

Rights Action  
January 3, 2012

BELOW

(Los Angeles Times – Editorial)

**Holding Honduras Accountable  
President Porfirio must demonstrate that he's taking measurable  
steps to prevent human rights abuses**

Los Angeles Times editorial

**WHAT TO DO – KEEP ON WRITING**

Please keep on sending copies of this information, and your own letters, to Canadian and American politicians and government officials. The repressive Honduran government – significantly propped up by the Honduran military - remains in power in large part due to political, economic and military support from the governments of the USA and Canada and on-going investments from international business interests (mining, sweatshops, fruit companies, tourism, biofuels, etc).

**HONDURAN RESISTANCE MOVEMENT:** For more information about the courageous Honduran pro-democracy Resistance Movement, contact Rights Action.

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(Los Angeles Times – Editorial)

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January 2, 2012,

<http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/opinionla/la-ed-honduras-20120102,0,7022781.story>

Honduras has the highest homicide rate in the world, according to the United Nations, and its government has long been plagued by allegations of corruption and human rights abuses. A 2009 military coup deepened political rifts and eroded public trust in democratic institutions. And a recent Human Rights Watch report found that officials have yet to bring to justice many of those allegedly responsible for violations committed after the coup.

Indeed, the crisis appears to be growing more acute. In November, Rep. Howard Berman (D-Van Nuys) asked Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton to reevaluate U.S. aid to Honduras in light of recent killings, including the deaths of two unarmed students. One of those students was the son of a university rector who served on the truth commission that investigated the 2009 coup, Berman noted. Four police officers were arrested in connection with the deaths but released days later without explanation. And human rights observers say the killings continue. In December, a former anti-narcotics advisor and outspoken critic of government corruption was gunned down and a prominent journalist was shot to death outside her home.

Now Congress has stepped in, cutting off some of the nearly \$70 million in annual aid earmarked for the country. That's an important start. Temporarily withholding 20% of the estimated \$1.8 million designated for police and military assistance could help persuade President Porfirio Lobo to adopt reforms. His administration, for example, has yet to provide the attorney general's office with promised funding to hire independent investigators; currently, allegations of human rights abuses by police are investigated by the Ministry of Security, the same ministry the police report to. And it could pressure him to speed up funding for a witness protection program, which prosecutors in the attorney general's human rights unit say could help secure testimony from victims.

Congress' decision to withhold a fraction of the total aid to Honduras could be seen as a symbolic gesture. But it still sends an important message, one the Obama administration has been reluctant to send: Lobo must demonstrate that he's taking measurable steps to prevent human rights abuses and to hold those who commit them responsible. Honduras needs assistance, but it also needs to be held accountable.

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