@gmail.com]: This was without a doubt the largest gathering (May 28, 2011) of people that I've ever been in. Hundreds of thousands waiting for overthrown President Manuel Zelaya. People see Zelaya's return from forced exile as a huge victory for a resistance movement that has been fighting for over 23 months. But what now?

MASSIVE TURNOUT FOR ZELAYA LAUNCHES NEW CHAPTER OF HONDURAN STRUGGLE: 'LARGEST GATHERING IN HONDURAN HISTORY' MARKS DEPOSED LEADER'S RETURN, BUT WHERE TO NOW FOR HONDURAN RESISTANCE MOVEMENT?

http://therealnews.com/t2/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=6854

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From: Gary Cozette [gcozette@crln.org]

HONDURAN BISHOP HOLDS BILLIONAIRE LANDOWNER RESPONSIBLE FOR 14 CAMPESINOS MURDERS - OFFERS PUBLIC MASS ON ZELAYA'S RETURN

Dear CRLN Members & Friends,

Last night, I received a message from John Donaghy - a valued colleague who serves as a lay volunteer in the Catholic diocese of Santa Rosa de Copán, Honduras - that Monseñor Luis Alfonso Santos, Bishop of Santa Rosa de Copán in Honduras has been threatened with a defamation law suit by Honduran billionaire landowner, Miguel Facussé. Bishop Santos recently charged in a news journal that Miguel Facussé is responsible for the murders of 14 campesinos in the Aguán region of Honduras: <http://www.elheraldo.hn/Sintesis/Lo-ultimo/Ediciones/2011/05/30/Noticias/Querellan-a-lider-de-iglesia-catolica-de-Honduras>.

Facussé, one of the coup plotters in the overthrow of President Mel Zelaya nearly 2 years ago, has long been charged by Aguán campesino agrarian reform cooperatives of killing these 14 campesinos whose land Facussé is trying to violently take over for palm oil plantations. The campesino groups have reported Facussé's involvement in the killings to both police and human rights groups. However, the police have failed to investigate these killings, in all likelihood because the police themselves have collaborated with Facussé's paramilitary hired guns in carrying out and covering up the killings.

With the millions of dollars the U.S. government provides to the Honduran police, CRLN has made repeated requests for to the State Department that these murders be investigated, and that the perpetrators and those who hire them be prosecuted. The State Department has reported that no progress has been made beyond the unverified claim that each case we bring to their attention “is being investigated by the police”.

Secondly, I also want to share from John Donaghy’s blog [<http://www.hermanojuancito.blogspot.com>] John’s account of the religious ceremony – not surprisingly a Catholic Mass – that accompanied the return of ex-President Mel Zelaya to Honduras this past Saturday, May 28. Bishop Luis Alfonso Santos is one Catholic bishop in Honduras, and as far as I know the only bishop, who has publicly opposed the coup and publicly affirmed the Resistance. This stands in stark contrast to Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez, who publicly supported the coup since day one and continues to do so.

At CRLN’s 20th Anniversary membership luncheon in November 2010, Jesuit priest Padre Ismael “Melo” Moreno from El Progreso Honduras, expressed his great disappointment and personal sadness that Cardinal Rodriguez had failed to publicly denounce a single human rights violation reported to him by Fr. Melo, including the repeated gang rape of a Catholic parishioner by police.

JOHN DOHAGHY’S OBSERVATIONS:

“I want to comment on the opening event (of the Saturday, May 28, 2011 return of Mel Zelaya to Honduras), a Mass in the plaza (in Tegucigalpa) celebrated by Monseñor Luis Alfonso Santos, the bishop of Santa Rosa de Copán. I missed most of the homily – though I heard Monseñor’s strong words against mining at the end of the homily. A few reports I read indicate that he gave a very prophetic sermon that included these very strong remarks.

