



Public pronouncement regarding the declaration of the European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) in Honduras

Friends of the Earth Europe (FoEE) and Friends of the Earth Latin America and the Caribbean (ATALC), members of Friends of the Earth International (FoEI), voice their deep concern regarding the declaration that was presented by the European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) in Honduras in relation to the proclamation of the results of the general elections held in 2017, in which Juan Orlando Hernández is legitimised as the winner.

As we had informed the Honduran EU EOM in our statement sent on December 9, 2017, and due to the electoral fraud that has been denounced by social organisations and movements throughout the country, we believe that it is necessary to establish an independent international commission *before* legitimising an election winner, in order to ensure a trustworthy process and an electoral result that represents the democratic guarantees that every nation deserves.

We trusted the EU EOM as a process that could bring some hope to the Honduran people who are facing the partiality of the institutions and brutal State repression against their mobilisations denouncing the well-known irregularities of the electoral process. However, we believe that the EU EOM declaration legitimises the results, justifying the role of the questionable Supreme Electoral Court (TSE in Spanish) and minimising the election day irregularities by reversing the burden of proof towards those who denounced the fraud rather than towards the TSE who, for example, suspended for hours the dissemination of the results on November 29.

Our trust in independent bodies such as the EU EOM came precisely from what we understood as their capacity to value peaceful protest of the people that, in spite of the brutal repression characteristic of a totalitarian state, firmly denounced the fraud and demanded that the constitutional precepts were upheld. The imposition of martial law and a curfew suspended these precepts.

We consider that a legitimate government, acting according to democratic values and with the transparency needed to attain a fair victory in the ballots, would not have resorted to the brutality shown over more than 20 days against a helpless population, attacking them with tear gas and gunshots. As a result of this brutality, more than 20 people were killed and hundreds were injured. Even Berta Zuñiga, coordinator of COPINH (an indigenous Lenca environmental organization in Honduras fighting for the defense of their territory and for environmental and social justice) and daughter of Berta Cáceres, was detained and harassed on several occasions as she supported the people's demands against the electoral fraud.

We also remember that Juan Orlando Hernández's candidacy was illegal and unconstitutional, and plagued with many flaws. In the appeal filed by the National party ex-president, only the possibility of discussing the re-election was opened; not the possibility of registering Hernández to run for office. Nevertheless, in a clear abuse of power, this decree was used to allow Juan Orlando Hernández's candidacy for president, in blatant violation of the Constitution of the Republic. The Supreme Electoral Court (TSE) accepted his candidacy in spite of the explicit ban on re-election, in a clear contradiction of the Constitution.

Although the EU EOM has stated that it will "present a series of recommendations for the improvement of future electoral processes, for the consideration of Honduran society," their current declaration appears to show the limitations of their work to guarantee democratic processes in Latin American countries. Moreover, it demonstrates the significant limitations these missions have to both curb the irregularities that threaten peoples and their decisions, clearly expressed in the ballots, and

to deal with the complaints presented in the peaceful exercise of their right to protest—an exercise in which they risk their lives to avoid the complete rupture of democratic processes that should be guaranteed and not attacked by the Honduran government.

In accordance with the Honduran situation, and contrary to what is shown in the current declaration of the EU EOM in Honduras, we request that the EU EOM publishes a final report to:

- Acknowledge the violent repression and the war-like strategies used by Juan Orlando Hernández's government to attack those who denounce the irregularities committed by his government. We consider this to be the most basic ethical determination this body should present to the world, because these brutal actions are also part of the electoral process;
- Recognise the various electoral irregularities, including the suspension of the dissemination of the results for hours on November 29, and to *refuse* the recognition of Juan Orlando Hernández as the Honduran President. He is responsible for this violence, he is facing serious allegations of electoral fraud and he is not recognised as president by the Honduran people;
- Demand that the burden of proof falls on those who have been accused of fraud, the TSE, and not on those who denounced it;
- Demand the promotion and respect of human rights, the protection of social, environmental and human rights activists, and the immediate end to impunity for those who are responsible for the violence.

As Friends of the Earth Europe and Friends of the Earth Latin America and the Caribbean, and together with our regional structures, national groups and grassroots organisations throughout the world, we will spare no efforts to denounce this irregular and devastating situation that is so unjust towards the less fortunate within a system that legitimises violent repression and validates the governments that nurtures it—a system that ignores the pain and suffering of those who defend true democracy.

Friends of the Earth Europe and Friends of the Earth Latin America and the Caribbean
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