

**Rights Action  
June 28, 2012**

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**3rd Anniversary Of Military Coup**

Below:

- “Three Years After Coup in Honduras, the Coup’s Legacy is One of Murders, Impunity” (by CEPR, <http://www.cepr.net/>)
- “The US Bears Responsibility for Killing Innocents in Ahuas, Honduras: We Demand Justice”, by Miriam Miranda of OFRANEH
- “Urge the U.S. to Stop Funding Honduran Police and Military!” (Center for Constitutional Rights, <http://ccrjustice.org/>)

**TAKE ACTION TODAY:** Please donate funds for the work of community groups in Honduras, united in the National Resistance Front, resisting the violations and impunity of the military backed regime, working for the restoration of democracy, community development, environmental protection and the refounding of Honduras.

Please re-send this letter to family, friends and colleagues. Send us your questions and comments.

Annie Bird and Grahame Russell

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**THREE YEARS AFTER COUP IN HONDURAS, LEGACY IS ONE OF MURDERS, IMPUNITY**

(Center for Economic and Policy Research, June 28, 2012)

Washington, D.C.- Three years to the day after a June 28, 2009 coup d’etat ousted Honduras’ democratically-elected President Manuel Zelaya, the coup’s legacy is one of ongoing murders, impunity for repression and

killings, and more coups and coup attempts elsewhere in Latin America, Center for Economic and Policy Research Co-Director Mark Weisbrot said today.

Weisbrot cited this week's murder of Carlos Jese Portillo Yanes, a member of the anti-coup Frente Nacional de Resistencia Popular (FNRP) and the LIBRE political party, as the most recent example of ongoing post-coup repression in Honduras.

"The coup's legacy of murders and repression of coup opponents, campesinos, journalists and members of the LGBT community is partly a legacy of the U.S. government's response to the coup, which it consistently supported," Weisbrot said. "If the U.S. had demanded the reinstatement of Honduras' democratic government, instead of undermining this goal at the OAS and other fora, the outcome would have been very different.

Instead, the U.S. continues to increase funding to Honduras' notoriously corrupt security forces, despite the protests of many members of the U.S. Congress.

"We can see the U.S. reacting in a similar way to Friday's undemocratic removal of president Fernando Lugo in Paraguay," Weisbrot added. "Were the U.S. to tell the coup regime in Paraguay that it won't support it, Paraguay would be isolated and would have to respect due process and its own constitution."

The coup in Paraguay is the latest in attempted illegal removal of a president in Latin America since Zelaya's ouster. Police in Ecuador attacked and later held President Rafael Correa hostage in September 2010 in what Correa and many outside observers called a coup attempt.

Weisbrot noted that in both the cases of Honduras and Paraguay, the U.S. government privately described the plans and actions to remove the democratically-elected presidents as "illegal" -- showing a clear knowledge that these were coups-d'etat -- while publicly refusing to call them coups.

State Department cables from 2009, made available by Wikileaks, show that U.S. Ambassador Liliana Ayalde warned that Lugo's "political

enemies” could “pursue political means like [i]mpeachment to remove him from office,” which State Department officials described as “interrupting the democratic process.”

The U.S. ambassador to Honduras in 2009, Hugo Llorens, sent cables from Tegucigalpa describing the June 28 events as having “constituted an illegal and unconstitutional coup.” Despite this private acknowledgment, the Obama administration refused to publicly recognize Zelaya’s removal as a military coup. To date, the U.S. State Department says it has not yet determined whether Lugo’s ouster was a coup d’etat.

Since the 2009 coup, Honduras has become the “murder capital of the world”, according to a UN study on homicides, with dissidents, people who opposed the coup, campesinos, journalists, and members of the LGBT community often in the cross hairs. 84 members of the U.S. Congress sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton this week urging U.S. action against murders of LGBT activists and community members in Honduras, noting ongoing impunity for the killings of people such as Walter Trochez, who was a well-known gay activist and member of the resistance to the coup. He was murdered in a drive-by shooting in December 2009.

This week’s letter follows another letter to Clinton in March from 94 members of Congress asking her “to suspend U.S. assistance to the Honduran military and police given the credible allegations of widespread, serious violations of human rights attributed to the security forces.”

Carlos Jese Portillo Yanes is the most recent member of the political opposition to be assassinated. His body was found in a plastic bag on Monday after he was seen being forced into a truck by three men Sunday and driven off.

“The escalating ‘war on drugs’ in Honduras is another legacy of the coup,” Weisbrot noted. “It is questionable whether we would see the kind of incidents under Zelaya or his party as occurred on May 11, when pregnant women and children were shot dead from U.S. State Department-owned helicopters, with U.S. DEA agents on board. The coup has led to the breakdown of many of Honduras’ key institutions,

including its police forces and judiciary, where corruption and abuses are increasingly rampant."

(Center for Economic and Policy Research, <http://www.cepr.net/>)

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## **THE US BEARS RESPONSIBILITY FOR KILLING INNOCENTS IN AHUAS, HONDURAS; WE DEMAND JUSTICE**

By Miriam Miranda June 22, 2012

Over a month ago, the Patuca River, which runs through the heart of Honduras' Afro-indigenous Moskitia region, turned red with the blood of the Miskito people. Before dawn on May 11th a small boat filled with residents of the nearby town of Ahuas was fired upon without warning from a helicopter.

A pregnant woman and a 21-year-old man were shot dead inside the boat. Another pregnant woman and a 14-year-old boy were killed as they tried to swim to shore. Four more passengers were seriously injured.

