

Jailed farmers go on hunger strike in Honduras

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Thirty-eight farmers imprisoned by the coup government in Honduras begin a hunger strike, demanding the reinstatement of ousted president Manuel Zelaya.

The protest comes as representatives of Zelaya and the interim government, led by Roberto Micheletti, agreed to resume talks next week.

The talks are aimed at resolving the country's political crisis, sparked when soldiers ousted Zelaya at gunpoint on June 28, and sent him into exile.

Zelaya's surprise return on September 21, to the Brazilian embassy, where he is currently holed up, triggered a new wave of protests and a clampdown on civil rights, but also boosted efforts to break the deadlock.

"We're being charged with sedition because we are calling for the return of our president to end all this," said Ramon Diaz, 43, one of the hunger strikers being held at the National Penitentiary in Tegucigalpa.

Diaz and 54 other Zelaya sympathizers were arrested on Wednesday, after police and soldiers violently ousted protesters from government offices they had taken over. Some of the protesters, including women and children, were released.

The farmer-protesters say they took over the office in an attempt to have their land rights respected. Prior to his ouster, Zelaya was in the process of granting land to some 300,000 farmers that have been demanding plots for some 40 years.

Under the sweeping new powers, baton-wielding riot police and soldiers have evicted Zelaya supporters who had been camping out in the capital this week.

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