

## REPORTS ON HONDURAS IN OPPOSING THE JUNE 28TH MILITARY COUP

Alliance for Global Justice on July 3rd explained why the tens of thousands of ordinary Hondurans on the streets are opposing the exile of President Manuel Zelaya. In 3 years Zelaya made fundamental policy changes. He abolished fees for primary education that added 400,000 more children in elementary education. One million received a meal daily, more medicines in hospitals, and more anti rotavirus vaccinations. Public vaccinations are considered "communism" by the coup military. Zelaya brought electricity to more homes. Poverty levels were lowered from 46% to 36% in 2008. Also 313,000 new jobs were created and the nation's minimum wage was increased. The strategic reserve of food grains was four times larger than in 2005. He received cheaper Venezuelan oil by a friendship with Hugo Chavez. His pursuit of a constitutional convention would have never been in time for November's election to be reelected, so the reason for the coup was his change from old policies favoring the rich elites to policies that improve the lot of the poor.

Nicaraguan Network Hotline on June 14th explained why Zelaya in Nicaragua read an ultimatum denouncing the violence against the Hondurans by the "usurper government". Nine Nicaraguans were expelled with no return allowed as Zelaya supporters after being detained without warrants. Some worked in Honduras for ten years; others were traveling businessmen. Travel between Nicaragua and El Salvador is affected with Honduran bus fees, with Honduran authorities now in the buses. Also, pictures are taken and identification cards required. Sixteen workers were detained from working on an international bridge in El Salvador. Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights condemned the repression of Honduran citizens, especially on the July 5th attacks on the airport protesters. Obed Murillo and Darwin Antonio Lagos died, and dozens injured.

Quixote Center on August 12th has a delegation in Honduras who along with others and U.S. marchers experienced military attacks at a peaceful demonstration. While they were eating lunch, the military enclosed an area with wire and began to fire tear gas. Some marchers began to run, along with members of our delegation, with the military in pursuit. We have reports of shots being fired.

Christian Commission for Development, Theological Evangelical Community of Honduras, Pastors and Church Leaders made on July 30th a declaration facing "The Political Crisis in Honduras". Mario Benedetti wrote, "We are at a crucial point in this situation, so as part of the Body of Christ, we pledge to support the people in opposition to the breakdown of the basic principles of the democratic system that among other major issues includes the violation of human rights by oppressive systems. Today, as church and church related agencies, we are committed to creating critical and proactive consciousness in the population so they play a protagonist role in the development of our country. It is no longer time to think that we should be subject to an oppressive system; God teaches us that we are royal priesthood, that is to say, subjects that impel change."

A report on the controversy continuing on the Nicaragua-Honduras border noted that the United Nations High Commission for Refugees visited there on July 29 and 30. Between 600 and 800 Hondurans were there in Nicaragua.

A Nicaraguan opposition leader, Eduardo Montealegre on August 7th said that "what occurred in Honduras was a constitutional succession, not a coup." He had been in Honduras for 3 days with the coup people. He claimed that Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega had violated the Central American Peace Accords by permitting Zelaya a base of operation in Nicaragua. Ortega criticized the coup. He said, "This coup d'etat has been condemned by everyone from the United States to Haiti." His Human Rights Ombudsman's Office ask that 7 Nicaraguans in Honduras be released by that government. (from Quixote Center 8-12-09 report)

A U.S. NGO, Medical Education Cooperation with Cuba, reported on August 11th, "Despite objections by local Garifuna communities (Honduran), Honduras, defacto government is moving to take over the first and only Garifuna-managed hospital in the country, ousting its current staff." These communities are located in the remote coastal area of Iriona. The hospital was being down graded to a health center under new management. "The Garifuna staff-both doctors and locally-trained nurses aides will be fired," reported Dr. Luther Castillo. However, the staff is staying put, working without the small stipend of the government and without guarantee of medicines or vital supplies. The doctor will not abandon the poorest of the poor and the invisible poor, who are the real victims of the coup. In December 2007 the Zelaya government and an international labor organization supported locally-managed health services for indigenous and tribal people. Since then 10 Garifuna doctors treated over 175,000 cases. They are graduates of the Latin American Medical School in Havana.

