



PRESS ADVISORY

Military Coup in Honduras Represents a Step Backward for Latin American Democracies

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When: Thursday, July 2nd, 12:00 p.m.

Where: Boston City Hall Plaza, Boston, MA

BOSTON, MA. Immigrant community groups in Boston, MA unite to denounce the recent military coup in Honduras as a step backward for democratic governance in Latin America. Harkening back to the dark days of past political turmoil in the region, the political actors in power in Honduras have used similar methods of media control and forceful military tactics as learned from the School of the Americas, to repress popular movements. Unlike the past, this first Latin American coup since the end of the Cold War has been met with an unprecedented, unanimous condemnation from all governments of the world and strong measures from Latin American governing bodies.

This past Sunday June 28th the democratically elected President of Honduras, Manuel Zelaya, was taken by his own military and flown to Costa Rica. The President of the National Congress, Roberto Micheletti, was subsequently sworn in a President the following day. These actions took place after months of increasing tensions between President Zelaya and the entire political establishment of Honduras, including his own party. These pressures came to a tipping point when Zelaya pushed forward on plans for a referendum on the question of a Constitutional Assembly to debate changes to the Constitution.

Within 48 hours denouncements of these actions and demands for a return to democratic processes had been produced by the Organization of American States (OAS) representing all the nations of the Western Hemisphere (with the exception of Cuba, which had also denounced the action), the European Union and most recently the United Nations. Incredibly, the Honduran government now stands alone in the diplomatic realm, as its Latin American neighbors recall ambassadors (El Salvador, Ecuador, Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Bolivia) close their borders to trade.

"We condemn what happened in Honduras and we demand the restoration of institutional order in the country. The Honduran people were getting ready to exercise their sacred duty to vote in a referendum that called for an assembly that would reform the constitution," said Tito Meza, Coordinator of the Honduran Project. Immediately after the coup measures were enacted to control communications in the country, including a shutting down of Internet access and some television stations. The only functioning news sources either broadcast or print are owned by members of the oligarchy which were at odds with Zelaya, and some of whom are political figures.

"The tactics used by those behind this coup are the same as in the past: a media control strategy that diffuses propaganda and stifles independent reporting, including the harassment and incarceration of reporters. Many leaders of the military, including the chief of the armed forces, Romeo Orlando Vasquez Velasquez, graduated from the School of the Americas where these tactics were taught," said Patricia Montes, Executive Director of Centro Presente. **"We do not recognize the legitimacy of the de facto government and we demand the restitution of constitutional and democratic order in Honduras. It is very important that democratic processes are respected in our countries of origin, to secure the political, economic and social well being of our people and minimize the pressures that cause them to migrate in search of economic opportunity and freedom."**

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