Honduras Election Monitoring Report
National Elections, November 24, 2013

Prepared by:

Alliance for Global Justice
&
Task Force on the Americas

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Executive Summary

As members of the North American Honduras Solidarity Network (HSN), the US-based organizations Alliance for Global Justice (AFGJ) and Task Force on the Americas (TFA) recently sent a delegation of 55 human rights accompaniers and election monitors to Honduras from November 17 to November 26, 2013. The delegation’s mission was to observe and document conditions on the ground in advance of and during the country’s national elections, which took place on November 24, 2013. Both organizations have a long track record of human rights advocacy and solidarity with Honduran civil society. AFGJ/TFA delegates were granted credentials by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal of Honduras (TSE by its Spanish acronym) to participate in the elections as official “International Observers and Accompaniers.” This report documents the delegation’s observations.

In the week prior to election day, 35 AFGJ/TFA delegates visited eight communities in four northwestern departments (Cortés, Intibucá, Atlántida and Yoro) to meet with local people and document their struggles, challenges and hopes for a democratic Honduras. The communities we visited are characterized by ongoing conflicts concerning land, territory and natural resources as well as documented violations of human rights. While the following report focuses primarily on describing in exhaustive detail our election day observations, a brief summary of pre-election day observations is also included. We strongly believe that the broader context of conflict, repression and violence experienced by the country’s most vulnerable people—namely peasants (campesinos), low-wage workers, youth, indigenous and Garifuna peoples—must be taken into account when evaluating the effectiveness of Honduras’ (or any) democratic process. Indeed, we have observed that these precarious conditions are frequently used as a form of control—for example, threatening to revoke people’s meager public benefits if they fail to support the governing party, a story we heard on multiple occasions in different regions.

On election day, November 24, 2013, a total of 55 AFGJ/TFA delegates visited 49 voting centers in 5 departments of northwest Honduras—Cortés, Lempira, Santa Barbara, Copán and Ocotepeque (see map on following page). While observers were touched by the commitment, courage and enthusiasm of the many Hondurans who participated in this process in good faith, we were also saddened by the numerous discrepancies, lack of preparedness and resources, bribery, voter intimidation, violence and outright fraud, which we witnessed throughout the day. While not all of these events occurred at all polling sites, the observations contained herein demonstrate a clear pattern of systematic undermining of the people’s right to a free and fair election. This pattern includes:

- **Instances of vote buying by “party activists”** (generally paid by a party to campaign at polling locations) and even by candidates themselves. In one case, in Quimistan, department of Santa Barbara, a congressional candidate was observed handing out 100-lempira bills to people outside the voting center.
- **Voter intimidation** by throngs of aggressive activists or by candidates. In the village of El Cocotillo in the municipality of Lepaera, Lempira, the mayor himself sat inside the voting area, directly in front of the ballot box as people cast their votes.
- **Complaints by voters that they were unable to vote**, either because they were listed as “deceased,” their polling station was changed at the last minute, or their name was simply not listed in the registry.
- **Over-representation of National Party on electoral tables** (MERs), which are supposed to have a maximum of two members from each party represented. In every department where

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1 See Appendix for complete list of observers

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observers were present, we took testimony from people claiming that well-known National Party members were brandishing credentials of other parties at the MERs—generally smaller parties that received few, and in many cases zero, votes.

- **Instances of violent attacks** against electoral table workers so that they were unable to represent their party and perform their duties operating the MER. In one case in Paraíso, Copán, a van containing eleven MER members affiliated with the LIBRE party was stopped at 2:00am on election day, its tires slashed, the representatives prevented from fulfilling their duties, and violently threatened.

- **Instances of bribery and coercion**, particularly by the governing National Party. In Santa Barbara, observers took testimony that the National Party was handing out discount cards and free cell phone credit, as well as threatening that people would lose their *bonos* (public assistance funds) if they failed to vote *todo azul* (“all in blue,” the color of the National Party).

These events were not isolated incidents, but rather came up repeatedly in different communities of the five departments where observers were present, indicating a widespread and systematic assault on the democratic process. And the incidents witnessed on election day must be understood in relationship to a broader context of deepening structural violence since the June 2009 military coup. Honduras has not yet healed from this trauma. Indeed, over the last four and a half years, the country has experienced staggering rates of politically motivated violence, land grabbing, narco-trafficking, militarization, unemployment and inequality. Nonetheless, we are hopeful that democracy can and will flourish in Honduras through the efforts of the countless women and men working to strengthen their communities and promote civic engagement throughout the country.

As North Americans—many of whom have visited Honduras more than once as human rights observers—we have been inspired time and time again by Hondurans working for peace and justice, and learned many valuable lessons to bring back to our own communities. Unfortunately, the electoral process we witnessed on November 24 did not reflect the integrity and dignity of the Honduran people. We hope that the information contained in this report serves to pierce the pervasive rhetoric claiming Honduras’ November 24 election was “peaceful” and “transparent.” These hollow pronouncements began ringing out early on election day, before accredited election observers were legally permitted to comment publicly on the day’s events—as per the agreement we signed with the Supreme Electoral Tribunal. We present this report in the interest of *genuine* transparency, peace and democracy in Honduras.

Alliance for Global Justice

Task Force on the Americas

December 9, 2013
**Map of Honduras**

*Map 1: Stars indicate AFGJ/TFA observation sites.*
Pre-Election Day Observations

In the week prior to election day, 35 AFGJ/TFA delegates visited eight communities in four Northwestern departments (Cortés, Intibucá, Atlántida and Yoro) to meet with local people and document their struggles, challenges and hopes for a democratic Honduras. The communities we visited are characterized by ongoing conflicts concerning land, territory and natural resources as well as documented violations of human rights. While the focus of this report is the delegation’s observations of the November 24 election, we wish to highlight the following pre-election events and trends in the interest of situating election day within a larger context.

