

Honduras 'State-sponsored drug trafficking' trial in New York City The Role of the United States and Canada in Supporting a Narco-Government in Honduras

Update #1, October 3, 2019, by Karen Spring, director of Honduras Solidarity Network
<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/honduras-state-sponsored-drug-trafficking-trial-in-new-york-city>

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Day 1: Juan Antonio "Tony" Hernandez's Trial in New York Trial Context: The Role of the United States and Canada in Supporting a Narco-Government in Honduras

Today, Juan Antonio "Tony" Hernandez, a former National Party congressional representative and the youngest brother of the Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez (JOH), goes to trial in the southern district court in New York. Tony is accused of *"conspiring to import cocaine into the United States, related weapons offenses involving the use and possession of machineguns and destructive devices, and making false statements to federal agents."*

Since the US and Canadian-backed 2009 coup d'état in particular, Honduras has spiraled into a human rights and economic, political and social crisis that has driven thousands of Hondurans out of the country and caused the murder, criminalization, and persecution of journalists, lawyers, land defenders, indigenous peoples, and women. Many of the people that have fled or have been politically targeted, have either publicly denounced these abuses, criticized the government, or made statements in relation to the Honduran government's involvement in drug trafficking, organized crime, and promoting impunity to the benefit of the economic and political elite in the country and foreign economic interests.

Many government corruption scandals have deepened the crisis sparked by the 2009 coup in Honduras including the judicial coup in 2014, the millions of dollars stolen from the social security system (IHSS) in 2015, a fraudulent election in 2013, over a dozen corruption scandals implicating high-ranking public officials in the government including family members of former and the current Presidents, the 2017 electoral crisis and US and Canadian-endorsed fraud that saw the illegal re-election of President Juan Orlando Hernandez.

Through all of these crises, the US and Canada have maintained their political and financial support for the Honduran government.

In the New York court documents in Tony Hernandez's case, federal prosecutors have focused on highlighting the role of Honduran officials in drug trafficking and organized crime. The prosecutors have also discussed how the political context that has permitted such illicit activities, was fostered and in turn, allowed for the expansion of drug trafficking by high level government officials and their family members. These statements include:

"The [US] Government will establish that the defendant [Tony Hernandez] described the 2009 coup as a development that enhanced the likelihood of additional lucrative drug trafficking and further impunity,

viewed each of the national elections as a motive for engaging in additional drug trafficking to generate proceeds that could be used to fund campaigns, and relied on the individuals who won many of the elections to protect him and his co-conspirators from arrest and persecution."

"In approximately the summer of 2009, the defendant [Tony Hernandez] told CW-3 [co-witness 3, Alexander Ardón, also charged in US with drug trafficking, former mayor in El Paraiso, Copan for many years], in substance, that the coup had improved the prospects for their drug-trafficking partnership because it was more likely that CC-3 [Co-Conspirator 3, former President Pepe Lobo] and CC-4 [Co-Conspirator 4, President Juan Orlando Hernandez] would be in positions to protect and assist them by winning their National Party campaigns for President and President of the Congress, respectively."

Although important information for their case, it is unfortunate and wrong that US federal prosecutors, US and Canadian media and US and Canadian citizens do not go further to ask what the role of the US and Canadian governments has been in creating and supporting these political contexts, these illicit activities, and how both governments have benefitted from such.

In the name of fighting drug trafficking and organized crime, the US has sent millions of dollars to Honduras to support the implementation of the Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI). And Canada has done the same through the Canadian Initiative for Security in Central America (CISCA).

Millions of dollars of funding, training, and support has been and continues to be sent to Honduras while convicted drug traffickers and named co-conspirators like former President Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo and President Juan Orlando Hernandez oversee national security efforts, the Honduran military and the so-called "war on drugs" and fight against organized crime.

What is the US and Canadian role in the drug conspiracies of the governments they have supported almost unconditionally since 2009 in Honduras? When will the US and Canadian government be held criminally responsible for financing and politically supporting governments that traffic drugs and commit human rights abuses in total impunity?

Day One, Tony Hernandez Trial: <http://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2019/10/2/day-1-juan-antonio-tony-hernandezs-trial-in-new-york>

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