

9-14-2017

Hondurasâ€™ Presidential Vote Pits Incumbent Against a Coalition Determined to Defeat Him

George RodrÃguez

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

Recommended Citation

RodrÃguez, George. "Hondurasâ€™ Presidential Vote Pits Incumbent Against a Coalition Determined to Defeat Him." (2017).
<https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen/10465>

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' Presidential Vote Pits Incumbent Against a Coalition Determined to Defeat Him

by George Rodríguez

Category/Department: Honduras

Published: 2017-09-14

Juan Orlando Hernández is seeking a second term as president of Honduras, but a two-party coalition is set on preventing that from happening ([NotiCen, Oct. 6, 2016](#), [Jan. 5, 2017](#), [April 20, 2017](#)).

Hernández is one of nine hopefuls competing in the Nov. 26 general elections, where 6.2 million Hondurans are scheduled to vote.

Popular sports journalist and television host Salvador Nasralla is the coalition's choice to lead Honduras, a country gripped by corruption and organized crime. Nasralla, a conservative, is backed by the Alianza de Oposición Contra la Dictadura (Opposition Alliance Against the Dictatorship), made up of the leftist Libertad y Refundación (Freedom and Re-founding, LIBRE) and the Partido Innovación y Unidad Social Demócrata (Innovation and Social Democratic Unity Party, PINU-SD).

Although he founded the rightist Partido Anticorrupción (Anti-Corruption Party, PAC) in 2011 and presided over it until four months ago, Nasralla did not take part in PAC's May 21 primaries. PAC is now headed by the evangelical pastor and legislator Marlene Alvarenga, the only woman among this year's presidential candidates.

Upon taking over, Alvarenga immediately questioned Nasralla's nomination by the Alliance—which initially included PAC—and demanded that it stop using PAC's name and symbols.

Nasralla's nomination was announced in Tegucigalpa by Xiomara Castro, wife of deposed president and LIBRE founder Manuel Zelaya (2006-2009) ([NotiCen, July 2, 2009](#), [July 16, 2009](#), [July 23, 2009](#)). Castro is on the Alliance's presidential ticket, vying for the position of vice president, which is named in the Honduran Constitution as designado a la presidencia (presidential designee). She is one of 16 women among 27 candidates nominated for the post by eight parties and the Alliance.

Nasralla, who is of Lebanese ancestry, made an unsuccessful bid for the presidency under the PAC banner four years ago. He assured sympathizers that they wouldn't be disappointed this time.

"Dictatorships, such as the one we're undergoing ... only bring poverty, hardship, hunger," he said, and went on to demand traditional politicians to "stop lying to us." He also criticized the present authorities for "squandering the people's money," and committed himself, should he win the presidential vote, to head a government that would be "the stingiest in history."

Committing himself to countering corruption and violence, Nasralla said that in his administration, there wouldn't be "any more influence peddling ... any more violence."

Promising change

Hernández, whose administration's motto, one strongly challenged by the opposition, is Honduras está cambiando (Honduras is changing) is seeking reelection under the banner of the traditional and rightist Partido Nacional (National Party, PN).

After winning his party's primaries and confident about his reelection, Hernández delivered a victory speech on May 23. "Serving my people is a great blessing," he told his audience of cachurecos--, as PN members call themselves--.

"United, we're unbeatable," he said, because "the party has the people's love and the respect it has earned working hard with social inclusion programs ... We're going for the third cachureco triumph."

Referring to key national issues such as security, institutional crises, and impunity, the president said, "We're going to fight and do whatever we have to do to fix those problems, hand in hand with God and with you."

Should the PN emerge victorious, it would mean its third administration in a row, after that of Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo (2010-2014) and Hernández's current term.

Lobo's election occurred under the de facto regime set up through the June 2009 bloody coup that toppled Zelaya seven months before the end of his four-year presidential term.

The coup was triggered by Zelaya's proposal to have a referendum on the following question: "Do you agree that a ballot box be added in November's general elections to call a constituent assembly to pass a new political constitution?"

Zelaya argued that it was necessary to adapt the Honduran Constitution "to national reality," among other reasons because it banned presidential re-election. The ban was contained in one of the Constitution's artículos pétreos (articles set in stone), and thus impossible to modify.

The reason offered by the coup leaders was that Zelaya's initiative was in blatant violation of the Constitution. He was violently toppled a few hours before ballot centers were to open for voters to answer the question. A wave of repression, both massive and targeted, was then unleashed.

But only seven years later, the Corte Suprema de Justicia (Supreme Court of Justice, CSJ)—which had backed the coup along with Congress, the PN, the PN's historic rightist rival, Partido Liberal (Liberal Party, PL), and the military—ruled in favor of two appeals against the artículos pétreos ([NotiCen, Oct. 6, 2016](#)).

The appeals were lodged by legislators close to Hernández. The opposition was immediately critical of the court's move, as they saw it opening the path for Hernández's reelection bid.

'All the good people'

In Nasralla's view, this year's elections "are the elections of good against evil," because "all the good people of all political parties in Honduras are in the Alliance" ([NotiCen, Aug. 3, 2017](#)).

Nasralla was quoted early in August as saying that "a lot is known now about how the ruling party steals votes." He added that Alliance delegates scheduled to be at ballot centers in November had been instructed to be in the lookout for suspicious documents.

"We need a new Honduras, and we're going to build it regardless of our ideologies, of the different parties [because] there are things we coincide on, such as lifting the country from poverty," he said. "We'll never again have thieves as ministers ... if you want to be a minister in Nasralla's government, and you're a thief, you go to jail."

-- End --