

12-3-2009

Honduras: Tug Of War Between Opposition And De Facto Regime Regarding Flow Of Voters

LADB Staff

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen>

Recommended Citation

LADB Staff. "Honduras: Tug Of War Between Opposition And De Facto Regime Regarding Flow Of Voters." (2009).
<https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen/9750>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in NotiCen by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.

Honduras: Tug Of War Between Opposition And De Facto Regime Regarding Flow Of Voters

by LADB Staff

Category/Department: Honduras

Published: Thursday, December 3, 2009

By George Rodriguez Honduras' de facto regime claims the elections it held on Nov. 29 were a success in getting the country back on the constitutional track because the 61% voter turnout gave them the needed legitimacy which had previously been questioned both at a local and an international level. Not so, says the opposition both toppled President Manuel "Mel" Zelaya's camp and the Frente Nacional de Resistencia contra el Golpe de Estado adding that their call to boycott the elections was the real success, since absenteeism ranged from 65% to 70%, so the elections were illegitimate. The effort to embellish the turnout figure is seen by some as the need of both the de facto regime and the US to somehow legitimize the election and change the minds of countries that had warned they would not recognize the elections or the resulting government if the vote were held with constitutional order not previously restored (see NotiCen, 2009-11-05). The US and a few of its allies in Latin America including Costa Rica and Panama had implied in advance that, if international observers found no major flaws in the voting process, the elections should be recognized as valid. Election day came, there was repression and arrests against a peaceful Frente Nacional march in the northern textile-maquila industrial city of San Pedro Sula, 250 km northwest of Tegucigalpa, the country's capital. Voting time was extended for one hour, after which vote-counting began. The Tribunal Supremo Electoral (TSE) said that, in view of the massive turnout, the extension was necessary to give everyone a chance to vote, but the Frente Nacional said the measure was a desperate effort by election authorities to see if more people would come to voting centers. The following day, while taking part in the XIX Ibero-American Summit, held in the southern Portuguese coastal town of Estoril, Costa Rican President Oscar Arias, who in July began an unsuccessful mediation, with US backing, in the Honduran constitutional crisis, said, "Today we woke up to a new reality" in Honduras. "More people have participated than many expected." "In previous elections, the trend was that of growing absenteeism, and now this has been turned around, which shows us that the people went to the polls because they want to see whether they can turn this black and sad page of the coup d'etat," said Arias. "If we don't recognize the new government....if it's isolated, if it's segregated, if it's discriminated against, certainly the only ones who are going to suffer more than they already have suffered are the long-suffering Honduran people, and this is not the best fate for that long-suffering people." Arias' statements were strongly criticized by Nicaragua's delegate at the Ibero-American meeting, Miguel D'Escoto, who accused the Costa Rican president of "obstructing peace." "As time passes, he doesn't change. He shows more wrinkles, but he doesn't change. He continues to be the empire's main instrument of domination," said D'Escoto, a Maryknoll priest who was Nicaragua's foreign affairs minister during the revolutionary government (1979-1990) of the Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional (FSLN), now in power again. D'Escoto was UN General Assembly president from September 2008-September 2009. The head of the Nicaraguan delegation also said that the fact that during his first presidential term (1986-1990) Arias obtained the 1987 Nobel Peace Prize "was a sham." Meanwhile, in Honduras, after TSE secretary Enrique Ortez said "technical flaws" had caused the five-hour delay in the announcement of the first results, giving victory to Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo of

the traditional Partido Nacional (PN) and showing a massive voter turnout, Zelaya as well as the Frente Nacional were critical of the official version. The toppled president told the US cable news network CNN en Espanol from the Brazilian Embassy in Honduras, where he has taken refuge for more than one month, that TSE turnout data "do not legitimize the election." He added, "It is false that 60% participated." Honduran teacher and human rights activist Alicia Almendarez told NotiCen, "We, the popular resistance against the coup, are the winners in these sham elections." She added, "Absenteeism has been the milestone. The Partido Liberal took the worst punishment, since it has been said that some 80% of its members refrained from voting thus making Pepe the winner." Jorge Coronado, a Costa Rican leader of the Central American social movement who has been following the Honduras constitutional crisis from Costa Rica and in Honduras, agreed with Almendarez. "Although the de facto regime tries to deny it, the winner is the resistance movement," Coronado said in an interview with NotiCen. "The highest political price was paid by one of the two traditional pro-coup parties the Partido Liberal (PL) for having stimulated, caused, and led the military coup." As far as the massive resistance movement, which has been active since Zelaya's ouster, it was disappointed that the agreement signed last month between representatives of the toppled constitutional government and the de facto regime was unsuccessful and not complied with, Coronado said. This led to a somewhat reduced presence of the Frente Nacional, "but it recovered and regained vitality with this election result," Coronado said, referring to voter absenteeism. "The fact that the people responded" to the Frente Nacional's call to refrain from voting "brings optimism to the resistance movement regarding its political strength," Coronado pointed out. "This is the first time they managed to come face-to-face with the de facto regime, and they won the showdown," Coronado said. "[The election] is the best poll possible, and it shows a scenario where the resistance movement is revitalized." "What comes now is the resistance consolidated as the new political subject. It remains to be seen whether they accomplish this," which should determine "how to stand up to the coup in this new strategy in which the coup has a new face, marking a new agenda," according to Coronado's forecast. "I believe that mainly the challenge now is for the resistance to consolidate this way regardless of what happens with the recovery of constitutional order."

-- End --