

**Observatorio Honduras: Week for Women's Rights in Honduras
August 20, 2009 – Tegucigalpa, Honduras**

Beginning on Monday, August 17, and continuing through Friday, August 21, a delegation of women from Canada, the United States, Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Costa Rica has organized an Observatorio de la Transgresión Feminista (Feminist Transformation Watch) in the Honduran capital to accompany the Feminists in Resistance in Honduras. The international feminist fact-finding mission has been visiting numerous organizations and holding discussions with women in Mesoamerica.

The fact-finding mission includes conversations with European Union and United Nations representatives in Honduras, as well as with local authorities and women's organizations, grassroots organizations, human rights defenders, lawyers against the coup, and academics.

The main objective of this mission is to provide accompaniment and solidarity to the Feminists in Resistance, a group made up of diverse feminists and women's organizations, to gather testimonies, and to draft a preliminary report detailing human rights violations committed against women since the coup, which took place on June 28, 2009.

Drawing from our first observations and from the testimonies and information we have collected, as well as from reports by the Special Prosecutor for Women, we express our principal perceptions regarding women's rights violations that have been committed since the coup took place 54 days ago:

1. We have observed that there is massive participation of women in the marches, and an outright rejection of the de facto government headed by Roberto Micheletti.
2. When the military goes into the streets, there are reports of violations of women's rights, characterized by the abuse of women's bodies.

We have gathered testimony from women who were sexually abused; struck with batons on different parts of their bodies, especially their breasts and buttocks; women have been verbally abused in a systematic way through comments like "whores, go back to your houses."

The most poignant testimonies show other types of violations of women's human rights, such as the fear that is being instilled in women that they might be persecuted or detained.

Some women have had to go into hiding; they are separated from their children and families in order to protect themselves and avoid illegal or forced searches of their homes; they tell of the intimidation that they receive, which makes them feel that they could be attacked at any moment.

Through the testimonies, we have been able to establish that this kind of aggression is taking place throughout the country, but principally in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula.

There are also reports about an increase in the number of femicides. The Special Prosecutor for Women confirmed that, in the month of July alone, 51 women were murdered. Historical statistics point to one woman being murdered per day, which means that femicide has increased by at least 60 percent. It is also pointed out that, in the weeks since the coup, people have been killed in groups, not just individually.

We are now examining and verifying all of the information we have been able to compile.

What will we do with the report?

- The report will allow us to show how violence has increased, to the detriment of Honduran women, since the coup.
- It will be an important supporting document for the UN Secretary General's campaign to put an end to violence against women.
- It will be part of the report of the Inter-American Human Rights Commission, where we have requested a special audience for the month of October in Washington, DC.
- Seeing as the Honduran government must submit a report to the United Nations in 2010 about the advance of women's rights in the country, the report drafted by this fact-finding mission will be a supporting document to that report, which receives documents from civil society.
- The report will also be a reference for those specific cases that exemplify the human rights violations before different international bodies. Some of the cases that have sufficient merit according to international norms could also be submitted in due course.

The Observatorio

We have formed a permanent Observatorio (or Watch). In addition to continuing to verify the complaints received through the testimonies, we shall continue receiving information and testimonies for as long as is necessary.

We also reiterate our willingness to return for an in-person Watch, if this is deemed necessary.

We appreciate the trust of the individuals and organizations that are a part of Feminists in Resistance and will be waiting to see how best to continue our work of providing solidarity and accompaniment.

The feminist fact-finding mission is comprised of:

Las Petateras (Mesoamerica), JASS (Just Associates, U.S.), Radio Feminista (FIRE, Costa Rica), the Nobel Women's Initiative (NWI), and Consortium for Parliamentary Dialogue and Equality (Mexico).

Alternative media networks are also accompanying the mission, including: CIMAC (Mexico), SEMLAC (Latin American Information Agency), and La Cuerda (Guatemala),

Some of the organizations represented in the delegation include: the Feminist Collective for Local Development of El Salvador, Feminists in Resistance against the Coup (Costa Rica), the Americas Program of the Center for International Policy, and the Canadian Foundation for the Americas of Ottawa.

In addition, there are experts and academics from Harvard University, the University of Colorado in Denver, and Universidad San Carlos in Guatemala.