

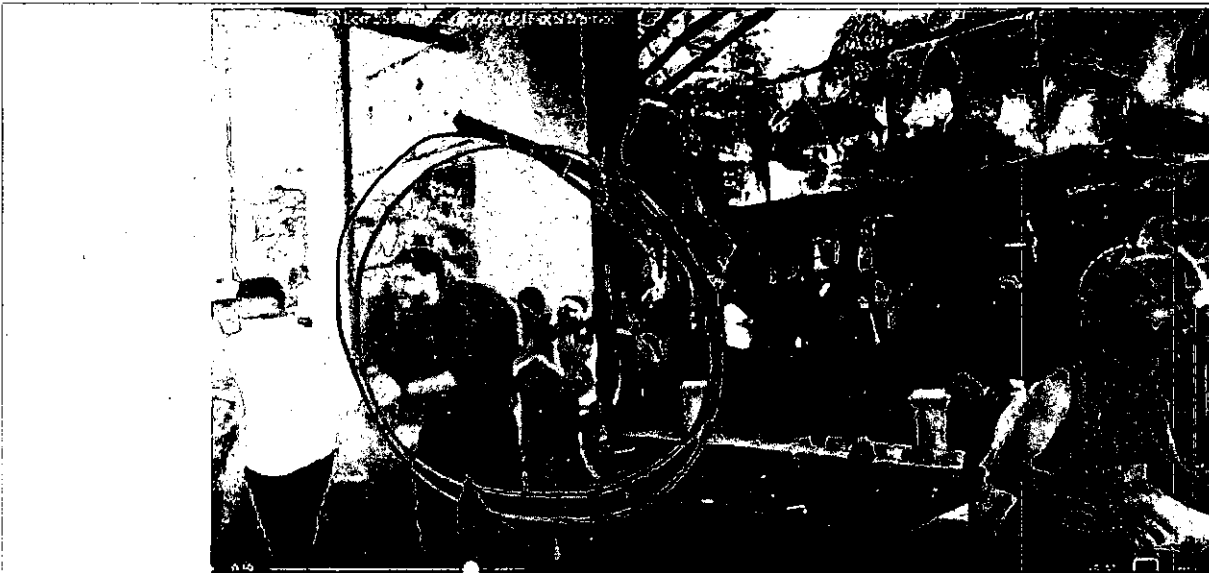
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PR Newswire

Honduran Government Identifies Prominent Perpetrators of Violence in Protests in Tegucigalpa

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Republic of Honduras →
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TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras, Jan. 15, 2018 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Today, the Honduran government announced that it has identified two individuals who participated in the violent protests in the capital on January 12.



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Honduran authorities have determined that José Manuel Zelaya, a representative-elect to the National Congress from the LIBRE party and the nephew of Manuel Zelaya, the coordinator of the Libre Alliance and a former Honduran president, was among the protesters. Authorities also identified José Toscano Casco, a former candidate for representative from the Alianza Patriótica Hondureña.

During the protests January 12, demonstrators vandalized the Marriott Hotel, setting fires in the lobby and breaking windows. Two days prior, defeated presidential candidate Salvador Nasralla of the Libre Alliance asked his followers to join the protests in a Twitter post.

Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández has called for an end to the violence and has asked the leaders of the Libre Alliance to meet with him. In a Facebook post on his official account, President Hernández called for "Salvador Nasralla and Manuel Zelaya and their followers to start a sincere and high level dialogue" aimed at quelling the protests and fostering economic growth in Honduras.

The president also said that his administration has been "working with different sectors of Honduran society to build a grand national agreement, so our nation will grow and all sectors will benefit."

Domestic and international business organizations have expressed concern about the protests. In a January 12 press release, the Federation of Private Organizations of Central America, Panama and the Dominican Republic (Fedepricap) said that it "categorically rejects the acts of vandalism, destruction and looting arising from the demonstrations...actions that have scared away foreign and domestic investment, and occasioned a loss of work for Hondurans."

In a statement reported by Honduran media, Executive Director of the Tegucigalpa Chamber of Commerce Rafael Medina called the protests "very regrettable" and said they have negatively impacted local workers.

The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights in Honduras also asked for the violence to end. In a statement also reported by Honduran media, the agency said that "it condemns the acts of violence as incompatible with the right to peaceful demonstration."

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Honduran President Appoints New Secretary for Human Rights

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Republic of Honduras →
18:43 ET

TÉGUCIGALPA, Honduras, Jan. 16, 2018 /PRNewswire/ -- Today, Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández appointed Karla Cuevas as the first ever Secretary for Human Rights to lead a newly created Ministry for Human Rights. The new Secretary will take office on January 27, the first day of the Hernández administration's second term.

Cuevas previously served as the vice minister of human rights and justice at Honduras's Ministry of Human Rights, Justice, Governance and Decentralization.



Human Rights

"This new cabinet-level ministry will strengthen the entire structure of human rights protection in the country," President Hernández said. "The appointment will strengthen security measures and strengthen protection policies for human rights defenders, journalists, social communicators and justice operators."

The Ministry will have a budget of 96 million lempiras -- more than \$4 million -- to reinforce existing security protections for human rights activists and to protect all Hondurans from infringements on their human rights.

President Hernandez announced the creation of the new ministry last May in a speech to the Honduran Association of Journalists, saying that he was elevating the Office of the Undersecretary for Human Rights to a cabinet-level body.

The establishment of the Ministry for Human Rights is part of the Hernández administration's push to strengthen domestic security and stimulate economic growth. Earlier this month, Honduran law enforcement officials announced that Honduras's homicide rate fell by more than 25 percent in 2017.

The Honduran central bank also reported this month that the Honduran economy grew by more than 4 percent in 2017.

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