

Honduras is in a state of political crisis, as citizens take to the streets to demand that President Juan Orlando Hernandez resign from office. As it has in the past, the Honduran government is responding with violent repression. UUSC is in touch with our partner organizations in Honduras, Radio Progreso and Foro de Mujeres por la Vida, who are monitoring the government's response as it unfolds, including the ongoing military occupation of three communities.

This most recent crisis was sparked by the Honduran government's moves to privatize the education and healthcare sectors, but it has deep roots in U.S. policy in the region. The ruling government in Honduras is the direct successor of the regime that seized power in 2009 through a coup d'état. That coup was effected with the tacit support of the U.S. government, which continues to maintain close ties to the Hernandez government, despite its human rights abuses, corruption, and ties to the drug trade.¹

In 2017, Hernandez ran for re-election despite a constitutional ban on consecutive presidential terms. (He had earlier engineered a court ruling to do so, using his authority as then-leader of the Honduran congress to install judges favorable to the ruling party.²) The November 2017 election that returned him to the presidency was widely condemned as fraudulent. Once again, U.S. authorities responded by recognizing and legitimizing his regime.

The United States is also implicated in the Honduras budget cuts that led to the current crisis. The cuts came in the wake of an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), a global institution in which the United States wields outsized influence.³ The IMF frequently conditions its international development loans on steep reductions in social spending, and its role in Honduras has followed the same pattern.

As U.S. citizens, we have a moral obligation to help undo the damage these and other policies have wrought for our Central American neighbors. Congress can help now by calling attention to the repression and authoritarianism of the Honduran government. Any visibility of concern and criticism of the violence from U.S. officials has the potential to save lives. We ask you to:

- 1** Introduce companion legislation in the Senate modeled on the Berta Caceres Human Rights in Honduras Act (H.R.1945), which would bar additional U.S. security funding to Honduran authorities until they meet rigorous human rights standards.
- 2** Post a tweet or other public statement condemning the Honduran state security forces' violence against protesters and the military occupation of the communities Pajuiles, Guapinol, and Guadalupe Carney. Naming specific locations can contribute to their protection. Express our deep concern about the attacks on teachers, doctors, and activists organized as the Platform for the Defense of Healthcare and Education and the threats and violence against journalists covering this social movement.
- 3** Contact the State Department and urge them to condemn the repression of protesters by Honduran state security forces.

¹ Associated Press, "Honduran president's brother admits to knowing drug lords," May 16, 2019. <https://www.apnews.com/50837e4ae7324de4be957744016c76b9>

² Congressional Research Service, "Honduras: Background and U.S. Relations," July 22, 2019.

³ David Bacon, "If San Pedro Sula Is Murder Capital of the World, Who Made It That Way?," The American Prospect, June 13, 2019.