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HONDURAS: VIOLENCE AGAINST PROTESTORS ESCALATES

At least 20 people have reportedly been killed, hundreds detained and others injured following the violent repression of protests regarding the processing and counting of votes following the presidential elections in Honduras on 26 November.



Protestors and police clash during election violence

Honduras has submerged into a deep crisis in the aftermath of the presidential election, with continued and escalating violence by security forces reported. The lack of transparency regarding how votes are processed and counted has led to numerous protests and street barricades around the country. Honduran security forces have responded with violent repression, putting the life and integrity of hundreds of people at risk.

The levels of violence displayed by security forces increased since 15 December, through the brutal repression of massive demonstrations organized as part of a national strike. According to local organizations, police, military police and the army have used excessive force, routinely resorting to the use of lethal weapons to disperse protesters.

Between 15 and 20 December at least 6 new deaths were registered, as the result of violent repression; multiple cases of people injured by firearms or brutally beaten by security forces were also reported, as well as cases that could amount to torture and other cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment. Local human rights organizations confirmed the substantial and indiscriminate use of tear gas, including tear gas dispensers thrown from helicopters and into houses, resulting in several people experiencing respiratory troubles - including children.

Hundreds of people have been arrested or detained during protests since 29 November. Amnesty International also received information of illegal raids carried out into houses at night by security forces.

Please send an urgent letter, email or fax without delay!

* Call on the authorities to refrain from disproportionate use of force and to fully respect the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

* Request that all those detained only for exercising their right to peaceful protest are released immediately and that anyone charged with a crime is guaranteed their right to due process, the right to defence, medical attention, and access to family and lawyers of their choosing.

* Demand that a comprehensive, impartial and independent investigation by civilian authorities is immediately opened into all the cases of violent deaths and other cases of excessive use of force which occurred in the context of repression of the protests; that the results are made public and those suspected of criminal responsibility are brought to justice before ordinary civilian courts.

Here are the contact details you will require:

Minister of Security

Julián Pacheco Tinoco El Ocotal,
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(ANAPO)

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Email: mprelacionespublicas@gmail.com
CC: walleskaz@gmail.com

Salutation: Dear Minister/Sr. Ministro

Prosecutor-General of Honduras

Oscar Fernando Chinchilla Lomas del
Guijarro,
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Fax: 011 504 2221 5660
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Salutation: Dear Prosecutor/Sr. Fiscal

Please send a copy to:

Amnesty International, Central America team

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Her Excellency Sofía Lastenia Cerrato
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Ambassador for Honduras
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The Honourable Chrystia Freeland

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 26 November 2017 presidential elections were held in Honduras. In the early morning of 27 November, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (Tribunal Supremo Electoral, TSE) published an initial indication of results, based on the revision of 57 percent of the votes, which indicated that the opposition candidate Salvador Nasralla had a five-point lead against the current president of Honduras, Juan Orlando Hernández. Both candidates declared themselves winners.

In the afternoon of 29 November, after a long and controversial period without releasing updates, the TSE announced a different result, pointing to the victory of Juan Orlando Hernández. This announcement gave rise to multiple and massive protests for days all over the country, as a reaction to the lack of transparency in the processing and counting of votes. Since then, protests have been violently repressed. On 1 December, the authorities declared a state of emergency for a period of 10 days. The Decree establishes a curfew restricting the right to free movement at night and could involve the participation of the armed forces to support the national police force in maintaining security and order.

Honduran human rights organizations and radio stations have been monitoring and denouncing the excessive use of force and human rights violations perpetrated in the aftermath of the presidential election.

On December 17, Juan Orlando Hernández was declared the winner by the TSE. The same day, the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, one of the international organizations that sent election observer missions to monitor the Honduran electoral contest, declared the election process was plagued by irregularities, and called for new elections. Protests have continued since these announcements, with at least 100 protests and roads blocked on 19 December.

Honduras is one of the most violent countries in the world, with high rates of murder and insecurity. There is a high level of mistrust of institutions, fuelled by the fact that impunity prevails in the majority of crimes, and by repeated signs of corruption or the involvement of state forces in criminal activities.

As a result of the coup of 28 June 2009, during which various states of exception and curfews were approved, serious human rights violations on the part of Honduran security forces were reported.