



IFCLA

Inter-Faith Witness

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The St. Louis
Inter-Faith
Committee on
Latin America

A faith-based source of information about events that shape our lives

Special Honduras Edition

87 MEMBERS OF CONGRESS SIGNED LETTER TO SECRETARY OF STATE CLINTON ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS IN HONDURAS

The letter asks Secretary Clinton to suspend U.S. aid to the military and the police. It further urges the State Department and U.S. Embassy to press the Honduran government to end abuses, implement the measures called for by the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights to protect journalists and human rights defenders, denounce the violence and threats made against human rights defenders, including attacks against the non-governmental Commission of Truth, and support the rule of law by bringing to justice the perpetrators and intellectual authors of human rights abuses that have occurred since June 2009.

Representatives Russ Carnahan (MO2), Lacy Clay (MO1),

Emanuel Cleaver (MO5), and Jerry Costello (IL12) signed the letter sponsored by U.S. Reps. Jim McGovern (MA), Jan Schakowsky (IL) and Sam Farr (CA).

Just last week, Honduran police fired live ammunition and tear gas canisters at protesting high school students; arresting 21 students and two of their mothers. Teachers sustaining a hunger strike have been repressed by police. This week there have been more assassinations in the Bajo Aguan Region.

In response, the State Department stated: "We remain concerned about reports of continued violence, threats, and intimidation of human rights defenders, activists, journalists,

and the LGBT community. The U.S. Government believes that participation in the OAS would enable Honduras to benefit fully from the OAS capacity to promote human rights and good governance. Honduras' reintegration will allow the OAS to help improve the human rights situation. In addition, the OAS General Assembly next week will address citizen security, a critical issue for Honduras, which is struggling to reverse a soaring crime rate and the infiltration of drug trafficking organizations. We have closely monitored the Lobo government's response to protests, while recognizing its right to maintain public order and respond to violence directed at law enforcement personnel."

Question Taken at the May 31, 2011 Daily Press Briefing

Honduras: Congressional Letter on Human Rights Concerns

Question: Did the Secretary receive a letter from the Hill voicing concerns of human rights abuse in Honduras? Is this particularly worrisome as they are getting ready to rejoin the OAS?

Answer: We have received this letter and appreciate the concerns expressed by members of Congress. Encouraging respect for

human rights has been and will continue to be one of the highest priorities for the United States. We welcome President Porfirio Lobo's strong commitment to strengthen respect for human rights and the concrete steps his government has taken to advance that goal, as exemplified by the creation of a Ministry of Justice and Human Rights. The United States will continue to work with the Lobo government to promote greater

respect for human rights in Honduras.

The U.S. Government believes the suspension of Honduras' participation in the OAS should be immediately lifted. Honduras was suspended from the OAS because of a breach in the constitutional order. That problem has been resolved.

Zelaya's Return: Neither Reconciliation nor Democracy in Honduras

May 28 2011

Adrienne Pine

Over the past few weeks U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and latter-day media "experts" have hailed Manuel Zelaya's return to Honduras and the pending reintegration of the country into the OAS as a restoration of democracy. Here in

Honduras, it is clear that such claims could not be further from the truth. Despite the triumphal language of Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez, Colombian president Juan Manuel Santos, Honduran president Porfirio Lobo, and even

Zelaya himself following their signing of the Cartagena Accords, Honduras today is no closer to reconciliation than it was in the months following the June 28, 2009 military coup.

<https://nacla.org/news/zelayas-return-neither-reconciliation-nor-democracy-honduras>



OAS Restores Honduras' membership

By Frances Robles

Bullet holes mark the walls of former Honduran president Manuel Zelaya's house.

But the controversial leader, back home in Tegucigalpa after 23 months of exile, says he extended a hand to the adversaries who ousted him by force two years ago. That mood of reconciliation that began

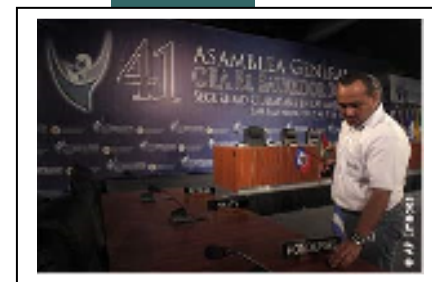
last week with a deal struck in Colombia reached all the way to Washington, D.C. on Wednesday, when the hemisphere's premier diplomatic organization readmitted Honduras. The landslide vote put an end to an ugly crisis that left scores dead and a Central American nation cast out from its neighbors.

