



## Concerns about election tampering during Honduran Presidential election

Common Frontiers expresses profound concern over the environment of intimidation in Honduras leading up to the elections and the electoral process itself, which has been plagued by delays and a lack of transparency during the vote tally. We are also concerned by allegations of election tampering and falsification of elections results.

On Sunday November 26, 2017, Honduras held elections for president, the National Assembly, and mayors. Leading up to the elections, Honduras experienced escalating militarization and intimidation intended to strike fear in opposition coalition supporters.

Former President Manuel Zelaya's leftist Liberty and Refoundation Party (LIBRE) and Salvador Nasralla's centrist Anticorruption Party (PAC) had joined to form the Alliance Against Dictatorship coalition to run in the elections.

Supporters of the opposition alliances have experienced electoral fraud in the past. It was President Juan Orlando Hernandez's National Party that engineered the coup which deposed President Manuel Zelaya from office.

Hernandez' National Party has control over many of the country's institutions, including the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) and the Supreme Court, that eliminated terms limits so he could run for re-election.

Amid allegations of fraud, the TSE, which is responsible for overseeing elections, still has not declared a winner in Sunday's presidential vote.

With 60% of ballots counted, the TSE announced initial results on Sunday showing Alliance Against the Dictatorship's presidential candidate Salvador Nasralla leading by 5% over incumbent National Party candidate Juan Orlando Hernandez. Two members of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE), Marco Lobo and Eric Mejia, stated the Opposition Alliance candidate Salvador Nasralla's lead in the vote was irreversible.

Inexplicably, election authorities then stopped giving results for more than 24 hours. The long pause in results have led many in Nasralla's party to suspect fraud and his supporters have taken to the streets in protest.

On Tuesday, the TSE finally began releasing vote totals which showed, Nasralla's lead dropping rapidly, and by Wednesday morning results showed that it has shrunk to about 1%.

The European Union election monitoring delegation has criticized the TSE for lack of transparency and for failure to document where the votes tallies were coming from.

Several international elections observers in the country have said irregularities during the vote counting could be potential fraud intended to benefit Juan Orlando Hernandez. As well, prominent civil society groups in Honduras accused the TSE of slowing its release of tallies because it appeared the incumbent president was headed toward a loss.

Hernandez has increasingly militarized the Honduran police and adopted a military style approach to the problem of migration, drugs and crime, an approach favoured by the White House administration - the steady increase of U.S. assistance to the Honduran armed forces is an indicator of tacit U.S. support.

We call on the Canadian government to break its silence about repression, corruption and impunity that have been systematic in Honduras since the 2009 coup.

We call on the Canadian government to stop all political and economic support for the Honduran government until election results can be scrutinized by international observers and declared free and fair, and until the human rights situation in the country improves.

We call on the international community to stay vigilant in order to ensure the democratic will of the Honduran people is respected without repression, fear or violence.