



COMMON FRONTIERS

CANADA

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## International Election Observers Head to Honduras

**(Toronto, Ont.)** – An international network of human rights organizations will be sending 180 official election observers to Honduras from November 17-27<sup>th</sup> 2013 to observe the upcoming general election, which will be taking place on November 24<sup>th</sup>.

Common Frontiers Canada is coordinating the Canadian based portion of the delegation which will be composed of representatives from various labour organizations, community groups, academics and a former chief of the Ardoch Algonquin First Nations. The mission will travel to various parts of the country to meet with communities and groups impacted by Canadian investment in mining, maquiladoras and the mega tourism sector.

Honduras is widely viewed as the murder capital of the world, reaching a record high of 7,172 homicides in 2012 (source: United Nations).

Since 2010, there have been more than 200 politically motivated killings and Honduras is now widely regarded one of the most dangerous places for journalists.

According to a 2013 Human Rights Watch report, Honduras has the regions highest rate of journalists killed per population.

The leading Honduran human rights group COFADEH has documented that at least sixteen activists and candidates from the main opposition party LIBRE have been assassinated since June of 2012.

The mission takes place on the heels of the Canadian government announcing the signing of the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement. Raul Burbano, delegation leader with Common Frontier's says, *"It's disconcerting to see the Canadian government focus on increasing its corporate profits via trade and investment amidst a political and human rights crisis in Honduras"*.

Members of the U.S Senate have expressed serious concerns over the increased repression and general atmosphere of fear in which the presidential elections will take place. Highlighting a "pattern of violence and threats against journalists, human rights defenders, members of the clergy, union leaders, opposition figures, students, small farmers, and LGBT activists".

Instead of addressing the crisis, President, Porfirio Lobo Sosa has responded by militarizing the country and deploying 1,300 troops into the streets under "operation liberty". Critics argue this has just exacerbated the problem.

**For more information:** Raul Burbano Program Director, Common Frontiers: (416) 522 8615 or [burbano@rogers.com](mailto:burbano@rogers.com) or in Honduras 011 504 89014511

[www.commonfrontiers.ca](http://www.commonfrontiers.ca)