

# Report

WINTER 2019-20

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*“The US Appears to be Destined by Providence to Plague the Americas with Misery in the Name of Freedom.”*  
-Simón Bolívar, 1829

## LATIN AMERICA: 2019, Year of Revolt of the Dispossessed



*Bolivians fight back against coup repression. Photo: Ronaldo Schemidt*

was also arrested months later on a fictitious assault charge.

Colombia receives more US military aid than any country in the hemisphere. It leads the world in cocaine production and extra-judicial killings of journalists, union leaders and environmentalists. The government has repeatedly broken the 2016 peace agreement with the FARC. Death squads targeted former FARC militants, and some of them have returned to the guerrilla struggle. But rightist President Iván Duque’s party suffered defeats in October’s regional and municipal elections. Left-leaning Claudia López became the first woman and first lesbian mayor of Bogotá.

On entering office in 2017, Ecuador’s President Lenin Moreno turned sharply to the right, betraying his own party. He had been vice president under leftist Rafael Correa who campaigned for him. Moreno jailed his own vice president and put out an arrest warrant for Correa (now in exile). Moreno delivered Wikileaks’ founder Julian Assange from asylum in Ecuador’s London embassy

*continued on page 2*

**By Roger Harris and Roger Stoll, Task Force Board members**

In 2018, National Security Advisor John Bolton invoked the 1823 Monroe Doctrine, claiming all territory south of the Rio Grande as the US “backyard”; in 2019, the dispossessed revolted against this barbarism of imperialism and neoliberalism.

**The Andean Nations:** US sanctions against Venezuela began in 2004 and now constitute a total blockade. In 2017-2018, sanctions took 40,000 lives. In January obscure Venezuelan politician Juan Guaidó, acting under White House tutelage, declared himself Venezuela’s president and was recognized by the US and a handful of allied nations. Yet the

coup failed. Massive popular demonstrations rallied in support of the Maduro government. In October, despite US ire, the legitimate government of Nicolás Maduro was voted onto the UN Human Rights Council.

In Washington, North American solidarity activists dubbed “Embassy Protectors” blocked an embassy takeover by Guaidó’s collaborators. With the permission of the Venezuelan government and in defense of international law, they protected the embassy for 37 days, until expelled by the US Secret Service. For their good work, Margaret Flowers, Kevin Zeese, Adrienne Pine and David Paul are being tried on bogus charges. They face stiff penalties. Journalist Max Blumenthal, who covered the events,

### CONTENTS

Latin America	2, 3
Bolivia	3, 10
Haiti	4
Cuba	5
Honduras	6
Mexico	7, 9
Action Alert	12

*continued from front page*

into the hands of the British police. He took Ecuador out of ALBA, the regional organization founded by Venezuela and Cuba, recognized the US puppet “President” Guaidó, and put a US airbase on the Galápagos. He forgave \$4.5 billion of corporate debt, then took a \$10 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan, requiring austerity measures. The indigenous CONAIE organization led mass protests, forcing Moreno to rescind some of the measures and temporarily flee the capital.

In April 2019, Peru’s former President Alan García shot himself before he could be arrested for corruption. Former presidents Alberto Fujimori and Alejandro Toledo also faced prison. Former President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, ex-US citizen and ex-IMF official, resigned in the face of corruption and election fraud allegations. The current moderate-right President Martín Vizcarra dissolved Congress; Congress impeached the executive. While elites squabbled, mass anti-corruption protests decried the dysfunctionality of decadent neoliberalism.

Bolivia boasted the hemisphere’s greatest economic growth and greatest reduction in poverty. Tragically, despite -- or because of -- this success, a US-backed military coup ousted President Evo Morales in November after he won re-election the month before, followed by the illegal government launching a wave of repression against the indigenous and poor, killing many.

**The Southern Cone:** Brazil has the largest economy in Latin America. It’s the “B” of the BRICS (with Russia, India, China, and South Africa) which forms a counter-weight to US imperialism. Jair Bolsonaro is president solely because of the 2016 parliamentary coup ousting leftist President Dilma Rousseff and the fraudulent imprisonment of allied predecessor, Lula Ignacio da Silva, who would have run and beaten Bolsonaro in the presidential race.

Bolsonaro dismantled social welfare programs, cut government jobs, lavished favors on multinational corporations, and blamed everyone for the Amazon fires except his anti-environmental policies. Inevitably, the popular sectors rose. Lula is now out of prison. The struggle continues.

Chileans launched a general strike against austerity. Over a million in the streets chanted “neoliberalism was born in Chile and will die here.” Police killed two dozen and jailed or disappeared thousands. Right-wing billionaire President Sebastián Piñera suspended the rule of law with a “state of exception,” under the constitution fashioned by former dictator Augusto Pinochet. Despite the



*Youth led uprising in Chile. Photo: Luis Hidalgo*

repression, the people remain in the streets.

Argentina’s President Mauricio Macri imposed textbook neoliberal economics to make payments on its \$56 billion IMF loan and the economy failed spectacularly, with 55% inflation, food shortages and capital flight. Even the middle class joined the uprisings of the dispossessed.

In October, center-left President Alberto Fernández and Vice-President Cristina Fernández were elected. They will take Argentina out of the regional anti-Venezuela Lima Group, tipping the hemispheric balance of power leftward.

Daniel Martínez, presidential candidate of Uruguay’s ruling center-left party, Frente Amplio (FA), won a plurality in the October election but lost the runoff, ending FA’s fifteen years in office.

**The Caribbean:** The 1959 Cuban Revolution ousted US-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista and in 1961 declared itself socialist. Under President Kennedy, the US invaded Cuba but failed to overthrow its government. Kennedy then imposed an embargo (now a blockade), intending to starve the Cuban people into renouncing their own government and submitting to US domination.