"Juan Pablo Duarte said, 'to live without a country

is to live without honor,'" Zelaya said, quoting the Dominican founding father in an interview on the Telesur network. "I have returned with my hand extended even to my adversaries, without rancor or grudges."

http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/06/01/2245700/oas-restores-honduras-membership.html?story_link=email_msg

(to p. 5)



iipdigital.usembassy.gov

Bishop of Santa Rosa de Copán threatened

A lay volunteer in the Catholic diocese of Santa Rosa de Copán, Honduras shared that **Monseñor Luis**

Alfonso Santos, Bishop of Santa Rosa de Copán in Honduras has been threatened

with a defamation law suit by Honduran billionaire landowner, **Miguel Facussé**.

Bishop Santos recently charged in a news journal that Miguel Facussé is responsible

for the murders of 14 campesinos in the Aguán region of Honduras <http://www.elheraldo.hn/Sintesis/Lo-ultimo/Ediciones/2011/05/30/Noticias/Querellana-a-lider-de-iglesia-catolica-de-Honduras>.

Zelaya Returns to Honduras, But Justice Is Still Not Done

Dana Frank | June 2, 2011: www.thenation.com/article/161102/zelaya-returns-honduras-justice-still-not-done



Eduardo Verdugo / AP

When President Manuel "Mel" Zelaya finally returned to Honduras on Saturday, May 28, almost two years after he was deposed in a June 2009 military coup, the sea of people in red t-shirts greeting him at the Tegucigalpa airport and protesting the coup extended so far out into the streets that no one could really count them. It was by far the biggest demonstration in Honduran history. Even the pro-coup *El Heraldito* estimated 500,000 to 1.5 million people. TV Channel 11 said 900,000—or eleven

percent of the entire Honduran population.

But what did Zelaya's triumphant return really mean? Certainly not that justice has been restored to Honduras, repression ended or social justice addressed. The accord with current de facto President Porfirio Lobo Sosa, brokered by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos, offers nothing beyond dropping the trumped-up charges against Zelaya, permitting his re-entry.

Zelaya's return does have enormous popular significance. Even for those who are quite critical of him, he is the grand symbol of resistance to the military coup and of constitutional order. His return offers a brief gleam of hope and dramatically changes the political landscape in Honduras.

But supporters of the ongoing coup regime are happy, too. Up north, the US mainstream media was quick to declare that "the crisis is now over."

(to p. 4)

Links to Broadcasts, Articles, Commentaries

http://www.democracynow.org/2011/6/1/former_honduran_minister_us_undoubtedly_played

["http://www.democracynow.org/embed_show_v2/500/2011/6/1/story/former_honduran_minister_us_undoubtedly_played"](http://www.democracynow.org/embed_show_v2/500/2011/6/1/story/former_honduran_minister_us_undoubtedly_played) youtube

www.counterpunch.org/weisbrot06012011.html

Here's a link to the Democracy Now! global broadcast exclusive that takes you on the plane of ousted Honduran President Manuel Zelaya as he, and his family, return home after almost two years in exile.

Democracy Now! host Amy Goodman interviews Zelaya, ousted Honduran Foreign Minister Patricia Rodas, Honduran exile Rene Guillermo Amador, and former Colombian Senator Piedad Cordoba, one of the many representatives of Latin American countries who accompanied Zelaya home. Also interviewed is Father Roy Bourgeois of School of the Americas Watch on the role U.S.-trained generals played in the 2009 coup.

<http://soaw.org/about-us/partnership-america-latina/212-delegations/3709-reportback-from-zelaya->

[return/#video](#)

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/may/28/honduras-usforeignpolicy/print> by Mark Weisbrot, Co-Director, Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR)

Manuel Zelaya's courageous homecoming [guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)

Deborah Charles on OAS <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/06/01/us-honduras-oas-idUSTRE75063P20110601>

"The return of Honduras's former president is a crucial challenge to the coup leaders to end their repression."

What Manuel Zelaya's Return Means for Honduras

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/jun/01/honduras-hillaryclinton> (Mark Weisbrot)

The former president's return is welcome, but human rights remain at risk in Honduras after the coup that deposed him. ...

