

**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 Karla Rivas
Radio Progreso Team, Honduras**

As basic institutions in Honduras continue to be weakened, we testify before this Commission today as those who have responded to that process by providing information and analysis.

Since the coup d'état in 2009, the country has been polarized and its people are increasingly defenseless. As a result, the political and electoral crisis of November 2017 impacted the already deteriorated lives of millions of people with great force, because they see no resolution in the near future.

The presidential re-election of Juan Orlando Hernández violated the Constitution of the Republic, articles 4 and 246, which require a rotation in the exercise of power and specifically prohibit presidential re-election. For this reason, the demands of the people who reject the election of Hernández are legitimate and just.

Their protests have been met with violence, repression, and false imprisonment.

Jonny García, a 35 year old carpenter, for example, who worked for a parish in a poor neighborhood in northern Honduras, protested peacefully with his family and Christian community, because an unconstitutional and individualistic decision was imposed on his political right to elect his government. Johnny was imprisoned for four months for demanding that failed institutions listen to the cry of the people.

Johana, imprisoned from December 2017 until May 2018, was accused of burning a police station. Her husband, the father of her two children, suffered the same fate. Together her brother, they placed in a

maximum security prison, treated as the worst criminals and agitators. They were used to send a message of intimidation: If you protest, you will end up in the Pozo, a maximum security prison.

These charges, and many, many others, have established a pattern of false accusations against those who sought to exercise basic rights of freedom of speech and democracy. In hundreds of cases since the election, peaceful protesters have been unjustly detained in terrifying prison contexts, that include deprivation of water and basic health care.

The post-election repression by the government escalates a long history of horrific violations of the human rights of thousands since the coup, with near-complete impunity.

Petitions:

--Suspend U.S. assistance to state security forces in Honduras. Support the Berta Cáceres Act, HR 1299 in the House of Representatives and the introduction of a parallel bill in the Senate.

--Support our call for the formation of an independent commission under the auspices of the United Nations that presents, within six months, latest, a report to the Public Ministry of Honduras. The report will identify the names of those responsible for the murders during the post-electoral crisis and lead to bringing the perpetrators to justice. Issue public statements in support of this commission, and push for congressional funding.

--Urge that all political prisoners, deprived of their liberty because they exercised their right to publicly demonstrate against electoral fraud, be freed. Issue public statements calling for this.

-- Announce that you find the election of November 26, 2017 invalid because Juan Orlando Hernández's re-election was unconstitutional, and because the highly questionable electoral results did not guarantee a winner or loser, yet he declared himself to be the winner.

-- Support mechanisms to legally convene new general elections for a prompt return to constitutional order. A new government should then initiate a National Dialogue, facilitated by the UN, to define priorities for public policies that guarantee good governance.

Thank you for listening to this delegation that loves our country and works so that all may have justice. God bless you.

Karla Rivas
Radio Progreso Team, Honduras.
Radio Progreso