

# 2009-2015 - Disaster Capitalism and Outrage in Post-Coup Honduras

Thursday 17 March 2016, by [PINE Adrienne](#) (Date first published: 28 June 2015).

## **Washington continues to interfere in the internal politics of Honduras six years after the coup.**

On June 28, 2009, School of the Americas-trained [\[1\]](#) general Romeo Vásquez Velasquez led the military coup that ousted Honduran President Manuel Zelaya. The Honduran orchestrators of the coup and their Washington collaborators disingenuously justified the putsch by claiming Zelaya had broken the law by (among other things) attempting to modify the constitution to permit presidential reelection.

A lot has happened since that fateful day six years ago. We learned through Cablegate, for instance, that Facussé was known to the U.S. embassy since at least 2004 to be a drug trafficker [\[2\]](#). Since the coup Facussé was directly responsible for the murders of at least five (the number he admitted to on national television, an admission that did not even result in an investigation), and likely over 100 small farmers who challenged his claim to their collectively-held lands. Facussé died last week, having never answered for his crimes, at age 90.

Vásquez went on to run for president in the 2013 elections, in which the main opposition candidate was Xiomara Castro, former President Zelaya's wife. Both lost to coup-backer Juan Orlando Hernández in an election riddled with fraud and violence [\[3\]](#) and — we now know — tipped by the emptying of the Honduran Institute for Social Security (IHSS, a public health insurance program tied to certain forms of legal employment) coffers to finance the campaigns of Hernández and his fellow National Party candidates. Like Facussé, Vásquez has not answered for his crimes in relation to the coup. He benefitted from the U.S.-created "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" which ensured immunity from prosecution to those who committed crimes during and in defense of the coup.

Like most disasters these days, the coup was man-made, and has played out as a textbook example of disaster capitalism at its worst.

Meanwhile, Hillary Clinton has promoted her role [\[4\]](#) in preventing Zelaya from returning to office as part of her hawkish electoral campaign strategy. And earlier this Spring, the Honduran Congress and Supreme Court overturned the Constitutional prohibition [\[5\]](#) on reelection — the same prohibition used to justify ousting Zelaya (though he himself never attempted to change it).

But while tracing the trajectory of individual actors is important, it cannot adequately capture the scope of the ongoing damage of the 2009 coup in Honduras. As I have argued previously, [\[6\]](#) the main function of the coup was to open the floodgates for neoliberal plunder. Like most disasters these days, the coup was man-made, and has played out as a textbook example of disaster capitalism at its worst [\[7\]](#).

Post-coup Honduran regimes have taken a page out of the playbook of free market evangelist Grover

Norquist—board member of the post-coup “Charter Cities” (ZEDE) initiative that promises to violently dispossess indigenous and other Honduran subsistence farmers of their lands to create corporate-governed cities within Honduran territory. In 2001 Norquist famously mused [8]: “I don’t want to abolish government. I simply want to reduce it to the size where I can drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub.” Since the coup, the Honduran public sector has been systematically starved through defunding and outright theft (as in the IHSS case) in order to render it weak enough for privatization.

Of course, the usurpation of Honduran electoral democracy did not go uncontested. To the contrary; June 28, 2009, is also recognized as the day the most important Honduran social movement in over half a century — La Resistencia — was born. The National People’s Resistance Front (FNRP) arose spontaneously to protest the coup, bringing together indigenous and peasant organizations, student movements, unions, feminist and LGBT groups, and hundreds of thousands of previously unaffiliated Hondurans. The over 4,000 human rights abuses documented by international human rights organizations in the months following the coup were carried out against its members, who continue to be systematically targeted for torture and assassination today.

Over the past month, Hondurans have again engaged in mass protests, but with a different message than that of the Resistencia. In fact, the largely middle-class organizers of the torch-lit marches of los indignados (“the outraged”) have expressly prohibited FNRP members from carrying their flags (a prohibition FNRP members—many of whom are marching as indignados themselves—have fought).

The marchers, many of whom did not oppose the coup, decry corruption, and have been celebrated for promoting that message in the pro-coup corporate Honduran media. They demand the resignation of President Hernández, who as a candidate (while President of Congress), signed a USD\$125 million contract with the company Dimesa overvaluing thousands of medicines to be purchased by IHSS — funds that later landed in his campaign coffers. They also demand the installation of a U.N.-led International Commission against Impunity in Honduras, and refuse to negotiate with the current corrupt administration.

Corruption is undeniably a factor in the destruction of the IHSS, which as a group of scholars affiliated with the indignados recently pointed out, has resulted in the “collateral deaths” of at least 3,000 Hondurans.

But it is not the whole story.

