

Emergency Interfaith Delegation to Honduras

PRESS STATEMENT EMERGENCY RELIGIOUS DELEGATION TO HONDURAS

Introduction: Good afternoon. On behalf of our religious delegation we would like to thank Father Melo, Radio Progreso, the religious communities, and the people of Honduras who invited to accompany them during this difficult time. Our delegation is comprised of 50 representatives from across the United States. We are also joined by 4 representatives from Canada, Colombia, and Argentina. We come in the Biblical spirit of Ruth, who said “*Your people are my people.*” (Book of Ruth 116) We come in the spirit of Martin Luther King, Berta Caceres, Oscar Romero, and all the martyrs who gave their lives for peace with justice. Some of us have visited Honduras many times. For some of us this is our first visit. We have been closely following the recent election, the rising repression against the popular movement and specific threats against human rights leaders. We come to learn and to stand with our sisters and brothers and join them in requesting the following:

1. **Stop the Violence & the Death Threats Against Fr. Melo, sj, Leaders of the Popular Movement, and the People of Honduras. STOP THE REPRESSION.**

We ask for an end to the repression and attacks against human rights/environmental rights defenders, the people of Berta Caceres, Fr. Melo and all who are exercising their right to free speech and assembly. Since the Nov. 26th election, more than 30 people have been killed, over 1,000 have been detained, and countless more injured as a result of excessive force and attacks against peaceful protesters, including the use of live ammunition and water cannons at protests. At least three death threats have been issued against Father Melo and other leaders of the popular movement. As members of the human family and in the name of the God of love and justice, we demand that you stop the repression. Do not assassinate Fr. Melo. Do not assassinate the defenders of human rights/environmental rights defenders. Do not assassinate the people of Berta Caceres and all who are exercising their right to free speech and assembly. Do not assassinate authentic democracy and full participation the right of people to raise their voice.

2. **The Recent Presidential Election is Illegitimate:**

The recent presidential election was fraudulent on two counts: 1) the Honduran constitution prohibits the re-election of the incumbent and 2) the election, itself, has been characterized as illegitimate due to rampant fraud by respected international observers. The Organization of American States (OAS) has recommended a new election.

3. **Support the Popular Sector’s Demand for a National Dialogue for Peace with an International Mediator**

The popular sector in Honduras - including broad-based organizations such as COPINH, the Garifuna, Radio Progreso and the Faith Community - agrees with calls for a broad, national dialogue to build a peaceful process toward resolving the electoral crisis and the longer term assault on democratic institutions. The prerequisites for a successful dialogue are to 1) recognize that the recent elections were fraudulent as documented by the OAS and the European Union and 2) bring to justice those responsible for the assassinations of protesters. And 3) to incorporate international mediators such as the United Nations.

4. **End U.S. Security Aid & the Militarization of the Region**

US aid and training to the Honduran security forces is sharpening the crisis in Honduras and the region and encouraging the violation of human rights in Honduras and across the region. It is one of the root causes of mass migration. Further militarization combined with mass deportations threaten to destabilize Honduras and the region and risk a return to the devastating Civil Wars of the 1980s. Those U.S. sponsored wars cost thousands of lives, displaced millions of families from their homes, and led to the dramatic exodus of Central Americans to the United States.

5. No Deportations - Support Immigrant Rights in the USA

The US must avoid the mass deportation for Hondurans and all Central Americans in the US. The **political earthquake** in combination with the structural economic, political and social upheaval facing Honduras and the region, makes the prospect of dislocating tens of thousands of Central Americans politically and morally unjust. The separation of US citizen children from their immigrant parents is antithetical to the principle of family reunification, a bedrock principle of US immigration policy for the last half century that is now under siege. The US foreign policy is forcing Hondurans to flee their land only to be deported from the United States.

6. A Call to the US Government

We call on our government to withdraw its recognition of the fraudulently elected government in Honduras, to end police and military aid to Honduran State Security Forces, and to stop the deportations.

7. Pledge of Ongoing Support for Peace, Justice & Democracy in Honduras

We pledge our ongoing love and support for the people of Honduras, the human rights and environmental rights defenders, and our faith counterparts. We commit to ongoing accompaniment to Father Melo and Radio Progreso. We commit to report to our elected leaders in Congress, our media, our faith communities, our families, neighbors and friends.

US Religious Delegation of 50 leaders
January, 24, 2018