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George Rodriguez

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by George Rodriguez
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At dawn on Sunday, June 28, 2009, Honduran President Manuel "Mel" Zelaya awoke to heavily armed soldiers storming his Tegucigalpa home to whisk him to the city’s Toncontín International Airport, where he was put on board a Fuerza Aérea Hondureña plane eventually destined to Base 2, Costa Rica’s police installation at the Juan Santamaría International Airport, just outside San José (NotiCen, July 9, 2009).

Thus began a bloody coup d'état that would stretch for seven months, until, the following January, following the November 2009 elections, Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo was sworn in as the country’s president for the 2010-2014 period (NotiCen, Feb. 4, 2010).

Two years after his ousting—which included a four-month stand in refuge inside the Brazilian Embassy in one of Tegucigalpa’s exclusive quarters, as well as exile—Zelaya, back in the Honduran capital, announced almost two months ago the birth of a new political party: the Frente Amplio de Resistencia Popular (FARP).

The FARP is the political branch of the Frente Nacional de Resistencia Popular (FNRP), a movement that spontaneously assembled at the outset of the coup, standing its ground regardless of the simultaneously massive and selective repression unleashed by the dictatorship that forcibly replaced the Zelaya administration.

Immediately after the coup, thousands of Hondurans radically opposed to it—including Zelaya opponents—spontaneously took to the streets throughout the nation, mobilizing neighborhoods in Tegucigalpa and other cities as well as rural communities.

The first seeds of political change were being sown in one of Central America’s poorest countries, a nation whose history is abundant with de facto régimes and US military interventions, whose people were now angrily facing up not only to the coup but to local political habits (NotiCen, Jan. 13, 2011).

The Frente rapidly became a formal organization, headed by grassroots leaders, and a support base for an exiled Zelaya, who eventually became the FNRP’s coordinator.

After a political agreement that allowed for his return, Mel Zelaya was greeted by thousands on May 28 this year, just outside Toncontín International Airport, where he called on his followers to continue peaceful resistance. "Blood wasn’t shed in vain, because we’re in a struggle, maintaining our positions," he said, adding that the message was only "coupes, never again."

**Zelaya calls for new political organization**

On June 26, almost a month after his return, Zelaya told a cheering, 1,500-strong FNRP assembly, "I propose the creation of a revolutionary, democratic political force. I propose the creation of a Frente Amplio de Resistencia Popular. The Frente Amplio does not make the Frente de Resistencia Popular disappear, because the Frente Amplio is born from the Frente de Resistencia Popular."
The new political organization implies "uniting all Frente de Resistencia forces, regardless of whether we have differing opinions," Zelaya said. "We’re creating a new, inclusive, peaceful era, in resistance, in Honduras….The proposal to build the people’s power in Honduras is the answer of the process of refounding Honduras. It's necessary, and we’re going to build it through the Asamblea Nacional Constituyente."

"Here we are, creating a democratic socialism which I call pro-socialist liberalism," Zelaya added, referring to his political origins of the centrist Partido Liberal (PL), one of the two major, traditional Honduran parties. The other is the rightist Partido Nacional (PN), now in power.

"It is about time radicalism has a force to compete transparently and that will also have the strength to replace them," he said, referring to Liberals and cachurecos, as PN members are referred to in Honduras.

"The road is set for the defeat of the bourgeoisie ruling this country. We’re consolidating the people’s victory," assured Zelaya, donning a red shirt and standing on a stage in front of the enthusiastic crowd waving red-and-black flags—the colors of both the FNRP and the FARP.

The assembly was held with anti-coup popular music in the background and against the backdrop of portraits of leftist Latin Americans, including Presidents Raúl Castro (Cuba), Rafael Correa (Ecuador), Hugo Chávez (Venezuela), Evo Morales (Bolivia), Dilma Rousseff (Brazil), and former Presidents Fidel Castro (Cuba) and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Brazil).

Among the portraits was one of Salvadoran communist leader Augustín Farabundo Martí, executed in 1932 along with two other leaders after organizing a popular uprising that was crushed in less than a month as repression claimed an unknown number of lives estimated at between 15,000 and 30,000. There were also large posters with individual photographs of people killed by the repression unleashed by the de facto régime after the 2009 coup.

"The Frente Amplio de Resistencia Popular is hereby approved," the assembly’s emcee told the wildly cheering crowd.

Addressing the crowd after the announcement, Zelaya said that "just for starters, we have 1.3 million signatures," referring to the approximately 65,000 signatures needed to request formal registration of the FARP as a political party. "I have no doubt whatsoever in announcing…that today we are the majority force in the Honduran nation. With at least 500,000 signatures, we’re going to force them [the Honduran government] to call for an Asamblea Nacional Constituyente."

The following day, on a brief visit to Costa Rica, President Lobo told a joint press conference with Costa Rican President Laura Chinchilla, "As president of Honduras and a lover of democracy…I encourage participation."

"I must strongly celebrate the fact that yesterday a new political force surfaced that is going to take part in the next elections, which is the Frente Amplio…under the coordination of former President Zelaya," Lobo told Costa Rican reporters and international correspondents at the Casa Presidencial after meeting with Chinchilla. "So, we celebrate this emerging political force, and…following democracy’s rules, we must greatly value this. There’s no better system than democracy, which is the people's free right to elect."
"We have five political parties in Honduras," said Lobo, and the FARP "would be the sixth party... taking part in the next elections, which are the primaries in November 2012 and the general elections in November 2013."

**Position on election participation challenges unity**

The new Frente has one immediate issue to deal with, and that is its unity, basically challenged by differing stands on whether taking part in the next elections is a wise decision.

Guillermo López, one of the judges fired by the de facto régime for having opposed the 2009 coup, told NotiCen, "We must be objective and say that the unity problem hasn’t been resolved. There are some differences, and those differences stem from the fact that there are sectors very defined to the left that say that the Frente Nacional de Resistencia Popular is politicizing itself, that Partido Liberal sectors are gaining a lot of influence, that they’re taking on key roles, and that in an election struggle they could be the ones to gain the most. And then there’s the whole sector supporting Zelaya...saying that it’s really necessary to take part in the political, election struggle and that it’s inevitable to count on the participation of all Partido Liberal groups disappointed by their own party, inasmuch as that's the social base that could really provide the Frente Amplio de Resistencia Popular with some victories."

"The left, in Honduras, has been a pretty weak left, weak in the sense of...a social base and maybe strong in the sense of its presence in historic organizations—such as unions, campesino organizations, teachers organizations," said the former judge. "And maybe here’s where Manuel Zelaya, with his leadership, his charisma, could be the great definer of a situation in which he could pull in the support of dissident groups from the Partido Liberal but also of other registered parties."

"So, this needs to be solved, because in essence it’s what is expressed in the contradiction that, in some way, is obstructing unity, with one sector saying this is not the moment to go to elections, that they’re going to be held under the rules of traditional political parties...that the Frente is going to end up taken over by Partido Liberal sectors, and that it’s going to be necessary to wait and accumulate strength to take part in a future [election] struggle," López explained. "While the other sector, the one linked to Manuel Zelaya Rosales—where there’s also plenty of social organizations—says this is the moment, that there’s a political moment and that it must be grabbed, and that there’s a social base that can back the project, the program of the Frente Amplio de Resistencia Popular."

-- End --