US regime-change operations against

Cuba were always bipartisan projects, and the blockade continues to be tightened. Yet Cubans show no sign of capitulating. In April, President Miguel Díaz Canel presided over ratification of the new constitution, in a strikingly democratic process involving virtually every Cuban adult, including 780,000 suggestions, 9,600 proposals and 133,000 community meetings.

Puerto Rico and Cuba were seized by the US in the 1898 Spanish-American war; Puerto Rico remains a poverty-ridden colony. Hurricane Maria worsened its plight. Mass protest and a general strike forced governor Ricardo Roselló to resign.

In Haiti, a determined social movement brought Jean-Bertrand Aristide briefly to the presidency after three decades of brutal US-backed Duvalier dictatorships. A US-authored coup ousted and exiled Aristide in 2004. Since then, US-backed presidents have imposed socio-economic conditions even less humane than under the dictatorships.

After the 2010 earthquake, billions in disaster relief and Venezuelan Petrocaribe funds nearly all disappeared into the pockets of corrupt politicians. Protests continued, calling for a new republic of justice and democracy, with the chant: *chavire chodyè* (“overturn the cauldron”). For months the people of Haiti have been in perpetual protest against the hated US-sponsored President Jovenel Moïse.

**Central America:** In Honduras, protests have continued against the corrupt, narco-state of US-backed President Juan Orlando Hernández, unindicted co-conspirator in his brother’s US cocaine smuggling conviction. One sign of hope is the release from prison of political activist Edwin Espinal, aided by an international solidarity campaign.

In Guatemala, the dispossessed rose in protest against the rightist, neoliberal rule of President Jimmy Morales. Tens of thousands marched on Guatemala City, including the indigenous Xinkas. Scars remain from the US-authored dirty wars of the 1980s, which targeted the indigenous, taking 200,000 lives.

El Salvador, another victim of US dirty wars, saw the first hundred days of President Nayib Bukele’s administration bring a shift to the US-favored neoliberal right, away from the politics of the previous FMLN administration.

*continued on page 3*



*continued from page 2*

Bukele seeks to privatize public health, water and utility services. He's slashed public employee jobs and closed the Cuban-sponsored vision clinics of Misión Milagro which treated those who couldn't otherwise afford it.

Invariably the US corporate press ignores US imperial practices that produce the repression, violence and inhumane governance that drive the asylum seekers out of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

In contrast, 2019 was a year of hope and recovery in leftist-governed Nicaragua, which successfully repelled a violent US regime-change operation in 2018. Unlike their Central American neighbors, few Nicaraguans left for the US, instead staying to rebuild their country.

**North America:** Mexico is the second largest economy in Latin America.

After decades of right-wing rule and serial election theft, left-of-center Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) became president last December. His MORENA party swept local and region-



*Lula released from prison. Photo: AFP*

al offices with a broad social program addressing poverty, inequality and corruption. AMLO dissented from the anti-Venezuelan Lima Group and gave political asylum to Bolivian president Evo Morales.

Trump issued AMLO an ultimatum: stop Central American asylum-seekers

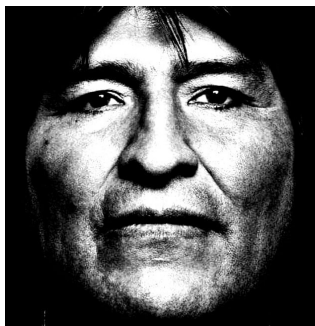
from reaching the US southern border or face tariffs that will wreck the Mexican economy. Earlier, carefully phrased threats issued from the US-dominated IMF, warned AMLO not to resist neoliberal privatization. As nineteenth century Mexican President Porfirio Díaz lamented: "Poor Mexico, so far from God and so close to the United States."

**A New Year's message:** 2019 brought a hard right turn to Brazil and Ecuador and now the Bolivia coup, yet the resistance to imperialist neoliberalism grew. Regime-change operations failed in Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua. US-preferred candidates suffered losses in Mexico, Colombia and Bolivia (hence the coup). The US was weakened by Russia and especially China, now the second largest trading partner with Latin America and the Caribbean. Neoliberalism is not dead but dying.

Addressing the 120-nation Non-Aligned Movement (one-third of which are sanctioned by Washington), Cuban President Díaz-Canel urged: "There are more of us. Let us do more."

Source: *Task Force on the Americas, November 28, 2019*

## BOLIVIA: TFA Statement on the US-backed Coup



The Task Force on the Americas (TFA) condemns the US-backed military coup against the democratically elected government of

Bolivia. We support the efforts of the Bolivian people to restore constitutional order and return President Evo Morales to office. We call on the community of nations to refuse to recognize the coup government and to expel the current coup government of Bolivia from multinational bodies such as the United Nations until democracy is restored.

Morales was the first indigenous president of the largely indigenous country. During the 14 years of his leadership in the Movement Towards Socialism, Bolivia had the highest economic growth rate and the greatest poverty reduction in the Western Hemisphere. Bolivia became a world champion for indigenous and poor people and a leader in the climate justice movement, aligning with the progressive governments of Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua.

Morales was the fairly re-elected president on October 20. Because the US-backed candidate lost, the US called Evo's election "fraudulent." A compliant Organization of American States (OAS) disseminated misleading information on the validity of the election. Thus, the

stage was set for the coup of November 10, when Evo was forced to "resign" by the military who threatened to kill him and his followers.

Many of the coup leaders were trained at the US School of the Americas and have connections to US police, military, and politicians. The right-wing neighboring governments of Brazil and Argentina have also been implicated in the coup. The self-proclaimed and arguably fascist coup President Jeanine Añez smeared indigenous communities as "satanic" in tweets that she later deleted. Meanwhile, Morales is in asylum in Mexico and the indigenous and other poor continue to protest in the face of lethal repression.