Governing Party Misuse and Politicization of Public Funds

In numerous communities, people claimed that the government’s Conditional Cash Transfer Program known as “Bono Diez Mil” (The “Ten Thousand” Fund)—financed in part by the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank—was being used to coerce eligible recipients into voting for the governing National Party. A member of the Afro-indigenous (Garifuna) organization OFRANEH told observers that the government agency PRAF (Programa de Asignación Familiar) in charge of distributing the bono had called several meetings of eligible recipients in the weeks leading up to the election in the department of Atlántida. At these meetings, people were required to sign in and were told that if they didn’t vote for the National Party—i.e. if the National Party didn’t win—they would not receive their bono. One meeting had been held in her community in the municipality of Tela earlier in the week of November 17 and another was scheduled for November 21 in the Garifuna community of Sambo Creek. In the community of San Juan, people were told, “the bono will come after Juan Orlando wins the elections.” In Lepaera, in the department of Lempira, Oscar and his wife—both of whom are active with the LIBRE party—told observers that they are on a list to receive the bono (he gave us a copy of the list). However, they claim they have never received the bono, whereas people on the list from the National Party have. In the community of Nueva Esperanza, department of Atlántida—which is engaged in a struggle against the mining company Minerales Victoria—community members claim none of the eligible families have received their bono because of their resistance to the mining project.

Violence and Disenfranchisement of Communities in Resistance

Over 3,000 peasant farmers have legal charges pending against them for their involvement in community-based movements in defense of land against wealthy investors interested in converting peasant lands to industrial sugarcane, oil palm plantations or other industries (e.g. mining, tourism). With charges against them, they are unable to vote, constituting a massive disenfranchisement of peasant farmers. They face not only criminalization, but also military and paramilitary violence at the hands of large landowners and investors, with over 100 peasant murders since the 2009 coup. A member of the community of Santa Rosa del Norte (known as Mesapa) who is engaged in a land struggle against the sugar company AZUNOSA (subsidiary of SAB-Miller) in the municipality of El Progreso, Department of Yoro, gave recorded audio testimony claiming that a local councilperson (regidor) by the name of Angel García was responsible for collecting the identification cards (cedulas) of all those who did not identify as National Party supporters and allegedly destroying/burning them. He also claimed that National Party thugs entered the community and threatened to return “well armed” if the party did not win the elections. Additionally, according to this testimony, families eligible for the Bono Diez Mil were denied assistance unless they professed allegiance to the National Party.
Harassment of Accredited Election Observers

On the evening of November 22, 2014, our delegation received a 2.5-hour election monitoring training session administered by representatives of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE). The training took place at the Centro La Fragua in El Progreso. Immediately following the training, officials from the Honduran Immigration Office showed up at the Center claiming to have received information that members of our group had entered the country illegally and asking to view everyone’s passports. The officials remained at the Center for over an hour, questioning group leaders and examining delegates’ documents. One delegate who did not have the slip of paper given at immigration upon entering the country was accused of entering the country illegally, even though her passport was stamped with the date of entry. She was told to present herself at the immigration office on Monday November 25 to pay a fine of ~6,600 lempiras (approx. $330 USD). After calls to the human rights organization COFADEH and to the US Embassy, this requirement and fee were rescinded. Notably, the immigration officials did not examine everyone’s documents, indicating that the purpose of their visit was to harass the group rather than conduct a thorough investigation or enforce the law.

Photos 1-2: Immigration officials harass observers following TSE training

To conclude, we believe that the above pre-election observations demonstrate a systematic attempt, especially on behalf of the governing party, to manipulate voters and suppress voter turnout—particularly in rural areas and communities engaged in struggles to defend their lands and livelihoods. Further, the harassment of accredited election observers shows a disdain for transparency that is particularly ironic considering the presence of international observers was subsequently used to support claims of a transparent election.
Observers: Rick Sterling, Allan Fisher, Carol Costa, Carolina Dutton, David Welsh, George Albro, Maria Robinson, Stanley J. Kaster, Virginia Dwyer, Tom Gallagher and Todd Davies

Voting Centers Observed (14):

Team One (9):
- Lepaera
- La Estancia
- Tejeras
- Jagua
- El Cocotillo
- Tierra Colorado
- San Matias
- La Libertad
- Juniapal

Team Two (5):
- Gracias (2 sites)
- El Tablón
- Las Flores
- Refugio

Summary: Team One went to Lepaera at 5am and spent the entire day into the night in that region. Team Two started the day by visiting a large elementary school with 16 voting tables (MERs) and approximately 5,500 registered voters. After observing the setup of voting tables and start of voting and then the voting process for an hour, the group travelled by car to observe the voting process in several nearby towns. They ended the day by observing the vote count at the school where they began. There was an evident enthusiasm and commitment by people to vote and it was impressive to see the hard work of many voting table staff persons. We understand that many of these people are unpaid volunteers who work a hectic 15-hour day with dedication and commitment. It was also impressive to see the patience and commitment of voters waiting to cast their votes. That said, we observed the following issues and problems.

Observations:

1. At Escuela Rep de Venezuela in Las Flores, there was an “information station” outside the entry to the school. At the station, voters could confirm whether they were registered at that location. Unfortunately the bias of the information table was clear because all of the demonstration ballots were in favor of one party. We took a sample with us and were accosted as we prepared to depart; the person responsible for the ballots attempted to grab them from our hands. A photograph of the marked “demonstration”/sample ballot is below.

Photo 3: Sample ballot used marked for National Party in Las Flores, Lempira
2. At Escuela Juan Lindo in Gracias we observed a heated dispute with seven people claiming they should be allowed to vote. They had all been marked as “deceased” in a registry and were being denied the right to vote. We heard other stories of people who were not allowed to change their voter registration. It seems this is an area where voter rolls can be manipulated to the advantage of one party.

