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# **Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Wednesday, March 9, 2011**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Dean Allison**



## Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

Wednesday, March 9, 2011

• (1535)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC)):** I call the meeting to order.

I want to welcome everybody to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, meeting number 50.

We have a chance today to hear from the Committee of Relatives of the Disappeared in Honduras and a number of other groups. I believe Mr. Neve is going to introduce the presenters today.

We're going to start with Bertha Oliva. Then we're going to hear from Pedro Landa, Maria Luisa Regalado, and then finish with Professor Scott.

I believe everyone's going to take five minutes. We have someone on the line from Honduras via teleconference, not via video conference.

I'm going to turn it over to Alex Neve from Amnesty International, who's going to make some introductory comments, and then we'll pass it down the line.

Welcome, sir.

**Mr. Alex Neve (Secretary General, Amnesty International):** Thank you very much, Chair, and good afternoon, everyone.

I'm going to say a few brief words just to situate the presentation you're going to hear from us this afternoon. Amnesty International is a member of the Americas Policy Group, which many of you will know is an organization made up of approximately 40 trade unions and faith groups and other non-governmental organizations. Obviously these organizations were deeply concerned by the coup in Honduras in 2009 and the human rights abuses that continue to be committed in its aftermath.

Last year, the Americas Policy Group submitted a policy brief on Honduras with specific recommendations to the Canadian government, and we certainly welcome this appearance today before your committee to share and build on those concerns and recommendations.

To make the best use of your time and ensure you can hear from those whose views truly matter, Amnesty International detailed our concerns in a written submission, the central message of which is that the terrible abuses that were committed during the coup and its aftermath have not yet been addressed by the current government—far from it. The Honduran reality today is one of continued human rights abuses and impunity.

Therefore, Amnesty International remains concerned about an ongoing pattern of threats and attacks, together with a failure to properly investigate these crimes and bring the perpetrators to justice.

In such a context it cannot be business as usual for Canadian policy. There certainly needs to be accountability, and therefore there needs to be careful monitoring of what has and has not been done by the Honduran government. There needs to be thoughtful, firm pressure by Canada to repair the damage done by the coup and to achieve conditions of respect for human rights and the rule of law.

At a minimum, there also needs to be transparency around negotiations for a free trade agreement with Honduras and an independent human rights impact assessment carried out before proceeding to sign any such agreement.

It's crucial that Canadian policy toward Honduras be informed by the observations of Honduran civil society organizations, which are doing tremendous work at great personal risk and amid huge obstacles, so this afternoon you will have the opportunity to hear from important leaders engaged with different sectors of Honduran civil society, including the most vulnerable sectors.

First you will hear from from Bertha Oliva, of the renowned Committee of Relatives of the Disappeared in Honduras; then Pedro Landa, coordinator of the respected Honduran Centre for the Promotion of Community Development; then, on the phone, Maria Luisa Regalado, who is the coordinator of CODEMUH, which promotes the rights of working women; and finally Professor Craig Scott, who is currently serving as a commissioner on the Honduran civil society Truth Commission.

At the end, obviously, we all look forward to answering your questions.

With your permission, Mr. Chair, I will now turn it over to Bertha Oliva for the first presentation.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Ms. Bertha Oliva (General Coordinator, Committee of Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared in Honduras) (Interpretation):** Good day, and thank you for this opportunity. It is a pleasure to be here before your committee to discuss the serious human rights situation in our country.

Work done by our organization in 2010 gives us evidence that the Honduran state is now broken. Since the June 28 *coup d'état*, we have not been able to rebuild our country.

Honduras must absolutely be able to re-establish its constitutional order. Violations of human rights make us believe that this is a failed state. Parts of Honduras are invaded now by criminals working hand in hand with the authorities. There have been reports of the violent deaths of 10 journalists; 10 journalists were assassinated between 2009 and 2010. Further, 16 people are being killed on a daily basis for political reasons in Honduras. These have been men and women, in the cities and in the countryside. Many of them are young, and most of the murderers have yet to be found. They remain at large with impunity. Why? Because of the fact that the state or its agents are complicit. We are defenceless, and unfortunately human rights advocates are powerless.

Statistics are conclusive. Out of 272 death threats that have been uttered, many are against human rights advocates, so it is officially a crisis. It is difficult to defend the rule of law. The rule of law there has been violated as of June 28.

