



CAWN

central america women's network

promoting women's rights and gender equality

www.cawn.org

PRESS RELEASE: Information leak confirms illegality of Honduras coup

3rd December 2010

CAWN

Following information exposed this week by Wikileaks – which sheds light on the role of the United States (US) following the military coup that took place in Honduras in June 2009 – the Central America Women's Network (CAWN) would like to express its concern about the controversy that still surrounds Honduras and the US regarding this issue. In particular, CAWN is concerned about the possible increase in repression and violence that may take place against those groups who still demand that the events of June 2009 be recognised as a coup.

The leaked document was a cable entitled 'Open and Shut: The Case of the Honduran Coup', sent from the US Embassy in Tegucigalpa to Washington one month after the events of the coup took place. The cable stated clearly that 'there is no doubt' that the events of 28th June 'constituted an illegal and unconstitutional coup'. In the cable the US Embassy also dismissed arguments being made by supporters of the coup to claim its legality, stating that 'none ... has any substantive validity under the Honduran constitution'.

Together with women's organisations in Honduras, CAWN is anxious about the possible implications of this leak. The constitutional and political crisis in Honduras has not ended, and thus failure to take immediate and decisive action by the US in response to the coup has contributed to the ongoing crisis. Despite the US initially opposing the coup, it went on to support the new elections under the coup regime. CAWN considers this a very contradictory approach.

It has been suggested that any top US official responsible for US policy in Honduras would have been familiar with the contents of the 24th July cable, including its position that the ousting from power of President Zelaya was illegitimate. A month after the cable was sent, the actions of the coup were being reported as requiring further study and the legal distinction between a 'coup' and a 'military coup' was created in order to justify the decision not to cut off all US aid to Honduras straight away. CAWN, along with other UK and European-based NGOs, lobbied for a public international rejection against this coup from the UK government and the EU, and advocated for all financial aid to Honduras to be stopped until the democracy and the rule of law had been restored.

This information leak is significant considering how events since the Honduran coup have undone much of the hard-fought work for the advancement of women's rights and legislation in Honduras over the previous years. Since the coup, women community leaders and civil society groups such as Feminists in Resistance (*Feministas en Resistencia*) – a coalition of feminists and women's organisations – have experienced increased repression, threats and violence, even after the new elected president Porfirio Lobo took up his position in January 2010. With a dramatic rise in the number of disappearances and femicides during this period (285 cases from January to October 2010 according to the Centre for Women's Rights – www.derechosdelamujer.org), women in Honduras have had to pay greater attention to their personal safety. The failure of the Honduran government to acknowledge that the events of June 2009 constituted an illegitimate coup (as declared by the international community), makes any dialogue or restoration process with the civil society that rejected and protested against this break of democracy extremely difficult.

With this evidence, and the recommendations presented to the Honduran government by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in May 2010, CAWN would like to reiterate its demand that the Honduran government takes responsibility for the implementation of the recommendations, and for the protection and respect of women's human rights in Honduras.