

Trump administration congratulates “re-election” of police-state regime in Honduras

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The US State Department on Friday officially backed the fraudulent re-election of Honduran president Juan Orlando Hernández, following the end of the five-day period provided by Honduran law for complaints after Sunday’s final announcement by the electoral tribunal (TSE).

This comes after a personal visit of the Alliance of Opposition against Dictatorship candidate, Salvador Nasralla, to present evidence of the fraud to the Organization of American States (OAS) and US State Department. The latter declared on Wednesday that it had not “seen anything that alters the final result.”

The US now joins the governments of Mexico, Guatemala, Spain and Colombia in congratulating Hernández and effectively disregarding the widespread evidence of fraud as well as the conclusion by the Organization of American States of an “impossibility of determining a winner.”

OAS observers and analysts reported unauthorized manipulations of ballot boxes transported by the military before being computed, vote-buying, an absence of Alliance representatives at some centers, “deliberate human intrusions in the computer system,” and finally, an inexplicable shift in the results from a five point lead by Nasralla with two-thirds of the ballots computed to a final 1.5 point victory for Hernández. Much of the evidence aligns with the methods of fraud planned by the ruling National Party and exposed in an audio reported by the *Economist* one day before the November 26 polling.

The Opposition Alliance has presented evidence of some tally sheets in the TSE partial “special scrutiny” lot that were re-printed with different results. It has also suggested that the main fraud and cover-up occurred during prolonged shutdowns of the servers used by the TSE precisely to send out the scanned tally sheets from

across the country, including a “server for central dissemination” maintained by Amazon, a company with close ties to the US State Department and Pentagon.

On Thursday, a group of 20 US Congressional Democrats sent a letter to Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, urging the Trump administration to heed the advice of the OAS and call for new elections, and to denounce the “excessive use of force” by Honduran security forces.

These cynical attempts by the Democrats to channel the social anger behind empty appeals to the OAS and the Trump administration are exposed by the fact that the latter is supporting a police-state regime installed during a coup orchestrated in 2009 by the Obama administration.

Moreover, it was under Obama that Washington initiated the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle to build up the military and police forces of Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador as a means to crack down on social opposition, and prevent refugees from escaping the violence and extreme poverty in the region. Given this recent history and the efforts to derail resistance to the ongoing neocolonial imposition, it is laughable that Democrats base their opposition against the Trump administration on a bellicose frenzy over alleged Russian “meddling” of the 2016 US elections.

Hernández, the incumbent, spoke to the military brass during a transfer of powers to a new Joint Chiefs of Staff on Thursday. He said the nation-wide protests against his fraudulent re-election, “are the resurgence of sectors of gangs (*maras*), organized crime, hurting Honduras.” He then stressed: “We must therefore fulfill and finish the [security] task for the nation to live in peace and ease.”

Washington's announcement arrives as the Honduran military and military police have turned to using gunfire ever more nakedly against unarmed protesters and as part of raids into working class neighborhoods to intimidate their families and even prevent them from leaving their homes. In the three weeks since the elections, at least 20 civilians, mostly youth, have been killed as part of the state repression. Dozens more have been injured and hundreds arrested.

While pre-electoral polls showed 70 percent of Hondurans opposed Hernández's unconstitutional bid for re-election, the opposition to the coup regime—which has overseen a further impoverishment of the masses in one of the poorest and most unequal countries in the Americas—has only become even more generalized as a response to the electoral fraud and attempts to create an atmosphere of terror among the population.

Thousands continue to challenge the deadly risk of manning the roadblocks that the Alliance has called for; the military police officials face scorn and resistance from virtually everyone they engage; police provocateurs have been identified when seeking to encourage looting and have been kicked out of the demonstrations. On Thursday night, several thousand people marched to the US embassy in Tegucigalpa to condemn the killings of protesters.

The legitimate anger and brave protests by workers, youth, and peasants contrasts sharply with the official response by the Alliance and the organizations in its orbit, which have continued to appeal to US imperialism and its agency for neocolonial supervision, the OAS, and have sought to gradually bring forward and legitimize holding talks with the Hernández regime.

Friday's US State Department declaration clearly sets this as the next step in the fraud: "The close election results, irregularities identified by the OAS and the EU election observation missions, and strong reactions from Hondurans across the political spectrum underscore the need for a robust national dialogue."

Manuel Zelaya, the ex-president ousted in 2009 and current leader and left flank of the Alliance, has continued to appear in select demonstrations to advance this agenda. He responded to the State Department statement on Friday declaring: "We want to talk, but we don't want an agenda imposed, if Salvador

[Nasralla] convokes a dialogue, I'll participate, but we want neutral sectors to participate too."

In a similar but faster sequence of events after the 2009 coup, the stage is being set for the OAS and other international puppets of Washington to mediate a deal between sectors of the so-called "opposition" and the installed regime to back its rule.

One of the arguments used by the National Front for Popular Resistance (FNRP) leaders to justify joining the 2011 talks was to halt the escalating repressive attacks and killings of local leaders by the state forces, something that did not happen after acceding to the Pact of Cartagena. Today, the military police show every sign of continuing the murderous rampage.

At the same time, the trade unions have now joined the Church and employers in calling for a dialogue, repeating the threats of mass firings made by the transnational corporations. For instance, the president of the Trade Union of Santa Inés Company Workers (Sitraesisa), a banana plantation owned by the Standard Fruit Company, warned with cowardice Thursday, "If the situation doesn't improve by Monday, the company said it will lay off 21,000 permanent and temporary workers."



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