



Protests and Police Repression Continue: Hernandez sworn in as Honduran President

Earlier this week, protests marked the inauguration of Juan Orlando Hernández, who now serves his second term as President.ⁱ Hernández was declared winner by Honduras' Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) in mid-January 2018.

Hundreds also trooped to the United States (US) Embassy in Honduras to denounce US support for Hernández.ⁱⁱ

Protests began in November 2017 after the controversial election count between then-incumbent Hernández and the centre-left opposition Salvador Nasralla. Police repression during the November and December protests has resulted to deaths of over 30 people, and hundreds injured. IBON International released a statement last December condemning state repression in the country.ⁱⁱⁱ

In mid-December, the US expressed its explicit support for the re-election of the right-wing Hernández. According to Nasralla, the US government is "afraid of losing Honduras" to a left government.^{iv}

Civil society perceived fraudulent actions by the government of Hernández and the TSE in last year's vote count when the latter stopped publicising the official electoral tally with the excuse of an electronic error. The count was in favour of Nasralla when it stopped, but resumed after 36 hours with Hernández leading. Amid resulting protests, Hernández was declared winner with 42.95 percent against 41.42 percent for Nasralla.^v

Serving a second presidential term was originally banned by the Honduran constitution. But this was overruled by the country's top court in 2015, which had judges allegedly friendly to Hernández' party.^{vi} Hernández is the first Honduran president to be re-elected.

The US has supported the neoliberal Hernández government through US security aid and training to the Honduran police.^{vii} Hernández became president in 2013, the second president since a 2009 US-supported military coup against the democratically elected Manuel Zelaya.^{viii} Since then, the US-trained forces have been reportedly involved in the killing of activists and rights defenders. Among them is Berta Cáceres, an indigenous peoples' activist against

development aggression, who was killed in 2016. IBON International released a statement in condemnation of the state's role in her death.^{ix}

Recently, reports revealed that the current Honduran Police Chief had assisted a drug cartel in 2013.^x Hernández-affiliated officials have also been linked to theft of millions from the country's social security funds^{xi}

The Secretary-General of the Organisation of American States (OAS) has previously urged for a new election, but OAS observers during the election claimed that fraud is "not possible to confirm."^{xii} ###

ⁱ<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/honduras-president-hernandez-sworn-protests-180127172421884.html>

ⁱⁱ<https://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Hondurans-Protest-US-Support-for-Hernandez-in-Front-of-US-Embassy--20180129-0006.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ<http://iboninternational.org/statement/against-rights-violations-repression-Honduras>

^{iv}<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-honduras-election-usa/u-s-backs-re-election-of-honduran-president-despite-vote-controversy-idUSKBN1EG1MP>

^v<https://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Honduras-Juan-Orlando-Hernandez-Given-Presidential-Credentials-20180119-0028.html>

^{vi}<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/honduras-president-hernandez-sworn-protests-180127172421884.html>

^{vii}<https://theintercept.com/2017/12/03/the-president-of-honduras-is-deploying-u-s-trained-forces-against-election-protesters/>

^{viii}<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/31/hillary-clinton-honduras-violence-manuel-zelaya-berta-caceres>

^{ix}<http://iboninternational.org/article/2016/03/internationally-recognized-environmental-activist-berta-c%C3%A1ceres-martyred>

^x<https://apnews.com/0cc4031c058545fb9247ce5095c644c0>

^{xi}<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/10/hit-men-high-living-honduran-corruption-scandal-president>

^{xii}<https://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/OAS-Observers-Oppose-New-Honduras-Election-Amid-Fraud-Claims-20171229-0012.html>