BISHOP SANTOS

Don’t forget that Honduras is dominated by a foreign power – the imperialism of the United States ... We Catholics will not join up with the “white shirts” [those who marched against Zelaya and supported the coup] who try to place God as a shield in regard to things that cannot be defended ... The church is not

with the coup ... The oligarchy wants to say that the people is just a few. They want to take control of all the goods which Honduras has, and for this they have been blinded so as not to leave the people of God in liberty.

Strong words, but to the point, I believe. But what really impressed me were the songs that were used at the Mass, mostly from the Salvadoran and Nicaraguan campesino Masses. Watching the internet streaming I realized that the singing was being led by Padre Efraín Romero, the director of Caritas Santa Rosa and pastor of Dulce Nombre de María parish – my “boss.” Here are a few of the lyrics:

“Cristo, Cristo, Jesús identifícate con nosotros”:

Christ Jesus, identify with us
Lord, my God, identify with us
Christ Jesus, be in solidarity with us
not with the class of oppressors
who squeeze and devour the community,
but with the oppressed people
with the people who are united, thirsting for peace.

NO BASTA REZAR

During the sharing of the greeting of peace, I was surprised to hear them sing: “No basta rezar” which comes from the Venezuelan group, Los Guaraguaos:

“No. No. It’s not enough to pray.
Many things are lacking
to obtain peace. (refrain)

They pray in good faith and heart
but the pilot also prays
when he gets into his plane
to bomb the children of Vietnam.

In the world there will not be peace
while one person exploits another
and inequality continues.

Nothing can be accomplished
if there is not revolution.
The rich man prays, the taskmaster prays
and they mistreat the peasant.”

THE COMMUNION

The Communion was a medley of some traditional hymns, but the one that struck me was “Nadie hay tan grande como tu Señor.” It starts out very traditionally:

“There is no one as great as you...
Who can do such marvels as you.”

But the verses are strong:

“Not with force, nor with violence,
will the world change,
but only love will change it.
“Not with weapons nor with war,
will the world change
Only love will change it.”

The closing was one of my favorites: Cuando el pobre crea en el pobre.

When the poor believe in the poor
we can already sing, “Freedom.”
When the poor believe in the poor,
we will build fraternity.

We all commit ourselves
in the table of the Lord
to build Love in this world.
By struggling for our brothers [and sisters]
we make community.
Christ lives in solidarity.

When the poor seeks the poor
and organization is born
that's who our liberation begins.
When the poor announce to the poor
the hope which He gave us
and his Reign has been born among us.

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ZELAYA'S RETURN: NEITHER RECONCILIATION NOR DEMOCRACY IN HONDURAS

by Adrienne Pine

<https://nacla.org/news/zelayas-return-neither-reconciliation-nor-democracy-honduras>

Over the past few weeks U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and latter-day media "experts" have hailed Manuel Zelaya's return to Honduras and the pending reintegration of the country into the OAS as a restoration of democracy. Here in Honduras, it is clear that such claims could not be further from the truth. Despite the triumphal language of Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez, Colombian president Juan Manuel Santos, Honduran president Porfirio Lobo, and even Zelaya himself following their signing of the Cartagena Accords, Honduras today is no closer to reconciliation than it was in the months following the June 28, 2009 military coup.

As Dana Frank points out in *The Progressive* on May 27, the Cartagena Accords ensure the reinstatement of Honduras into the OAS in return for only one "concession" that is not already ostensibly guaranteed: that the trumped-up charges, leveled against Zelaya by the same court that legitimated his unconstitutional expulsion from the country, be dropped.

That this should be sufficient for Honduras's return is perplexing, given that the country was expelled under Article 21 of the OAS Democratic Charter, which reads in part:

“When the special session of the General Assembly determines that there has been an unconstitutional interruption of the democratic order of a member

state, and that diplomatic initiatives have failed, the special session shall take the decision to suspend said member state from the exercise of its right to participate in the OAS by an affirmative vote of two thirds of the member states in accordance with the Charter of the OAS.”

