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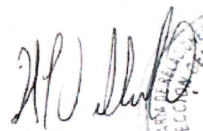
MUY URGENTE

PARA: JEFES DE MISION Y JEFES DE OFICINAS CONSULARES DE HONDURAS

Atendiendo instrucciones del Embajador José Isaías Barahona Herrera, Subsecretario de Estado para Asuntos de Política Exterior, se tiene a bien remitir para su conocimiento, copia de la Traducción Oficial aprobada del idioma español al inglés, de la Declaración del señor Abogado Juan Orlando Hernández Alvarado, Presidente de la República, en conferencia de prensa realizada el 12 de febrero de 2018.

Aprovecho la oportunidad para reiterarles las muestras de mi más distinguida consideración.

Tegucigalpa, M.D.C., 14 febrero de 2018.



Humberto López-Villamil Ochoa
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Comparecencia de Prensa

**Señor Abogado Juan Orlando Hernández Alvarado, Presidente de la
República**

Versión al Inglés

If I understand you correctly, you ask why Salvador Nasralla and Mel Zelaya invited the United Nations to come to Honduras and why they are now rejecting their Mission and did not attend personally to the meetings.

I believe that Nasralla has since presenting his request realized that there are International United Nations Conventions that require the UN to study what happened, during the Honduran elections, with regard to the gangs and organized crime participating directly in them and favoring the former Alliance.

They probably became aware that it is part of the agenda and wished to avoid this topic.

We have been told that the former Alliance proposed, that Salvador Nasralla proposed that it was necessary to know what had really happened on the 26th and during the electoral process. I totally agree, my party also agrees, as do thousands of Hondurans. However, I do not want you to forget that the second document I signed with the OAS, and which Nasralla, should have also signed, included a section, with the list of all the members who participated in the polling stations, in order to identify them, and their links; to determine if they are common citizens or gang members. According to what we were able to see before the elections, on Election Day and thereafter, on behalf of the Alliance many gang members and organized crime participated in the electoral process, trying to influence the process by terrorizing citizens just because they sympathized with the National party and supported Juan Orlando Hernández.

Nonetheless, this fact should be the subject of reflection not only in Honduras, or other American States, but of all States of the World, because in democracy what is important is the opinion of citizens free from threats and fear, and not the contrary, when someone wants to disturb citizens who intend to vote by threatening them just because they belong to one party or because they represent a given party in a poll station, in this case Members of the National Party, submitted to the threats in their own homes.

One week before Elections Day, I met with around 250 members of the polling stations of the Comayagüela Sector, and all of them had been threatened directly in their homes. Many of them fled.

Similar events took place on Election Day. Some gang members took over the polling stations or used their wives or people close to them in the *barrios and colonias* to scare people.

Should this matter be the subject of investigation or not? My belief is that it should, because we cannot allow this to happen again in Honduras.

If I am not mistaken, in March elections will be held in El Salvador, and afterwards in Guatemala, and in other countries in the region. If we do not pay attention to this matter, it is possible that we may live to see parties that climbed to power with the direct support of organized crime.

In this line of thought, I would remind you that Honduras is a signatory to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime since 2000. This fact cannot be eluded; it is part of Honduras' commitments in the United Nations Framework.

In 2013, as member of National Congress I voted in favor of this Convention. It is part of what led me to fight organized crime in the country with a transnational vision, because I knew the impact this would have in the lives of Hondurans and people in the region.

Intimidation used by the gangs to benefit certain candidates against others, and to promote the expansion of organized crime. I repeat, this is not an issue that should only concern Honduras, but the entire World.

United Nations should investigate, and address the issue with the seriousness that it deserves. It was a good part of the conversation I had with them.

I imagine that this is what worries the leaders of the former Alliance for elections and the reason why they did not show up.

Our neighbor, El Salvador is having elections soon, but the Chief of Police recently said that gangs were already taking part and wanted to continue to participate in the decisions of the electoral process, and this is obviously dangerous to the State of El Salvador.

In Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador they are known as "maras" and gangs, but in other countries in the continent they could be called something else, but in general they are transnational organized crime.

It is a very serious issue, the Honduran people know what role the gangs played in this electoral process, as you know and we all know...

Second Part

"We know it, we cannot deceive ourselves; or we solve this problem now or the situation will become too complicated.

Electoral competition should and must be fair, but there can be no democracy if the will of the people is undermined by the fear of losing their own lives or of their families.

It was clear to us long before elections and on Election Day that we were under threat given the huge number of messages received by our activists and leaders by telephone or at their homes, whereby gangs were telling them: "here only the Alliance can win, Salvador Nasralla must win".

Remember the National leader that was murdered in his home, Papucho, and what they put in his chest. That crime is under investigation and there are many more cases like that, and there will be more evidence of what happened prior to, during and after election.

In that sense, it is clear that the "maras" intimidated many at the polling stations where gang members replaced the representatives of the polling stations.

At the polling facilities, the party representatives were intimidated by the gangs, where they surrounded some schools generating the wrong atmosphere so that people did not come to vote; the outcome was that in many polling stations virtually no National Party votes appeared, they were very scarce and in others even zero votes.

That will become more apparent later, because that is part of my request to the OAS and the UN, but that request does not only approach the issue of gangs, but also the areas where there has been drug-related organized crime influence for decades.

Look, there is a connection between former candidate Nasralla and "maras", through his very frank and clear references to them in terms of great friendship and sympathy.

You are witnesses to what I am saying, you have seen it and heard it, there is ample evidence to back-up what happened in hundreds of polling stations in the capital city and in the area of the Sula Valley, among other areas.

I am referring to the influence generating fear by the "maras" and gangs.

And in many places where there has always been a strong vote for the National Party in several previous elections with a constant and growing voting, in those same polling stations in 2017 it was reduced to a minimum with very few votes or zero votes, and it is important to study what happened there.

I have privately asked Observation Missions to send researchers and speak in private to the people; and you can visit and talk privately to the people and make your own conclusions because that would be a good investigative work of journalism.

Now I want to tell you that we are very interested in electoral reforms, whatever reform is welcomed to the dialogue and in that sense, the new electoral system that we want should have clarity in preventing fraud from happening, because overturning the will of the citizen by way of fear that one will lose his/her life, or his/her family, is a clear manner of fraud.

We have to avoid the interference of these criminal groups in the political arena from now on and, accordingly, I have asked the support the UN and other international bodies.

We already have fact finding information from the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance and also of the Netherlands Institute of International Relations, who have been studying and published a first report in 2016, not talking about Honduras, but other Nations where criminal groups terrorize to influence voting decisions.

I invite those Institutes and others to investigate the case of Honduras because it is essential for the strengthening of democracy in the world.

In fact the headline of the publication is "the influence of organized crime in the elections"; I suggest to look for it and you will see how that background has a relationship with what has been happening in Honduras.

This is not a problem limited to Honduras and I gather that in light of such evidence Nasralla and Mel Zelaya now reject to participate in discussions with the United Nations.

I repeat, they themselves requested the deployment of the UN team and you can verify that the Government request to the UN was issued after they had requested it and had private meetings with United Nations.