

Honduran Accord Solidifies Coup D'Etat Rule

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On October 29, Honduran coup d'etat "president" Roberto Micheletti announced that:

"....a few minutes ago I authorized my negotiating team to sign a final agreement" to let Congress and the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ) decide whether or not deposed President Manuel Zelaya may return to office and complete the remaining weeks of his term, expiring on January 27. If he does, will it matter?

Zelaya is a wealthy businessman, a member of the right-wing Liberal Party (PL), a former National Congress Deputy from 1985 - 1998, a former PL Minister for Investment, and president from January 27, 2006 to when he was deposed on June 28.

His 2005 presidential campaign was largely on a law-and-order platform with pledges that, if elected, he'd address Honduras' crime problem with more police programs against and reeducation ones for violent international and local street gang members.

Zelaya also joined Venezuela's Bolivarian Alternative of the Americas (ALBA) based on fair, not one-sided "free" trade; complementarity, not competition; solidarity, not domination; cooperation, not exploitation; and respect for each nation's sovereign freedom from corporate control.

According to supporters like Alejandra Fernandez, a Honduran student, he also:

"raised the minimum wage, gave out free school lunches, provided milk for the babies and pensions for the elderly, distributed energy-saving light bulbs, decreased the price of public transportation, (and) made more scholarships available for students." In addition, he built roads and schools in rural areas. "That's why the elite classes can't stand him and why we want him back. This is really a class struggle." One the Resistance is determined to win and hardliners aim to crush.

The Coup d' Etat

On June 28, dozens of Honduran soldiers stormed Zelaya's residence at night, arrested him in his pajamas at gunpoint, and exiled him to Costa Rica in violation of the 1982 Constitution that states:

"No Honduran may be expatriated nor delivered by the authorities to a foreign state," nor may a democratically elected leader be deposed.

On July 3, the Honduran army's top lawyer, Col. Herberth Bayardo Inestroza, admitted as much in a Miami Herald interview saying:

"We know there was a crime there. In the moment that we took him out of the country, in the way that he was taken out, there is a crime. Because of the circumstances of the moment this crime occurred, there is going to be a justification and cause for acquittal that will protect us."

He meant protection from the Constitution's Article 239 (crafted by a military government to subordinate civilians to repressive rule) that states:

"No citizen that has already served as head of the Executive Branch can be President or Vice-President.

Whoever violates this law or proposes its reform, as well as those that support such violation directly or indirectly, will immediately cease in their functions and will be unable to hold any public office for a period of 10 years."

Also, Article 374 stating:

"It is not possible to reform, in any case, the preceding article, the present article, the constitutional articles referring to the form of government, to the national territory, to the presidential period, the prohibition to serve again as President of the Republic, the citizen who has performed under any title in consequence of which she/he cannot be President of the Republic in the subsequent period."

Zelaya didn't suggest it or break the law in calling for a simple non-binding June 28 "yes" or "no" referendum on one question:

"Do you think that the November 2009 general elections should include a fourth ballot box (the other three being for candidates) in order to make a decision about the creation of a National Constituent Assembly that would approve a new Constitution?"

The Honduran Congress and military opposed it. The CSJ illegally ruled it unconstitutional, ordered no distribution of ballot boxes, and threatened those doing it with 8 - 12 years in prison for "abuse of authority." The High Court and Congress are stacked with right-wing ideologues. In addition, the Council on Hemispheric Affairs calls the CSJ "one of the most corrupt institutions in Latin America."

So is the military whose officers from captain on up have been trained for decades at the infamous School of the Americas (SOA), renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHISEC), where they're taught the latest ways to kill, maim, torture, oppress, exterminate poor and indigenous people, overthrow democratically elected governments, assassinate targeted leaders, suppress popular resistance when it erupts, and work cooperatively with Washington to solidify hard-right rule, intolerant of progressive change - familiar tactics since June 28.

The day before, the military set off a chain of events. Reports said Zelaya fired Joint Chiefs Head General Romeo Vasquez Velasquez for refusing to distribute ballot boxes. He denied it. Velasquez may have resigned on his own. So did Defense Minister Edmundo Orellana and several military commanders. Nonetheless, the CSJ and Congress called Velasquez's

dismissal illegal. Military forces deployed around Tegucigalpa, surrounded the Presidential Palace, and took over the airport and borders in advance of the planned coup, made in Washington, of course, like numerous others for decades.

Zelaya, nonetheless, ordered ballot boxes distributed. Congress recommended removing him. The Federal Prosecutor's Office announced that anyone setting up polling stations or promoting the referendum would be prosecuted. Anti-Zelaya forces urged a boycott.