The TFA urges constituents to ask their Congress members to sign on to Representative Hank Johnson's "Dear Colleague" letter to US Secretary of State Pompeo, condemning the Administration's support for [the Bolivian] military-backed regime and silence on violent repression [which] contributes to the spiraling crisis.

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## HAITI: On the Anniversary of the Lasaline Massacre the People Rage on against Moïse



By Jonathan Molina, research apprentice at the LatinxAmerica Research on Democracy project at UC Berkeley

As protests demanding the resignation of President Moïse in Haiti rage on this month, leaving at least 18 dead and close to 200 injured, it is worth remembering the devastating massacre that took place because of similar political opposition almost one year ago today. Beginning on November 1st, 2018 in an impoverished neighborhood of Port-au-Prince known as La Saline, estimates are that hundreds of Haitians were murdered or injured, with hundreds more displaced. La Saline, a long-time stronghold of the oppositional Fanmi Lavalas Political Organization, has been severely damaged, enduring the destruction of infrastructures such as schools, homes and hospitals. Scant media coverage mostly portrayed the violence as gang-related. The people of La Saline, however, as documented by first-hand observers, sternly argue that the killings were ordered by the Parti Haïtien Tèt Kale, the ruling party of Haiti, in association with the police. The PHTK, which came to power due to elections that were widely acknowledged to be corrupt, has been involved in numerous other corruption scandals and alleged human rights abuses. It is simply no wonder, then, that the people of Haiti are taking to the streets to protest this government. Infrastructure is being damaged, government-sponsored police are engaging in repressive and violent behavior, and there is little economic opportunity, which effectively limits social mobility. Democracy appears to be deeply undermined to the point of illegitimacy.

Despite the massacre and the ongoing protests, the United States continues to back Moïse, who appears to promote US economic interests at the expense of the general Haitian public, with large sources of funding for the Haitian National Police. Despite the recent mainstream media covering the ongoing protests, the United States' response remains to be seen. With increased public outcry in the US, Congress could be incentivized to reexamine foreign policy that currently creates a double standard in regard to democracy and US economic interests.

For example, in Venezuela, contrary to Haiti, United States intervention currently imposes a seemingly coercive economic embargo to intentionally weaken the government of Nicolás Maduro. Despite less fraudulent elections, less government-backed violence and far more popular support of the government, the US is leading a campaign to seemingly create an undemocratic regime change in Venezuela. Juan Guaidó, the opposition leader whom the US backs and financially supports, has never stood for a presidential election, has been linked to paramilitaries and is widely discredited within the country as a viable candidate. There have already been several failed coup attempts against the Maduro government in Venezuela, and all Venezuelan assets have been frozen by the United States. Crippling economic policy against Venezuela has deeply harmed the people that the US claims to protect. If the US were to be true to its often-stated goal of advancing democracy and protecting the world's poor, Haiti's government should be the focus of human rights intervention to defend unarmed civilians against repressive government violence. As these cases underscore, the promotion of democracy and the protection of the world's poor is not well supported by the US. If it were otherwise, the realities on the ground in Haiti and Venezuela would differ greatly from those which we see today.

Rather, the United States government seeks to strongly promote the neoliberal economic model. Under this model, for-

eign governments promote free trade and open markets. International businesses reap the gains of natural resources and force abusive working conditions and little pay. International investment is encouraged. Businesses move their production to nations in which poor wages, poor working conditions and poor environmental standards thrive. As many scholars argue, the neoliberal economic model leads to corporate gains at the expense of public investment and people mired in poverty. The people of these nations and their interests are left out of the equation. The leftist government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the first democratically elected president of Haiti, was corrupted by a string of US-backed coups. While supported by the people of Haiti, Aristide was detested by the powerful and rich that gained from the neoliberal economic model that they advocated.

Understanding these truths allows for the realization that we should have expected the United States' silence on the massacre of La Saline, as well as the ongoing protests. It is in line with the United States' long-held neoliberal economic and geopolitical interests, which is hard to change. The ruling of the PHTK and the suppression of the Lavalas opposition puts money in the same corporate pockets that fuel campaign contributions in the US. Only now, with the continued protests in Haiti and the loss of lives and injuries imposed on the protesters, is the mainstream media covering their demands. While the demands of the Haitian people should have been recognized much earlier, it is critical for the international public to listen to the Haitian protests and understand the harm the current Haitian government, backed by foreign interests such as the US is inflicting on its people. Popular narratives must be challenged reflecting the voices of those who are deeply affected. The people being attacked and waging protests in Haiti must be heard. And the US Congress should be deterred by its constituents from choosing to fiscally support the repressive Haitian police and, by proxy, the repressive political regime.

Source: *The Daily Californian* on October 25, 2019



## CUBA: Hundreds in Solidarity with Latin America



*Raul Castro and the President's Nicolas Maduro and Miguel Diaz Canal.  
Photo: Bill Hackwell*

**By Alicia Jrapko, Task Force Board member**

On November 1st to 3rd, more than 1,350 delegates from 86 countries representing 789 organizations came to Havana to participate in the Anti-imperialist Conference of Solidarity for Democracy and Against Neoliberalism. Delegates traveled from all continents, particularly from Latin America and the Caribbean. The conference was organized by the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP), and the Central Organization of Cuban Trade Unions (CTC), along with the Cuban Chapter of Social Movements and the Continental Conference for Democracy and against Neoliberalism.

This historic conference took place at a decisive moment for all progressive forces that resist neoliberal policies as the intention of the United States to reconquer Latin America and take over all its natural resources aided by servile oppressive governments and local oligarchs becomes increasingly clear.

