

Rights Action
October 3, 2011

President Obama Scheduled To Meet With Porfirio Lobo, “President” Of Honduras
Rights Action update

CALLS NEEDED:

TO PRESIDENT OBAMA,
TO GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS,
TO YOUR MEMBER OF CONGRESS,
TO YOUR SENATOR

- WHITE HOUSE: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/CONTACT/>, 202-456-1111, Comment Line: 202-456-1414
- CONGRESS: Go to <http://www.house.gov/> to get info for your member of Congress, and call: 202-224-3121
- SENATE: Go to <http://www.senate.gov/> to get contact for your Senator, and call: 202-224-3121
- STATE DEPARTMENT - Office of Western Hemisphere Affairs: 202 647-0834, WHAAsstSecty@State.Gov
- AMBASSADOR CRAIG KELLY, Principal Deputy Asst. Secretary, Western Office of Hemisphere Affairs: KellyC@state.gov
- MARIA OTERO, Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs; c/o Laura Pena, Assistant: Penal@state.gov
- BENJAMIN GEDAN, Honduras Desk Officer, (202) 647-3482, GedanBN@state.gov
- Dan Restrepo (Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs, National Security Council), 202-456-1111 or 202-456-1414

NO POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ‘BUSINESS AS USUAL’
WITH ILLEGITIMATE, REPRESSIVE REGIMES IN HONDURAS OR
ANYWHERE

President Obama never met with the last democratically elected president Honduran President, Manuel Zelaya, even after he was ousted in a military coup, June 28, 2009.

Such a meeting with President Zelaya could have been an important message of support for democracy in the Americas. Instead, President Obama chose to send the clear message that the US did not support democracy in Honduras, by not meeting with Zelaya.

This Wednesday, October 5, Obama will be reinforcing the message that – rhetoric notwithstanding - democracy and the respect for human rights are not high priorities for the United States.

The military-backed regime of “President” Porfirio Lobo – that came to the presidency through fraudulent elections in November 2009 - has seen the rebirth of systematic politically motivated extrajudicial executions and disappearances undertaken by what appear to be State security forces organized in death squads.

Call the White House, government officials and elected officials, and demand that the US government:

- not finance, train and equip military and police units that are engaged in gross human rights violations in Honduras,
- that internationally verified respect for human rights and the rule of law are the only foundations of regional security and must be securely in place before any type of economic and/or “security” assistance can be provided.

BACKGROUND:

Slightly over two years after the June 28, 2009 coup in Honduras the human rights crisis is only deepening. For the first time since the bloody Central American conflicts of the 1980’s, death squads linked to the police and military are systematically targeting political activists and community organizers.

Hundreds of human rights and political activists have been killed since the coup, in assassinations that demonstrate the characteristics of death squad actions.

Forced disappearances of political activists, apparently by state security forces, are again occurring. In just one small rural area – the Aguan region - forty poor farmers have been killed in less than two years.

The gravity of the problem is compounded by the criminal connections within the state security forces; state security forces have become so bold that they break into homes and execute or kidnap people in front of their families, both in situations where the only identifiable motive is political and others where the motives are unclear.

The extreme corruption within the justice system worsens and deepens the problem. Corruption has been extremely problematic for years, on two occasions in 2007 and 2008 public prosecutors undertook national hunger strikes to denounce corruption, which worsened markedly after the coup when public prosecutors and judges who had been active for many years demanding reforms were purged from their offices.

Networks of corruption not only facilitate illegal activities such as drug trafficking and maintain total impunity for the rampant and widespread human rights violations but also promote political motivated, baseless and biased prosecutions.

Without first combating the structures of impunity in the justice system, arming and training security forces will make no advances in fighting the drug war or reducing terrible violence in the region.

A particularly concerning example is in the region of the Aguan, where prominent palm oil businessmen in that region have been implicated in atrocities against small farmers with full support of State security forces, resulting in the death squad killings and disappearances of over 40 land rights defenders in less than two years. Palm oil plantations zealously controlled by a heavy presence of armed private security guards have been repeatedly implicated in drug trafficking.

Yet the US Army Rangers have been training soldiers from the very same military base that has been widely denounced as operating jointly with the very same security guards apparently also implicated in drug trafficking.

Recent revelations of state department cables demonstrate not only extremely close ties between public officials and the drug trade, but also that arms and equipment provided as US military assistance has repeatedly ended up at the service of drug trafficking networks.

Political persecution is also extremely concerning, particularly the case of Enrique Flores, Minister to the President during the administration of Manuel Zelaya. Mr. Flores was implicated in exactly the same politically motivated charges pressed against Mr. Zelaya, and used by the coup plotters, and by the governments of the USA and Canada to “justify” the coup.

Though Mr. Zelaya’s trumped up charges were dismissed during the negotiation of the Cartagena Agreement, Mr. Flores’ were not though under the terms of the agreement they should be. His rights to due process have been openly violated and at any moment he could go to jail.

These are the very same charges that following the June 28, 2009 coup Honduran officials claimed had been the basis of a supposed arrest warrant which was intended to provide legal justification for the coup. However, the Attorney General had admitted to then US Ambassador to Honduras, Hugo Llorens, that the charges had not existed before the coup. This means that the Supreme Court intentionally falsified the dates of the charges in order to generate a predated arrest warrant intended to provide legal justification for the coup.

This is an extremely dangerous precedent, especially combined with recent killings of several Popular Resistance Party activists at the exact time the new party launched its campaign to gather signatures to officially register.

In the delicate political process currently underway in Honduras denying the Resistance movement a right to political participation could be devastating.

It is of grave concern that the US is increasing its commitment to armed “security” initiatives in the Honduran military and police even as grave human rights violations continue to occur. Before establishing security assistance the United States must demand and see enacted profound

reforms in the justice system, including the prosecution of those responsible for the military coup and the on-going, systemic human rights violations, an end to politically motivated, biased prosecutions, and assurance of due process regardless of political ideas or economic status.

Otherwise, the increased security assistance will only compound violence and illegal activities.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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Grahame Russell, info@rightsaction.org

TO MAKE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS

for grassroots and campesino organizations working for justice, an end to impunity and the building of real democracy 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

3 SOLIDARITY DELEGATIONS TO GUATEMALA AND/OR HONDURAS

Please join a Rights Action education-solidarity delegation to:

1- HONDURAS, JANUARY 6-15, 2012

“ACCOMPANIMENT AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY DELEGATION”

Sponsored by Alliance for Global Justice, Join AfGJ Coordinator Chuck Kaufman, Karen Spring (long-time Honduras human rights accompanier with Rights Action) and Tanya Kerssen (food policy analyst from Food First). For an application, send an email to AFGJ@AFGJ.org

2- HONDURAS & GUATEMALA, JANUARY 2012 (EXACT DATES TBD)

“MINING, BIOFUELS & MILITARIZATION: US MILITARY AID & CANADIAN-AMERICAN ECONOMIC INTERESTS”

Sponsored by Rights Action, join Annie Bird (Rights Action co-director). For more information: annie@rightsaction.org, 202-680-3002.

3- GUATEMALA, MARCH 10-17, 2012

“DAMS, MINING & AFRICAN PALM PRODUCTION * versus * COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE & HUMAN RIGHTS”

Sponsored by Rights Action, join Grahame Russell (Rights Action co-director). For more information: info@rightsaction.org, 860-352-2448

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