Today, the same businessmen, politicians, and military officials who funded, engineered, and carried out the coup are in power, having been guaranteed impunity for their crimes by a coup-supporting president who came to power through an illegal, fraudulent election that was legitimated by the U.S. government. Human rights abuses committed by police and military forces, rather than decreasing with the Lobo presidency, have surged in recent months to levels at or above those just after the coup.

The current Honduran government, which markets itself as one of "reconciliation" — a concept that historically means bringing those responsible for crimes against humanity to justice — has shown no interest in reconciling with anyone who disagrees with its policies of displacement, privatization of public services, and the auctioning of the country to the highest bidder.

Diverse figures such as Carlos Slim (the wealthiest man in the world), former Colombian President Álvaro Uribe, and former State Department official Craig Kelly have lauded the Lobo government's eagerness to divest itself of Honduran resources at the Honduras is Open For Business conference earlier this month.

Meanwhile, criminalization and the violent repression of citizens exercising their right to protest such policies has intensified. The Anti-Terrorist Law, passed last November by "Zero Tolerance" strongman and Minister of Security Oscar Álvarez, expands the legal revocation of civil liberties for opponents of government policies, building upon the 2003 Anti-Gang Law passed by Lobo (as President of the National Congress) and also on the 1980s Anti-Terrorist Law, when Álvarez's uncle Gustavo Álvarez Martínez led the infamous CIA-trained Battalion 3-16 death squad in disappearing, torturing, and killing opponents of the "democratic" regime then in power.

Just this week in Tegucigalpa, police ambushed a high school, shooting tear gas canisters and live bullets at students as young as 16 who were protesting the Lobo government's suspension of their math teacher for speaking out against

the privatization of education. One student was sent to the hospital and 21 others were arrested — along with the mothers of two students, who had come to beg for mercy — for threatening the public order.

The State Department's response to the excessive violence of the Honduran police and military in recent months has been far from satisfactory. The U.S. Human Rights and Labor Attaché in Tegucigalpa, Jeremy D. Spector — instead of condemning the reprehensible acts (including murder) carried out by Lobo's security forces — has labeled protestors "thugs," and blamed the violence on protesting teachers, students, parents, and other Hondurans resisting repressive state policy.

There are opposing voices both within and outside of the U.S. government. At least 86 members of Congress have signed a "Dear Colleague" letter to Hillary Clinton calling for a halt in U.S. police and military aid to Honduras until there is accountability for human rights abuses.

Another recent letter, signed by 107 organizations, calls for the continued suspension of Honduras from the OAS, stating that "the regime of Porfirio Lobo should not be rewarded for continuing the repression and impunity."

A May 16 letter from 20 Honduran and international NGOs to OAS ambassadors cautions against Honduras's return to the OAS before substantial progress has been made in addressing human rights violations and impunity.

Meanwhile, the U.S. military Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) has been rapidly expanding its occupation of the country, with the implicit approval of the Lobo administration. SOUTHCOM has installed two new military bases and recently announced a plan to construct permanent barracks in contravention of Honduran law, which recognizes the U.S. military as having only a "temporary" presence in the country. On Thursday, a letter written by the Fellowship of Reconciliation and signed by over 70 religious leaders, organizations, and academics, was sent to "contractors and bidders on contracts for U.S. construction on military bases in Honduras," urging them to withdraw from such contracts or from bidding on them.

Perhaps most importantly, here in Honduras, nearly all sectors of the massive resistance movement, while celebrating the return of Zelaya, have publicly and outspokenly opposed the re-entry of the Lobo government (which the movement itself does not recognize) into the OAS. Some have gone even further, criticizing the bargaining away of human rights and the anti-democratic procedure of the Cartagena Accords as a threat to democratic processes.

A May 23 statement titled "Human Rights Are Not Subject to Political Negotiation" — issued by the Committee of Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared in Honduras (COFADEH), one of the most respected human rights organizations in the country and a member of the anti-coup Human Rights Platform — rejects the notion of "reconciliation" under current conditions, which it describes as follows:

“Nearby, five teachers sustain an indefinite hunger strike due to violations of their social and economic rights; hundreds of campesino families in the zone of Aguán are surrounded by legal and clandestine forces acting against their lives and lands; and an average of 16 violent deaths occur each day throughout the country, in total impunity.”

