



Comité de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos en Honduras **COFADEH**

Electoral Process: A dangerous context for human rights

The organizations that form the Committee for Political Analysis of the Human Rights Situation during the Electoral Process (*Mesa de Análisis Político de la Situación de Violaciones a los Derechos Humanos en el Proceso Electoral*), denounce the extremely dangerous situation which is unfolding around the electoral process in the country, and which is having a direct impact on human rights, as illustrated by the following events:

Last week, taking advantage of the national emergency generated by the state of insecurity and violence, the National Party through its Presidential candidate, Juan Orlando Hernández, launched the Public Order Military Police against political opponents.

In addition to applying this dynamic of force to gain votes just 30 days away from the general elections, Hernández is also using the Public Prosecution Service (*Ministerio Público*) and the courts to strengthen his campaign.

To date, the LIBRE Party (Partido Libertad y Refundación) is the one most affected by the harassment, threats and murders of its members by public institutions that are creating a tense atmosphere through the use of terror to benefit the nationalist candidate, who is also President of the Honduran Congress.

Political Assassinations

The cameraman, Manuel Murillo Varela, who was granted precautionary measures by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, was found dead with three gunshot wounds to his face on October 23 in the Colonia Independencia, in the city of Comayagüela. In 2008 he was the official cameraman of ousted president **Manuel Zelaya Rosales, and on February 2, 2010, while he was working for TV Globo, he was kidnapped and tortured. For the last few years he had been working directly for Rasel Tomé, Congressional candidate for the LIBRE party.**

On October 3, heavily armed men murdered Terencio Paz while he was working on the land. He was Deputy Coordinator of LIBRE in the north of La Iguala municipality, department of Lempira; the week before, hooded men had aggressively searched the area, looking for him.

Raids

On October 23, 2013 the house of Edwin Robelo Espinal, an active member of the resistance against the coup d'état and LIBRE sympathizer, was raided in the Flor del Campo neighborhood of Tegucigalpa. The principal actor utilized for the raid was the recently created Military Police which in turn, used the judiciary, the Public Prosecution Service, the army and various divisions of the civilian police, including Criminal Investigation, Anti-narcotics, Visual Inspections, Bomb Squad, and the Canine Unit.

According to the search warrant which authorized an army sergeant as the executing judge (*juez ejecutor*), the state was looking for grenade launchers, automatic weapons and drugs at Espinal's home, in the style of the political police commandos of Álvaro Uribe in Colombia, a country with which the current regime signed one of its first contracts in 2010 to counter resistance to the coup d'état.

The sergeant and those under his command carried out the raid wearing ski-masks, acting on an order issued by Judge Claudio Aguilar, a key figure for coup supporters through his use of the judicial system to persecute the Honduran resistance.

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Another raid with the same characteristics took place on May 7th in the home of María Concepción Ortega Lanza, a LIBRE activist and sister of Gladys Lanza, National Coordinator of Honduran Women's Committee for Peace "Visitación Padilla" (***Movimiento de Mujeres por la Paz Visitación Padilla***). Fifty hooded soldiers with trained dogs raided the house pointing guns directly at the faces of the entire family and creating terror in the entire Kennedy neighborhood where María Concepción lives. These soldiers were part of Operation Freedom which was authorized by the Council of Ministers on April 2, of this year.

On October 11 at 5:00 am, the Military Police also entered the house of Marco Antonio Rodríguez, Vice President of SITRAPANI (*Sindicato de Trabajadores del Patronato Nacional de la Infancia* – National Child Welfare Agency Workers' Union), with no search warrant, jumping over the walls surrounding the house, saying that they were looking for weapons.

Then on October 12, trade unionist Pedro Elvir, also with SITRAPANI, was the target of persecution on the beltway when he was intercepted by a vehicle, the occupants of which threatened him.

Death Threats and supposed assaults

This year to date, 20 people, activists and members of the LIBRE party, have received death threats in the departments of Francisco Morazán, Comayagua, El Paraíso, Lempira, Olancho y Santa Bárbara.

Six cases of alleged assaults of people linked to activism with this party have also been documented, particularly in Comayagua and Danlí.

These acts of terror coincide with a hostile campaign that incites hatred against the membership of LIBRE through the press, television, radio, social networks and graffiti which the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) has failed to halt. This campaign is managed by experts in dirty war, kidnapping and torture from the 1980's; some of them are candidates running in the elections. They are implicated in serious human rights violations, such as removing political detainees' fingernails in long torture sessions, and shooting them, claiming that they were trying to escape.

Meanwhile, the Magistrates of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal declare the 2013 election to be "one of the best campaigns of all times since the implementation of democracy in Honduras in 1982."

We have opened a file to collect and analyze the violent and illegal acts committed by the military electoral force created to support the campaign of candidate Juan Orlando Hernández and to supplant the institutions of law.

By this means, we warn missions of international election observers and human rights accompaniment that the coup regime also intends to close borders to impede the entry of new missions and to closely monitor those currently within national territory.

The use of "faceless" prosecutors and judges, hooded and acting outside the law, is a practice of the armies of occupation in Iraq and other countries subjected to conflicts due to hegemonic influences.

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