

Rights Action
June 17, 2015

“Just how heinous should Honduras have to be before the U.S. [and Canada] stop supporting it?”

(Dana Frank)

Honduras

- Murder capital of the world
- Repression capital of the Americas
- Corruption capital of the Americas
- A women murdering capital of the world
- ... and a profitable place for North American governments, companies and businesses to do business

Honduras Education Seminar Trip, November 7-15, 2015: see below

**U.S. Underwrites Corruption And Violence In Honduras
Washington continues to prop up Hernández's regime, despite its blatant disregard for human rights**

June 1, 2015, by [Dana Frank](#)

<http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2015/6/us-underwrites-corruption-and-violence-in-honduras.html>

Since 2009, Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández has helped depose a democratically elected president in a military coup, ousted part of the country's Supreme Court and facilitated the illegal appointment of Honduras' sitting attorney general. He's jettisoned the Honduran constitution through militarized policing, helped abolish presidential term limits and he even pushed through Congress a law that says that the Honduran constitution doesn't apply in new, privately-run "model cities."

Yet the Barack Obama administration continues to champion Hernández as a key regional partner and wants to send even more money to shore up his regime.

Just how heinous should Honduras have to be before the U.S. stops supporting it?

Now, Hernández's National Party [has been accused of stealing millions](#) of dollars from the country's social security institute, or IHSS. The funds were allegedly used to finance the party's election campaign in 2013. Hernández's government admitted last year that at least \$330 million has been stolen from the IHSS.

On May 8, Globo TV reported that it had obtained copies of checks being held by the prosecutor's office, made out to the National Party election fund from several outside contractors. On May 14, the prosecutor's office confirmed that the checks are indeed in its possession, and are being investigated.

Most of the money was apparently siphoned off through subcontracting firms, which overcharged the IHSS for medicines, ambulances and services, and pocketed the difference.

A number of top National Party leaders are potentially implicated. The list includes the party's election fund officials and Mauricio Oliva, currently president of Congress and chair of a committee that was tasked with overseeing IHSS payments when the checks were approved. It is widely assumed that Hernández owes his electoral victory in part to these stolen funds. Protests have been immediate and growing.

Former President Manuel Zelaya, who was deposed in a 2009 coup and is now the leader of the center-left party LIBRE, has called for Hernández's resignation. The head of another new party in Congress, the conservative Anti-Corruption Party, has demanded an investigation.

The collapse of the IHSS public hospitals has had wider implications. Thousands of Hondurans have died and are still dying without critical care. Local newspapers regularly report the lack of kidney dialysis machines, plates for x-rays of patients who arrive with broken bones, or medical supplies for women who need cesareans to give birth. Doctors and nurses frequently strike because they have not been paid.

In theory, the IHSS scandal should bring down Hernández's government. The National Party doesn't have a majority in Congress, and there's a vigorous political opposition, including LIBRE and the Anti-Corruption Party.

But they're boxed in: Hernández's National Party controls not only the procedures in Congress, but also the Supreme Court, the Attorney General's office, the country's top prosecutors, the military, the police and a new 4,000-strong police force that answers to a military command and patrols the streets in black balaclavas.

It's past time for the U.S. to finally ditch Hernández, and instead speak honestly and forcefully against his militarization, repression of civil liberties and destruction of the constitution.

As the United Nations, Amnesty International and many other human rights groups have documented, state security forces have committed vast human rights violations since the 2009 coup and continue to do so with near-complete impunity. Gangs, murders and drug trafficking have flourished given the breakdown of law enforcement.

Still, Hernández remains the greatest enemy of the rule of law in Honduras. In 2009 he chaired a key congressional committee that supported the coup. In 2012, when he was president of congress, he led the "technical coup" in which four members of the Supreme Court were

deposed in the middle of the night, and new justices were illegally named the next day. In 2013 he led the illegal appointment of a new Attorney General to a five-year term. On April 23, the Honduran Supreme Court ruled that the country's constitution isn't valid and that presidents can, indeed, seek a second term.

Asked about the ruling by a Honduran newspaper, Obama's top adviser on Latin America, Ricardo Zúniga, merely replied that it was a debate for Hondurans alone.

Despite Hernández's dismal record, the Obama administration still celebrates him as a key partner in fighting gangs, drug traffickers and violence. By contrast, Obama has been quick to criticize Venezuelan leaders. His lofty rhetoric on human rights and democracy at the recent Summit of the Americas in Panama apparently doesn't apply to Honduras.

Last year, the arrival of some 60,000 unaccompanied migrants from Central America countries led to an immigration crisis at the border. In response, the White House is aggressively pushing for a billion dollars in aid to Central America, much of which will flow to Honduras, including a tripling of military funding. This is tantamount to rewarding Hernández and other Honduran elites for the very crisis they created.

Instead, the U.S. should push for the establishment of a United Nations-sponsored commission to investigate human rights abuse and impunity. There's a successful regional precedent to emulate: Recent investigations by CICIG (the International Commission against impunity in Guatemala) led to the resignation of that country's vice president.

Hernández's government has pushed forward in its six-year-long march against human rights, the rule of law and civilian policing. His administration is now embroiled in an exploding corruption scandal. It's past time for the U.S. to finally ditch Hernández, and instead speak honestly and forcefully against his militarization, repression of civil liberties and destruction of the constitution.

[Dana Frank is a professor of history at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and an expert on human rights and U.S. policy in Honduras]

Honduras Education Seminar Trip, November 7-15, 2015

The Mir Centre for Peace at Selkirk College and Rights Action invite you to join an education-seminar trip to Honduras

(<http://selkirk.ca/mir-centre-for-peace/events-workshops/honduras-education-seminar-tour>)

- **More info:** Grahame Russell, info@rightsaction.org

Say No To 'International Business and Investments, Militarism and Impunity As Usual'

The U.S. and Canadian governments, the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank, and North American companies and investors (including pension funds) maintain profitable economic and military relations with the Guatemalan, Honduran and Mexican elites, turning a blind eye to death and suffering by exploitation, repression, violence and impunity that are the norm in these countries.

Because of impunity and immunity from legal liability in Canada and the U.S., it is extremely difficult to hold our companies, investors, governments and international "development" banks accountable when they contribute to and benefit from human rights violations and environmental and health harms in other countries.

Send, and keep on sending copies of this information, and your own letters, to your own elected politicians (MPs, Congresspersons, Senators), to your media, and to your own pension and investment funds, asking: Why our governments, companies and investment firms do nothing about the poverty, repression and violence, and environmental and health harms associated with North American businesses, while benefiting from these economic, military and political relations?

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