

Rights Action
March 28, 2013

Al Jazeera news report

Honduras – A Culture Of Impunity: U.S. funding death squads in Honduras?

On Al Jazeera, “Inside Story America” talks with Annie Bird (Rights Action) and Alberto Arce about whether the US state department is misleading Congress about possible US funding for Honduran death squads?

View (25 minutes):

<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/insidestoryamericas/2013/03/201332882542746858.html>

HONDURAS – A CULTURE OF IMPUNITY: US funding death squads in Honduras?

A new investigation has further highlighted the culture of impunity that exists within the Honduran police force. The Associated Press heard testimony that strongly suggests that people are being disappeared by roving groups of armed officers.

"Clearly, the state department is well aware of Honduran law [regarding Bonilla's control over all police units]." (Annie Bird, the co-founder Rights Action)

There are claims that the US Congress may be funding these units. Last August, Congress held back \$30m in Honduran aid precisely because of concerns over the human rights record of the country's top police officer, Juan Carlos Bonilla. But that money was later restored on condition that it went to units not under Bonilla's control. However, AP reports that Honduran law prohibits any police unit from operating outside the command of the chief of police.

Honduras has the highest murder rate in the world. Much of it is ascribed to gang violence. But rights groups say the chaos is also being used as a cover to target political opponents.

So, is the US state department misleading Congress about possible US funding for Honduran death squads? Inside Story Americas, with presenter Shihab Rattansi, is joined by guests: Alberto Arce, the Honduras correspondent for Associated Press and Annie Bird, the co-founder of Rights Action.

Alberto Arce, the Honduras correspondent for Associated Press:

"According to gang sources just for the last month, we will have around 10 members of the 18 street gangs killed. Killed in the same kind of operative with these two cars a number of masked men, and most of them appear killed mostly only by one gun shoot in the back part of the head, some of them also disappear. The bodies appear six to eight hours after they were arrested, and we cannot identify arrest orders for any of these guys, so it looks like there is an intelligence work that it's been done, that tracks them through all the city, and they are conducting these kind of operatives at least two or three times per week....

Tegucigalpa is under curfew. It is full of police checkpoints. There is no way that 150 operatives of heavily armed men can move around the city if they don't have the logistics and coordination to move around without being stopped. It's both the logistics and the intelligence that only the police have."

RIGHTS ACTION

The roots of Rights Action's work go back to 1983 in Guatemala. Since then, and particularly since 1995, Rights Action has been funding grassroots organizations working for community development and the environment, for disaster relief, for truth, memory, justice and human rights, and for democracy and peaceful resolution of conflicts in Guatemala and Honduras, as well as in southern Mexico and El Salvador. The Canadian Rights Action Foundation, founded in 1999, is independent from Rights Action (USA). Grahame Russell and Annie Bird are co-directors of Rights Action (USA); Grahame is director of Rights Action (Canada).

TO MAKE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS (in Canada and the U.S.) to support Rights Action's work, make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

- UNITED STATES: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887
- CANADA: (Box 552) 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8

CREDIT-CARD DONATIONS can be made (in Canada and U.S.):

<http://www.rightsaction.org/tax-deductible-donations>

- be a monthly credit card donor (Canada and U.S.)
- to donate stock, contact: info@rightsaction.org

GET INFORMED / GET INVOLVED

- SPEAKERS: Contact us to plan educational presentations in your community
- JOIN A DELEGATION: Form your own group or join one of our delegation seminars to Guatemala and Honduras to learn first hand about community development, human rights and environmental struggles
- BALANCED DAILY NEWS SOURCES: www.democracynow.org / www.therealnews.com / www.upsidedownworld.org / www.dominionpaper.ca / www.rabble.ca / www.fsrn.org /
- GOOD READING: Eduardo Galeano "Open Veins of Latin America" / Howard Zinn "A People's History of the United States" / James Loewen "Lies My Teacher Told Me" / Ronald Wright "Stolen Continents" / Naomi Klein "The Shock Doctrine" / Dr Seuss's "Horton Hears A Who" /

COMMENTS / QUESTIONS: info@rightsaction.org

- Get on/off Rights Action's listserv: www.rightsaction.org
- Follow Rights Action on facebook: www.facebook.com/RightsAction.org
- Please re-post and re-publish this information