

**House Foreign Affairs Committee  
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission**

**Briefing  
on  
Voices from Honduras: Human Rights and Accountability**

**May 18, 2018 – 9:30 a.m.  
2255 Rayburn House Office Building**

**Statement of Ely Castro Rosales  
Local Coordinator  
Convergence Against Continuance, Honduras**

My name is Ely Casto Rosales, and I thank you for this honor of being able to share our reality In Honduras. I work with the Convergence Against Continuism, which is an organization that brings together organizations and people from all over the country who are clear and with dignity are opposing the continuity of the illegal and illegitimate presidency of Juan Orlando Hernández. Some of these organizations include the Coalition Against Impunity, which It brings together the majority of the organizations that defend human rights, ERIC, the Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras, OFRANEH, COPINH, etc.

Between December 2017 and the months of January and February 2018, dozens of people protesting in the streets were murdered by projectiles fired by armed forces in the majority of cases, particularly the Military Police for Public Order and the army according to numerous reports from non – governmental organizations and the report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Honduras. No investigation has been carried out to identify and bring to justice those responsible. Twenty-two people were imprisoned, of which 9 received alternative measures to defend themselves without

being imprisoned. 13 are in prison accused of common crimes but the reason for their arrest is directly related to having exercised their right to public protest against what over half of Honduran society considers to be the electoral fraud that occurred on November 26, 2017.

Journalists from Radio Progreso and others have been mistreated, beaten and followed while exercising their profession during protests. Radio Progreso has presented formal denunciations to the Public Ministry, especially to the Special Prosecutor for Human Rights, but there has been no investigation. Authorities at the highest level within the Ministry of Security have repeatedly expressed that journalists get what they deserve for supporting violent actions in the streets. Across many parts of the country, such as the Aguán, the department of La Paz, and Tela, Atlántida, community leaders and correspondents from have received death threats.

Halfway through last year, a couple of months before the election, 30 students were accused and given legal proceedings for protesting in favor of public education, demanding their right to organize and against the re-election of Juan Orlando;, three of which have been convicted but not yet in prison, 24 students were expelled from the Autonomous University for the same reason.

We cannot continue to live like this. For simply trying to exercise our freedom of speech, we are hunted down. Our state institutions are deeply broken and corrupt. And so we are here to ask for your support.

1. We need an end to the official and para-official policy of stigmatization and delegitimization via hate campaigns targeting independent journalists and human rights defenders.

2. We ask that this Commission of the House of Representatives lend your support to our demand for the freedom of those imprisoned who, because of their decision to exercise their right to participate in public protests in defense of their political rights against the electoral fraud, are political prisoners.
3. We ask for support to our demand for a depoliticized and independent judicial power, including the Public Ministry, so that the process of investigation of corruption networks linked to high level public functionaries and private business leaders can advance. For this the presence of an independent, international body is necessary whether it is the current MACCIH or a body like the CICIG in Guatemala, so that together with Attorney General and independent of the powers of the state, can carry out the mission of attacking the root of corruption.
4. Lastly, we ask that you support us in the demand for an authentic dialogue that leads to the prompt return to constitutional order through the nullification of the November 26, 2017 election based on the unconstitutionality of re-election and the lack of credible electoral results.

Thank you.