Critics within the FNRP have raised concerns about U.S. government meddling in anti-corruption messaging, which paints a picture of an otherwise-functioning system corrupted by bad apples. For example, the most powerful “civil society” organization charged with fighting corruption in Honduras is the Asociación para una Sociedad Más Justa [9], the national chapter of Transparency International. ASJ is a project of a U.S.-based evangelical Christian organization, Association for a More Just Society (AJS), that receives significant funding for its Honduras operations from the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations of the U.S. State Department. AJS has taken a decidedly pro-coup stance over the years through its subsidiary groups, like Transformers Honduras [10] — which partners with police actively engaged in the violent repression of citizens, and coordinates union-busting attacks on the public education sector — and *Revistazo* [11], an AJS digital publication [12] that fired Resistance-affiliated reporters following the coup.

Other organizations promoting an “anti-corruption” message have received funding from the National Democratic Institute and USAID, which has been increasingly involved in counterinsurgency operations around the globe through its Office of Transition Initiatives. USAID

has funded counterinsurgency expert David Kilcullen's Caerus Group in Honduras (subcontracted through Creative Associates, the group behind the "Cuban Twitter" project [13]). And earlier this month, U.S. ambassador to Honduras James Nealon (who has otherwise supported the "anti-corruption" message) made the clumsy decision to lash out on the embassy website and Twitter against journalist Esdras Amado López, who claimed USAID funds had made their way to the campaign coffers of the National Party; López swiftly posted documentation of his claim in retaliation [14]. While the feud did not result in incontrovertible proof of anything, it further fueled popular suspicions that U.S. policy has not suddenly shifted toward supporting Honduran democracy.

Just as Washington is responsible for the continuity of the coup that enables the corruption [15], it is now trying to disassociate that corruption from its interference in, and military occupation of, Honduras. Obama's primary solution to the problem of corruption in Central America—the Alliance for Prosperity—offers nothing but more of the same militarized neoliberalism [16] that has so ravaged Honduras.

Hondurans have every right to be outraged. On the anniversary of the coup, they are once again taking the streets, where they have yet again been met with tanks and tear gas. If those of us who are outside of Honduras wish to support them in their struggle against corruption, we must fight the U.S.-led militarized neoliberalism and coup-mongering that make Honduran "corruption" inevitable.

**Adrienne Pine**

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## **P.S.**

\* "Disaster Capitalism and Outrage in Post-Coup Honduras". Published 28 June 2015. This content was originally published by teleSUR at the following address:

["http://www.telesurtv.net/english/opinion/Disaster-Capitalism-and-Outrage-in-Post-Coup-Honduras-20150628-0004.html"](http://www.telesurtv.net/english/opinion/Disaster-Capitalism-and-Outrage-in-Post-Coup-Honduras-20150628-0004.html).

If you intend to use it, please cite the source and provide a link to the original article.

[www.teleSURtv.net/english](http://www.teleSURtv.net/english)

\* Correction: The original version of this article stated that Miguel Facussé's airplane was used during the June 28, 2009 coup to remove the president, Manuel Zelaya, from Honduras.

Mr. Facussé's plane was instead used for the illegal kidnapping and extradition of the foreign minister, Patricia Rodas, as part of said coup.

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## **Footnotes**

[1] <http://soaw.org/news/news-alerts/3464-military-coup-by-soa-graduates-in-honduras-shines-spot-light-on-controversial-us-military-training-school>

[2] <http://www.thenation.com/article/wikileaks-honduras-us-linked-brutal-businessman/>

[3] [http://www.nlginternational.org/report/NLG\\_Honduras\\_Election\\_October\\_2013\\_Report.pdf](http://www.nlginternational.org/report/NLG_Honduras_Election_October_2013_Report.pdf)

[4] <http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2014/9/hillary-clinton-honduraslatinamericaforeignpolic>

[y.html](#)

- [5] <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/05/honduras-latest-coup-150511090408289.html>
- [6] <http://www.jourlib.org/paper/2922992#.Vusshjaof4c>
- [7] <http://www.naomiklein.org/shock-doctrine>
- [8] <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1123439>
- [9] <http://www.ajs-us.org>
- [10] <http://www.transformemoshonduras.com/ES/>
- [11] <http://www.revistazo.biz/web2/>
- [12] <http://www.ajs-us.org/project/revistazocom>
- [13] <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/03/us-cuban-twitter-zunzuneo-stir-unrest>
- [14] <http://cholusatur.com/noticias/embajador-de-los-estados-unidos-james-nealon-ataca-periodista-de-honduras-esdras-amado-lopez/>
- [15] <http://www.telesur.tv/english/news/Washington-Complicit-in-Honduras-Corruption-Scandal-20150605-0023.html>
- [16] <https://newrepublic.com/article/120962/alliance-prosperity-wont-help-central-american-violence>