Politically motivated assassinations, violations of the right to life, show that our state has failed. It has collapsed. Four hundred and sixty-three people were murdered in the year 2010, to say nothing of the political persecution reigning in Honduras today.

We do not have a security policy. In fact, we have a repression policy. Political assassination and persecution are rampant. One hundred and fifty-six individuals are currently exiled from Honduras. This did not happen on the day of the *coup d'état*. Fifteen days ago young people were removed from our country because of the persecution they were subjected to. Moreover, the state has taken measures against these people. The state has shown no political will to defend these young people, so today we condemn this situation, and we call on the Inter-American Human Rights Commission to take measures.

We presented 190 applications for measures to be taken for the people of Honduras. The most recent measures were presented February 22, February 24, and yesterday. Indeed, we called for two additional measures to support human rights advocates.

• (1540)

In all forums we are raising the issue that Honduras is currently experiencing a human rights crisis. We should take advantage of this opportunity to reiterate that the rule of law in Honduras is broken, and on the remains of this collapsed state, we have been unable to rebuild a country worthy of its name. In other words, we've been unable to create a national assembly that could be considered legitimate and worthy of the name.

Some people say that our government was freely and justly elected, but we are here to tell you that the elections that took place were not transparent. Therefore they were irregular, and the results of this are blatant. When the elections were called, these elections—which really were not elections—led to the assassination of five people in Honduras. Many people were wounded. People have been persecuted and were persecuted the day before the elections were called.

We are concerned about the right to life in Honduras. This is the most fundamental right, and there has been violation after violation in this country. In Honduras, any person who challenges the *coup*

*d'état* suffers consequences. The people I'm going to refer to today have been killed, and they're flesh and blood.

In fact, my time is up, so I won't say any more, but thank you.

• (1545)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Oliva.

We're now going to move to Mr. Landa. You have five minutes, sir.

**Mr. Pedro Landa (Coordinator, Honduran Centre for the Promotion of Community Development)(Interpretation):** Good afternoon, honourable members of Parliament. I thank you on behalf of my people for this opportunity to speak to you today.

It has been suggested that in the context of a significant improvement in respect of human rights and democracy in our country, the conclusion of a Canada-Honduras free trade agreement would be acceptable. The fact is that our daily reality shows that the situation regarding human, civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights continues to deteriorate in Honduras. Nonetheless, as far as we are concerned, this notion is only part of the debate. Human rights, of course, play an essential role, but in the context of these discussions of commercial activities, it is only part of the debate. The other dimension is that commercial activities in themselves have an impact on respect for and enjoyment of human rights, and states therefore have a responsibility pursuant to international human rights agreements, a responsibility to ensure that this impact will be positive and not negative, even if those activities are being carried out beyond their borders.

We know that with respect to the negative effects, this is the reason that we were discussing Bill C-300, which promotes better social responsibility for corporations engaged in activities of mining, oil, and gas in developing countries. We have to continue these discussions. The effects of all of these decisions have not yet come to fruition. We know that in December of last year there was another discussion held a short while ago. Unfortunately, in Honduras no one is aware of the effect and the potential consequences of all of these. We are not getting access to information.

Long before the *coup d'état* in Honduras, several mining corporations with Canadian capital had been involved in questionable situations, either through commission or omission, that constituted acts of corruption as well as disrespect for and violations of international human rights standards. This situation motivated us to work together with the Canadian Catholic organization Development and Peace and Honduran civil society for the last eight years in carrying out an advocacy campaign aimed at changing the mining law in Honduras. A number of members of Parliament had in fact supported us in this regard and had sent letters to our Parliament to ask for accountability on the part of Canadian companies in Honduras.

Human rights organizations in Honduras, as well as the public prosecutor's office on environmental crimes, have noted various crimes involving water pollution, environmental damage, and the violation of the people's right to a healthy environment as a result of the actions of the mining companies. In other words, they are complicit. These companies are therefore complicit in human rights violations.

All of this is also happening while the economic elites and political elites turn a blind eye. We believe that signing a free trade agreement in these conditions is reprehensible. One cannot support the forces that organized the *coup d'état* and that continue to have power in our country.

