

Honduran Christians Respond to Political Unrest With Prayer

✖ As ousted Honduran President Manuel Zelaya meets with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton this week in Washington, D.C., Christians in the Central American nation are responding to the political unrest with fasting and prayer.

The Apostolic Prophetic Network of Honduras launched a 21-day fast on June 30—two days after the Honduran military arrested Zelaya and sent him into exile in Costa Rica. The ouster prevented a national, nonbinding referendum that could have led to a constitutional revision allowing Zelaya (pictured) to seek re-election.

“The fast is ... to unite the church, bring peace to the country, protect the country from outside invasion and, of course, as the church we’re praying against demonic forces over the air, land, sea that would come in against us,” said John DuBose, a member of the apostolic network and a missionary in the nation for 13 years.

The prayer effort—launched the same day an earthquake measuring 5.8 on the Richter scale shook the nation—has united thousands of Honduran churches across denominational lines.

“The pastoral and church associations have united like never before to intercede, maintaining [a spirit of] neutrality while inviting peace and respecting order and justice,” said Patricia Guevara, a journalist at the Christian radio station La Voz Evangélica de Honduras (HRVC), according to HCJB Global Voice, a Colorado-based missions organization that partners with the Honduras broadcaster.

"We see this as an opportunity for an awakening of the evangelical church in Honduras," Guevara added. "We are on our knees before the Lord."

James Graham, who leads International Gospel Outreach, the Alabama-based missions network that DuBose is affiliated with, said Honduras has been experiencing "real revival," and the political unrest may be an answer to prayer.

"This is warfare against the good things that could happen in Honduras," Graham told *Charisma*. "It may be [that] God is preempting some things by getting the guy out of office, God is laying the foundation for a true revival to sweep through that country."

DuBose said Honduran churches have been praying against increasing crime and government corruption for the last several months. "The church is not against Mel Zelaya, but what he was doing in trying to bring the country into what most of the country sees as a puppet state of Venezuela, of Hugo Chavez—in other words, a dictatorship," DuBose said. "[Zelaya] is talking about democracy, but in fact he was bringing the country [in] the other direction."

Despite pressure from the United Nations, the U.S. and the Organization of American States (OAS), current Honduran leaders have refused to reinstate Zelaya. On Monday the military would not allow Zelaya's plane to land as he attempted to re-enter the country, prompting protests that led to the first casualty since the ouster.

During meetings in Washington, the U.S. may try to forge a compromise between Zelaya, Roberto Micheletti, who is serving as interim president, and the Honduran military. Under the possible agreement, the ousted president would be allowed to serve out his remaining six months in office with limited and clearly defined powers, a senior U.S. official told the Associated Press (AP). In return Zelaya would promise to

abandon efforts to change the constitution in order to run for another term, the official said.

Missionaries in Honduras say the mood has remained calm, but some are adjusting their plans to host short-term teams this summer. Orphan Outreach has moved several of its interns out of the capital, Tegucigalpa, to avoid potential problems, a ministry spokeswoman told HCJB Global.

"We had already made a decision for their safety and moved them out of Tegucigalpa, but they are not able to do the ministry that they were called there to do right now," Orphan Outreach spokeswoman Tiffany Taylor said.

Although the population is divided on whether to support Zelaya or the interim president, Christian leaders in Honduras say the vast majority of Hondurans welcome a change in government. They also dispute claims that Zelaya was removed through a military coup.

They said the army carried out orders from both Congress and the Honduras Supreme Court, which accused him of treason and abuse of authority after he continued to push for the referendum even though both Congress and the courts had labeled the move unconstitutional, the *New York Times* reported.

Gordon Garrett, president of Heart to Honduras, said missions leaders in the nation say the majority of people believe the Honduras Supreme Court and Congress made the right decision "to remove a president that continued to violate the Honduras Constitution."

"Zelaya claims to be the advocate for the poor but aligns himself with Chavez, Castro and other socialist/communist leaders who claim the same," Garrett said. "Have we seen the poor of those countries rise from poverty to a better life of freedom? Zelaya knowingly and repeatedly made decisions that violate the Honduras Constitution-a constitution of democracy.

I am baffled by the strong unified support of the international community for Zelaya.”

Garrett and other church leaders urged Christians outside Honduras to pray for the nation.

Because of the ouster, the OAS suspended Honduras from membership last weekend, and the nation-one of the poorest in the Western Hemisphere-now faces trade sanctions and the loss of hundreds of millions of dollars in subsidized oil, aid and loans, according to the AP.

So far, the White House has not taken steps to punish Honduras, but President Obama has denounced Zelaya’s ouster. If the State Department were to classify Zelaya’s ouster a coup, the nation would lose more than \$100 million in U.S. aid, the AP reported.

“For the average Honduran, [sanctions mean] that the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere might rise to No. 1 on that infamous list,” wrote Leon and Judy Greene, missionaries to Honduras through Action International Ministries, in an update on the political situation.

“It will hurt the average subsistence farmer. It will mean even less food and fuel available in the country. It will mean even less medical care available from the government. ... So please pray for the country of Honduras, for her people, and for a speedy resolution to this crisis.”