

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
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New Honduras President must order investigation into rights abuses

Amnesty International today urged the new Honduran President to order a full investigation into abuses committed by the security forces following June's coup d'état, bring those responsible to justice and provide reparations to the victims.

Honduran President Porfirio Lobo, who is set to take office on 27 January, was elected in November last year amidst a political crisis that saw President Manuel Zelaya ousted by military-backed right wing politicians in June.

Hundreds of people opposed to the coup d'état were beaten and detained by the security forces as protests erupted during the following months. More than 10 were killed during the unrest, according to reports.

"President Lobo must ensure a fresh start on human rights in Honduras by ensuring abuses committed since the coup d'état are not forgotten and do not go unpunished," said Kerrie Howard, Americas Deputy Director at Amnesty International.

The organisation also called on Honduran security forces to co-operate with any investigations into alleged abuses.

Since the presidential elections, the Honduran Congress has discussed the possible introduction of an amnesty law that would reduce or deny punishment for those responsible for human rights violations.

"Proposals to introduce amnesty measures for human rights violations are simply unacceptable," said Kerrie Howard. "Failure to sanction abuses that took place during the coup d'état could give a green light to further violations in Honduras."

According to dozens of testimonies collected by Amnesty International's researchers in Honduras during two visits to the country, human rights abuses spiralled following the June coup d'état.

Following the coup d'état people who took to the streets to demonstrate their opposition were targets of widespread excessive use of force by the security forces, including unlawful killings, torture and ill-treatment, as well as hundreds of arbitrary arrests. The police and military also widely misused tear gas and other crowd control equipment.

Human rights activists, opposition leaders and judges suffered threats and intimidation, media outlets closed and journalists were censored. There were also reports of security force personnel committing acts of sexual violence against women and girls.

Noone has been held to account for these abuses and few investigations have been opened as yet.

On 27 November 2009, 32-year-old Angel Salgado was driving home in the capital Tegucigalpa with three friends when, according to eye witnesses military, officials fired shots at their car as it drove by an unmarked check point.

Angel Salgado was hit in the head by a bullet. He lost control of the vehicle, which then crashed and injured several bystanders.

According to eye witnesses, military personnel began cleaning the scene of evidence immediately after the incident took place. After passing five days in a coma, Angel Salgado died in hospital on 2 December.

On 14 August 2009, a police officer sprayed lawyer Nicolás Ramiro Aguilar Fajardo directly in the face with an unknown chemical spray, temporarily blinding him. At the time, Nicolás was trying to stop the police officer from beating a colleague.

Background Information

Honduran President Manuel Zelaya Rosales was forced from power on 28 June 2009 and expelled from the country by a military backed group of right-wing politicians led by Roberto Micheletti, former president of the national Congress.

A de facto government headed by Roberto Micheletti remained in power until the end of the year. President Zelaya returned clandestinely to the country and took up residency in the Brazilian Embassy in September.

Despite the failure of political negotiations mediated by the Organization of American States to restore the elected government, in November the de facto authorities proceeded with elections, Porfirio Lobo of the National Party won 88% of the vote and takes office on 27 January 2010.