

Testimony of Lanny J. Davis

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House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere

Thank you Chairman Engel, Ranking Member Mack, and members of the Committee. I am here today speaking on behalf of my clients, the members of the Honduran Chapter of the Business Council of Latin America (CEAL), to provide you with their perspective on the situation in Honduras. Like former justice Perez, my clients came here this week to talk about Honduran democracy, not about Venezuela or Nicaragua.

The Honduran business community has three messages that they wish to communicate to the members of this Committee and the United States government as a whole:

- First, my clients are businessmen and do not have expertise on legal and constitutional issues, which the courts and the duly elected representatives of the people of Honduras must ultimately decide. However, the members of CEAL strongly believe that any analysis of the events of the past weeks must be viewed through the prism of the rule of law and the facts of Mr. Zelaya's actions. Honduras has made steady progress in strengthening its democracy over the past 27 years, and in order to continue this progress the rule of law must be followed. They believe that no one is above the law – including the President – under the Honduran Constitution, just as no one is above the law under the U. S. Constitution.

- Second, CEAL believes that the most productive thing Honduras and the international community can do at this point is to stop looking backwards to the question of Mr. Zelaya's removal, but instead to look forward to a solution that protects Honduran democracy. My clients believe the best chance for a solution is the dialog between Mr. Zelaya and President Micheletti, mediated by President Arias, that is now ongoing in Costa Rica. As you know, Secretary Clinton has endorsed this dialog. My clients thank Secretary Clinton for her support and believe that the best thing that Congress can do for the Honduran people is to provide its full support for this dialog.
- Finally, CEAL would like to emphasize that it does not have a position on what the outcome of the dialog between Mr. Zelaya and President Michelletti should be, so long as the outcome is a Honduran solution to the current situation that safeguards Honduras's constitutional democracy, Honduran sovereignty, and the safety of the Honduran people. No one wants bloodshed and nobody should be inciting violence. The talks with President Arias are the best hope for a Honduran solution and that is why my clients support these talks and hope Congress will do the same. In the long term, the ultimate solution, which my clients wholeheartedly support, are free, fair, and democratic elections leading to the inauguration of a new President in January in accordance with the Constitution. There has been some discussion in Honduras that the elections may be moved up to an earlier date than the date in November that they are scheduled for, and

CEAL would welcome such a move. The sooner Honduras is able to show the world that their democracy is alive, and indeed thriving, the better.

Thank you again Chairman Engel, Ranking Member Mack, and members of the Committee, I hope I can help answer any questions you might have.