3. We found evidence of vote buying. Oscar Fernando Oriana Mejia of Gracias reported that he saw someone voting, displaying their ballot to someone secretly looking through an adjacent window, then going outside and receiving 500 lempiras from the person. Oscar approached the person who gave the money and requested 2,000 lempiras for his vote. The person responded that he would only give him 500 lempiras ($25 US). We recorded the audio and video testimony of the eyewitness. Another example of vote buying was observed in Lepaera area where one of our team members observed the mayor handing a 100 lempira bill to a campesino outside the voting area.

In addition, we observed a situation at MER #11681 where a camera flash went off as a voter was in the voting area. The voter (who was actually a voting table officer and the Secretary of the MER #11681) was evidently taking a photograph of the marked ballot. Despite rules against having a camera or cell phone in the voting area, the ballot was accepted. It was widely rumored that a financial reward is given to anyone proving they voted for the National Party. The above incidents appear to confirm the validity of the rumor.

4. We observed evidence of voter intimidation. At the town of El Ocotillo in the Municipality of Lepaera, the mayor (Edgar Murillo) was seated directly in front of the ballot urnas (boxes in which the marked ballots are placed). See picture below. From that vantage point, the mayor running for office watched each voter as they cast their ballot. They mayor’s assistant provided drinks and sandwiches to the staff of the voting table.

Photos 4-5: Mayor of Lepaera’s campaign poster (L) and mayor watching voters cast ballots (R)
We heard testimony from people who claimed that their **public assistance ("bonos" from the Bono 10 Mil program) is taken away or granted depending on their political choices.** Oscar Antonio Henriquez showed us a document verifying that his family qualified for the aid (pictured below). He claimed that he does not receive the aid because he is a known supporter of one of the opposition parties.

![Listado para Cheques de Beneficiarios de Bono 10Mil Urt](image)

**Photo 6: List of Persons who qualify for “Bono 10 Mil” welfare payment program**

5.  Some of the voting table staff are volunteers representing one of the nine parties running in the election. However, we heard numerous reports that the small parties cannot provide a representative and that the National Party purchases that party’s credentials. We observed indications of this bias at the table. Because the voting table staff votes last, their votes are counted first when the public counting begins. In nearly all cases the votes from the election table staff was about 80% National Party with zero votes for the smallest four parties.

6.  When our group left Lepaera at around 8:00pm, the scanner, which was supposed to send the **actas** to the TSE, was still not working.
Observers: Tanya Kerssen, Kate Tanaka, Akio Tanaka, Suzanne Baker, Dale Sorenson, Adrianne Aron, Sherilyn Young, Helen Duffy, Jane Keir, Porfirio Quintano and Al Lubow

Voting Centers Observed (9):
1) Centro Juventud Hondureña (5 MERs #12317-12321)
2) Escuela Normal Mixta Miguel A. Chinchilla (12 MERs #12305-12316)
3) Centro Básico Dr. Virgilio Rodesno, Antigua, Ocotepeque (includes MER #12355)
4) Escuela Rural José Cecilio del Valle (1 MER #12351)
5) Escuela Guía Técnica No. 5 Blanca Margarita Terraza y Razo (8 MERs #12322-12329)
6) Centro Educación Basica de Nueve Gados (5 MERs #12335-12339)
7) San Marcos, Ocotepeque
8) La Labor, Ocotepeque
9) Mercedes, Ocotepeque

Observations:

Centro Juventud Hondureña

- **Polls open late:** MER #12318 opens at 7:15; MER #12317 opens at 7:25; MER #12319 opens at 7:26; MER #12320 opens at 7:28 and the voter list was not posted on the wall until just before opening; MER #12321 opens at 7:40 (TK, SB). At MER #12318, poll workers took their oath and then said a prayer before opening about 15 minutes late. [SB]
- Many party “activists” present. They are asked numerous times by MER representatives to clear out of the rooms and stop blocking the doorways. (TK)
- Extremely slow voting time in the morning; 5 to 6 minutes per voter to go through. (TK)
- During setup: MER #12320 had a number of materials missing: hoja de incidencia (incidents report sheet), acta de apertura (opening act), and distintivos (badges) for MER members. It was thought that the list of voters was also missing, but this was found at the last minute before opening. There was a lot of confusion at setup and it appeared the MER members did not know what to do, and were looking at the setup instructions and materials for the first time. Also, the president did not show up for this MER and was replaced by Vocal 1. The escrutidor also did not show up and was replaced by Vocal 2. All these setup irregularities were noted on a sheet of paper used as a makeshift “hoja de incidencia” (since the original was missing). (TK)
- Later in the day, around 3:00pm at the Escuela Normal Mixta, an anonymous person told me that a ballot had been found pre-marked at the Centro Juventud polling station earlier that afternoon. No confirmation of this report. (TK)
- Many moto-taxis with National Party flags were dropping people at the gate of the polling place (SB).

Escuela Normal Mixta Miguel A. Chinchilla

Outside the school, voters were lined up waiting the 7am opening. All around them, supporters of the Liberal Party (very numerous, a throng of more than 50 high school age kids) and, less numerous but well represented and noisy, were National Party supporters—all violating the law by wearing their party's "Vote For..." t-shirts and handing out pre-marked sample ballots. It is illegal for this kind of

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2 Observer/documenter initials are included in parentheses throughout the text in this section
campaigning to take place within 50 meters of the polling place, but no one was enforcing the law and the behavior continued all day long. Only these two parties were in violation. LIBRE party banners were much less in evidence in the town. (AA)

Photo 7: Liberal Party activists outside Escuela Normal Mixta entrance handing out “sample ballots”

- MER #12311: There were eight poll workers and none of them wore any identification. At 7:07am the poll workers weren’t accepting voters yet and yet prayed in a group for at least four minutes. The prayers stopped at 7:11 and they let the first voter in after that. The second voter entered at 7:18am, meaning that it took six minutes for the first person to vote. (SY)

