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Report from Honduras on the new government of Libre Party leader Xiomara Castro

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Lucy Pagoada introduces Gerardo Torres at the meeting on Honduras. SLL photo: Gary Wilson

Honduran Vice Minister of Foreign Relations Gerardo Torres was introduced by a teacher, Lucy Pagoada — Coordinator of D19: Libre Party USA-Canada and Costa Rica, which is coordinated in Honduras by former President Manuel Zelaya — at a full house in the People’s Forum in New York on Dec. 6. Following is a summary of his remarks, addressed to the enthusiastic gathering of Hondurans and their supporters.

Honduras did not have regular elections for 13 years. After the government of Honduran President Manuel Zelaya was overthrown by a military coup d'état in 2009. Xiomara Castro Zelaya, the first lady, went to the streets and became the leader of a revolutionary process that put an end to one of the most violent, weaponized dictatorships in Latin America.

The regime was violent and, at the same time, one of the largest drug cartels in Central America. In November 2021, despite the years of brutal repression and murder, the Honduran people defeated the Juan Orlando Hernández regime by electing President Xiomara Castro, making her the first female president of Honduras.

Immediately after the inauguration of President Castro, the U.S. extradited Hernandez for drug trafficking and money laundering. Obviously, the U.S. had not just discovered that Hernández was running a drug cartel. If the Hondurans did not have an election victory, that cartel would still be flourishing.

Why did they have to wait for a political and electoral defeat to bring down the cartel? Why did it last 12 years? Why were the heroic Hondurans — who struggled for their country, its natural resources, for control of the Honduran military forces — condemned and murdered? Would they allow this criminal organization to take over the country and enrich themselves under their extremely violent rule?

A couple of years ago, the U.S. government may have asked themselves, what do we do with this country that has been historically the most conservative and obedient to the U.S.? It is a country that the U.S. used as a base for attacks on revolutions in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. This country, with valuable resources, has been one of the most important U.S. military bases in the region.

They saw that Hondurans were trying to create a new constitution. They were trying to establish relations in Latin America with countries like Brazil and Venezuela. They

didn't accept the "free trade," policies that were robbing their resources and destroying the environment. So the U.S. said do we let this socialist, leftist movement get into power, or do we stop them by allowing a drug cartel to take over Honduras?

Why, when they are willing to do so much to stop progressive movements from gaining power — why is it still possible that elections can be won in Venezuela, Uruguay, Brazil, Colombia, and Chile? [Cheers] Why are progressive elections taking place in Honduras and Mexico despite years of brutal repression?

[Torres said that he was visiting New York as Libre Party International Secretary, Director of the Political Education Institutes to take part in [The New International 1974 -2024 Economic Order \(NEIO\)](#). This meeting is called to analyze the possibility of creating alternative economic models. He said the discussion is opening now because many countries are moving away from the destructive capitalist, neo-liberal economic model.]

When Fidel Castro and Berta Cáceres and other fighters, intellectuals (the majority of whom came from underdeveloped countries) told us that if you continued to extract natural resources to expand industry and exploit people, to reduce them just to merchandise with no wages or jobs, the consequences is that our way of life will be destroyed. If we don't resist the greed of the small minority of capitalists, all will be lost.

If we want to participate in the transformation of our society, we have responsibilities. First of all, we have to organize in our communities. Second, we have to understand our environment, have critical thinking to see the truth behind what we are being told, and to be able to grasp reality. The third is to have the imagination to see a different way of moving forward. We need to rethink economics, culture, social relationships, couples, children, neighbors, and friends. That is revolutionary ideology, and in Latin America, that is an anti-capitalist, anti-neo-

liberal model that is winning elections. Now it has the responsibility to change things.

We are most focused on the way wealth is produced and distributed. Wealth in Honduras has always been concentrated among a rare few. It has been based on extracting resources and also on the monoculture of agriculture, bananas, and sugar. In our country, a small group of powerful businesses benefits from their relationship to the government.

The Venezuelan government of President Nicolas Maduro is currently creating an International Commission Against Corruption and Impunity at the U.N. Within the next two years, it plans to bring this body from the international community to Honduras with the goal of ending corruption.

Changes under the Castro government

Until now, Honduran people have only had electric light if they can pay for it. It is expensive. President Castro's government is guaranteeing access to electricity and other forms of energy to all Hondurans.

In another area, Castro is planning new development that will come from the communities. The process may be slower, but it is the only way economic growth will be democratic. In the past, development was concentrated in small isolated areas with enormous capacities for production.

We are a social-political movement that focuses on human rights. We organized our party in the streets, protesting against the coup, calling ourselves the resistance. We are the resistance. President Xiomara Castro has stood up to the police forces, to the military forces. One of her main goals is to promise that there will never be another coup, that the police and military will never again be used to torture, criminalize and murder the Honduran people who protest.

We are reestablishing connections with the international community. With the support of this community, the government is investigating incidents carried on by the coup, such as the disappearance of Garifuna leaders and hate crimes like the murder of transsexual woman Vicky Hernandez on the same day as the coup in 2009.

The electoral victories in Latin America are only part of a much larger struggle. While each country is making its own way, we see the alliance with each of these progressive movements as a base of support for our own development.

