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Former President Says Current Administration "bleeding Honduran People"

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Aug. 23, opposition leader and former president Jose Azcona said President Rafael Callejas' "brutal taxation" part of an economic austerity program is "bleeding the Honduran people." Azcona dismissed claims by Callejas that the Azcona administration's inefficiency and excessive bureaucracy had forced the new government to impose austerity. Callejas has said that Azcona's government was responsible for an over \$220 million fiscal deficit. If in fact, said Azcona, Callejas' statements on a bloated public administration were accurate, then he would simply dismiss civil servants. Moreover, added the former president, Callejas promised during his campaign that he would reduce the deficit by 10%, but instead the deficit has nearly doubled. Instead of reducing the deficit by 10% as he promised in his campaign, continued Azcona, Callejas has increased it from \$403 million (at the rate of 4.4 lempiras per dollar) to \$796 million. In previous statements, Azcona has asserted that Callejas should follow his example and resist pressure from international organizations (presumably, the International Monetary Fund) to implement "readjustment" measures. (Basic data from AFP, 08/23/90)

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