- At 8:28am in front of the voting center, I took testimony from three adult men who said that they were just inside the voting center and saw that all the accredited national observers were from the same party, the National Party. The men said that they did not know where those persons got those credentials. I asked if there was community-wide notification about the opportunity to be a national observer and they said no. They said they don’t know who paid those observers or if they are volunteers. They told me that there were just two observers earlier, but starting at 8:00am there were a lot of them, an “exaggerated amount.” Those men all showed me their ID cards so they could denounce this action. I wrote their names down as Willman E. Jerasco, Lincoln Francisco Chinchilla Polanco, and Jose Francisco Coto—all stated they were from the Liberal Party. Jose Francisco told me, when he approached me that he was just inside the voting center and saw the mayor also inside, observing with a credential. All three men were angry and wanted me to document these actions. (SY)

- Intimidation: In the doorway to MER #12313, a vocal stood with an arm spanning the entrance, as if the voters waiting to enter were intruders who were not welcome there. This MER had only one booth, and its transparent ballot boxes had very few ballots inside as compared to other MERS. It had the longest line of any MER, and at the end of the day would still be receiving voters after the polls closed. (AA)

- National and Liberal parties handing out pre-marked ballots under the guise of helping people learn the procedure. National Party and Liberal Party staffed kiosks just outside voting center where voters were helped to determine their MER—and told who to vote for. (DS)
• Anonymous testimony: Taken at Hotel Maya Chortís (10:00am) from a voter who just voted at Escuela Normal Mixta: all accredited national observers are affiliated with the National Party. Also, many MER members are National Party members, but wearing credentials of other parties. Some appear to have more than one credential and are switching them. She knows they are National Party because this is a small town and they all live in the community. (TK)

• Anonymous testimony: (1:00pm, Central Plaza Ocotepeque) Claims National Party MER representatives are using the credentials of other parties, especially the smaller ones—UD, DC, PAC and Alianza Patriótica. (TK)

• Anonymous testimony: (3:15pm) Three men who identified as LIBRE voters claimed to have received information from a friendly police informant warning all LIBRE people to take off LIBRE t-shirts and other party identifiers by 4:30pm or else risk being attacked. They also said they had been offered 500 lempers and 1000 lempers by the Liberal Party for their vote for mayor. They said there was no way/norwhere to denounce this, as the authorities were not trustworthy. (TK)

• Our contact, a TSE-accredited National Observer from COFADEH (Livy Aguilar), was told she was not allowed to observe the vote count unless accompanied by one of us (an international observer). Once inside the room (MER #12313), she was asked to relinquish her cell phone. The international observer with her (Tanya) asked if she should also hand in her cell phone and was told no. 15 minutes later, the MER president gave Livy back her phone. This appeared to be harassment of national human rights observers. (TK)

• MER #12310: At 4:40pm I saw that the president was charging her cell phone in the wall outlet and that the cell phone had a Juan Orlando, blue screen saver/background on it. At 6:15pm when the vote tally for the presidential race was complete, she took a break and walked over to her cell phone and texted someone. She did that several other times, including after the tally of each race was finished and before the actas were scanned and copied. (SY)

• Regarding the ballot for diputado, many ballots were disqualified because the voter marked only the flag of the party and not the face of the candidate. 45 votes were disqualified and 171 ballots were accepted as valid. That means about 25% of the total ballots for diputado were disqualified with the major reason being that the voter marked the flag not the face. (SY)
Centro Básico Dr. Virgilio Rodesno, Antigua, Ocotepeque

- **MER representatives are not wearing their credentials.** They claim it’s because they didn’t receive enough clips to attach them to their clothing. When observers start asking about this, they all put them on. (TK)
- **Polls closed early:** Three observers arrived at 4:30pm to observe the vote count at this location (Jane Keir, Al Lubow and Porfirio Quintano). Though voting had been extended until 5:00pm, the polls had already been closed when we arrived. When asked about this, MER representatives responded that there hadn’t been anyone in line for over half an hour, so they decided to close early. One woman was overheard complaining on her cell phone at 4:40pm that she wasn’t able to vote and was going home. (Note: polls also opened late at this location; See above) (JK, AL)
- Porfirio Quintano (a native of Honduras with TSE credentials as an international observer) was not allowed into the room to observe the MER members voting (but was allowed to enter the room to observe the count).

Escuela Rural José Cecilio del Valle

- Anonymous testimony: (12:15pm) One **LIBRE party representative was forced to leave** that morning because the number on his ID card did not match the number on his credentials. Apparently, the credentials contained a typo or error that prevented the LIBRE member from sitting on the MER. (TK)
- There was only one voting room and when we arrived there were at least 14 people in line. Voting took about 4 minutes per person. [SB]

Escuela Guía Técnica No. 5 Blanca Margarita Terraza y Razo

- No MER I visited had enough workers to prevent lines from forming. At Escuela Guía Técnica, late in the day, people had to stand in line more than an hour before they could vote. (AA)
- At MER #12327, an argument threatened to go out of control. The fight was instigated by a vocal of the Liberal Party, a man named José Antonio Benitez, who was irate because he believed that a **vocal in the room was an imposter, pretending to represent one of the minor parties when in fact he was supporting the interests of the National Party**, which had bought the minor party a place in the electoral process so as to buttress the strength of the Nationals. The angry man wanted the “fake vocal” expelled. The MER, already running behind because it was using only a single voting booth, had to shut down for about half an hour to deal with the outburst, but eventually things calmed down and voting resumed. (AA)
- MER #12324: the improvised second voting booth was poorly executed and did not give privacy to the voter. An officer of the MER saw me (Adrianne) standing next to it, writing a note, and immediately got up and went to the booth and improved it. (AA) The improvised voting booth was fashioned from supplies already in the schoolroom—a desk and a peg board screen. That did not provide voters with a secret ballot because the **cabina** was one-sided, not three. (SY)

