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September 29, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
Washington, DC

Open Letter to the President of the United States from the Women of Honduras:

A Call to Stop the Violence in Honduras and Restore Democracy and Peace

Dear Mr. President:

Ninety days have passed since the democratically elected President of Honduras, Jose Manuel Zelaya Rosales, was ousted by a military-civilian coup. The U.S. government remains the only government in the western world that has not recognized this occurrence as a military coup, in spite of overwhelming evidence. We are extremely concerned about reports that your government had prior knowledge that a coup would occur; allowed those who kidnapped and transported the President into exile in Costa Rica to land at the U.S. military base in Honduras; and set in motion a pre-conceived negotiation process with the Costa Rican President to position the illegal de facto regime as a legitimate partner in the restitution of democracy in Honduras.

In addition, and of much concern, is the information we have received that the tear gas bombs used by the Honduran police against poor neighborhoods of the capital city, Tegucigalpa, were manufactured in the U.S. and imported via Peru. Are we witnessing again the deceitful practice of past U.S. governments using other countries as third parties to circumvent its own laws and regulations, while maintaining the appearance of innocence publicly? We hope not.

As we write this letter, unbearable noise and bioterrorist tactics are being used to harass the President, his family and his supporters in the Brazilian Embassy where he has taken refuge after the failure of the San Jose Accords. There are reportedly plans to murder the President, as violence against the population escalates.

Honduras is in a state of siege and all constitutional rights have been suspended for 45 days beginning September 27, 2009: hundreds have been incarcerated in baseball stadiums (all too reminiscent of Chile and the military coup by Pinochet) and in clandestine jails, brutally beaten by the police, and denied medical attention. Police forces enter hospitals and arrest severely injured civilians, crush cigarettes on their bodies, and break their knuckles with metal batons. In addition, children have fallen sick from inhaling life-threatening toxic gases manufactured by the U.S.; the elderly are arrested and kept for hours with no access to food or water; some women are hauled by

their hair onto the streets, while others are raped and sexually harassed with police batons. Young men and women are viciously persecuted and beaten; police enter houses with no legal warrants and throw tear gas bombs against the homes where children are present; and naturalized foreigners who are critical of the coup have had their Honduran nationality revoked. Furthermore, airports have been closed for several days; all roads to the capital city are under heavy military surveillance; the economy has basically been shut down; and the media has been selectively censored, their transmitters destroyed or signal taken off the air. At the same time, a media campaign of fear, deception and hate have taken over the radio and TV air waves, and the press misinforms civil society, leading the population to believe in a calm that does not exist and to accept as normal and legal violent acts perpetuated by the de facto regime. The coup has taken the lives of at least twenty people, and violence by the de facto regime has left a trail of victims that includes children, youth, the elderly, women, and politicians.

Given these human rights violations and your commitment to democracy, President Obama, why have you remained silent? Why did you not mention Honduras in your speech before the General Assembly of the United Nations when you spoke so highly of peace and justice in the world? Why did you decide not to speak personally in the White House with the democratically elected President, Jose Manuel Zelaya Rosales, on any of the six occasions he traveled to your country to find a real and rapid solution to the crisis in Honduras? The lives of the people in this small Central American country do matter. And the crisis in Honduras threatens stability in the region.

The thousands of Hondurans marching daily in the streets have made it clear that we will not give up our dreams of freedom and will not stop our struggles to build a democratic Honduras. And we have pledged to do it peacefully. We ask you and the American people to join our struggle to build a better world. We ask you to be as serious as we are in our commitment to democracy and peace. Please do not make this more difficult by training and arming our military and police. Do not fund greedy economic groups in power in Honduras. Do not support our corrupt politicians. Do not exploit us for other strategic goals in the region. Do not try to derail us with the empty rhetoric of peace. Instead, we ask you to work with us to save Honduras. Let us all work together to contribute to a more democratic and peaceful world.

Signatures:

Honduran Feminists in Resistance

Red de Mujeres Colonia Cruz Roja

Red de Mujeres Ramón Amaya Amador

Red de Mujeres Jóvenes de Honduras

Centro de Estudios de la Mujer CEMH

Movimiento de Mujeres Socialistas Dolores Caballero

Centro de Derechos de Mujeres CDM

Red Lésbica Cattrachas

Centro de Acción para el Desarrollo Hondureño CESADEH

Movimiento de Mujeres Visitación Padilla

Acciones para el Desarrollo Poblacional ADP
Articulación Feminista de Redes Locales
Feministas autónomas
Colectivo de Mujeres contra la Violencia
Comité Latinoamericano y del Caribe para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer –
Honduras
Red de Mujeres de Olanchito
Red de Mujeres del Bajo Aguán
Organizaciones integrantes de la Red de Salud de las Mujeres Latinoamericanas y
Caribeñas
Ecofeministas independientes