But it is better to have Zelaya back in the country than outside of it. He will have a voice that can

possibly break through the rightwing media monopoly, and if he uses that to oppose the repression there, it can have a positive impact. As elsewhere in the hemisphere, the media – controlled largely by wealthy elites – are a

major obstacle to progress. In Honduras, most media organizations supported the coup and promoted the falsehood that Zelaya and his supporters were foreign agents (much like the propaganda of the Arab dictators facing demands (to p. 6)

Justice is not Done (cont from p. 3)

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who's been desperately seeking Zelaya's return in order to create the semblance of two-party democracy, immediately announced that Honduras could now be readmitted to the Organization of American States. The fix was in: on Wednesday, June 1, the OAS indeed readmitted Honduras, with only Ecuador dissenting.

But the pact does nothing real to address the human rights crisis in Honduras. As a statement issued by twenty prominent Honduran judges, ministers, women, indigenous, gay people, Afro-Hondurans and human rights activists—underscored, the original conditions for readmission to the OAS, including prosecution of the coup perpetrators, have by no means been met. "Innumerable violations of human rights" were

committed during the coup, they note, but the accord "doesn't record these facts; nor does it establish an effective mechanism for their investigations, sanction, and adequate reparation."

Repression of the opposition in the past three months has in fact been worse than it was in the period immediately following the coup. Lobo's police and military now routinely use tear gas canisters as lethal weapons, threats and assassinations of opposition journalists continue (including two murders in May) and free-range paramilitaries pick off campesino activists one by one in the Aguán Valley, where four people were killed in May alone. Two days *after* the accord, Lobo's police used tear gas and live bullets against a group of high school students protesting their math teachers' dismissal. The judiciary

system, moreover, is largely nonfunctional. Complete impunity reigns for the over thirty-six politically-motivated assassinations and over 300 suspicious murders of opposition members since Lobo took office, according to COFADEH, the leading independent human rights group in the country. The same military officers who perpetrated the coup are in charge of the armed forces and the state-owned telephone company.

Lobo—himself elected in a fraudulent November 2009 election, controlled by the army and boycotted by the opposition and international observers—weakly promises in the accord to pay attention to human rights. But with nothing concrete in the text, it's merely the fox swearing he'll guard the chicken coop even more carefully. "Human rights are not subject to political negotiation," COFADEH emphasized, in response to the accord. (...)



english.cri.cn

And what about the Honduran resistance, which has already paid such a terrible price?

It's pivoting to deal with the new reality of Zelaya's presence and his accord with Lobo. Internally, a ferocious debate is raging, between those who support the entrance of the National Front of Popular Resistance (FNRP) into electoral politics right now—which could translate into formal political power, but risks patronage opportunism and slippage into a revived version of the old oligarchic Liberal Party—and the social movement base within the opposition, which wants to build a horizontal base more slowly and is concerned about decision-making processes within the *frente*.

In this new, rapid-fire political context, the question is how to seize the moment and translate that mass of politically-engaged Hondurans in red t-shirts into fundamental social, economic and political change. As Eugenio Sosa, a prominent Honduran intellectual, queried on the radio as Zelaya's plane was about to land, "This multitude—for what?"

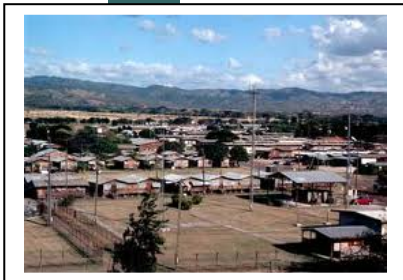
OAS – Organizations Sign Statement Against Reinsertion

102 non-governmental and grass roots organizations signed the letter against the reinsertion of Honduras into the OAS because of the ongoing human rights crises, the impunity regarding violations since June 28, 2009 to the present and the involvement of the state security forces in past and current violations. The human rights situation has not improved under

Porfirio Lobo.

This is the same position expressed by the Honduran rights organizations that also signed a letter prior to the meeting of the OAS and who gave testimony to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in March of this year, including Cofadeh (Families of Disappeared).

The FNRP (Resistance Front) has also stated that there has been no progress for human rights under Lobo Sosa and that although the Frente supports the return of the exiles and the recognition of the Frente as a legitimate political force it does not support the return of Honduras to the OAS because of the human rights violations and impunity.



jhns.dma.mil

US Military Construction in Honduras

John Lindsay-Poland, Research and Advocacy Director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) was interviewed by KPFA's Dennis Bernstein about the US Defense Department's open

bidding for a contract worth up to \$25 million to build barracks for enlisted soldiers at the U.S. military base in Soto Cano/Palmerola, Honduras.