Centro de Educación Basica de Nueve Gados

- **Campaigning within the 50-meter limit** by National and Liberal parties; National and Liberal parties handing out pre-marked ballots under the guise of helping people learn the procedure. National Party and Liberal Party staffed kiosks just outside voting center where voters were helped to determine their MER—and told whom to vote for. (DS)
• A man named Allen, who was a TSE official, came up to us as soon as we arrived about 10:00am and told us that there had been numerous *denuncias* (complaints) about national observers who were all members of the National Party. [SB]

Other:

• Meeting with Ocotepeque Departmental TSE Representatives: Our group had attempted to meet with TSE representatives on Saturday (day before elections). While they had agreed to meet with us and said they would be available until 5:00pm, at 4:10pm we called and they had all left the office. I spoke with TSE president (first name Najer, cell no. 977308171) who said they could meet with us on election day. We said we would be very busy, but perhaps could meet briefly. When we met with them (at 2:00pm) the TSE president told us at one point that: **Observers should “use their eyes and ears only” and that we should not ask questions at the voting centers** because this made people “nervous” and “defensive.” He complained that observers had asked during the opening “why some parties were not represented” at the MERs, and insisted this was an inappropriate question. (TK)

• Within the Centro de Educación Basica de Nueve Grados, the Instituto Juventud Hondureña, and Centro Escuelo Rural José Cecilio de Valle there were armed police with side arms and at least one soldier with a large automatic weapon. Although they stayed well away from the voting rooms, their presence was fairly intimidating. [SB]

*Photo 9: Police and military at Centro Básico José Cecilio del Valle, Mercedes*
Santa Rosa de Copán

Copán – Group One

**Observers:** Judy Ancel, Stan Smith, Dave Davis

**Voting centers visited (5):**
1) La Bonilla – 5 MERs – morning and evening
2) Geronimo – 5 MERs – mid morning
3) Federico – 8 MERs- late morning and afternoon
4) Pedagogía – 5 MERs – mid-afternoon
5) San Antonio – 5 MERs – late afternoon

Turnout just before closing time at many MERs was a little over 50%.

**Observations:**

**Setup**

1. Teams took a **long time to get set up and all MERs at Bonilla opened late** but all were open by 7:30am.
2. The TSE officer at Bonilla said they didn’t have to be open until 8:00am, which was incorrect according to our instructions.

*Photos 10-11: Set up at Bonilla School (L) Waiting for polls to open at Bonilla (R)*

**Personnel and Credentials**

1. Jenny Carolina Leon Bueso was supposed to be president of MER #2364 at Bonilla. **She was assaulted, and her credentials were stolen.** The TSE officer refused to seat her and got a replacement.
2. We checked most MERs to see which parties were represented. Consistently all were there except PINU and UD. Alianza Patriótica was represented at many but not all even though they had no local candidates on the ballots either for congress or mayor.
3. There were allegations that people with Alianza Patriotica credentials were actually National Party people who had bought or somehow gotten false credentials. At one MER, at Bonilla, the National Party brought breakfast to three delegates (only allowed two party representatives).

4. People who were running the MERs consistently failed to wear their credentials. At many the secretary had collected them and kept them in a place that was not visible. Several complained that they were given no lanyards to hang the credentials around their necks. This made it possible for uncredentialed people to sit at the MERs.

5. At least two people were not allowed to vote because they were listed on the records as being deceased.

Facilities and accessibility

1. Many of the schools were completely inaccessible to people with problems walking or climbing stairs.
2. Many rooms had broken chairs or chairs too small for people to sit on, inadequate space, bathrooms that were not working, with no water.
3. One man at San Antonio on crutches couldn’t make it across town to his polling place and asked the edecan if he could vote there but was told no.

Vote Counting

1. We did not observe any major problems with the vote count. It was public and could be observed by people at the door. However, people were permitted to come in and out of the rooms where counting was going on.
2. It was not clear that the scans of totals successful were transmitted. We never received a copy, despite being promised them.
3. Overall the party volunteers at the MERs had a great spirit of cooperation. We did not witness bickering and when they confronted problems, they discussed and resolved them.
**Copán – Group Two**

**Observers:** Larry Fisk and Heather Wolford

**Voting centers visited (4):**
1) El Membréño (for opening and closing of voting)
2) Guardería Infantil
3) Jose Cecilia
4) Gimnasio Municipal, pre-opening

**Summary:** While the general atmosphere in Santa Rosa de Copán was positive during election weekend, our observation team witnessed several irregularities and infractions of the voting process. We also took testimony from many individuals about more egregious violations of voting rules and associated acts of intimidation and violence.

**Observations:**

**Physical Violence and Intimidation**
During our visit to the Gimnasio Municipal about 5:00am, we took the testimony of two women, Analuz Lara Ayala and Jeny Carolina Leon Bueso, who had been assaulted in the street in Barrio Santa Teresa in Santa Rosa about an hour earlier. The women were to be members of MER #2364 in Centro Manuel Bonilla, but had their credentials stolen during the attack. Ms. Leon Bueso was to be the MER president, but both were unable to seat due to the incident.

**Denial of Right to Vote**
We took testimony from many individuals who were prevented from voting due to errors in voter lists or other irregularities. One of the most common of these was voters being turned away because they were supposedly dead. Voters who reported this included Jose Arturo Perdomo at voting center Jose Cecilia; and Raquel Gómez and Leonel Rivera (id# 0401-1977-00534) at El Membreño. Ms. Gómez reported that she was told to go to a nearby office to resolve the problem, but when she arrived no one was there. Mr. Rivera reported that while he was told he could not vote because he was listed as dead, his mother appeared on the list, despite the fact she has been dead for more than 5 years.

