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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

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30.08.2019

Under the U.S. Eye: When is the Time for Honduran Democracy?



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A U.S. Federal court released documents in which a known narco-trafficker, Don H., implicated Honduran elites and politicians in the drug business. Most untenable is the revelation that the sitting president, Juan Orlando Hernandez, took drug money as bribes for himself and the Nationalist party.

But let's face it, this is not news to Hondurans who already knew about the narco-dictator, known as "JOH," as in #FueraJOH ("Get Out JOH!") and his cronies. For 10

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years, since the U.S.-backed coup that put the Nationalist Party in power, various sectors of civil society have protested the party's connections to drug kingpins and illicit activities, their theft of national resources and sacking of social welfare programs – that is, stealing from the poorest and most disadvantaged for the benefit of the rich. The corruption in the highest levels of the JOH administration is clear as day to Hondurans, and all sectors of society are protesting in the streets right now.

In the 2013 and 2017 elections, and particularly in the latter, the opposition known as the Alliance Against the Dictatorship won. The U.S. meddled and turned a blind eye to rigging of the results by the narco-dictator and his party of crooks. They obscured and circumvented every law to prevent Manuel Zelaya Rosales and the Libertad and Refundación-LIBRE party, part of the Alliance, to take office, fearing their leftist leanings and proximity to Venezuela. U.S., in collusion with Honduran impunity at the highest levels abscond the truth on the Berta Caceres case, and have destroyed the independent body investigating corruption and impunity, the MACCIH, and are oblivious on the real needs of the migrating thousands leaving the country.

U.S. foreign and diplomatic policy in Honduras has been tragic, embarrassing almost. The Republicans and the Democrats have done absolutely nothing to promote democracy. Their actions did absolutely nothing to improve the conditions in the country. In fact, their actions, or inaction, vis-a-vis the JOH regime, have made as many as 100,000 Hondurans migrate out of the country per year. Since the U.S.-backed coup d'état in 2009, Honduras regressed from Banana Republic to narco-dictatorship. The difference between the two is not so great; both require a servile head of state, pliant domestic elites, a weak infrastructure, and a marketable commodity.

Manhandling Honduras to fit the needs of the U.S. geopolitical agenda on Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua—has destroyed the Honduran court system, electoral system and brought the country to a familiar chaos that generated by foreign U.S. policy. Protestors are repressed brutally and painted as the culprit of the violence, instead of the corrupt military police. Peaceful protestors have been sprayed with live bullets by military police, a force created by JOH with the insistence of the U.S. Embassy. In the past week, Military Police, hurled tear gas cannisters inside a school bus full of university students. In the previous months they teared-gas an elementary school with small children inside, and hurled canisters inside private homes causing serious injuries. All of this under the approving eye of the U.S.

The curious thing here is that the various U.S. departments are in contradiction with each other as to what to do about Honduras—on the one hand the U.S. federal prosecutors are nailing down Juan Orlando Hernandez and the Nationalist party for taking bribes for their campaigns and themselves. On the other, the U.S. Embassy and State Department officials are posing for pictures and giving Orlando their vote of confidence. Meanwhile Trump in the oval office calls Honduran immigrants’ invaders and is going to great lengths to keep them out through family separation, incarcerating unaccompanied minors and Transgender immigrants in deplorable conditions with hard rules for asylum.

Whatever the tactics, it is all intervention, all the time.

Will the U.S. ever let Honduras have a participatory democracy?

Hondurans know the U.S. is giving them doublespeak and its intervention will not provide salvation or liberation. For Hondurans, it is clear they will have to bring democracy to their country by their own hands, on both sides of the border. Organizing around their issues locally and nationally, thousands of Hondurans, from all walks of life, have taken to streets in protest. 10 years of illegality and abuses of power in post-coup Honduras has reaped a new kind of resistance—one against the JOH regime—but also one seeking a new kind of participatory democracy to replace him. But the U.S. seems intent on ignoring the will of the people to continue its track record of foreign policy disasters in Central America.

What other abuse of power and suffering will the U.S. State Department inflict on the Honduran civil society to stop the mythical threat Communism (again)? Were 200,000 murders in Guatemala, 80,000 murders in El Salvador, 20,000 murders in Nicaragua, and over 2000 murders in Honduras and thousands of disappearances and displacement of entire communities not enough in the 1980s? What more blood will the U.S. agenda cost us Central Americans on both sides of the border?

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AUGUST 29, 2019