• (1550)

Further, we ask that you not legitimize these human rights violations, assassinations, illegal detentions, and the like. It is a crime in Honduras even to have an opinion that is not in line with that of the current government. Any free trade agreement would legitimize this type of oppression.

We're here to ask Canada to support us and to delay signing a free trade agreement with Honduras. The signature should be conditional on meeting requirements, including significant improvements in respect for human rights in Honduras. That's the only way to promote the rule of law.

Second, Canada has to require Honduras to engage in a transparent process for commercial activities so that all social sectors can be involved, so that anyone potentially affected can be involved.

We also have to have fair trade policies that are consistent with international policies and that take into account the environment, climate change, and human rights. These policies mustn't be there just to promote wealth generation and economic growth.

The regime in Honduras today should have to take concrete steps to improve the prosecution of human rights violators before, during, and after the *coup d'état* of June 2008, as my colleague Bertha Oliva said before. To date, none of these crimes has been investigated or has led to any charges. A clear message has to be sent to Honduras. You mustn't support a regime that engages in this type of practice and does not promote justice and fairness.

When it comes to hydro production and mining, there has to be a policy to promote human rights and international standards. Unfortunately, Canada is seen abroad as a country that makes off with other countries' natural resources without any concern for society.

Urgent steps are necessary to put an end to persecution and threats against the general population, and resistance groups in particular, including human rights advocates.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Landa.

We're now going to move to a teleconference. We're going to hear from Ms. Maria Luisa Regalado.

**Ms. Maria Luisa Regalado (General Coordinator, Honduran Women's Collective):** Good afternoon.

First of all, you have to understand that Canada is negotiating a free trade agreement with the Porfirio Lobo Sosa regime. That treaty, that regime, is violating people's human rights and their labour rights.

I'd like to talk about the Gildan Activewear's practices as well. The company is violating labour standards, recognized standards. The

shifts are far too long and include night shifts. Gildan Activewear has 11½-hour shifts on average, both day shifts and night shifts. These are flagrant violations of national labour standards. Gildan Activewear is a Canadian company. It was criticized by employees for violating labour rights.

There are huge health and safety problems in the workplace. Workers are working in non-ergonomic work stations. The company requires its workers to make excessive physical efforts and imposes production targets of over 500 pieces of clothing per day. This piecework is excessive. The workers, the women who work for Gildan, with our support filed a grievance or complaint about Gildan Activewear and brought this problem to the attention of the international community. The workers' health problems are the direct effect of the work situation. Workstations, as I said, are not ergonomic, and complaints were made in 2008. Since that time, the length of shifts has only gone up. In fact, the women who work for Gildan now have to work six days a week, 70 hours a week. It's a difficult situation for these women who work for Gildan Activewear.

It goes beyond the standards. We made a complaint against Gildan Activewear. Gildan Activewear imposes work conditions without any study or concern about the potential effect of those conditions. They are thereby jeopardizing the health and safety of the women who work for them. The company has increased the length of the workday and has increased production targets. Basically, two people are doing the work of three. In short, we've been able to see for ourselves that 92% of the women who work for Gildan are suffering from musculoskeletal problems—in other words, problems with muscles, tendons, and joints. They have problems with all this. Many of them have two or three illnesses, occupational illnesses, at the same time. Despite complaints to the labour department, this situation continues.

• (1555)

We don't understand how the company is able to get away with this. Workers don't even have time to brush their hair, or they can't brush their own hair because their shoulders are so sore. We've made complaints nationally without any success, and that's why we've brought our complaints to the international stage.

We are calling for the international community to insist on Honduras enforcing its own human rights standards in legislation and its labour standards, and that Honduras require Gildan Activewear to comply with our legislation. We complained to the FLA Friday of last week. They have 40 days to respond to our complaint. They're going to have to tell us within 40 days if they can solve the problem with Gildan Activewear.

The company will have to either solve the problem or compensate workers who were injured in the workplace.

• (1600)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Now we're going to move to our last witness for today on this issue.

We have Mr. Craig Scott, professor of law from Osgoode Hall Law School, York University.

Welcome, sir; the floor is yours.

**Prof. Craig Scott (Professor of Law, Osgoode Hall Law School, York University):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon, honourable members of Parliament.

