



Witness for Peace

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The Honorable Hillary Clinton
U.S. Department of State

The Honorable Thomas Shannon
U.S. Department of State, Western Hemisphere Affairs

Dear Secretary Clinton and Assistant Secretary Shannon,

On behalf of Witness for Peace, a national organization with 26 years of on-the-ground presence in Latin America, I write today to convey our grave concern with the deteriorating situation in Honduras. A representative of Witness for Peace recently observed the situation firsthand as part of an international observation delegation to Honduras. We appreciate your words of support in recent weeks for the Honduran people's right to exercise their democratic will. We urge you to now demonstrate the sincerity of those words with actions that will hasten the end of the dangerous coup regime.

The coup regime currently in power warrants greater isolation simply for the anti-democratic means through which it usurped that power. President Obama was correct to join the Organization of American States, United Nations, and the European Union in refusing to recognize the coup regime after its illegal military ouster of democratically-elected president Manuel Zelaya on June 28. While the international community's verbal condemnation was swift and resounding, after nearly one month in power the coup regime has proven impervious to words alone. A broad cross-section of Honduran civil society continues to push for an end to the coup through nonviolent demonstrations and work stoppages. Yet, as more time passes, those who orchestrated this illegal coup grow increasingly intransigent, and Hondurans' hopes of restoring democracy wane. If the coup maintains its illegitimate grip on power, it will not only prove a blow to democracy in Honduras, but a signal to would-be coup-plotters throughout the region that military ousters are once again a viable means of attaining power.

Beyond its inherent illegitimacy, the coup regime has fostered an alarming upswing in human rights violations since seizing power. While in Honduras last week, Witness for Peace's representative spoke with a teenager who was grazed by a bullet when Honduran soldiers shot 160 rounds of live ammunition into a nonviolent crowd (as confirmed by a governmental investigator). Our representative met independent journalists who now face arrest warrants for the "crime" of covering anti-coup demonstrations. Theirs are not isolated cases. A respected national Honduran human rights

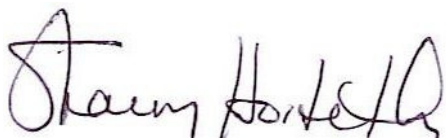
organization named COFADEH published last week a report documenting 1,161 human rights violations occurring during the coup's first 17 days in power. The report details over 1000 arbitrary arrests, censure of many independent media outlets, dozens of physical attacks from security personnel, and four politically-motivated murders. We share the fear of many human rights organizations that so long as the coup regime retains its illegitimate hold on power, such flagrant human rights violations will continue to escalate in number and severity.

As you are aware, the U.S. has at its disposal various untapped means, both political and economic, of pressuring the illegal coup regime to relinquish its power. We appreciate Secretary of State Clinton's call to de facto President Roberto Micheletti earlier this week to warn that the U.S. may soon exercise some of these means. Given the dire nature of the human rights situation and the coup's proven disregard for unfulfilled threats, we urge the U.S. to immediately exercise two forms of pressure:

- **Revoke the U.S. visas and freeze the U.S.-held assets of the individuals responsible for the coup.** Given the importance that Honduras's political class attributes to the ability to travel to the U.S., prominent Honduran organizations have suggested visa revocation as a salient means of further isolating the coup-plotters within Honduras. Through visa revocation and asset seizure, the U.S. could directly diminish the power of those responsible for the current crisis without afflicting broader Honduran society.
- **Cease all operations and recall all U.S. military personnel at the Palmerola military base.** While activities at the base have diminished, Palmerola continues to function as an active U.S. base in the midst of an active coup. Honduran organizations report that the Micheletti regime is using this fact to convey to the Honduran populace that the U.S. actually supports the regime, and that statements to the contrary from Obama Administration officials do not represent the U.S.'s true position. By fostering perceptions within Honduras of underhanded U.S. support, the coup regime weakens the resolve of Honduran organizations pushing for a return to democratic governance. The U.S. should not allow the coup regime to thus borrow power from a functioning U.S. military base. Rather, the U.S. should fully cease operations at Palmerola to demonstrate its unequivocal condemnation of the coup and unambiguous support for the quick reinstatement of democracy.

Again, we must stress the urgency of the present moment. With each day that passes, the coup regime grows more intransigent and its human rights violations grow more widespread. Please act now to revoke U.S. support for the coup regime and hasten the restoration of democracy in Honduras.

Sincerely,



Sharon Hostetler
Executive Director, Witness for Peace