

10-30-1992

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### Recommended Citation

Tyroler, Deborah. "Honduras: Human Rights Group Calls For End To Militarization." (1992). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen/7878>

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## **Honduras: Human Rights Group Calls For End To Militarization**

*by Deborah Tyroler*

*Category/Department: General*

*Published: Friday, October 30, 1992*

In a press release issued Oct. 26, the Comite de Derechos Humanos de Honduras (CODEH) denounced continued "militarization" of Honduran society. According to CODEH, power and influence of the military "are so pervasive that the organs of the state are unable to exercise real control" over the armed forces. Specific issues addressed in the document include: \* Since 1956, when the military first established its status as an autonomous institution, military leaders have refined the mechanisms by which the armed forces maintain their independence from civilian authorities. CODEH says this has occurred to such an extent that military leaders are convinced that "the institution exists in order to run the state itself." \* The military has a monopoly on the use of force, including control over the police. CODEH says this has made it difficult to assure that police affairs are conducted within the law or to improve respect for human rights in the conduct of police affairs. \* Despite the absence of proper legal authority, the military continues to control the following state organs: immigration, civil aeronautics, the national real estate title office (catastro), the national telecommunications company (HONDUTEL), the geographical institute, and the merchant marine. Among other abuses perpetuated by this system is the ability of military authorities to monitor phone conversations and other forms of communication without first securing a judicial order. \* Limits on the power of civilian government authorities can be seen right up to the case of the president. As commander of the armed forces, the president may not issue orders directly to the military. They must instead pass through the armed forces chief. In a similar fashion, military authorities are under no obligation to comply with orders handed down by judges from civilian courts. Even when members of the military commit crimes against civilians, they are only subject to prosecution in military courts. \* CODEH called on President Rafael Callejas to establish a commission for modernization of the state which would implement reforms aimed at bringing all aspects of the state administration under the exclusive control of civilian authorities. (Source: Agence France-Presse, 10/26/92)

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