



December 7, 2017

The Honorable Rex Tillerson
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Tillerson,

I write on behalf of the Jesuits in the United States to voice our concern regarding the critical situation in Honduras following the presidential election on November 26. In recent days, our fellow Jesuits and lay colleagues in Honduras, as well as Jesuit leadership in Latin America, have asked for support from the international community, and we join them in calling upon the U.S. government to stand for human rights and democracy.

Numerous concerns have emerged regarding the fairness, transparency, and accuracy of the electoral process. Long delays and inconsistent reporting of results by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) have led to valid questions regarding the legitimacy of the counting. When thousands of Hondurans began to hold public demonstrations and protests, the government's response was a declared state of siege, instating a 10-day curfew that bans citizens from public spaces and orders the detention of anyone who violates curfew. This violation of the right to assemble and of free speech is alarming, as are numerous reports of excessive use of force by military and police authorities and the use of arbitrary detention.

We are concerned that the actions of the current government and the TSE compromise the building of justice and democracy in Honduras and throughout the region.

Further, we were surprised and deeply discouraged to learn of the U.S. Department of State's recent decision to certify aid subject to human rights conditions in the State, Foreign Operations Appropriations law. In recent years, we have noted and shared great concern with State Department staff regarding violations of human rights, especially against women, indigenous peoples, journalists, and environmental defenders. The current events we are witnessing in the aftermath of Honduran elections reaffirm that these conditions are not being met.

We urge you and the U.S. Embassy in Honduras to:

1. Call for an independent, international commission to undertake a transparent vote count and an investigation into all claims of state involvement in electoral fraud and violence during and since the November 26 elections;
2. Request that the Supreme Electoral Tribunal of Honduras refrain from announcing the winning candidate, without first obtaining the result of the recount as requested above;
3. Demand an end to the State of Siege and the reinstatement of all human rights, including the people's right to peaceful demonstration, expression, and movement;

4. Ask that the media's freedom of expression be guaranteed with unrestricted access to all sources so that they can report in a truthful and timely fashion;
5. Insist that all people who have committed crimes, violated human rights in the aftermath of the elections, or violated the Constitution of Honduras be brought to justice; and
6. Support the rights of women, indigenous peoples, and others who organize to protect the environment in the face of state repression and multinational companies' complicity.

Thank you for your attention to this critical situation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Saint-Félix SJ". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small "SJ" at the end.

Fr. Jean Denis Saint-Félix, SJ
Secretary, Office of Justice and Ecology
Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States

cc: Heide Fulton, Chargé d'Affaires, U.S. Embassy in Honduras
Donald Jacobson, Director of Central American Affairs, U.S. Department of State