On May 26 the influential collective Artists in Resistance issued an open letter to former President Zelaya, in which they welcomed him back, but announced their refusal to perform in Saturday's festivities, stating: "Our song and our voice is political and not simply backup for a cathartic euphoria over a success that we have yet to achieve."

They also presented a brief assessment of the current state of affairs: “We will be there to receive you, compañero Manuel Zelaya, and we will not forget that the Lobo regime is murderous, that it continues murdering the campesinos of Aguán and Zacate Grande; that this very week it has ordered police to stomp on the necks of the students of Luis Bográn, that it ignores the martyrs and desperate hunger strike of the teachers, that it permits the targeted assassinations of artists like Renán Fajardo and Juan Ángel Sorto, that it carelessly ignores the deaths of poets of universal standing like Roberto Sosa and Amanda Castro, that it continues ordering protection for the murderous businessmen of the coup d'état and that it attacks and persecutes its people

and has sold off our territory piece by piece, with the help of a police force and army converted by the empire into occupation forces within our country.”

In a statement on May 27, the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH), the largest and most powerful indigenous organization in Honduras, similarly welcomed Zelaya to the country while condemning the Lobo administration. It reserved its strongest words for the OAS:

“[I]f you think you will wipe the board clean and start over, you are mistaken; you are mistaken in your cold economic calculations, in your political pragmatism, in your urgent desire to serve imperialism in its project of rearranging the continent; you are mistaken in your hypocrisy of recognizing a murderous regime that is the inheritor of a coup d'état and that has not complied with the conditions for return imposed by the OAS itself, for which it was expelled in the first place.”

COPINH signs its statement, "We will not forget, We will not forgive, and WE WILL NOT reconcile!!"

So far, only Ecuador has declared its firm opposition to Honduras's reentry into the OAS. President Rafael Correa, himself nearly overthrown in a coup attempt last year, said on May 26, "There is one requirement; anything else is impunity. What is the requirement? That those responsible for the coup be punished."

Zelaya will walk a treacherous line as he steps off the plane on Saturday. Many Hondurans, for whom he has become a hero of saint-like proportions, will be surprised to discover that his first order of business is a luncheon with Lobo and OAS Secretary General José Miguel Insulza. But whether or not Zelaya retains his enormous popularity in the months to come, one thing is certain: without justice, there will be neither reconciliation nor democracy in Honduras.

[Adrienne Pine is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at American University, and the author of *Working Hard, Drinking Hard: On Violence and Survival in Honduras* (University of California Press, 2008). More of her work can be found at quotha.net.]

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ZELAYA RETURNS TO HONDURAS, BUT JUSTICE IS STILL NOT DONE

Dana Frank | June 2, 2011

<http://www.thenation.com/article/161102/zelaya-returns-honduras-justice-still-not-done>

When President Manuel "Mel" Zelaya finally returned to Honduras on Saturday, May 28, almost two years after he was deposed in a June 2009 military coup, the sea of people in red t-shirts greeting him at the Tegucigalpa airport and protesting the coup extended so far out into the streets that no one could really count them. It was by far the biggest demonstration in Honduran history. Even the pro-coup El Heraldo estimated 500,000 to 1.5 million people. TV Channel 11 said 900,000—or eleven percent of the entire Honduran population.

But what did Zelaya's triumphant return really mean? Certainly not that justice has been restored to Honduras, repression ended or social justice addressed. The accord with current de facto President Porfirio Lobo Sosa, brokered by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos, offers nothing beyond dropping the trumped-up charges against Zelaya, permitting his re-entry.

Zelaya's return does have enormous popular significance. Even for those who are quite critical of him, he is the grand symbol of resistance to the military coup and of constitutional order. His return offers a brief gleam of hope and dramatically changes the political landscape in Honduras.