In a moving opening presentation, with songs and verses, the children of Cuba's National Theater group "La Colmenita" inaugurated the Conference

embracing with love and tenderness all of those in attendance.

Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla started his speech by saying: "You can feel in this room the deep expression of our peoples and solidarity with Cuba...There will be no sustainable development without the right to the development of the countries of the South, nor can it be done without social justice."

During the second day of the Conference, a special event about the struggle to free the beloved former President of Brazil, Luis Ignacio Lula da Silva Lula, took place with the participation of a large delegation from his homeland. They were presented with boxes of thousands of petitions signed by Cubans demanding Lula's freedom.

Other constant and heartfelt expressions of support of countries in struggle, including the independence of Puerto Rico, echoed in the convention center along with pronouncements in solidarity with the right to self-determination of the peoples of Haiti, Palestine and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic. On the second day delegates participated in six different commissions. Solidarity with Cuba and other just causes took place at the Latin America School of

Medicine (ELAM). Other commissions met at the Palace of the Convention, the site of the conference.

At ELAM arriving buses from the conference were greeted by lines of medical students in their white coats. After welcoming plenary delegates, they divided up by region to develop proposals for action against the blockade.

The third and last day brought endless emotions as participants heard a declaration of Solidarity with the Cuban Revolution and a final declaration of the Anti-Imperialist Conference, including proposals for an action plan that includes establishing a common communication strategy as a weapon of action for the coming months.

Participants were nurtured with three days of positive energy to return to their respective places and continue the struggle for a better world. But the symbolic culmination of the three-day experience was the presence at the closing ceremony of Raúl Castro Ruz, first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez and Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro Moros.

President Maduro spoke first, and brought applause and loud chanting from delegates when he shouted, "We hear him, we feel him, Fidel is present here!" He talked with optimism of the future: "With the strong resistance we've had, we can say today, towards the end of 2019, that a new geopolitical situation is developing in the region and a new wave is rising to face neoliberalism."

In talking about the US Administration, Maduro described it and the regional right as being stupid for blaming him and Raúl for the events in Brazil, Chile and Ecuador. "No! It is only the IMF that is the one to be blamed, together with its neoliberal clients. The ones they are blaming are searching for alternatives to face those wild neoliberal policies of hunger and misery."

"If there is anything we learned from Chávez, it was to be brave. I always remember when he came to Cuba to support Fidel during the worst of the Special Period. More than a few told Chávez, "Don't go to Cuba or you will lose credibility"!

*continued on page 6*

continued from page 5

But Chávez responded, ‘Fidel is the light for the continent, I am going!’ and here he was 25 years ago. A dose of courage is needed to pave the ways of truth. Maduro finished his talk to thunderous applause when he said, “Good and better times are rising in Latin America. Let’s have enough spiritual strength to continue pushing in our century and then no one will be able to take it from us.”

Following President Maduro, Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel spoke. He described the discourse of Trump “as aggressive and dismissive of all those who do not share his approach. The decisions that he makes and tweets, affect millions with the most abhorrent behavior. He talks about socialism without the slightest idea of what it means. And he orders the end of any process or political program that intends to overcome prevailing injustice as if he held the course of history in his hands.”

“He is not the first emperor to try this.



US medical students getting free education in Cuba.

Photo: Bill Hackwell

And surely he will not be the last to fail, because history can only be changed by the people. Fidel said many times that the lie was the main adversary to be defeated in politics and that telling the truth is the first duty of every revolutionary. This is one of our fundamental missions as practitioners of revolutionary politics. The first enemy to cut down is the lie and even more so, the imperialist lie.”

He addressed all delegates by saying: “In your beautiful Declaration of Soli-

darity with the Cuban Revolution, you have written: ‘The peoples of the world need the example of Cuba’, and he recalled Martí’s statement that maintains its relevance: “Whoever rises today with Cuba rises for all time. Thanks for saying it and doing it!”

Venezuela and Cuba are at the center of the most vicious attacks and lies by US imperialism and their lackeys, and the significance of having the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution and the current presidents of both countries together on the same stage was not lost on the audience. The powerful speeches of both presidents sent a message of strength to the struggling people of the world and at the same time a message of defiance to the neo-liberal policies of the Empire of the North. Despite all the attacks and attempts at economic strangulation that both countries are having to endure, here they were standing strong, without fear, surrounded by cheering allies.

Source: *Task Force on the Americas*, November 7, 2019

## HONDURAS: US Implicated in Supporting Drug Trafficking

*By Karen Spring, researcher and human rights activist, currently the Honduras-based Coordinator for the Honduras Solidarity Network (HSN)*

On October 18 in a New York courtroom, Juan Antonio “Tony” Hernández, the brother of Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández, was found guilty of drug trafficking. After nine days of trial, five collaborating witnesses, and five pieces of physical evidence, the New York Southern District court convicted Tony Hernández for drug trafficking, use and possession of weapons to traffic drugs, and lying to US federal prosecutors. In a suit and tie and in the presence of his mother, Hernández received the news that he faces up to three life sentences in prison.

The conviction of the brother of a sitting President in many ways is historic but the most impactful element of the trial was the damning evidence and information revealed about the role of Juan Orlando Hernández and Honduran state institutions in drug trafficking. Five confessed drug traffickers gave testimony at Tony Hernández’s (or TH for his initials he used to stamp his cocaine) trial as part of their plea deal with federal prosecutors. All five outlined TH’s

drug trafficking activities but also touched on how TH, Juan Orlando Hernández (JOH), the public prosecutors office, the judiciary, and most importantly, the Honduran military and police protected them from prosecution, assisted in trafficking drugs, and acted as assassins to eliminate drug rival.

