

# **HONDURAS - POPULAR NATIONAL CONSULTATION**

CONCERNING THE FORMATION OF A CONSTITUENT  
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY THAT WILL CONSIDER  
SERIOUS CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

JUNE 28, 2009

[Rights Action reproduces this [article from before the June 28, 2009 military coup](#), about COPINH (a long-time Rights Action partner group in Honduras) and their work and struggle in favor of the peoples' right to a popular consultation, that the traditional, powerful elites of Honduras are opposing.]

## **COPINH**

**(CIVIC COUNCIL OF POPULAR & INDIGENOUS  
ORGANIZATIONS OF HONDURAS)**

**CALLS FOR INSURRECTION, IF THE PEOPLE ARE NOT  
CONSULTED**

Monday, 18 May 2009

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There will be insurrection and civil disobedience if there are any attempts to impede the Executive Branch's promotion of a community consultation regarding the formation of a Constituent National Assembly.

Today, outside the Public Ministry, over one hundred campesino and campesina members of COPINH, machetes in hand, staged a protest. In a communiqué distributed to the press, COPINH sent out a

“call to all sectors of Honduran society, stating that if the obscurantist and power groups and the transnationals and their spokespersons deny us our right to a consultation and to reforms to transform Honduras into a people's democratic state, we will organize a massive popular insurrection. Our insurrection will be inspired by the spirit of Lempira, Francisco Morazán, Visitación Padilla, Graciela García and Juan Manuel Cálix, amongst others.”

The communiqué states:

“For decades, the indigenous peoples have been subjected to killings, imprisonment, discrimination and torture of all kinds, ... We therefore maintain our conviction to struggle for true peace, with intercultural democracy, justice, liberty and development.”

COPINH underlines the fact that community consultation is a basic right, as well as being an excellent opportunity to create a judicial constitutional context for recognition of linguistic rights and the territorial rights of indigenous and black peoples, as well as those of children, workers and youth.

The communiqué points out that the consultation will respond to the right of the people to direct democracy, to make it possible for the people to achieve self-determination, freedom of expression, public accountability, transparency and a justice system that does not tolerate abuse and impunity.

Berta Cáceres, co-founder of COPINH, maintained that

“not only do we want a popular consultation (known as the “Cuarta Urna”, the fourth ballot box), but we also want a popular and democratic Constituent National Assembly. We want constitutional reform in favour of the majority.”

When asked if she supports maintaining the present political parties, Cáceres answered

“we do not agree with continuismo because it means carrying on with the same neoliberal policies that place power in the hands of the transnationals, big business and the 25 rich families that have mercilessly sacked this country.”

Cáceres explained that by insurrection, they mean that people will rise up to defend their legitimate rights, because

“we do not want this country to continue selling out to the transnational mining companies, Miguel Facussé, Fredy Nasser and the Roble y Coyolito group.

“The Honduran people have had enough of those tired old political sectors - they have no credibility; we are fed up with those corrupt political representatives who have sold this country to the maquileros. There are groups who want women to live like we did three hundred years ago in the time of the Inquisition, with no rights - this is why we must fight against the capitalist system.” Cáceres stated.

The indigenous leader, Salvador Zúniga, said that

“reforming the constitution means writing a new constitution in which the state must institutionally respond to the need for justice in the country. It also means creating a context of justice that recognizes the rights of the indigenous people.”

“The right to natural resources, freedom of expression, freedom of thought and the right to direct democracy - these are the rights that will form the basis of a new constitution.”

He added that there is a general will amongst the people of Honduras to rid the country of obscurantist and powerful groups who want to impede the progress of democracy and the drive to create a state that will do away with alarming rates of poverty.

“We are being denied a basic right; democracy is the people’s power and in a democratic system the people rule - not the queen, not the king, not the National Congress and the controlling power groups. Why, then, should the people be denied the opportunity to be consulted?” said the leader.

Last week, representatives of a number of civil society groups met to back up Manuel Zelaya Rosales’ project to carry out a community consultation in June. The people would be consulted on the initiative to install a Constituent National Assembly and draw up a new political constitution.

On May 12, the Contentious Administrative Court found in favour of a request from the Public Ministry to declare the fourth ballot promoted by the Government of Manuel Zelaya null and void. The judge’s resolution was emitted without suspension of the fourth ballot, which means that for the time being, the Executive Branch can continue with the campaign for a consultation regarding a Constituent National Assembly. The decision was read this morning by Judge Zelaya Saldana.

COPINH considers that the Public Ministry answers only to the power groups and to conservative political groups who do not want progress to create a true justice system and institutional structure that would benefit the people of this country.

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## **TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS**

Since the June 28th military coup, Rights Action has channeled thousands of dollars of donations and grants to Honduran civil

society organizations doing pro-democracy, pro-rule of law, and human rights defense work.

To support the March 12-14, 2010, National People's Assembly in La Esperanza, Honduras, hosted by COPINH, make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

\* UNITED STATES: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887

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## WHAT TO DO

There is no reason for North Americans to write the repressive regime of Honduras to demand they respect human rights and investigate these political crimes. They won't. The regime in Honduras is carrying out State repression on purpose; repression will unfortunately but quite predictably continue in Honduras. The "government" of Lobo has no real legitimacy and knows it will need repression to quell opposition to its government.

North Americans must send these informations to our politicians and governments. We must hold our governments partially accountable for Honduras' State repression. The United States and Canada are the main governments that have accepted and endorsed the November 29th "elections" as legitimate ("elections" that have served to legitimize the June 28th military coup and sweep under the rug 5 months of repression and killings).

Now, the illegitimate government continues with its repression. But for the legitimization and support that the Honduran regime is receiving from the USA and Canada, it would not be able to repress with such impunity.

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- RECOMMENDED BOOKS:

Eduardo Galeano's, Open Veins of Latin America

Howard Zinn's, A People's History of the United States

Naomi Klein's, The Shock Doctrine

Paolo Freire's, Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Dr. Seuss's, Horton Hears a Who