

Honduras: left feminist coalition denounces electoral fraud

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Honduran popular movements continue to protest the fraudulent November 2017 election of a pro-US President and his cronies at Governor and Councillor level.

In November, 2017, Hondurans took to the polls to elect a new president, local governors and councillors. However, far from a smooth transition into a new presidency, numerous irregularities and allegations of electoral fraud became apparent, unleashing a post-election crisis.

Since the night the election results were announced, a wave of surveillance, intimidation and violent repression at the hands of the country's security forces has resulted in the deaths of over 40 people – with hundreds more being detained. Frequent mobilisations, protests and strikes have been called to protest the lack of transparency around the process and the results of the elections, which represent a much wider rejection of a failed and increasingly authoritarian regime. The protests have been met with growing violence, an attitude which has spread way beyond the streets, generating a state of lawlessness and danger, especially for women. In January alone, 22 femicides were reported.

This post-election crisis reached its climax when Juan Orlando Hernández was sworn into office for the second time on January 27th – despite Honduras' constitution forbidding a President's re-election. The Honduran Women's Collective (CODEMUH), has been on the frontline of the mobilisations to challenge the 'rigged election' of Hernández in one of the world's most dangerous cities, San Pedro Sula.

CODEMUH stated: "We denounce and blame the government of Juan Orlando Hernández for placing the country's institutions and human rights at risk and trying to impose an illegal and fraudulent government. This situation has placed Honduran people at HIGH RISK, disrespecting their rights, as voters as exercised on November 26, when they expressed themselves in the polls and decided to REJECT the RE-ELECTION, as it is illegal."

Under Hernandez, and with strong backing from the US, an economic model was implemented which has seen Honduran cities become some of the most dangerous in the world, as hunger, poverty and violence intersect with the expansion of neoliberal policies. This is especially so for land and human rights defenders, who have been systematically targeted and killed as they defend their lands and communities from the explosion of mega-projects, which seek to extract the so-called natural resources abundant in Honduran ecosystems.

In the context of growing violence, it was revealed that the British government had sanctioned sales of surveillance equipment shortly before the election crisis erupted. Honduras became the latest country in a growing list of repressive regimes which are buying 'security' equipment from the UK that is later being used for internal repression and to target human rights defenders.

On January 25th 2018 – Honduran Women's Day – CODEMUH released a second statement, pointing

to the impact that a Hernández re-election was having on women working in garment factories, and what the deepening of a particular economic model would do to women's rights:

"We denounce Juan Orlando Hernández, for putting the lives of working women at risk, particularly for putting the Maquila (garment) women workers at even greater risk. These women not only have to survive the repression they and their children face at the hands of the military and the police, they also face other problems in their places of work in the department of Cortés, where the maquilas are situated.

"Employers expect workers to turn up at the factories regardless of the risk, and further, workers are being made to make up for lost hours - spent in mobilisations or during the curfews - in their free time."

Despite an early call for new elections by the Organisation of American States (OAS), who found copious irregularities in the electoral process, the USA and the EU backed the decision of the Tribunal Supremo Electoral's (TSE) results. This sent the country into a spiralling division between the country's current government, their supporters and the Alianza (Alliance) party, a broad coalition of social movements who came together behind a platform for change headed by Salvador Nasralla. Through this coalition, Honduras' feminist movement had been able to push for the political agenda of Honduran women

P.S.

CODEMUH is a feminist and women-led organisation defending and promoting women's and women workers' rights. They have been fighting for over 20 years, challenging the lack of workplace health and safety protection, and have successfully contested numerous cases on behalf of women suffering from occupational diseases. Their European partners include the British CSO War on Want

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