The same day Honduras' police triumphantly announced that two drug traffickers had been killed and around 1,000 pounds of cocaine seized in a joint operation with the U.S. DEA. Only after the town mayor denounced that the victims were actually 'civilians,' a term now common in a country that is supposedly not at war, the media began to report what had really occurred.

U.S. Department of State helicopters had ambushed unarmed villagers traveling upstream, many returning home after celebrating Mothers' Day, as their boat passed an apparently unmanned motorboat filled with cocaine that was floating downstream.

The helicopters then landed and armed U.S. and Honduran agents stepped out as townspeople rushed to the shore. Relatives of the passengers were held at gunpoint for hours and prevented from assisting their loved ones. Some were threatened with death despite being unarmed and posing no threat. While the dying and injured passengers were left to fend for themselves, the agents forced a boat driver, son of

one of the victims, to retrieve cocaine from the abandoned vessel downstream.

More than a month has passed, and there is no sign that those responsible for the massacre will be held accountable. The two principal actors responsible for the operation – the Honduran and U.S. governments – have only criminalized the victims in public statements, insisting against all evidence that they were drug traffickers, while establishing new military encampments in Ahuas and nearby towns.

The U.S. State Department has said that they support a Honduran government investigation and that a preliminary report by Honduran authorities concludes that agents fired in self-defense. Yet the State Department itself, in its 2011 human rights report on Honduras, acknowledges that “corruption and impunity” have been “serious problems” within Honduras’ security forces. Since a military coup in 2009 led to the breakdown of Honduran institutions and rule of law, hundreds of violent incidents involving security forces have failed to be brought to justice. How then can we expect Honduras’ authorities to carry out an honest investigation?

Today, the inhabitants of the Moskitia region are fearful of traveling along the river. For them, the massacre was a de facto declaration of a curfew and state of siege.

A week before the killings, The New York Times reported that tactics and personnel from counter-insurgency campaigns in Afghanistan are being transferred to the Moskitia. Though militarized interdiction has never been proven to decrease the availability of drugs in the U.S., U.S. and local security forces have succeeded in terrorizing indigenous and Afro-descendant communities. Statements to the press made by U.S. officials following the massacre equated indigenous communities and authorities with drug traffickers, an outrageous and dangerous assumption.

The commander of the U.S. Joint Task Force Bravo, which provides logistical support to DEA operations, told the Times that, “By countering transnational organized crime, we promote stability, which is necessary for external investment, economic growth and minimizing violence.”

Indeed, militarization of the region has occurred in tandem with the rapid encroachment of corporate ventures that threaten the life of the rivers and the people of the Moskitia. The subsoil of Ahuas is believed to contain massive, untapped petroleum deposits. Concessions in the area were recently granted to oil companies, including at least one Texas-based joint venture. Plans are moving forward to establish African palm oil plantations on the lands of indigenous communities and the construction of the first of three large hydroelectric dams along the Patuca has begun with potentially devastating consequences for ecosystems and traditional indigenous livelihoods.

The May 11th killings brought some attention to the plight of the Moskitia. It is now time for the U.S. to act. Given the U.S. government's direct role in this tragedy, the U.S. should carry out a rigorous, independent investigation and identify those responsible at every level of the chain of command. The U.S. must also find a way of addressing its massive demand for drugs that does not involve turning indigenous territories into war zones.

(Miriam Miranda is a founder of the Observatory of the Human Rights of Indigenous and Black Peoples of Honduras (ODHPINH) and the General Coordinator of the Fraternal Black Organization of Honduras (OFRANEH), a federation of the Garifuna communities of Honduras. In this capacity Ms. Miranda has participated in the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous People, the Working Group to prepare the Draft American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People in the OAS, and has coordinated the presentation of groundbreaking petitions before the Inter American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), and Inspection Panel of the World Bank. She has been the target of violence by Honduran police, as a consequence in 2011 she was granted protective measures by the IACHR. In November 2011 Ms. Miranda was honored by the Chicago Religious Leadership Network.)

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**URGE THE U.S. TO STOP FUNDING HONDURAN POLICE AND MILITARY!**

[Write your representatives and demand they get behind the call to cut U.S. funding to the Honduran police and military:](#)

[http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/383/p/dia/action/public/?action\\_KEY=10981](http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/383/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=10981)

Three years ago the coup d'etat in Honduras sparked a national uprising against the coup and widespread repression by the coup regime that took power. Today, Honduras has the highest murder rate in the world and is one of the most dangerous countries to work as a journalist. Impunity for assassinations, kidnappings, torture and police misconduct is the norm.

The Honduran military and police have engaged in systematic threats and violence against a number of groups and professions, including organized farmers, journalists, lawyers, members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community, members of the political opposition, and human rights activists.

The United States continues to fund the Honduran police and military despite this atrocious human rights record and despite numerous calls from members of Congress to cut the funding.

CCR has been standing in solidarity with the resistance in Honduras since the 2009 coup. Please see our [Honduras Coup webpage](http://ccrjustice.org/honduras-coup) (<http://ccrjustice.org/honduras-coup>) for more information about the lawsuit we filed against coup leader Roberto Micheletti, our advocacy work to cut U.S. funding to the Honduran police and military, and our Freedom of Information Act requests and litigation for more information about U.S. knowledge of and actions regarding the 2009 coup. (<http://ccrjustice.org/>)

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**MAKE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS** ... for community organizations in Honduras working for community development, protection of the environment, human rights and justice, 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

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### **MORE INFORMATION / QUESTIONS**

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