One of the principal arguments of lead federal prosecutor Emil J. Bove was that since 2010, Honduras has been fully converted into a narco-state involved in “state-sponsored drug trafficking.” The level of institutional support in Honduras for drug trafficking, according to Bove, went far beyond just ‘a few bad apples’ in the system.

These powerful statements by a US federal prosecutor have consequences not just for Honduras but for US foreign policy in Honduras. Throughout the trial, a huge pink elephant sat unacknowledged in the corner of the courtroom.

The US support for the construction and maintenance of a narco-state in Honduras increased after the 2009 US and Canadian-backed coup d’état. US support for “state-sponsored drug trafficking,” intentional or not, came in many forms: the Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI) that includes training and financial support to

the Honduran military, police and state intelligence institutions, the Alliance for Prosperity, USAID, and more. Diplomatically and politically, the US supported the two National Party governments under Porfirio “Pepe” Lobo who is named as co-conspirator 3 (CC3) in the same New York drug case and supported two (illegal) Presidential terms of co-conspirator 4 (CC4), current Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández (JOH).

Under President Obama, the US Congress appropriated more than \$2 billion in aid through CARSI to assist the region’s law enforcement institutions and justice systems. The Trump administration has maintained Obama’s security framework for Central America but has focused more on diverting migrants away from the border and ramping up border security.

Some of that \$2 billion went into supporting a Special Commission for the Cleanup and Transformation of the Honduran National Police as scandal after

Continued on page 7



continued from page 6

scandal, assassinations, and organized criminal activities linked to the police, became public in Honduras long before TH was indicted. The Special Commission is still active today but the TH trial helped illuminate the partial if not total failure of the efforts to clean up the police in Honduras.

Most importantly, the conviction of TH in New York helps North Americans make an even stronger argument for US Congressional support for H.R. 1945 or the Berta Cáceres Human Rights in Honduras Act. On top of the human rights abuses against journalists, campesinos, environmentalists, and land defenders in Honduras, we can now easily argue, with evidence and names, that the US through its security aid and training, is supporting an essential element of the “state-sponsored drug trafficking” machine in Honduras.

The US government through the State Department’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) paid the salaries of the two Hondurans who worked on the Special Commission created in 2016. These men worked alongside General Julian Pacheco, a member of the five-person Special Police Purge Commission, supposedly to remove police that are corrupt or involved in organized crime.

This Commission has been criticized extensively for its lack of transparency and public accountability and its failure to prosecute police officers and dismantle



Craig Faller, head of US Southern Command, former US Ambassador to Honduras, Heide Fulton and Honduran President Juan Hernandez.

through judicial action all organized criminal groups operating in the police force. For example, confessed drug trafficking police officer and witness in the TH case, Geovani Rodríguez was removed from the police by the Special Commission without a judicial process that investigates and prosecutes those accused of crimes. Without an accountability process, he and many other police can stay active in organized crime and utilize influence peddling to continue working with drug traffickers. Many officers who were fired like Rodriguez did similarly. They continued illicit activities and/or continue their careers as paid assassins. As ex-Defense Minister Edmundo Orellana told Honduran press, “a large quantity of assassins in this country come from elements purged from the National Police.”

But even the highest levels of the Special Commission have been linked to drug interests. General Pacheco, the cur-

rent Minister of Security, met with drug traffickers and, according to testimony in TH’s trial, received bribes and payments from drug traffickers. This is not surprising since JOH or CC4 nominated Pacheco as Security Ministry who was the official that swore in the members of the Police Purge Commission. Of course CC4 (JOH) would not place anyone on the Commission that could threaten his or his brother TH’s interests in maintaining key allies in the National Police that promoted their drug cartel interests.

US aid to Honduras over the last 10 years has not made Honduras a safer place for its citizens despite this being one of CARSI’s main objectives. Until the Honduran police and military act in the interests of Hondurans and not drug cartels, all US security to the Honduran government should be suspended. All US security aid to Honduras must be stopped until drug traffickers and those that promote their interests are removed from key government positions. While CC4 remains in the Presidential palace, Hondurans will not see an end to impunity and corruption. Despite Trump’s border security efforts, US supported “state-sponsored drug trafficking” in Honduras that terrorizes the population will mean that Hondurans will continue to flee to the US southern borders.

Source: [aquiabajo.com/blog](http://aquiabajo.com/blog). On November 28, 2019

## MEXICO: How Trump Forced them to do his “Dirty Work”

By Carolina Dutton, Task Force Board member

Mexico’s new president Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) laid out a plan for humanitarian migration before he took office last December. He clearly stated, “Mexico will not do the dirty work of the US against migrants. Migration should not be seen as a matter of militarization of borders. Instead its causes must be attended to, above all offering better conditions of life to people so that they are not forced to migrate.”

AMLO proposed a “Marshall Plan” of cooperation between Mexico, the Central American countries with high migration (Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras), and the USA. He proposed investing \$30 billion in megaprojects in Mexico and Central America which would provide jobs in people’s own countries and he promised visas and work permits for migrants to work in Mexico.

When the first large migrant caravan arrived at Mexico’s southern border in

October 2018 it was met with riot police sent by then president Peña Nieto. In contrast soon after he took office AMLO met the January 2019 caravan with humanitarian visas; 12,000 visas were issued in two weeks. Mexico was not prepared, was soon overwhelmed and had to stop issuing more visas. Mexico has not opened new offices to process asylum claims even though the number of applicants has increased 200% from last year.

continued on page 8

*continued from page 7*

Pressure on Mexico from the Trump administration to stop migrants from reaching the US-Mexico border has thwarted AMLO's humanitarian promises.