Right-wing media hype called the vote illegal, a ploy to re-elect Zelaya, a way to shift his conservative Liberal Party far-left, a scheme to solidify his Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) membership and let Chavez make Honduras socialist. In a pro forma June 29 pronouncement, the CSJ reinstated Velasquez. The Catholic Church backed the coup government. Months of terror followed, including:

- imposing military rule, martial law, and a state of siege;
- deploying combat troops on city streets;
- suspending civil liberties, including habeas, the right of assembly, free movement and free expression;
- committing thousands of human rights violations;
- thousands more illegal arrests;
- dozens of killings, beatings, kidnappings, and nationwide intimidation;
- according to the human rights NGO Comité de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos en Honduras (Committee of Relatives of the Disappeared - COFADEH), torturing and sodomizing men and gang-raping women;
- reactivating the infamous Battalion 316, the CIA-created death squads that disappeared, tortured, and exterminated regime opponents in the 1980s;
- silencing the independent media; and
- harassing and arresting Honduran and foreign journalists; at least one was murdered, Gabriel Fino Noreiga on July 3.

Barack Obama ignored the worst of state terror in support of coup d'état rule – no surprise from a president calling the fraudulent Afghan election “a step forward...to advance democracy, peace and justice....in “the interests of the Afghan people (and) a reflection of a commitment to the rule of law.”

Post-coup on Venezuela's TV Telesur, Zelaya called his ouster:

a “kidnapping. An extortion of the Honduran democratic system. And I will ask the presidents of the Americas, including the US president – I want to hear the US Ambassador Hugo Llorens in Tegucigalpa if they are behind this, and if not, clear it up, because if the US is not behind this coup, they won't be able to stay there forty-eight hours.”

For over 100 years, Washington repeatedly intervened in Central and Latin American affairs – by invasions, bombings, occupations, assassinations, countless episodes of destabilization

and election rigging, and numerous coup d'états against leaders it wished to depose.

Zelaya was the latest, confirmed by the Obama administration's refusal to cut diplomatic ties, halt military aid, impose sanctions as US law requires, or call the ouster a coup.

Announced Deal

On October 30, New York Times writers Ginger Thompson and Elisabeth Malkin headlined, "Deal Set to Restore Ousted Honduran President." To what given the agreed on terms. On October 29, AP reported that:

"opposing political factions resumed talks (today in hopes of reaching a deal) to end the power crisis that has paralyzed the country" since June 28. "The two sides returned to the negotiating table a day after visiting US diplomats urged both factions to be more flexible and find a solution (ahead of) scheduled" November 29 presidential, parliamentary, and municipal elections.

Terms of the So-Called Agreement/Accord

Signed on October 30, it's for Congress and the CSJ to approve it. Titled "Accord for National Reconciliation and the Strengthening of Democracy in Democracy," it's as Orwellian as "War is peace. Freedom is slavery. Ignorance is strength."

Post-coup, The Hill.com reported that the far-right Business Council of Latin America (CEAL) hired former Bill Clinton special counsel, Lanny Davis' firm, Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe, to lobby Congress and conduct a supportive PR campaign for its leaders. Lobbyist Bennett Ratcliff was enlisted to work with Davis, and according to an unnamed source in The New York Times, the Micheletti government hasn't made a move without first consulting him.

These men, their associates, and legal staff prepared the Accord, the way business sectors craft all Washington legislation affecting them.

It begins saying:

"We, Honduran citizens, men and women, convinced of the need to strengthen the rule of law, protect our Constitution and the laws of our Republic, deepen democracy and ensure a climate of peace and tranquility for our people, have carried out an intense and frank process of political dialogue to seek a peaceful and negotiated solution to the crisis in which our country has been submerged in recent months."

Terms include:

1. Forming a "National Unity and Reconciliation Government."

Fact Check

Only hardliners need apply, and if reinstated, Zelaya will finish his term as an impotent puppet head of state.

2. Renouncing "a Call for a National Constituent Assembly and Amending the Unamendable Articles of the Constitution."

Fact Check

According to Article 5 of the 2006 Honduran “Civil Participation Act,” government officials may hold non-binding inquiries (referenda) to determine popular support for proposed measures. Gauging sentiment for a National Constituent Assembly for a new Constitution is legal. Illegally, Washington and Honduran hardliners stopped it.

3. The coup regime calls on Hondurans to “peacefully participate in the coming general election and to avoid any type of demonstrations that oppose the elections of their results, or promote insurrection, unlawful conduct, civil disobedience or other acts that could result in violent confrontations or transgressions of the law.”

Fact Check

Honduran coup opponents called for an election boycott. On September 15, so did Zelaya saying:

“One cannot talk about the elections where there are no guarantees that the will of the people is going to be respected.”

On October 24, 300 members of the two dominant parties, the National Party (PL) and Liberal Party (PL), announced they’ll refuse to participate. Will they now after the Accord was signed?