<http://www.kpfa.org/archive/id/70269>

With Alvarez Guerrero the Political Agreement of Cartagena Dies

“The Committee of the Families of the Disappeared Detainees in Honduras (COFADEH) COMPARECE in this Plaza of the White Headscarves”

They have granted amnesty to the military assassins, oblivion to the victims of torture and disappearance, a political party by decree to reinforce bipartisanship, an incomplete return from exile and impunity for the comunal crimes of those in uniform....

Honduran people, watch out: the same ones who ask for peace, reconciliation, pardon and forgetfulness are the psychopaths of power that before disappeared people and now kill...

To summarize, we consider that the avalanche against life and individual liberties crushes the declared proposals regarding human rights of the Cartagena Agreement.

(Oscar Alvarez Guerrero is Minister of Security)

Bishop of Santa Rosa de Copán threatened (from p. 2)

Miguel Facussé, one of the coup plotters in the overthrow of President Mel Zelaya nearly 2 years ago, has long been charged by Aguán campesino agrarian reform cooperatives of killing these 14 campesinos whose land Facussé is trying to violently take over for

palm oil plantations. The campesino groups have reported Facussé's involvement in the killings to both police and human rights groups. However, the police have failed to investigate these killings, in all likelihood because the police themselves and those who hire them be

have collaborated with Facussé's paramilitary hired guns in carrying out and covering up the killings. With the millions of dollars the U.S. government provides to the Honduran police, groups have made repeated requests for to the State Department that these murders be investigated,

"Bishop Luis Alfonso Santos is one Catholic bishop who has publicly opposed the coup and publicly affirmed the Resistance."

and that the perpetrators and those who hire them be prosecuted. The State Department has reported that no progress has been made beyond the unverified claim that each case we bring to their attention "is being investigated by the police".

Blog from Honduras: <http://www.hermanojuancito.blogspot.com>

"I want to comment on the opening event (of the Saturday, May 28, 2011 return of Mel Zelaya to Honduras), a Mass in the plaza (in Tegucigalpa) celebrated by Monseñor Luis Alfonso Santos, the bishop of Santa Rosa de Copán. I missed most of the homily – though I heard Monseñor's strong words against mining at the end of the homily. A few reports I read indicate that he gave a very prophetic sermon that included these very strong remarks.

is dominated by a foreign power – the imperialism of the United States...We Catholics will not join up with the "white shirts" [those who marched against Zelaya and supported the coup] who try to place God as a shield in regard to things that cannot be defended...The church is not with the coup...The oligarchy wants to say that the people is just a few. They want to take control of all the goods which Honduras has, and for this they have been blinded so as not to leave the people of God in liberty."

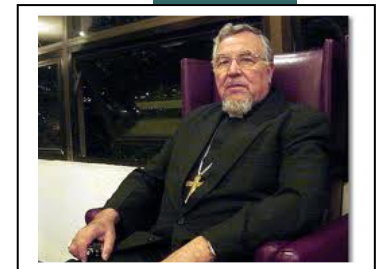
Strong words, but to the point, I believe.

But what really impressed me were the songs that were used at the Mass, mostly from the Salvadoran and Nicaraguan campesino Masses...

Here are a few of the lyrics:

***"Cristo, Cristo, Jesús identificate con nosotros"
"No basta rezar"
"Cuando el pobre crea en el pobre"
"Nadie hay tan grande como tu Señor"***

Don't forget that Honduras



Mons. Luis Alfonso Santos

What Manuel Zelaya's Return Means for Honduras (from p. 4)

for democracy in the Middle East). These themes spilled over to the international media, where they remain visible to this day.

On the positive side, it is good to see Latin American countries taking control of the mediation,

with Washington relegated to the sidelines. The biggest mistake they made after the coup was to allow Hillary Clinton, along with Oscar Arias of Costa Rica, to hijack the mediation process. Clinton's goal was the exact opposite of restoring

democracy in Honduras, and she succeeded. There will be many struggles ahead for the Honduran pro-democracy movement, and they will need a great deal of solidarity and help from outside, especially in opposing the repression.

But this accord is, at least, a step in the right direction.