It is not only Central Americans that come through Mexico on their way to the US. For months Africans and Haitians have been protesting in Tapachula, Chiapas. These protests are a response to raids in the streets and parks of Tapachula where immigration authorities and the National Guard have been detaining them. The demonstrators have been chanting; "Down with racism," "Liberty for African migrants." "The life of a human being is not equal to a piece of paper." They are demanding free passage through Mexico to the US or documents that allow them to remain and work in Mexico.

The US has instituted two new policies this year which place a great burden on Mexico. "Metering" places a limit on how many asylum applications are accepted by the US each day at any port of entry. This creates long waitlists of people needing food and shelter along the border. In August about 20,000 migrants were waiting in Mexico to apply. Meanwhile Mexico has agreed to another US policy which took effect in January, "Migrant Protection Protocols" (MPP), better known as "Remain in Mexico." After applying for asylum migrants must wait in Mexico until their claim is heard. There are about 60,000 migrants waiting near the US-Mexico border. Waiting migrants often fall prey to violence by gangs, in border cities.

A new US Homeland Security policy took effect on July 16. According to this new rule migrants who pass through a third country in order to reach the US must apply for asylum in a third country and be denied before they are eligible to apply for asylum in the US. This may cause Mexico to receive many more asylum applications.

AMLO's "Marshall Plan" includes megaprojects designed to develop the region and provide jobs for Mexicans as



*Migrants at Mexico's Southern border. Photo: ABC news*

well as migrants coming through Mexico's southern border. These projects are all in the country's southern states, which are less industrially developed than the north and have large indigenous populations. The projects have been in the works for decades and have been consistently opposed by indigenous and environmental groups. Previously known as the "Plan Puebla Panama" they have now been given new names: the Trans Isthmus Corridor (Oaxaca, Veracruz), the Mayan Train (Chiapas, Yucatan, Quintanaroo, Campeche, Tabasco), a proposed extension into Guatemala, and the Plan Integral Morelos (Puebla, Tlaxcala, Morelos). These plans have large amounts of private foreign investment behind them as well as support from the US and International Financial Institutions all of whom are undoubtedly pressuring AMLO to move ahead with these lucrative projects.

The Trans Isthmus Corridor is a giant superhighway to transport goods from the Pacific to the Atlantic coast and includes deep water ports at each end, in Oaxaca and Veracruz. It also includes *Maquilladoras* to produce products for export. Some consider this corridor a new "wall" to deter migrants from traveling north and to keep them in southern Mexico working for much lower wages than they would earn in the US working for the same corporations. Bettina Cruz, an indigenous organizer from the Isthmus of Oaxaca says that the corridor serves "to stop migrants, acting like a

deterrent by providing some jobs, but only low wage jobs ....This is only for the benefit of multinational corporations. It is not for us indigenous peoples."

In May Trump threatened Mexico with tariffs if the country didn't reduce migration through Mexico to the US. AMLO agreed to reduce migration within 45 days. He explained his decision, "What will we gain with 25% tariffs? The economy will collapse. We don't want a commercial war with the US."

One of AMLO's strategies for meeting Trump's demand has been the deployment

throughout Mexico of the new controversial National Guard ostensibly created to fight crime. In June 15,000 troops, mostly National Guard, were deployed to the northern border. They are stationed along the length of the border from Baja California to Tamaulipas. Now heavily armed Mexican troops detain migrants before they even cross into the US.

More than 6000 National Guard troops have also been deployed along the 1000 kilometer long southern border with Guatemala. This has forced migrants to cross into Mexico from Guatemala by the most dangerous routes. The role of the National Guard in the south is to detain migrants and turn them over to immigration authorities or to reinforce immigrant checkpoints within Chiapas with armed guards. Since 2014 the southern border has been highly militarized, financed by US taxpayers through the "Plan Frontera Sur" under the "Merida Initiative." Now Mexico has been forced to increase the militarization with its National Guard under the command of the military commander of Chiapas, creating a second border wall at Mexico's southern border. It looks like Trump has found various ways to force Mexico to pay for his border wall.

*Source: Task Force on the Americas, November 15, 2019*



## MEXICO: AMLO, A New Hope for Mexico



After a year AMLO maintains a 70% approval rating.  
Photo: Yael Martinez

By Rick Sterling, President, Task Force on the Americas

With 129 million people, Mexico is the 10th most populous country in the world. It has the largest population of any Spanish speaking country. It has the 15th largest economy in the world. Political and social developments in Mexico are important for the entire western hemisphere.

Mexico is in a period of potentially profound change. President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) and the MORENA Party are charting a dramatically new path for the country. In the 2018 election López Obrador (AMLO) decisively defeated the other candidates. He assumed office on December 1st, 2018.

From 2000 to 2005 Lopez Obrador was head of government for Mexico City. He left office with a high approval rating. In 2006 he ran for the presidency as candidate of the PRD (Party of Democratic Revolution). Despite widespread irregularities, Felipe Calderón was declared the winner.

In 2012 AMLO ran for president again. With widespread accusations of vote buying, Enrique Peña Nieto won the election. Following the election AMLO declared he was founding a new party, the Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional (MORENA).

In the 2018 election, AMLO won the presidency and his party, MORENA, won a majority in both the Chamber of Deputies and Senate.

López Obrador analyzes Mexico's problems and presents his solutions in his 2018 book *A New Hope for Mexico*. He sees the primary problem as corruption and neoliberal politics which has given rise to "rampant inequality, shock-

ing poverty, frustration, resentment, hate, and violence."

He identifies the enemy: "In Mexico the governing class constitutes a gang of plunderers...the astounding dishonesty of the neoliberal period (from 1983 to the present) is wholly unprecedented." He names leading economic and political oligarchs who profited from privatizing public institutions; people like Carlos Slim, Pedro Aspe, and others. He documents the changes under Salinas' rule that rolled back the right of children to free education.