If some reports are accurate, Zelaya capitulated to coup d’état terms by calling the Accord a democratic “triumph” – even though trade unionist independent candidate and National Resistance Front member Carlos Reyes and legislative deputy Cesar Ham of the small leftist Democratic Unification (UD) party dropped out of the presidential race on September 9. Most of the remaining PN and PL candidates are conservative hardliners who’ll assure no possibility of democratic change.

The elections will fill 2,896 positions, including the presidency, all 128 National Congress deputies, 20 others to represent Honduras in the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN), 298 mayors and another 2,000 municipal officials.

4. The Honduran military and police will be “placed at the disposition of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal from one month before the general elections for the purpose of guaranteeing the free exercise of suffrage, the custody, transport and surveillance of electoral materials and other security aspects of the process.”

Fact Check

Hardline security forces will subvert democratic change. Hondurans will be disenfranchised if they back the charade. In betraying his supporters, Zelaya capitulated, meaning he’ll support coup d’état authority.

5. The CSJ and Congress will “resolve the issue regarding ‘restoring possession of the Executive Power to its status prior to June 28 until conclusion (of) the current governmental period on January 27, 2010.”

Fact Check

Two hard-right bodies will decide IF Zelaya is reinstated and on what terms. He'll be impotent by agreeing to the charade.

6. A "Verification Commission" will be created "to verify commitments made under this Accord and those deriving from it....composed of two (coup lackey) members of the international community and two members of the national community, the last two to be chosen, one each, by" Micheletti and Zelaya.

Fact Check

Staunch Washington ally, Ricardo Lagos, former Chilean president, and Obama's Labor Secretary, Hilda Solis, will represent the international community along with Jorge Eduardo Idiaquez, Zelaya's UN ambassador, and coup lackey, Arturo Corrales Alvarez. A three to one edge assures no chance for democratic change.

7. The coup regime calls for "Normalization of Relations between the Republic of Honduras and the International Community" to restore the status quo.

Fact Check

The regime wants international recognition for its illegitimacy, continued hardline policies, and apparently will get it.

8. The Verification Commission will handle "differences regarding interpretation or application of this Accord..."

Fact Check

Hardliners want rubber stamp approval. Commission members chosen will assure it.

9. The Accord is effective on signing. The "following calender for compliance" was agreed on:

(1) On October 30, signing the Accord into effect, delivering it to Congress, and having it rule on Point 5, "Regarding the Executive Power."

(2) On November 2 or no later than November 5, forming the Verification Commission and establishing the "National Unity and Reconciliation Government."

(3) On January 27, "celebrating the transfer of government."

The Accord was agreed to by Micheletti and Zelaya representatives, Thomas Shannon, the former US Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs and Obama's yet-to-be confirmed ambassador to Brazil. Ostensibly, it will return Zelaya to office in exchange for international support for subverting democracy and continuity under far-right officials taking over in January.

It also assures his impotence. Hardliners will be empowered. Constitutional change will be prohibited. Democracy will be subverted. Zelaya must distance himself from Hugo Chavez. Perhaps other regional center-leftists as well. Coup plotters will get amnesty, and Zelaya may still be tried for treason for ordering a legitimate referendum.

What's Next?

With elections in a few weeks, hardliners may stall, obstruct, and from what Micheletti advisor, Marcia Facusse de Villeda, told Bloomberg News maintain the status quo until new officials take office in January.

“Zelaya won’t be restored,” she said. Further, “just by signing this agreement we already have the recognition of the international community for the elections.” From Washington for sure according to Thomas Shannon. On November 4, Al Jazeera reported that he:

“told CNN en Espanol (on November 3) that the US will recognise the November 29 elections even if the Honduran congress votes against Zelaya’s return to power before the vote.”

No surprise, and according to Micheletti aide, Arturo Corrales, Congress isn’t in session so approving the Accord will come “after the elections.” Yet, according to hondurasthisweek.com, the congressional Executive Committee (Junta Directiva) met on November 3 to evaluate the Accord, but what’s next is anyone’s guess as Congress president, Jose Alfredo Saavedra, hasn’t convened an extraordinary legislative session to decide on reinstatement. Nor has the CSJ ruled, yet the November 5 midnight deadline came and passed.

Zelaya Reacts

Still holed up at the Brazilian embassy under threat of arrest, Zelaya told Radio Globo: “There’s no sense in deceiving Hondurans.” His negotiator, Jorge Reina, said the Accord is dead because Congress failed to vote by the agreed on date and added:

“The de facto regime has failed to live up to the promise that, by this date (November 5), the national (unity) government would be installed. And by law, it should be presided by the president of Honduras, Manuel Zelaya.” Reina accused Micheletti of arranging “a great electoral fraud this November. We completely do not recognize this electoral process. Elections under a dictatorship are a fraud for the people.”