Several individuals were also denied their right to vote due to the failure of traslados or voting transfers to be processed. We took testimony while in El Progreso from Salvador Rivera, whose cédula reflected that his voting place had been transferred from Olanchito to San Pedro Sula, but the TSE website did not reflect this change, so he was unable to vote. Similarly, Wilma Avila Ramos was prevented from voting at Jose Cecilia in Santa Rosa, despite applying for her transfer many months ago.

**Lack of Proper Training of MER Members**
It was quite evident that MER members did not receive sufficient training in voting processes. Many members appeared unfamiliar with the materials and were unprepared to deal with issues that arose. During the closing process, one MER encountered a discrepancy in the ballot totals and clearly were unfamiliar with the official protocol of how to deal with the situation. After discussing how to proceed, they asked our observer to dig through the other urnas (ballot boxes) to look for the missing ballot (she declined). They eventually decided to open the other urnas, the MER president dug through until he found the ballot, then they ressealed the urna. While this was done in front of the observer and did not appear to be fraudulent, it demonstrated a lack of familiarity with official procedures that could have easily resulted in either intentional or unintentional fraud.
We also observed many members not wearing or displaying their credentials at a number of voting centers. This made it impossible to verify that all parties were represented at the MERs.

Late Opening of Voting Center
Though voting materials arrived at El Membreño on time at 6:00am, the center did not open to voters until 7:35am. The delay was due to both the lack of proper training of MER members, who struggled to get their tables ready in the allotted time, as well as several missing or misplaced materials. For example, the maleta (suitcase containing preparatory materials) for MER #2407 was inadvertently given to the wrong group, causing confusion and delay. Several groups reported materials missing from their maletas, including MERs #2405 and #2407, which reported missing voter lists. These materials were all later found, but the delays at some tables caused the center to open to the public over half an hour late. Approximately 50 to 60 voters were waiting outside the gates at the time of opening.

Copán – Group Three

Observers: Alice Kitchen, Robert Sweet and Helen Gebre-Amlak

Voting centers visited (5):
1) La Medina
2) Centro Universtario regional de Oxident, Curoc.
3) Escuela Jose Cecilio, Del Valle
4) Escuela Varones Juan Lindo
5) Las Flores de Lempira

We started our task at La Medina school after 5:00am and were able to observe the boxes of voting materials being opened and the inventory of the contents and the assembly of the ballot boxes. Voting started on schedule. We monitored all the rooms and there appeared to be no irregularities. We met two other observers, Javier, a Spaniard who resides in Managua and the other a Honduran, José Ramon Avila, of “asonog” a human rights group. We left with them after 10:00am and went to the Curoc university (only 1 voting table there). We met a gentleman who was prevented from voting because the records said he was deceased.

Next we went to a small community called Del Valle and as we approached the Escuela Jose Cecilio where voting was being conducted, we went up a steep incline where there were a row of buildings adjacent the school. Mr. Avila said he observed the mayor who has succeeded himself for four terms, jump in his pickup and hurriedly leave; obviously he saw us too. Mr. Avila said he controlled those buildings and that people there were involved in vote buying and coercion.

Next we left to go to Varones Juan Lindo School in another community. On the way Mr. Avila received a call informing him of the incident at El Paraíso, that other compañeros have reported on. Everything at the Juan Lindo school seemed normal. A radio reporter approached one of the team for comment but we were not able to comment. Around 1:25pm we arrived in Las Flores de Lempira, the largest voting center we had observed. Our fellow observers and we visited all the voting tables and detected no irregularities and the voting was carried out within the rules of the TSE. Voters reported some irregularities such as parties selling their credentials to other parties and there were incidents where people were turned away from voting because they appeared dead in their records. There were also dead people, whose record showed them as alive and eligible to vote.
We finished the day by going back to La Medina to observe the closing and counting of the ballots. We observed three tables closing and counting for president. We didn’t observe any irregularity in La Medina. However, voters from Las Flores de Lempira reported some irregularities. With the exception of the one incident in Curoc, where a man was turned away from voting, we observed no irregularity.

Copán – Group Four: Testimony taken in La Entrada

Observers: Madeline McClure, Charley Delaney and Marta Kaufman

Summary of testimony taken in La Entrada, Copán regarding events in Paraíso:

The three testimonies taken contained evidence of human rights abuses targeted at LIBRE party representatives who had been assigned as MER Table Representatives by the TSE. A group of eleven representatives, including the three who gave testimony, left their hotel—El Paraíso Maya in El Paraíso, Copan—at 2:00am on November 24th, to set up the electoral tables. The eleven representatives were sent to four election centers located in La Libertad Nueva, Río Lindo, La Libertad Vieja, and La Playona. At approximately 3:00am, on their way to the first election center in La Playona, the van of eleven representatives was stopped by four vehicles in an area identified as El Mojón. An unidentified man wearing a mask then slashed three of the van’s tires and verbally assaulted the representatives, shouting, “Did you see anything?” and “Do you know who I am?” The unidentified vehicles drove away, and police from La Entrada were able to assist with repairing the van.

At approximately, 5:30am, the representatives arrived in La Playona. They were unable to enter the polling center due to extreme threats of violence. A man named Pinto was identified as orchestrating the intimidation, as well as a military official by the last name of Hernandez. Four women representatives in Río Lindo were told that they would be ‘dead meat’ (carne de canon) if they attempted to participate. Testimony included the taking of voter’s national identification cards, and voters being ordered to vote for Juan Orlando. LIBRE representatives also had their credentials and nations identifications taken. An unidentified woman within the school in La Playona was held hostage. There is also testimony of the election box having been opened without their presence.

The LIBRE representatives returned to their hotel in El Paraíso without being able to fulfill their positions as MER table representatives. At 11:00am, shortly after returning, one representative received an anonymous call to her personal cell phone, further threatening the group and insisting that they leave the area. The caller said, “Son of a bitch, you’re still here? Leave!”