El Salvador NGO on August 11th sought to restore democracy to Honduras by asking the Obama Administration:

- To revoke U.S. visas and freeze bank accounts of those involved in the coup.
- Cease all operations and recall all personnel from the Palmerola military base.
- Recall U.S. Ambassador Llorens as required by law in the event of a coup.
- Join the nations of UNASUR is declaring that the U.S. will not recognize any election results in Honduras unless Zelaya is previously reinstated as President.
- Cut off U.S. economic assistance for election support, to the coup regime in Honduras.

Amnesty International USA on September 2nd informed about the Honduran crisis. "We are witnessing the biggest political crisis to rock Central America in years." The U.S. politically moved at a very slow speed. At gun point by 300 troops, President Manuel Zelaya was exiled. A defacto government has assumed power, violently punishing all those who courageously speak out - dealing a powerful blow to democracy and human rights. In Washington, President Zelaya met with Organization of American States and U.S. Department of State officials, and Hillary Clinton. The Hondurans voted for a democratic government, but in the most undemocratic fashion possible, they are in danger of losing that right, among many others. The coup government conducted mass arrests, police and military sanctioned beatings against vocal opposition. The U.S. must send a clear message to coup leaders that abuse of human rights and democracy in Honduras will not be tolerated. Amnesty International researchers have been there since the coup and documented beatings of many kind of activists and the violence. Obama's words are not enough. More must be done to end the ongoing crackdown on human rights. Decisive action by Obama needs to seek a negotiated solution and counter the damage. This Amnesty summary was based on a report of their Central America Team.

Quixote Center's delegation meeting with the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa presented concerns summarized in a letter by Tom London in an email on 8-5-09. "The situation here continues to deteriorate. For the last week nearly every day there have been reports of police and military attacking unarmed protesters. Our delegation just returned from San Pedro Sula, where there was an unprovoked attack on a peaceful march on Monday. Over 2000 protesters had organized a caravan in San Pedro Sula calling for an end to the coup and the restoration of democracy. When the military cordon began advancing on the caravan, protest leaders called on the people to withdraw. Police and military then attacked retreating protesters with bully clubs and whips. The police also severely beat and arrested people who had nothing to do with the march. They even aimed their weapons and assaulted the judge assigned to review the cases of people who had been detained when he came to the police station. People report that the police seem to be on drugs because of the excessive and uncontrolled way in which they are acting. Later that day, over 4000 people spontaneously gathered in the park of San Pedro Sulain repudiation for the repression that occurred earlier. One Journalist we interviewed was beaten up and arrested both in Comayagua last week and again on Monday in San Pedro Sula. The police busted out every window in his truck which was clearly identified, as press. The police dragged him out of the truck and beat him. When he pleaded for them to stop explaining that he had had back surgery, police threw him on the ground and jumped on his back. We also learned yesterday that Radio Globo, one of the few remaining media outlets that has been able to provide some news converge of events inside Honduras was shut down by the National Commission of Telecommunications at the request of a lawyer for the Armed Forces of Honduras. The Honduran social movements have called for a week long National March in opposition to the coup, August 5-11."

Battle for Honduras---and the Region by Greg Grandin (The Nation, 8-31/9-7, 2009, p.22-24) is subtitled: "The coup has encouraged those who want to halt the advance of the Latin American left." Robert Micheletti who took over the rule in Honduras seems by many people to be the last line against the spread of Chavismo. The return of Zelaya is unacceptable to him. Read more in this article about the regional Latin American struggle between the right and left. In these reports above, the region's views are in the Nicaraguan, El Salvadoran and NGO concerns.

---Kenneth Trauger, 9-15-09