



6 of February 2018

Open letter to the European Union and its Member States on the worrying human rights situation in Honduras during the post-electoral period

European networks and international human rights organizations express their deep concern over the disproportionate and sometimes fatal use of force employed by security forces of the state against protesters, as well as other attacks on human rights defenders in the context of the post-election crisis in Honduras. We call on the European Union to condemn these incidents, to publicly support the defenders, and to request the Honduran State ensure that international human rights obligations are fully respected.

On November 26, 2017, general elections were held in Honduras. Four weeks later, on December 18, Juan Orlando Hernández (National Party of Honduras) was declared president by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE). During the electoral process, the EU Election Observation Mission (EOM-EU) and the Electoral Observation Mission of the Organization of American States (EOM-OAS) observed irregularities during the process, which led the Secretary General of the OAS to call for a repeat of the general elections.¹

Since November 27, numerous protest have taken place across the country to demand a transparent electoral process and credible results. As a response, on December 1, 2017, the government of Honduras declared itself in a state of emergency and decreed a temporary suspension of constitutional guarantees. Since then, human rights organizations **have registered 30 killings -21 at the hands of the Military Police of Public Order (PMOP), about 232 people injured and 1085 detained**². Up until January 4, 2018 24 violent deaths have been recorded by the Director of Forensic Medicine of the Public Prosecutor's Office. To date, human rights organizations do not know if the Public Prosecutor's Office has launched the appropriate investigations for these cases.

On its behalf, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner in Honduras has **documented more than 50 cases of intimidation and harassment against human rights defenders, social leaders and journalists**. This has led to a joint appeal from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and the Office of the High Commissioner³, requesting that the State of Honduras guarantee the right to peaceful demonstration, as well as all fundamental rights. This appeal has also been requested by several international civil society organizations⁴. In light of the ongoing tensions that have occurred since the general elections and its impact on human rights, the government

1 Statement by the OAS General Secretariat on the Elections in Honduras. December 17, 2017. Available in: http://www.oas.org/en/media_center/press_release.asp?sCodigo=E-092/17

2 Alert: International concern regarding the serious increase of attacks against human rights defenders in Honduras' post-electoral context, January 22, 2018 http://www.pbi-honduras.org/fileadmin/user_files/projects/honduras/files/Alertas/180122HOP_Alerts_8_DefendersSituationPost-Electoral_01.pdf

3 IACHR and OHCHR Express Concern over Post-Election Violence in Honduras, January 19, 2018 http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2018/007.asp

announced the creation of a Human Rights Secretariat as an entity that is separate from the current Secretariat for Human Rights, Justice, Governance, and Decentralization of the government of the Republic of Honduras. The new agency begins operations on January 27, 2018.

Nonetheless, the disproportionate use of force employed by security units of the state, attacks against human rights defenders, the lack of adequate response from institutional structures, as well as uncertainty over broad sectors due to the lack of application of international standards in recent electoral processes (2009, 2013 and 2017), they are generating a lack of confidence among the population in respect to the principles of democracy and the rule of law, as well as in Honduran institutions.

In the framework of relations with Honduras and foreign policy on human rights, we urge the European Union to:

- Issue a public statement at the highest level that:
 - Recognizes the work of human rights defenders and shows their concern for the events that occurred in the post-electoral stage;
 - Calls on the Republic of Honduras to abstain from excessive use of force against the population as well as respect the right of citizens to demonstrate and express themselves freely;
 - Requests the Republic of Honduras to investigate immediately and diligently all reported acts of violence, in order to identify of the alleged perpetrators.
- Urge the government of Honduras to include testimonies of the victims and human rights defenders in any dialogue initiative aimed at resolving the crisis and discovering the truth of the events that have taken place in the electoral context.
- Request that the Republic of Honduras collaborate with human rights observation missions led by international and regional human rights organizations.

Additionally, in the framework of cooperation to strengthen the justice system (Eurojusticia) and the guidelines on defenders, we demand the Delegation of the European Union in Honduras and the Embassies of European countries in the country:

- To formally request information from the Ministers of Security and Defense on the current protocols that are being applied in the framework of the demonstrations, as well as request information on the steps being taken to ensure investigations into these reported incidents are prompt and effective in identifying those responsible and brought to trial.
- Adopt the necessary measures that make visible EU support for the defenders, that contribute to a new public discourse that recognizes their work and guarantees a safe environment for the exercise of their function.
- Promote a favorable space for the work of the defenders, among others: facilitate a meeting between the National Protection System and beneficiaries in order to ensure an effective, appropriate and urgent response in this context.

4 See letter from CEJIL and others, 25/01/18, <https://www.cejil.org/es/estado-hondureno-continua-violacion-derechos-humanos-denuncian-organizaciones-internacionales>

- Continue to promote participatory spaces for political dialogue and regular consultations with civil society organizations, including the exchange mechanism with civil society on human rights issues, - the 'Enlace Group'.

To the European Parliament and the national parliaments of the European Union, we request they monitor the human rights situation and, if deemed relevant, issue a parliamentary resolution on the situation of human rights, promote opportunities for discussion with civil society organizations.

SIGNED

EU- LAT NETWORK, Advocacy Network Europe-Latin America (former CIFCA and Grupo Sur)

PROTECTION INTERNATIONAL

FRONT LINE DEFENDERS

OMCT, World Organization Against Torture

CIDSE, International Cooperation for Development and Solidarity

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