

Rights Action  
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[info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)

## **Honduran Election Results Contested Amid Reports of Fraud, Intimidation**

by Sandra Cuffe, 26 November 2013, UpsideDownWorld

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<http://upside-downworld.org/main/honduras-archives-46/4572-honduran-election-results-contested-amid-reports-of-fraud-intimidation>

The tallying and transmission of voting results from the November 24 general elections continue, parties are not recognizing the results, announcing challenges in the courts and in the streets.

As of 5 p.m. on November 25, ruling National Party presidential candidate Juan Orlando Hernández remains in the lead with 38 percent of votes, according to the results processed by the electoral tribunal from 60 percent of polling stations. Xiomara Castro, the candidate for the upstart Libre party trails with 29 percent. Hernandez and Castro both declared victory on November 24, when less than half of the polling stations’ results had been processed.

The Libre Party emerged this year as a new contender, growing out of the resistance movement to the June 2009 coup that ousted Castro’s husband Manuel Zelaya from the Presidency.

In a press conference on November 25, Libre party leader Manuel Zelaya announced that the party does not recognize the results, claiming that

some 20 percent of polling station results that have been processed by the electoral tribunal are inconsistent with the results at the actual voting locations. Anti-Corruption Party presidential candidate Salvador Nasralla, officially in fourth place, has also denounced serious inconsistencies in reported results and vowed to initiate legal challenges.

“If necessary, we’ll take to the streets,” said Zelaya. In San Pedro Sula, the country’s second largest city, Libre and National Front of Popular Resistance activists called for supporters to gather in the central park.

Before issues were raised regarding the transmission of results, the electoral process had been rife with irregularities, intimidation and fraud, according to reports by national and international observers, some of whom were subject to harassment and intimidation.

#### FRAUD

“The buying and selling of votes and credentials by the National party, even using the Nationalist discount card ‘let’s work now,’ has been observed in many parts of the country,” according to a roundtable of electoral human rights violations analysis, made up of national human rights, women’s, and workers’ organizations. “In addition, there have been irregularities in the electoral registry, where people who are alive are listed as deceased, and voters have been transferred without consultation.”

“Nationalist party activists have been used at the voting centers against some representatives of the Libre party. They have warned the Libre party members of possible attempts on their lives during or after the elections,” the statement added.

#### DEATH THREATS & INTIMIDATION

Death threats against Libre party members on election day formed part of an ongoing trend. Eighteen Libre candidates and campaigners were murdered between May 2012 and late October 2013 – more than from all other political parties combined.

“There’s just all these attacks all around the country of people that are associated with the Libre party – whether they’re Libre activists, Libre supporters or Libre sympathizers – that aren’t being reported, but that are absolutely directly related to the state repression against the political opposition and the fear and terror campaign that’s occurring,” Honduras

Solidarity Network delegations coordinator Karen Spring told Upside Down World.

On the eve of the elections, María Amparo Pineda Duarte and Julio Ramón Maradiaga Araujo were ambushed and killed on their way home from an elections training activity for local scrutineers and party representatives. Pineda Duarte was the president of the El Carbón co-operative affiliated with CNTC, a national farm workers' union, and Maradiaga Araujo – who initially survived the attack but died later was a member. Both were local Libre party activists in the municipality of Cantarranas, an hour outside of the capital.

News of the fatal attack had just aired on the radio when Nelson Orestes Canales Vásquez spoke with Upside Down World in Tegucigalpa. The rain poured down where he and other local supporters stood under a Libre party tent in the Centroamérica Oeste neighborhood, one of many marginalized neighborhoods with a strong Libre base. “In Honduras, there was a coup d’état. We marched, we took the streets for almost seven consecutive months – the country in resistance. Then we created the Libre political party. It was born in the popular resistance,” he said.

A local party activist and member of the health workers' union (Sitramedhys), Canales Vásquez, says he's not struggling just to change a government figure, but to change the system. He sees an act of intimidation that took place at the local party tent as part of ongoing repression against resistance and Libre activists. “They don't want an example to be set in Honduras where the people kick the oligarchy out at the ballot box and where the system changes in favor of the people. That's what we're struggling for in Honduras, and that's the reason for this repression against the people and against the Libre party,” said Canales Vásquez.

Shortly after sunset on November 23, a truck with tinted windows and no license plate pulled up right beside their tent. The windows rolled down so that the three people at the tent could see several masked men, one in military uniform and the others in civilian clothing. Despite the intimidation, Libre party activists in the neighborhood were determined to stay at their tents all night long, said Canales Vásquez.

On the evening of November 22, the military police attempted to enter the neighborhood Libre party headquarters in the Kennedy neighborhood, another Libre stronghold in Tegucigalpa. There were three vehicles with approximately 12 agents of the controversial new military police new in each, said César Silva, a journalist and Libre candidate for National Congress.

“They were all wearing balaclavas,” he said, almost shouting over the celebratory din in the neighborhood headquarters after the military police had left. In less than 30 minutes, more than 100 people had shown up to defend the location and people continued to pour up the stairs and gather to support Libre.

The military police force was promoted by former president of Congress and current Presidential front-runner Hernández, along with promises of increasing police and military presence on the streets. “I will do whatever I need to do,” Hernández pledged during his security-focused campaign, in a country infamous for having the highest per capita murder rate in the world.

As the sun began to set on November 25 in Tegucigalpa, electoral tribunal facilities were heavily militarized. The outcome of the elections remained uncertain, both in terms of official results and organized reactions.

[Sandra Cuffe is a freelance journalist currently based in Honduras.]

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### **Americans / Canadians:**

Keep on sending this and other information to your MPs, Congressional Reps & Senators. Keep on denouncing the repression and corruption in Honduras, now including the fraud and repression associated with the November 24 elections. Since the military coup of 2009, the governments of Canada and the USA – and many North American businesses – have maintained strong political, military and economic relations with the regime in power, empowering and ‘legitimizing’ the repressive, military-backed government.

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