But supporters of the ongoing coup regime are happy, too. Up north, the US mainstream media was quick to declare that "the crisis is now over." Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who's been desperately seeking Zelaya's return in order to create the semblance of two-party democracy, immediately announced that Honduras could now be readmitted to the Organization of American States. The fix was in: on Wednesday, June 1, the OAS indeed readmitted Honduras, with only Ecuador dissenting.

But the pact does nothing real to address the human rights crisis in Honduras. As a statement issued by twenty prominent groups—representing Honduran

judges, ministers, women, indigenous, gay people, Afro-Hondurans and human rights activists—underscored, the original conditions for readmission to the OAS, including prosecution of the coup perpetrators, have by no means been met. "Innumerable violations of human rights" were committed during the coup, they note, but the accord "doesn't record these facts; nor does it establish an effective mechanism for their investigations, sanction, and adequate reparation."

Repression of the opposition in the past three months has in fact been worse than it was in the period immediately following the coup. Lobo's police and military now routinely use tear gas canisters as lethal weapons, threats and assassinations of opposition journalists continue (including two murders in May) and free-range paramilitaries pick off campesino activists one by one in the Aguán Valley, where four people were killed in May alone. Two days after the accord, Lobo's police used tear gas and live bullets against a group of high school students protesting their math teachers' dismissal.

The judiciary system, moreover, is largely nonfunctional. Complete impunity reigns for the over thirty-six politically-motivated assassinations and over 300 suspicious murders of opposition members since Lobo took office, according to COFADEH, the leading independent human rights group in the country. The same military officers who perpetrated the coup are in charge of the armed forces and the state-owned telephone company.

Lobo—himself elected in a fraudulent November 2009 election, controlled by the army and boycotted by the opposition and international observers— weakly promises in the accord to pay attention to human rights. But with nothing concrete in the text, it's merely the fox swearing he'll guard the chicken coop even more carefully. "Human rights are not subject to political negotiation," COFADEH emphasized, in response to the accord.

A large and growing segment of the US Congress, fortunately, isn't fooled. On May 31, eighty-seven members of the House of Representatives sent a letter to Secretary Clinton, sponsored by Representatives James McGovern, Jan Schakowsky and Sam Farr, expressing concern over the human rights situation in Honduras and demanding a suspension of US military and police aid to Honduras—up from 30 signers of a similar letter last October.

And what about the Honduran resistance, which has already paid such a terrible price?

It's pivoting to deal with the new reality of Zelaya's presence and his accord with Lobo. Internally, a ferocious debate is raging, between those who support the entrance of the National Front of Popular Resistance (FNRP) into electoral politics right now—which could translate into formal political power, but risks patronage opportunism and slippage into a revived version of the old oligarchic Liberal Party—and the social movement base within the opposition, which wants to build a horizontal base more slowly and is concerned about decision-making processes within the frente.

In this new, rapid-fire political context, the question is how to seize the moment and translate that mass of politically-engaged Hondurans in red t-shirts into fundamental social, economic and political change. As Eugenio Sosa, a prominent Honduran intellectual, queried on the radio as Zelaya's plane was about to land, "This multitude—for what?"

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WHAT TO DO

TO MAKE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS for the pro-democracy movement in Honduras, make check payable 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>
DONATIONS OF STOCK: info@rightsaction.org

- EDUCATIONAL DELEGATIONS TO HONDURAS: Form your own group and/or join one of our educational delegation-seminars to come to Honduras and learn first hand about the pro-democracy movement:
info@rightsaction.org
- CREATE YOUR OWN email and mail lists and re-distribute our information
- RECOMMENDED DAILY NEWS: www.democracynow.org/
www.upsidedownworld.org/ / www.dominionpaper.ca

- RECOMMENDED BOOKS: Eduardo Galeano's "Open Veins of Latin America"; Howard Zinn's "A People's History of the United States"; James Loewen's "Lies My Teacher Told Me"; Naomi Klein's "The Shock Doctrine"; Paolo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed"; Dr Seuss's "Horton Hears A Who"

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