As the chair has indicated, I am a professor of law at Osgoode Hall Law School, but I'm also one of nine commissioners on a non-governmental *comisión de la verdad*, or truth commission, established by a civil society coalition of human rights organizations in Honduras. It was inaugurated eight months ago, on June 28, 2010, which was the first anniversary of the 2009 *coup d'état* in that country.

In the minutes I have, I have four main purposes. One is to explain briefly how the civil society Truth Commission came to be and what our mandate and working methods are. Second, I will say something very briefly about the human rights situation. Third, I will comment on what I consider to be a complementarity between the work of the commission I'm on—the civil society Truth Commission—and an official governmental commission, called the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, on which another Canadian sits, Mr. Michael Kergin. Fourth, to the extent I have time, I'll note some questions that both commissions need to analyze in the sphere of the rule of law.

My notes are written out, but they're in English, so only once they are translated into French will they be available for the entire committee. However, we've provided them to the committee. I won't be speaking to all aspects of my text.

The first point is on the civil society truth commission—let me start, actually, with the other commission. President Pepe Lobo, the holder of the presidency at the moment, established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by executive decree. It began its work in May of last year. Now, this official commission's mandate is to clarify the facts “that occurred before and after June 28, 2009, in order to identify the acts that led to the crisis situation” and to make proposals to the Honduran people in order to avoid a repeat of such acts in the future.

They're due to report in mid-May, we were told two days ago. As I mentioned, a Canadian, a former Canadian ambassador to the U.S., Michael Kergin, is one of five commissioners, as is the former vice-president of Guatemala, Eduardo Stein, who is the chair.

Now it's fair to say that deep mutual distrust within a polarized society is a defining feature of Honduras at present, and it's perhaps not surprising that the coalition of human rights organizations called the *Plataforma de Derechos Humanos*, decided to constitute its own commission.

Generally put, our commission has the mandate to investigate, document, and analyze the nature and dimensions of the coup as well as the climate of human rights violations following the coup and up until the present, and indeed up until this coming June. In order to come to grips with the two fields of focus—the coup and human rights violations—it's necessary to understand the multiple dimensions of the fragile and compromised state of the rule of law in Honduras.

A crucial part of our report will be recommendations on the accountability of state and individual actors, on necessary structural and institutional reforms, and on desirable action from international

institutions. We expect to report in October with a report that will be in both Spanish and English.

A team of staff members, who I'll note are not just dedicated but courageous, has experienced a multitude of threats in the months of November and December, which thankfully have quieted down in the last couple of months. I offer my thanks to the embassy of Canada, and to the ambassador, for the concern expressed by Canada and the willingness to consider further actions on the part of Canada if the situation worsens for our staff members.

The team is looking into four prongs of investigation. One is a contextualized understanding of the entire situation in Honduras, historical and sociological. The second is a study of the nature of the coup, both from a factual perspective and in terms of the legal justifications that have been offered by some actors. Third is a study of the human rights situation in Honduras in terms of the facts and the application of relevant law to those facts. Fourth is an analysis of options for recommendations in light of accumulated, comparative, and international experience.

On the human rights situation, I'll briefly say that a wide range of credible and authoritative institutions have issued reports on what is viewed as a serious deterioration of the human rights situation in Honduras since the coup. They include the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the UN High Commissioner, and the International Commission of Jurists.

•(1605)

It's very important to know, in line with what you've already heard, that such reports have by no means focused only on the six months between the coup and the holding of elections in November 2009. For example, an interim report from the International Commission of Jurists just this past December focuses on the serious problems of the rule of law and the organization of impunity in Honduras.

Perhaps surprisingly for external observers, since the immediate post-coup regime headed up by Roberto Micheletti ceded power to the government of Porfirio Lobo after the November 2009 elections, the situation is not getting better, and indeed in certain respects, is getting worse. I can give examples during the talk.

Briefly, on complementarity, there is great value if Hondurans, the OAS, Canada, and Canadians have the benefit of the report of both the commissions to allow broader, more informed, and more inclusive national and international deliberation on ways forward for Honduras.