According to AP:

“Shortly before midnight, Micheletti announced that a unity government had been created even though Zelaya had not submitted his own list of members. Micheletti said the new government was composed of candidates proposed by political parties and civic groups.”

In other words, mostly hardliners to solidify coup d’etat rule even though earlier hondurasthisweek.com cited a November 1 Spanish newspaper La Vanguardia report saying Tegucigalpa diplomatic sources told the paper that Thomas Shannon forced Zelaya’s compliance or risk his son, Hector’s, prosecution on drugs trafficking. He lives in America. Zelaya complied, but as of November 6 no longer. Nonetheless, events are fast moving with likely new developments in the hours and days ahead.

At issue is how the international community will react if a fake national unity government is established and elections precede a vote on Zelaya’s reinstatement.

The Organization of American States’ (OAS) Secretary-General, Jose Miguel Insulza, said he’s creating a “mission” to assure compliance, meaning Zelaya must be reinstated once Congress and the CSJ agree. However, no deadlines are set, so hardliners may run out the clock and declare victory. They’ve

already won even though The New York Times reported that:

“As news of the agreement spread, residents poured from their homes and workplaces across Tegucigalpa, the capital, to celebrate. Jubilation broke out in streets,” with more likely if Zelaya’s reinstated. It’s not assured. Neither is what’s next if it comes. What if delay and obstruction follow, and what if Venezuelan lawyer, author, and close Chavez confidant, Eva Golinger, is right about more Washington-instigated “coups in Paraguay, Nicaragua, Ecuador and Venezuela, where subversion, counterinsurgency and destabilization increase daily.”

Latin America is being more militarized, the result of Colombian president Alvaro Uribe giving the Pentagon access to seven new military bases with US forces currently on nine others, supplemented by the April 2008’s Fourth Fleet’s reactivation after a 60 year hiatus. Now the Honduran coup suggests other regimes outside the US orbit or not enough in it may be targeted. Add Bolivia to Golinger’s list and still more if center-left regimes take over.

The Honduran Resistance Reacts

In an October 1 interview, National Resistance Front leader, Juan Barahona, said:

“We will not stop. We will continue to be against the coup until the last day they are in power. After the June coup, the level of consciousness has greatly risen. There has been a parting of waters. This is a struggle between classes: on one side the exploited people, and on the other the capitalists, the large capitalists that dominate this country. (It’s a) struggle of the poor against the rich....” Overwhelming public sentiment wants a referendum calling for a National Constituent Assembly to draft a new Constitution.

Will popular resistance demand it? On November 5, two of its leaders appeared in Washington at an event to restore democracy and human rights in Honduras – Bertha Oliva, COFADEH founder, and Jessica Sanchez of the National Alliance of Honduran Feminists in Resistance.

On November 4, a London protest was held at the US Embassy for the same purpose. It also stressed “end(ing) all US economic, political and military support to” the Honduran dictatorship. Speakers included trade unionist leader Tony Burke, other activists, and Jeremy Corbyn MP.

The UK Trades Union Congress (TUC), “the voice of Britain at work (with) 58 affiliated unions representing nearly seven million working people,” called on MP David Miliband, Secretary of State Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, “to increase pressure” on hardliners “to restore democracy and to strongly condemn the series of human rights violations” post-coup.

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), representing 170 million workers in 158 countries, unanimously passed a resolution at its recent Berlin General Council meeting calling for:

- suspending Honduran trade preferences and financial aid and cooperation until democracy is fully restored; and
- not cooperating with the bogus November elections by sending observers.

On October 31, the National Resistance Front told Hondurans:

- “We celebrate the upcoming restoration of President Manuel Zelaya Rosales as a popular victory over the narrow interests of the coup oligarchy;”
- the Accord mandates “returning the holder of executive power to its pre-June 28 state (and assuring) a democratic framework in which the people can exercise their right to transform society;”
- the Accord must “be processed in an expedited fashion by the National Congress; we alert all our comrades....to pressure for the immediate compliance;”
- “We reiterate that a National Constituent Assembly is an unrenounceable aspiration of the Honduran people and a non-negotiable right for which we will continue struggling in the streets, until we achieve the re-founding of our society to convert it into one that is just, egalitarian and truly democratic....(After over four months) of struggle, nobody here surrenders!”

One of its leaders, Rafeal Alegria, told Prensa Latina: “The people will not approve the electoral farce the putschists are preparing. The only solution to the conflict is the restitution of democratic legality and the president elected by the people.”

Key now is follow-through, persistence, and staying mobilized for the long haul. Popular victories come only at great cost after years of struggle the way noted journalist IF Stone explained:

“The only kinds of fights worth fighting are those you are going to lose, because somebody has to fight them and lose and lose and lose until someday, somebody who believes as you do wins....”

It’s for Hondurans and oppressed people everywhere to understand, persevere, and endure, no matter what.

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