López Obrador explains, "The first thing we must do is to democratize the state and retool it as an engine of political, economic and social growth. We must rid ourselves of the myth that development requires blind acquiescence to market forces... Mexico will not grow strong if our public institutions remain at the service of the wealthy elites."

AMLO asserts, "The problem is corruption, not a lack of funds... the budget is used to maintain an onerous bureaucratic structure that serves the political mafiosi.... Reassigning misallocated funds to the benefit of production, employment and general well-being is a wholly attainable goal."

AMLO describes the decline of Mexico's industrial infrastructure in the neoliberal period. Banks were bailed out while "neoliberal technocracy has led to partiality with respect to hiring, and always at the expense of unions. There have been massive waves of firings."

AMLO describes ambitious plans: new refineries and renewable energy to make the country energy self-sufficient; a transportation corridor which will convey containers from the Atlantic to the Pacific; guaranteed crop prices to enable food self-sufficiency; expanding tourism in the Caribbean, Mayan and Olmeca regions; planting large areas in the southeast with timber and fruit trees; ready loans to small farmers; training and internships for youth.

López Obrador says such development is possible by reducing spending in some areas, and "we will also save by cutting back on purchases of ships,

planes and helicopters...[and] sell those used by high ranking officials including the president; we will keep only those used for medical emergencies, security and public safety... The first priority must be serving the poor. Only through the creation of a just society will we achieve the revitalization of Mexico."

He contrasts his goals for Mexico with those of the US, where the Trump administration has increased military spending while slashing spending on housing, transportation and education.

López Obrador believes neoliberal economic policies have been especially detrimental in villages and rural areas of Mexico. As a result of these policies, small farmers have lost their livelihoods and food imports have risen dramatically. He writes, "The abandonment of our rural areas has taken a heavy toll on production, has increased migration, and fostered societal breakdown and violence."

López Obrador writes, "The crisis of public safety and violence that we face today is the product of a poorly conceived war on drugs that relies solely on coercive means. The security crisis that plagues Mexico is a result of a confluence of factors: poverty, injustice, and exclusion, aggravated by the inefficiency of the authorities and corruption within the police and the judiciary."

He proposes to combat police and judiciary corruption, to use the army and navy to protect public safety, to develop and utilize a National Guard, and to change laws regarding drug use. Above all, he emphasizes, it is necessary to provide positive alternatives for youth. "The belief that the deterioration of our social fabric can be combated only through use of force is profoundly wrong and highly dangerous, as Mexican history amply confirms."

During his presidential campaign, López Obrador visited several US cities. He especially addressed Mexican Americans but his words are relevant for all Americans: "We must convince and persuade these who were brainwashed by Trump campaigns rethoric... We must reach out to lower and middle class American workers, explaining that their problems are rooted in the poor distribution of income..."

*continued on page 10*

*continued from page 9*

We must raise awareness among Americans of good faith who have been tricked by the propaganda campaign against Mexicans and foreigners.”

After one year in office, the AMLO government has significant accomplishments: minimum salary has been dramatically increased, the bureaucracy and top government salaries have been cut, small loans and grants are going directly to farmers, the billion dollar gas thieving cartel has been exposed and attacked, a 44 billion dollar infrastructure plan has been launched, and programs to benefit youth and the elderly have begun.

AMLO sets an example of hard work and transparency. Each day begins with a 7 AM press conference. The Presidential jet is up for sale and he flies economy on commercial air planes. During this first year in office, he has not left the country but travels constantly within Mexico seeing the conditions hospitals, schools, factories and the small cities and towns that make up so much of the country. AMLO still lives at his home and the presidential palace is open to the public. While he has a 70% approval rating,

there are challenges and opposition. The Mexican economy has been near recession throughout the year. Some of the development plans have significant opposition. For example, indigenous organizations oppose the proposed Maya

this year when the US and Canada tried to impose a new government on Venezuela. The subordinate Latin American countries went along with Washington. Mexico did not.

As the recent coup in Bolivia unfolded, President Evo Morales' life was threatened and Mexico granted asylum to him when he was forced to flee Bolivia on a Mexican military plane.

As the Trump administration escalates its economic and political attacks on Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua, Mexico's independent stance is especially important. AMLO's administration has stood up against the US in the reactionary Organization of American States and the specially created anti-Venezuela Lima Group. Recently AMLO has moved even further to the left when he welcomed Ecuador's former socialist leader Rafael Correa, followed by Cuba's President Díaz-Canel, and he hosted Argentina's newly elected progressive president Alberto Fernández for his first foreign trip. The lead that AMLO is taking on foreign policy does not sit well in Washington and that can be seen in critical articles showing up in the US corporate media indicating that Mexico is a potential threat to US security.

Despite areas of contention and uneven progress, a new and hopeful process for the majority of Mexicans has begun thanks to AMLO and MORENA.

Source: *Task Force on the Americas*, November 30, 2019



*Photo: Bill Hackwell*

Train. AMLO now says it should not be started if the people of the region do not support it and it cannot be completed.

The changes in Mexico are also important on the international scene. For several decades Mexican foreign policy has been subordinate to Washington. Now it is returning to a foreign policy based on principles of self-determination and non-interference in the affairs of other nations.

The difference was important early

## BOLIVIA: Hatred of the Indian

*By Álvaro García Linera, Bolivian Vice President in Exile*

Ed. note: *This article is substantially abridged from the original, found here: <https://peoplesdispatch.org/2019/11/19/hatred-of-the-indian-by-alvaro-garcia-linera/>*

Hatred rapidly traverses the neighborhoods of the traditional urban middle-class of Bolivia. They go out to hunt the rebellious Indians that dared to take power from them.