Voting Centers Observed (5):
1) Escuela Morazán, Quimistan
2) Escuela Leonidas Rivera, llama
3) Escuela Guadalupe Ulloa, La Trinidad
4) Escuela Duplex, Santa Barbara
5) Escuela Luis Landen, Petoa

Observations:

• Both Greg and Andria personally witnessed a local National Party member handing out 100 lempira notes to people outside of the gate. She defended herself by saying that she was helping the poor. She was a National Party member and had been a diputada for 30 years. Her name was Chonita (photos 13 & 14 below).

Photos 13-14: National Party congressional candidate seen handing out 100-lempira notes.

• In Quimistan the voting boxes were not taped properly. The bottoms were not taped and the tape was not signed. The boxes were signed, but not on the tape. Greg reported the taping anomaly to the custodies at MERs #5491 & 4077. The boxes were never taped properly.
• MER #14160: A **blind man and woman**, who wanted help voting from the person of their choice, were not allowed. They were **told that officials would have to be the ones to provide assistance.** The door was closed and the companion was not allowed in. The person who “helped” was a member of the National Party.

• A person coming out of MER #14161 totally **wiped the ink off of her finger.** Then Greg went in and put some on his finger and was able to wipe it completely off. Also this classroom was missing its official sign identifying it as MER #14161; the smaller sign on the top of the door was difficult to read.

• **Signing ballots ahead of time:** At several tables, the president and secretary were signing ballots ahead of voters coming to the tables, but never more than four ballots ahead, at least when observed.

• **Purchasing of credentials by the National Party:** At MER #14420 I interviewed all members of table and examined their credentials. I asked each member of the table if they were members of the party identified on their credential. All affirmed that they were. This included the president of the table, Mrs. Martha Julia Lopez, the *Suplente* (substitute) President Mrs. Cresita del Carmen Regalado, both of whom were credentialled by the Christian Democratic party; and the vice-president of the table, Mrs. Eris Oneyda Madrid who was credentialled by the Patriotic Alliance Party. I spoke privately with Mr. Rogelio Antonio Morel, who was credentialled as an election judge by the LIBRE party. He told me that he knows Mrs. Lopez, Mrs. Regalado and Mrs. Madrid personally, and that all **three are active members of the National Party, and that Mrs. Regalado is the sister of a National Party office holder, the mayor of Trinidad.**

• When I further discussed this with all the judges during a quiet moment during the day, they all insisted that their true affiliations were with the party that had credentialled them to be election judges. They further stated that even if their true affiliations were with other parties that would not be a violation of the election law, that **parties often gave their credentials to other parties and that the practice was known of and approved by the TSE.**
• At MER #14420 there were no votes for the presidential candidates of the Patriotic Alliance or the Christian Democratic parties, meaning that not even the election judges credentialed by those parties voted for them and therefore may not have been representing them in good faith.

• Proselytizing at the polling site was reported at nearby Tigre center, so we went there. Witnesses reported that the National Party activists who had been proselytizing to voters while they waited to vote left promptly upon our arrival.

• Anonymous testimony of vote buying/intimidation: Once back in Trinidad I (Michael) was approached by a resident of Trinidad who is employed as a moto-taxi driver, and who had visited multiple polling places in the small communities around Trinidad during the day as he transported voters to and from the polls. He asked me to record his concerns. He asked that his name not be used in my report as he feared reprisals from the government or National Party activists. He reported that he had witnessed coercion of voters by representatives of the National Party, taking place at the polling place in Trinidad and the surrounding villages. He reported witnessing and receiving reports from his passengers that National Party representatives were at the polling places telling voters that there were cameras hidden in the polling places and the government would be able to tell how each voter voted, and that those who voted against the National Party would lose access to payments of the “Bono 10 Mil” and could be subject to other reprisals. He described National Party activists addressing voters waiting in line to vote and insisting that they vote “todo azul” (all blue).

• The same moto-taxi driver also informed me that National Party representatives were at the polls giving out “Cachureca” discount cards attached to flyers with the image and name of the National Party presidential candidate, Juan Orlando. And that they were also giving out PIN numbers for gifts of cell phone minutes in an attempt to win over voters at the last minute before they entered the polling place. He provided these photos (16-18 below) taken with his cell phone.
In Trinidad poll judges closed doors to classrooms at beginning of vote count, causing some consternation among voters who wished to witness count. Members of the military mediated the dispute by suggesting the doors be kept open but desks be placed in the doorway as a barrier. This measure placated the citizens who watched from the doorway and via the classroom windows.

Actas were taken from classrooms to an office in the school for scanning, copying and transmission to the TSE to be performed by TSE custodios. MER members were not allowed to remain in the room and observe this process. One with the MER members (a LIBRE credentialed member) objected vehemently to this exclusion. The custodios insisted that that was the procedure they were instructed to follow. Scanning/copying and transmission was performed without any MER members present. I was allowed to observe and filmed the transmission and copying process for one table.
El Progreso

Observers:
Richard Hobbs, Roger Harris, Meryl Sundove, John Ocampo, Dave Conway, Sherry Teachnor, Michael Wittkamper, Chuck Kaufman, Elane Spivak Rodríguez and Faye Hinze

Voting Centers Observed (7):
Escuela Jaime O’Leary
Jardin de Kinder Care
Escuela Petrolina C. De Villalobos
Escuela Guillermo Jaime Bain
Institución Santa Elizabeth
Colegio San José
Escuela Francisco Morazán

1) Escuela Guillermo Jaime Bain

• **50 meter propaganda rule was violated.** All of the parties had signs immediately outside the school. They were told by the table representatives that “Honduras had a custom despite the law of doing this.” All of the parties were in violation. Handing out papers to tell people which table they were registered to vote at.
• This polling location was forced, due to the number of voters registered here, to have two voting tables in each classroom. This was not ideal as it made for crowding.
• General disorganization at voting tables.
• In the afternoon there was a steady stream of people coming to vote, but the line outside a classroom didn't usually exceed six or either.