I am inclined to think about the relationship between the two commissions in terms of a fuller truth, including—as may be produced by discussion and debate—any differences in findings, interpretations, and recommendations in the two reports. In the most simplified sense, as I have said more than once to journalists in Canada and Honduras, more truth is better than less. In a more complex sense, it's not just a quantitative matter; it's also a qualitative thing. I think we're more likely to arrive at a deeper truth.

It's important to take into account two facts. Within this way of thinking, note the very different mandates and different emphases of the two commissions. The official commission is focusing on what their mandate calls "a crisis", without using the word "coup", and their investigations are to stop with the start of the current presidency of Pepe Lobo.

The human rights situation in Honduras is not specified in the President's mandate for the official commission, and I believe the term "human rights" appears once. It receives only an indirect mention in the mandate, so we don't know what we can expect from the other commission in terms of how far they think they can go in that area.

I'll end here, but there's also the important reality of the two commissions having access to different actors and different forms of evidence. For example, the official commission—at least by its mandate—has full access to executive branch documentation. On the other hand, our commission has much more extensive and higher-quality access to information on the human rights situation in the country, both because of the documentation that human rights organizations are assisting us with and because we have adopted an approach to comprehensively documenting the situation through individual witness testimony.

My final point on complementarity is that it's not just about a fuller and a better truth: it's a prudential and strategic recommendation. Honduras is a highly polarized society with immense distrust, including distrust on the part of many Hondurans of the official commission and obvious distrust of our commission on the part of other sectors. There are thus political legitimacy consequences if the Honduran government moves ahead based solely on the official commission's report. To move ahead of having both reports is not just to lose the benefit of more knowledge and a healthier basis for debate and deliberation; it's also to risk, and indeed practically invite, exacerbation versus amelioration of the fractures in Honduras.

Such prudential considerations also apply to external actors. The OAS, for example, is viewed by many in Honduras as having sided with justice and the rule of law even if pressure was ineffective in carrying out the OAS's own call for the coup regime to stand down and allow Zelaya to return to the presidency. If the OAS were now to act in a way that is perceived as an abandonment of its support for democracy and human rights—for example, a premature lifting of the suspension of Honduras from the OAS—it will take a huge hit in terms of its respect levels in the country.

Finally, Canada also has to consider the context in which it takes initiatives, including the planned free trade agreement between Canada and Honduras.

As predicted, I didn't get to the fourth point—the rule of law—but I'm happy to answer questions.

Thank you.

• (1610)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We only have our Spanish interpreters until half past, so we're only going to have five minutes for each round and we're going to

have one round. I think we can get that in at least, and we'll move from there.

I'll stop talking and turn it over to you, Dr. Patry, for five minutes, sir.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** Thank you very much.

I want to thank our guests and tell them how much we are pleased to welcome them today.

My first question is for Professor Scott.

It is a great pleasure that you could take part in this hearing. You are a member of the commission of prominent experts in human rights and the international law of the civil society.

Could you tell this committee whether your commission, which is parallel to the governmental commission, will make its report public anytime soon?

[*English*]

That's my first question.

[*Translation*]

I will ask my second question right away.

[*English*]

I'll give them all in a row.

[*Translation*]

Did your associations, which appeared today before this committee, submit a brief to the truth and reconciliation commission set up by the government?

My third question is this: at the United Nations, there was recently a general report on the working group,

[*English*]

the working group on the universal periodic review in Honduras, and there were a little more than 112 recommendations. These recommendations should have already been checked by the Government of Honduras. They're supposed to give their answer to these recommendations this month.

Did you hear about these recommendations or the response from the Government of Honduras? *Merci*.

**Prof. Craig Scott:** Very quickly on the first question, we will be reporting in October. Our first draft, an internal draft, won't be public until the end of June, and we'll be working on it then.

On the third question—I'll leave the second to my colleagues here—I have the working group report from January from the UN Human Rights Council under the universal periodic review and a range of answers Honduras has already given, but there's a reserve list of maybe a dozen or 15 to which they still hadn't responded in the last few days. I haven't seen responses to those. They may well have come in, because the Human Rights Council is sitting. Somebody else in the room might slip me a note if they know more, but I don't.

**Mr. Bernard Patry:** As for the second question, I just want to know if your association presented *un mémoire* to the other commission.

