

Exclusive Interview with Honduran Agrarian Leader Rafael Alegría “We are preparing a massive reception for Zelaya”

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Honduras, 30th June 2009.- Exclusive interview with Rafael Alegría, leader of the National Field Worker’s Center (CNTC by its Spanish initials), founder member of the Democratic Union and the farmers organization Vía Campesina; adviser to President Zelaya in recent years on agrarian issues.

APO: Comrade, President Zelaya announced today that he will return to Honduras on Thursday, are you preparing anything in response?

RA: We are preparing to give President Zelaya a massive reception, the Honduran people are preparing for it and without a doubt we hope that Zelaya will take control of the State and the government as the legitimate President. This will enable us to bring an end to the efforts we are making, and the confrontation and mobilizations can give way to peace and tranquility and to continue to govern for the good of the majority, trying to reorder the democratic state that we hope for in Honduras.

APO: Today we witnessed violent situations in the areas around the Presidential residence, do you have any information about this?

RA: In terms of the violence around the Presidential Palace, we saw how a peaceful march that brought more than 25 thousand people together, met with tremendous repression from the Police and the Army of Honduras with tear gasses containing extremely toxic substances, that were fired from helicopters and special guns. The people resisted but the gasses have seriously affected the health of our people, and, according to a statement from the Red Cross in Honduras, more than 50 people were injured.

APO: What is the current situation with the curfew?

RA: Social leaders are being constantly threatened, because we categorically reject Roberto Micheletti as president. With regard to the curfew, almost no one has respected it in the country, more than 2 thousand people stayed in the streets, day and night, in front of the presidential palace. Today they said that they curfew will start at 6pm, but nobody complied with it, and we are still here, resisting. I would like to denounce that this evening the police attacked against eight buses that were under the coordination of Father Camayo. The tires were destroyed by gunshots. The repression is terrible and we fiercely reject it.

APO: There has been unanimous support from countries in the hemisphere in support of President Zelaya's constitutional government, the countries of the ALBA have withdrawn their ambassadors and have announced economic sanctions and the isolation of the /de facto /regime. How do the social movements view these events?

RA: We have been very aware of the international actions, deliberations and agreements and this support gives us infinite pleasure, particularly the actions of the ALBA, that have been followed by the Rio Group and the Organization of American States (OAS), including the declaration from the President of the United States, Barack Obama. These actions reflect a general consensus in America and also in the European Union to reject the /coup/ and recognize and support Mr José Manuel Zelaya Rosales as the only President elected by the Honduran people. All these actions have helped to keep morale up and maintain the resistance that is taking place throughout the entire country. There has been fierce repression, but this has not demoralized the masses in deposing Micheletti's fascist regime and returning President Zelaya to power this week.

APO: There has also been news of military risings. Do you know anything about this?

RA: The comrades responsible for taking the Tela road said that the soldiers were encouraging people to keep up their peaceful occupation and saying that they would not repress the people because they were opposed to the /coup d'état/. This gives us faith in those in charge of the Atlantic region and there are rumors that the military base in Olancho may follow the same instructions. We also believe that there are soldiers who do not support the decision of the Joint Chief of Staff. This /coup d'état /is promoted by retired military men who come from a past where they were involved in the violation of human rights in the 1980s.

APO: Anything more to add?

RA: I would like to call on the whole world, from Honduras, and ask them to maintain their solidarity together with our people and with the Zelaya government, as there is no doubt that the international support for defending our rights gives us hope that we will soon recover our government.