



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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July 16, 2009

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
Washington, D.C.

Dear Secretary Clinton,

Francis Cardinal George, OMI, the President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, recently wrote a letter of solidarity to Cardinal Óscar Rodríguez and the Bishops' Conference of Honduras. In the spirit of that letter we urge continuing efforts to help the people of Honduras resolve peacefully the current political crisis.

Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, has expressed his concern about recent events in Honduras and has called for patient dialogue and mutual understanding and reconciliation to create conditions to “ensure peaceful coexistence and authentic democratic life” in that country.

The bishops of Honduras have issued statements concerning the crisis on June 19 and July 4 of this year. I am enclosing copies in the event that you have not seen them. Our Conference has joined with the bishops in their call for dialogue and reconciliation among the Honduran people and for external support “without unilateral pressures” in order to achieve a just and peaceful resolution.

We are encouraged by the United States' endorsement of the mediation process initiated by President Arias of Costa Rica. We urge you to continue to support this effort and to take all other appropriate steps, as necessary, to help the people of Honduras resolve the present crisis in peace and justice and, in the words of the Holy Father, to create the conditions for “peaceful coexistence and authentic democratic life.”

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Howard J. Hubbard
Bishop of Albany

Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace

[Unofficial translation of July 4, 2009 Statement from the original Spanish]

Statement from the Episcopal Conference of Honduras

“Building from a crisis”

1. At the Plenary Meeting of this Episcopal Conference, which took place scarcely three weeks ago, we clearly indicated that social justice, dialogue and consultation within the scope of the law are necessities which should be recognized and respected in our people.
2. In view of the circumstances of the past few days, we refer to the information we have sought among competent government authorities (the Supreme Court of Justice, the National Congress, the Attorney General, the Executive Power, the Supreme Electoral Court) and many civil society organizations. Each and every document that has come into our hands shows that the institutions of the Honduran democratic state are valid and that their final judgments in juridical-legal matters have been rooted in the law. The three branches of government: Executive, Legislative, and Judicial are in force, legally and democratically, and in accordance to the Constitution of the Republic of Honduras.
3. Based on the documentation that we received:
 - a.) Under Article 239 of the Constitution of the Republic, “Whoever proposes the reform” of this Article, “will immediately cease from office and be rendered unable to hold public office again for 10 years.” Therefore, the summoned individual, when captured, was no longer acting as President of the Republic.
 - b.) On June 26, 2009, the Supreme Court of Justice, unanimously named a Magistrate who issued the arrest warrant against the citizen, President of the Republic of Honduras, who is presumed to be responsible for the following crimes: AGAINST THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT, TREASON, ABUSE OF POWER AND USURPATION OF PUBLIC FUNCTIONS to the detriment of the Public Administration and the State of Honduras; the aforementioned is based on the Fiscal Request filed in that Court by the Office of the Public Prosecutor.

Learn from the errors to amend them in the future

4. “No Honduran can be expatriated or handed over to a foreign state” (Art. 102, Constitution of the Republic). We believe that we all deserve an explanation of what happened on June 28th.
5. This past June 19 we articulated that we, to a large or a small extent, are all responsible for a situation of social injustice. However, we still believe that Honduras has been and wishes to continue to be a nation of brothers and sisters living in unity, in justice and peace.
 - a. For this reason it is necessary that we resolutely opt to listen to the opinions of others in order to establish a true dialogue among all sectors of society and reach constructive solutions.

- b. It is crucial to respect the schedule of the Supreme Electoral Court which guarantees the upcoming election in November.
- c. It is necessary to globalize solidarity as a process to help us overcome injustice and inequity. The international community could contribute to these purposes if it receives adequate information as to the situation of our country.

6. *We make a special call*

- a) To those who have or have had the leadership of the country in their hands, we ask that they not be led by selfishness, retaliation, persecution, violence and corruption. The paths for understanding and reconciliation can always be sought looking beyond the interests of a party or group.
 - b) To social, economic and political groups, we urge you to overcome emotional reactions and to seek the truth. Today more than ever social communicators should express their love for Honduras seeking the pacification and serenity of our nation, setting aside personal attacks and seeking the common good.
 - c) To the population in general, we invite them to continue participating in a responsible and respectful way understanding that we all, through honest work, can build a more just and caring Honduras.
 - d) To the Organization of American States, we ask that it pays attention to everything that was transpiring outside the law in Honduras and not only to what happened from June 28th on. The Honduran people are also asking themselves why it has not condemned the threats of war against our country. If the inter-American system limits itself to protecting democracy in the ballot boxes but does not monitor a good government or the prevention of political, economic and social crises, it will be pointless to have a belated reaction when coming face to face with them.
 - e) To the international community, we declare our right to determine our own destiny without unilateral pressures of any type, seeking solutions which promote the wellbeing of all. We reject threats of the use of force or blockades of any type that only cause suffering to those most in need.
 - f) We express our deepest gratitude to our brothers and sisters of many countries who, through gestures of solidarity and with their support and proximity, have given us a horizon of hope in contrast with the threatening attitudes of some governments.
7. The present situation could help us rebuild and start a new path, a new Honduras. The confrontation we are witnessing today should not serve to aggravate acts of violence but as a new starting point for dialogue, consensus and reconciliation which would strengthen us as a family of Hondurans and would allow us to undertake a path towards an all-round development for all Honduran men and women.
8. We urge our faithful people to promote prayer and fasting so that justice and peace prevail.