**Prof. Craig Scott:** I'll quickly say I believe they haven't.

**Ms. Bertha Oliva:** What we thought when the human rights advocacy groups.... What we were told was that there was going to be some information provided to the Honduran people and not the commission. I should point out that it's not a parallel commission; it's simply a truth commission that aims at finding the truth. It will be reflecting on and will be producing a study for the people of Honduras and the world, but it doesn't have to present any reports to the truth and reconciliation commission.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Pearson.

**Mr. Glen Pearson (London North Centre, Lib.):** Thank you all for coming. It's important that we hear directly from you.

Briefly, Mr. Scott, you mentioned how, as the talk of free trade goes on, the human rights situation in Honduras is deteriorating. You also mentioned some groups that have chronicled and spoken to that. It seems odd to me that we would seek to be working on these higher arrangements when underneath all of that there is a deteriorating situation.

Can you tell me again who those groups are and what some of their findings were?

**Prof. Craig Scott:** The credible organizations issuing reports in one form or another are almost too numerous to name, but the last report of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which is intergovernmental, was from an on-site visit from last May, which was four or five months into the current President's period. There is a preliminary report of the International Commission of Jurists, based in Geneva, a highly recognized organization; I think their final report on the state of the judiciary in Honduras is expected sometime in late fall. This is about a 10- to 12-page report on the overall problems in the judiciary and the problems of impunity in the country.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and Amnesty International have both had different kinds of reports. One thing I would emphasize is that the best work that goes on in Honduras is done by Honduran organizations. I would also say that what I've been struck by in my experience working through the civil society commission is the care that Bertha Oliva's organization takes to document facts almost conservatively. They're very careful to make sure they can only claim what the facts show. I've seen a number of cases of people taking issue with whether or not they've interpreted something correctly and have said that this may just be a crime situation. They're not going to definitively say it's a political act. I think that shows great care. When you see their stats, their stats border on being conservative, even though they're frightening.

Thank you, Chair.

•(1615)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Pearson.

We're now going to move to Madame Deschamps for five minutes.

[Translation]

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am sorry that we have so little time to deal with this very serious situation.

Military and civil personalities and even some companies played a major role in the coup. Could we say some of them are also involved in the development of the free trade framework that is being negotiated?

Mr. Kent, the former Minister of State of Foreign Affairs for the Americas told this committee in June 2010 that he was in favour of the reinstatement of Honduras in the Organization of American States. In the present context, is it a good thing that Honduras should be readmitted as a member of the OAS?

[English]

**Mr. Pedro Landa (Interpretation):** With respect to the first question, yes, there are individuals and corporations who were involved in the *coup d'état*, who planned it and even supported the coup regime, and today they are involved in negotiations of the free trade agreement.

In the notes that I presented to you, the brief, it is stated that there is a direct relationship between these corporations and the private corporations in Honduras, the leaders of which played a part in the *coup d'état* to support the regime that was then installed and that represents these private companies that are negotiating with Canadians. There is a direct relationship between these people who might be signing the free trade agreement; in fact, they were the people who were behind the *coup d'état*.

Second, with respect to the OAS, I will defer to my colleague.

**Ms. Bertha Oliva (Interpretation):** We believe that given the seriousness of the situation and the urgency of the human rights situation in Honduras today, the idea of voting in favour of readmitting Honduras to the OAS would in fact be signing a blank cheque to allow for more rapes of women and assassinations of men, women, and children. In fact, this would not contribute to the rule of law in the country and it would not at all improve the situation of human rights in Honduras.

We say this in light of certain things. In Honduras there are some areas where we are very vulnerable. There are some death squads, military squads, and police squads on the ground. I'm thinking about the serious situation in Bajo Aguán in northern Honduras. The same can be said about Zacate Grande, which is in the southern part of the country.

When I'm thinking about certain areas I'm thinking of, for instance, the judiciary. It's a very vulnerable sector of our society. I would like to point out that in this respect it can be said that there have been nine people assassinated among the judiciary since the *coup d'état* in 2010.

•(1620)

[Translation]

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** Since I have a little bit of time left, maybe I could let Mr. Dorion use it.



**Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ):** I would like to know why teachers are more particularly targeted. Why are they being killed this way?