2) Escuela Francisco Morazán

• Richard spoke to a person (very big and intimidating), paid to be there by National Party, who said he was there to “maintain order.” He is replaced by a small woman standing in the doorway after Richard asked if they really wanted him there.
• The third largest site in El Progreso **didn’t have a scanner to send the results.** Don’t know what happened in the end with the results.

3) Colegio San José

• Ballot boxes not sealed properly. There was controversy about this.
• Military showed up because they heard there were irregularities.
• Tables having too many Liberal Party representatives; John saw ballots ripped out of book (five ballots missing) – MER #15462

4) Institución Santa Elizabeth

• Polls opened on time. Poll workers seemed comfortable with setting up and were organized in doing so. Initial few voters took a few minutes each as the workers were getting used to handling the forms, etc. No lines formed longer than four people in any event.
• Voters had a terrible time finding their names on the posted signs outside the door
• Didn’t stamp the ballot before it went in the box (voter was told their ballot wasn’t going to count). Voter had put her ballot in box before they had a chance to stamp it. Sherry talked to the MER workers and they said they’ll just stamp it when they start the count.
• One woman was upset that she couldn’t vote. Was told she was in the wrong polling place. Her husband was allowed to vote.
• Voting throughout the morning was slow, but regular. MER workers reported from the two tables that they were getting approximately 50% turnout.

5) Escuela Petrolina C. De Villalobos

• A number of technical and procedural issues similar to others
• Liberals were giving out free food. Paid for by the El Progreso Mayor.
• Complaint that a National Party activist was going into rooms telling people how to vote.
• Complicated process with 21 tables, not in order, very difficult to find
• Electricity went out at 5:13pm at both Morazán and Villalobos. It was reported by the MER representative that the same thing happened last year in 2012 when the vote count started. Power went out at Francisco Morazán and Escuela San Jose.
• Several party activists ushering people through front entrance. If they didn’t have the little paper with their table number then they escorted them outside to the Liberal Party table to look up their number
• A MER member wearing a UD credential told Elane that she was really a Liberal Party representative but was told to wear the UD credential.
Appendix

AFGJ/TFA Election Observers:

George Albro, Lawyer, New York City, New York
Judith Ancel, University Professor, Kansas City, Kansas
Adrienne Aron, Clinical Psychologist, Berkeley, California
Suzanne Baker, Archaeologist, Oakland, California
Ladale Benson, Graduate student (Theology), Concord, North Carolina
Diana Bohn, Ceramics Teacher and Potter, Berkeley, California
Andria Cantrell, Ellenboro, North Carolina
Timothy Close, Franklin County, Ohio
David Conway, English Teacher, Dublin, Ireland
Carol Costa, ESL Teacher (retired), Fairfax, California
Todd Davies, University Lecturer, San Francisco, California
Dave Davis, Retired, Overland Park, Kansas
Charlie Delaney Megeso, Chittenden County Judge and Chair AFGJ, Chittenden County, Vermont
Helen Duffy, School Teacher & Administrator (retired), Oakland, California
Carolina Dutton, College Teacher, San Francisco, California
Ginny Dwyer, Social Worker (retired), Emeryville, California
Allan Fisher, College Instructor (retired), San Francisco, California
Larry Fisk, Ft. Ripley, Minnesota
Tom Gallagher, Healdsburg, California
Helen Gebre Amlak, Overland Park, Kansas
Marta Greenhow Kaufman, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Puerto Rico
Gary Hagemann, Elementary School Principal (retired), Weston, Florida
Roger Harris, Conservation Biologist, Corte Madera, California
Leigh Haynes, Lawyer / Health Rights Advocate, Oakland, California
Faye J. Hinze, High School Teacher (retired), Corte Madera, California
Richard Hobbs, Immigration Lawyer, San Jose, California
Stanley Kaster, Psychiatrist, Brooklyn, New York
Chuck Kaufman, National Co-Coordinator AFGJ, Tucson, Arizona
Jane Keir, Musician and Arborist, Huntington, Vermont
Tanya Kerssen, Research Coordinator, Food First, Oakland, California
Alice Kitchen, Kansas City, Kansas
Allan Lubow, Carpenter (retired), Lagunitas, California
Greg McCain, International Human Rights Advocate, Honduras
Madeline McClure, Chehalis, Washington
John Ocampo, Restaurant Worker, Miami, Florida
Lucienne O’Keefe, ILWU Union Administrator (retired), Greenbrae, California
Kim Porter, Durham, North Carolina
Porfirio Quintano, El Sobrante, California
Maria Robinson, Registered Investment Advisor / Stockbroker, Healdsburg, California
Colleen Rose, Office Worker and Organizer, Novato, California
Stansfield Smith, ESL Teacher (retired), Chicago, Illinois
Dale Sorensen, Marriage Counsellor (retired), Inverness, California
Elane Spivak Rodriguez, AFGJ Organizer, Oakland, California
Rick Sterling, Electronics/Aerospace Engineer (retired), Walnut Creek, California
Roger Stoll, Lawyer (retired), San Rafael, California
Meryl Sundove, Teacher, Corte Madera, California
Aki Tanaka, Electrical Engineer (retired), Oakland, California
Kate Tanaka, Real Estate Agent, Oakland, California
Sherry Teachnor, Attorney, Tucson, Arizona
Michael Terry, Physician Assistant, Oakland, California
Robert Vance Sweet, Masbelvale, Oklahoma
Dave Welsh, Postal Carrier, Berkeley, California
Michael Wittkamper, Clergy (retired), Anoka, Minnesota
Heather Wolford, Graduate student, Eugene, Oregon
Sherlyn Young, Donor Relations / Fundraising Professional, St Paul, Minnesota