Tegucigalpa, M.D.C., July 4, 2009.

CONFERENCIA EPISCOPAL DE HONDURAS (C.E.H.)

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[Unofficial translation of June 19, 2009 Statement from the original Spanish]

"Give your servant, therefore, an understanding heart to judge your people and to distinguish right from wrong" (1 Kings 3, 9).

We, the bishops of the Catholic Church in Honduras gathered in our Second Annual Meeting, wish to express the following to the People of God and the Honduran society in general:

A firm determination for true SOCIAL JUSTICE as a commitment by all citizens, especially by those who aspire to elected positions. We believe that to the extent in which skills, awareness, and responsibility develop among political leaders, public officials and the banking system, the existing social injustice will start to diminish. Without Social Justice true democracy cannot exist.

A DIALOGUE, as a tool for turning the natural differences and social and cultural pluralism into opportunities for improving proposals for the future and reaching consensus in political and economic decisions. For this, we need a dialogue that would include all segments of society and would lead us not only to overcome the present crisis but to find a plan for the nation in which we can all work together.

The CONSULTATIONS with the people, far from provoking fear, should be considered as an important resource for political participation as long as they are made within the scope of the law since "the institution of representation in fact does not exclude the possibility of asking citizens directly about the decisions of great importance for social life" (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 413).

1. We want to be faithful to the mission of proclaiming the Gospel through education and the creation of awareness, the defense of values, especially truth and justice, and our contribution to the common good. We are reminded of such responsibility in the *Concluding Document of Aparecida*, when it states: "The Church should also help consolidate fragile democracies, in the positive democratization process in Latin America and the Caribbean, although today there are grave challenges and threats of authoritarian deviations" (*Concluding Document of Aparecida*, 541).

2. The political situation, which derived from elections within the political parties, the election of the Supreme Court of Justice, the appointment of the Attorney General, the rumors of a coup d'état, and the groundwork for a referendum for a fourth election, worry us deeply due to the division and polarization of forces which, day by day, are becoming more intense in our society.

3. The various communication media, civic associations and the people themselves are insisting on the need of broaching, and solving, those huge social problems that have been neglected such as the increasing social violence, the reduction of the government's financial resources, unemployment, the rapid rise of organized crime and drug trafficking, the lessening of the fortitude which society derives from moral and religious values, vulnerability in the face of natural phenomena, land holdings, etc.

4. To some extent, we are all responsible for this set of problems that threatens our democracy. The government branches, its institutions and organisms are also responsible when they politicize their negotiations and tarnish them with corruption, abuse of power and the intention of instilling in our nation a single system of values. Also responsible for this are the political parties who consider themselves heirs to the government assets which, in many cases, they manage according to their own interests. Likewise responsible are those so called national and international "power groups", who are hard to identify because they operate in the shadows,

insatiable in their eagerness for enrichment, blocking or conditioning the country's overall development, and intensifying the gap in the unjust inequality in which we live. In short, all of us who make up the Honduran society are responsible to the extent in which we turn indifferent and passive before the dangers that threaten our weak democracy, which is more electoral and representative than participatory.

5. The participatory democracy that we want to achieve will only be possible if certain conditions are met:

Therefore, we urge the authorities who have been elected to defend the Constitutional State to, through a DIALOGUE, find the solutions needed for the present conflict and that they guarantee the rules and regulations of constitutional resources to the people of Honduras, such as the Plebiscite and the Referendum which, along with other instruments such as the Law of Civic Participation, will allow consultation with the people on more important issues.

6. A free and sovereign society can only be built with the participation of all citizens who together feel responsible for the wellbeing of Honduras. But a true channel of civic participation cannot be established against the very same laws. Laws cannot be infringed in favor of those who receive the benefits just as we cannot be democratic without respecting Democracy with the "imposition of power by a certain group upon all the other members of the society" (*Redemptor Hominis*, 17).

7. In preparing the way for future elections we believe we need a process which would allow spreading an understanding of the Constitution, at all levels. This effort will be more beneficial to all citizens than all the expenses, some from dubious sources, of the excessively long political campaigns.

8. Citizens should demand from those running for office in all future elections that they demonstrate their knowledge of the country's needs, their ability to perform public office, their honesty and their genuine sensitivity towards those most in need. In the same way, candidates should publicly reaffirm their commitment to respect the processes of civic participation and to work so that Laws are at the service of everyone, especially the poor, and not to adapt them to serve the particular interests of individuals, groups or political parties.

9. We ask the three branches of government, their agencies and institutions and, especially, the Armed Forces that they guarantee the transparency, organization and good process of the next elections so that they may turn into a demonstration of pacific and harmonious living and respect towards the Constitution, as is the wish of the people of Honduras.

We ask God that His Holy Spirit enlightens the hearts of those of us who live in this nation, Honduras. May the Virgin of Suyapa, with her maternal presence, reminds us every moment that we are sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters, and that she will guide us towards unity in justice and peace.

Tegucigalpa, M.D.C., June 19, 2009.