[*English*]

**Ms. Bertha Oliva (Interpretation):** We believe that the teachers are being targeted because they're a very well-organized group and are unionized also. It can be said that teachers have a bit of a leveraging effect, if you will. They're in the schools and it's bit of a mission, in a way. It's not surprising to us at all that these individuals would be targeted. They're being targeted, but the youth are being targeted as well. Young people in the colleges and universities, as well, are being targeted. This is a very strong segment of society, and we think it's sort of the bedrock behind this popular resistance movement in our country asking for the constituent assembly. This is the only way in which Honduras could get new a constitution, through this constituent assembly, which of course is something that was lost on June 28. That's what we were seeking then.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

That's all the time we have. I apologize. I'm trying to fit everyone in here.

Mr. Goldring, you have five minutes.

**Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for appearing today, ladies and gentlemen.

I'd like to talk a little bit about Gildan, as it's featured in some of the reporting, but first I want to relate my experience. When I was in Haiti in 2006, I specifically asked to see the Gildan factory there, to talk to employees, to talk to the management, to ascertain the situation for myself. We all hear rumours of sweatshops and abuses. They had one plant, and they had plans for two more. I hope that in the study of Haiti we will have an opportunity to talk to them on that too, if the plants are still standing and operating.

I had experience in my previous life with manufacturing, and I had my own factory on a small scale. The factory in Haiti was clean and well organized, with a well-organized cafeteria. I talked to the employees. It was air-conditioned. I talked to the employees about whether they were happy with it. They have practically zero turnover in employment and they seem very happy with the work.

I was there with Alexa McDonough, and I'm sure she would have said something if she had noticed anything awry. I was also there with Bloc MP Thierry St-Cyr, and he concluded that this was important for the country of Haiti. It was 5,000 family-sustaining jobs. They were paying the equivalent of double the minimum wage, which here in Canada would be \$20 an hour. That's what I determined. Maybe I didn't drill deep enough or look into all of the facts, but my experience runs quite counter to what I'm reading in the reports and hearing.

Have you done comparable studies of other factories in Haiti, Honduras, Canada, and the United States? Have you looked at the injury rates for this type of manufacturing in a variety of countries?

As unfortunate as it is, injuries do happen. They happened in my factory. They happen in all factories, but as to numbers of injuries in various countries, do you have any stats? Is this exceptional? How does it relate?

**Prof. Craig Scott:** I think this is best answered by Maria Luisa, who's on the phone.

**Ms. Maria Luisa Regalado (Interpretation):** Here in Honduras, the situation is concerning. It's quite a negative situation for the workers. From time to time, workers come together, and people who have about 30 years' worth of work are injured. They can no longer work in their own homes. They can no longer support their families.

Some people have shoulder injuries and can't do the work. They're experiencing many difficulties. These employees have consulted doctors. They've been getting shoulder injections, and then they're sent back to work. In some cases, it's taken six months to a year before they were able to see a doctor and have the right tests done.

Workers work as a team, and they can't go see doctors. The company doctor has to provide a document—

• (1625)

**Mr. Peter Goldring:** I'd like to make a comment. Some of this seems to be hyperbole. Certainly it calls for a countering or a balancing comment from the company itself on what their opinion is. I think all these factors are very relative. Are the injury rates relative to similar types of manufacturing?

On the bottom of this report, I see a complaint saying that each piece of Gildan clothing that we wear is manufactured through the fractures, back injuries, shoulder injuries, and arm and hand injuries of the workers.

**Ms. Maria Luisa Regalado (Interpretation):** The company is violating the labour code. Working hours are supposed to be eight hours Monday to Friday and four hours on Saturday. In other words, it is 44 hours. We're actually working up to 69 hours a week. There is no air conditioning. Workers would need good working conditions. These workers have to produce 400 to 550 dozen items of clothing, and then they have 15 minutes to eat, barely, and then come back as soon as possible to the work stations.

[*Witness speaks in Spanish*]

[*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

**The Chair:** I think we have the system overloaded, because nothing is working. Sorry.

We'll go to Mr. Julian now, but we're out of time. Why don't we start? I hope the system works.

Peter, why don't you go ahead now?

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster):** Mr. Chair, I believe the witnesses have their own translator. With your permission, what I'll do is give the question first—

[*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

• \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

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• (1710)

**The Chair:** Once again I apologize for the system. It appears that it will not reboot.

The meeting is adjourned.

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