

Ranking Member Connie Mack  
House Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere  
The Crisis in Honduras  
Opening Remarks

I want to thank Chairman Engel for holding this hearing today. I also want to thank our witnesses for being here. As we hold this hearing, parties from all sides are meeting in Costa Rica to negotiate a peaceful and democratic resolution.

But it is important to look at the whole picture. Who are the main players? How did we get here? And who is meddling from the outside?

Now Mr. Chairman... we have Mr. Zelaya. A man who refused to listen to the Honduran Supreme Court. A man who refused to listen to the Honduran Attorney General. A man who refused to listen to the Honduran Congress.

Mr. Chairman, this is a man who tried to undermine the legislature, the judiciary, the Attorney General, the Human Rights Commission, the Catholic Church, evangelical groups, business associations, and four of the five political parties represented in the National Congress!

Including his own party!

I am interested to hear what our panel has to say on this. Not only that Mr. Chairman. This is a man that when told "no" by the courts, took it upon himself to storm a military base and seize and distribute ballots for an illegal referendum. Ballots that had Hugo Chavez's fingerprints all over them.

It seems to me that the more we look at Mr. Zelaya, the more we find a man who believes he is above the law, untouchable, and clearly a man who has no respect for democracy.

I also look forward to hearing from our panel on the links between Hugo Chavez and Mr. Zelaya. Since he was exiled, Mr. Zelaya has been flown around the hemisphere on Venezuelan jets. The ballots that were going to be distributed for this illegal referendum were printed and flown from Venezuela. Furthermore, there are reports that Mr. Zelaya has been involved in drug smuggling from Venezuela and other places in South America.

Also, there is little doubt that Mr. Zelaya violated Article 239 of the Honduran Constitution, which clearly states that "anyone who violates this provision must immediately cease the discharge of their duties."

As the parties negotiate in Costa Rica, I want to make one last point.

I believe the Obama Administration should be commended for making a renewed commitment to Latin America.

But at the same time, by calling this a coup and by, early statements, insisting on the reinstatement of Mr. Zelaya, the Administration now stands with the likes of Chavez, Morales, and Ortega -- and not with the Honduran people.

While we all want a peaceful and democratic resolution, now is the time to stand for freedom and with the Honduran people in their fight against the tyranny of the Bolivarian revolution.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for holding this hearing and I look forward to hearing from our panel today.