In Santa Cruz, they organize motorized hordes with sticks in hand to punish the Indians, those that they call *collas*, who live in peripheral neighborhoods



*Indigenous women being tear gassed in El Alto. Photo: AFP*

[traditional skirt worn by Indigenous and mestizo women] they hit her, threaten her.

In Cochabamba, they organize convoys to impose their racial supremacy in the southern zone, where the underprivileged classes live, and charge, as if it were a cavalry contingent, at thousands of defenseless peasant women that march asking for peace.

and in the markets...if on the way, they come across a woman wearing a *pollera*

*continued on page 11*



# S O U T H A M E R I C A

*continued from page 11*

They carry baseball bats, chains, gas grenades. Some carry firearms.

The woman is their preferred victim. They grab a female mayor of a peasant population, humiliate her, drag her through the street. They hit her, urinate

Indigenous people and urban dwellers resisted the coup and began to retake territorial control of the cities. But just as the balance of forces shifted in their favor, the police mutiny occurred.

The same happened with the armed forces. During all of our time in government, we never allowed them to repress

(more than 50% of functionaries in public administration must be Indigenous, new national narrative around the Indigenous sector) and the reduction of economic inequality (the difference of income between the richest and the poorest fell from 130 to 45). All this meant the systematic democratization of wealth,



access to public goods, opportunities and state power. The economy has grown from 9 billion dollars to 42 billion dollars, widening the market and internal savings, which has allowed many people to own their own homes and improve their work activity.

Thus, in a decade, the percentage of people of the so-called “middle class” went from 35% to 60%. The largest part of them came from the working-class and indigenous sectors. It was essentially a process of democratization of the social goods through the construction of material equality. But this inevitably has caused a

rapid devaluation of the economic, educational and political capital held by the traditional middle class. In the past, a notable last name, the monopoly over “legitimate” knowledge, and their family relationships allowed the traditional middle class to access posts in public administration, obtain loans and bids for projects, or scholarships.

In Bolivia, social class is only comprehensible in the form of racial hierarchies. Inheritance of the last name and skin fades in the face of the democratization of goods. Although the traditional middle class raises the flag of democracy, in reality, they have risen up against democracy understood as a leveling of social classes and the distribution of wealth.

*Source: Peoples Dispatch, English translation by Zoe PC, November 19, 2019*

*Indigenous women resist. Photo: Reuters*

on her when she falls to the ground, cut her hair, threaten to lynch her, and when they realize that they are being filmed, they decide to throw red paint on her.

In La Paz they tear down the Wiphala, the Indigenous symbol, they spit on it, they step on it, they cut it, they burn it. Racial hatred is the political language of this traditional middle class.

The OAS spoke of “clean elections” but of a weak victory and asked for a second round, against the constitution that states that a candidate that gets more than 40% of the votes and has more than 10% over the runner-up wins.

On the night of Monday, October 21, they burned five of the nine electoral offices, including the ballots.

Paramilitary groups besieged institutions, burnt trade union offices, set fire to the residences of candidates and political leaders of the governing party. Even the president’s home was looted. In other places, families, including children, were kidnapped and threatened with being whipped and burned if their parent, a minister or union leader, did not resign.

civic mobilizations. However, they had no hesitation in seeking the resignation of president Evo, in violation of the constitution, and did whatever was possible to attempt to kidnap him. When the coup was consolidated, they went to the streets to militarize the cities and assassinate peasants. And now, in only five days, there are more than 18 dead and 120 injured with live bullets, nearly all of them indigenous.

How did the traditional middle class incubate so much hatred and resentment towards the people, and embrace racialized fascism with the Indian as the main enemy? The answer is the rejection of equality, which is to say, the rejection of the fundamentals of substantive democracy.

The last 14 years of the government by the social movements were characterized by the leveling of the social classes, the sharp reduction in extreme poverty (from 35% to 15%), the broadening of rights for all (universal access to healthcare, to education and to social protection), the Indianization of the State

# A C T I O N   A L E R T

## Emergency Action Alert for the People of Bolivia!



*Bolivian police breaks up funeral procession of the victims of military repression. Photo: Ronaldo Schemidt*

Call your congress person today to urge them to sign on to Rep. Hank Thompson's "Dear Colleague letter" calling on the Trump administration to support human rights and restoration of constitutional order in Bolivia.

As the level of repression against supporters of Evo Morales and the gross violation of the human rights of the Indigenous people of Bolivia escalate it is urgent that we push our representatives today to condemn the role of the US State Department in the coup that ousted the constitutionally elected president of that Latin American country.

So far 14 representatives have signed on including; Rep. Hank Johnson, Rep. Ilhan Omar, Rep. Susan Wild, Rep. Raul Grijalva, Rep. Jan Schakowsky, Rep. Jared Huffman, Rep. Deb Haaland, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Rep. James McGovern, Rep. Jesus G. "Chuy" Garcia, Rep. Bobby L. Rush, Rep. Ayanna Pressley, Rep. Alan Lowenthal and Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton.

The letter is directed to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and starts by stating, "We are deeply concerned that recent statements and actions on the part of senior Trump Administration officials are contributing to an escalating political and human rights crisis in the Plurinational State of Bolivia following contested elections held on October 20, 2019. We are dismayed that the Administration has failed to denounce racist attacks targeting Bolivia's indigenous communities and their symbols."

For the full statement go to <https://hankjohnson.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/rep-johnson-colleagues-call-trump-administration-support-human-rights>

For more info contact: [Chelsea.Grey@mail.house.gov](mailto:Chelsea.Grey@mail.house.gov) or call 202-225-1605

***-Support Task Force on the Americas in 2020!-***

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