Chronology: The Path to the Return of Zelaya

From The Economist of how things stood in March:

<http://www.economist.com/node/18333010>

At the beginning of May the Supreme Court dropped all the charges against Mel Zelaya, who has been living in exile in the Dominican Republic:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-13264454>

Sunday, 22 May 2011: Mel Zelaya (the deposed president) and Pepe Lobo, (the president chosen in elections controlled by the coup) sign an accord in Cartagena, Colombia. This accord was brokered by Venezuela and Colombia, and allows Mel to return to

the country without fear of being arrested.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-13496588>

Saturday, 28 May 2011: Mel Zelaya returns to the country; a huge crowd greets him in the Tegucigalpa airport exactly one year and eleven months after the coup.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-13586991>

Wednesday, 1 June 2011: The OAS voted 32-1 to readmit Honduras to the organization. (The opposing vote was Ecuador, which experienced an unsuccessful attempt at a coup last year).

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-13622939>

With the readmission to the

OAS, the outstanding countries (with the exception of Ecuador) recognize the Lobo government and are going through the legalisms to send ambassadors. These outstanding countries are Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia, Venezuela, Nicaragua. I don't fully understand what is the official status vis-à-vis Ecuador, but I imagine they will accept the re-instatement in the OAS in spite of having voted against it.

While all that has been going on on the political front, we have continued down the path of becoming one of the most violent countries in the world. A couple of good articles on the drug trade in Central America:

Construction Companies Urged Not to Bid on "Violent Outcomes" in Honduras

More than 70 religious leaders, organizations, and academics yesterday urged companies not to bid on a \$25 million contract to upgrade a U.S. military base in Honduras, saying the base "violates Honduran sovereignty and the principles of democracy." The Army Corps of Engineers contract is for barracks for enlisted soldiers at Soto Cano Air Base in Honduras.

"The U.S. military is supporting anti-democratic, violent and wealthy sectors in Honduran society, and companies shouldn't lend themselves to that," said historian Greg Grandin of New York University, one of the signers of the letter.

Leaders of Catholic, United Methodist, Presbyterian,

Jewish, and other faiths, over two dozen organizations, and 30 university professors and academics, including Noam Chomsky, told the companies that the contract "is not worth the costs." ...

The proposed new building type is an enlisted personnel barracks for JTF-Bravo of approximately 2,233 square meters in area (24,038 SF) each. There will be three barracks constructed under this contract. This will be a total of 6,699 square meters (72,114 square feet) of constructed area. The barracks will replace existing hooches which will be removed and relocated as part of the site work and are part of the base building package.

Each building unit will be identical. The barracks are 3 stories tall. The construction

type for each building will be a poured slab and beam on load bearing concrete masonry units (CMU). The exterior will have a stucco system over an exterior insulation finish system. The roof will be composed of metal trusses covered with a structural standing seam metal roof system.

Each building will be fully sprinklered with a central HVAC system and two chillers to provide cooling for all three buildings. Site work will include the installation of new water, sewer, electrical and communications lines to each of the buildings. In addition to the installation of utilities, the contractor may install a subsurface track system for emergency vehicle access around the perimeter of the barracks buildings.



freesnobee.com

"Repression of the opposition by state security forces is now worse than it was immediately following the coup... The estimated cost of this project is will between \$10,000,000 to \$25,000,000."



Blog from Honduras (cont.)

Great hopes. We will see what the coming of Mel Zelaya means, but for me what is important is what the poor will do, finding their voice, coming together to

live lives to the full, reflecting the presence of God in their lives, working to make real in this world the Reign of God, a Reign of justice, love, peace, equality.

This is happening....”

Cuando el pobre crea en el pobre

When the poor believe in the poor we can already sing, “Freedom.”
When the poor believe in the poor, we will build fraternity.

We all commit ourselves in the table of the Lord to build Love in this world.

By struggling for our brothers [and sisters] we make community. Christ lives in solidarity.

When the poor seeks the poor and organization is born that’s when our liberation begins.

When the poor announce to the poor the hope which He gave us and his Reign has been born among us.

*“No basta rezar”
No. No. It’s not enough to pray. Many things are lacking to obtain peace.
(refrain)*

Contributors to this issue of IFW: Jenny Atlee, Honduras Solidarity Network, Frances Robles (Miami Herald), Adrienne Pine, Gary Cozette, Dana Frank, Mark Weisbrot, John Donaghy, Jack Warner, COFADEH, Marilyn Lorenz
Longer versions of some articles available through IFCLA.



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