

Testimony of Enrique Roig
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before the
House Foreign Affairs Western Hemisphere Subcommittee
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Chairwoman Salazar, Ranking Member Castro, Members of the Committee—thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I’m here on behalf of Human Rights First to discuss the upcoming elections in Honduras and the ways in which recent U.S. foreign-assistance decisions have impacted the ability to support electoral observation, civil society oversight, media programs and anti-corruption efforts.

Honduras enters its next electoral cycle already burdened by increased polarization, a legacy of irregular elections, and a justice system that has been hollowed out by political manipulation and organized-crime infiltration. There undoubtably is a need for increased vigilance and raising of the alarm on the Honduras election.

However, the Trump administration has been relatively silent and taken a largely transactional approach to the Castro government focused mainly on deportations. According to Human Rights First’s ICE Flight Monitor, the United States from January to October 2025 carried out 353 deportation flights to Honduras, making it the second-highest deportation destination after Guatemala. The administration also pressured Honduras into signing Asylum Cooperative Agreements that allow the U.S. to send asylum seekers there without assessing their claims. The administration’s termination of TPS for 72,000 Hondurans in September 2025 has further placed even more people at risk of removal.

While the Trump administration has remained focused on deportations, there are other national security interests at play that require greater vigilance of the electoral process in Honduras. Fortunately, the European

Union and Organization of American States have stepped up and called for greater transparency and legitimacy of the upcoming election.

Today, Honduran civil society – much to their credit - have been able to organize domestic observers. However, they have had to cobble together their effort at the last moment because the foreign assistance they depended on was terminated. If U.S. foreign assistance had not been decimated, the Honduran observers would have greater resources to ensure increased scrutiny of the elections at this critical juncture.

Unfortunately, this is not just a Honduran problem. Beginning early this year, the administration froze and terminated a broad range of USAID and State Department programs—including those that have long supported election integrity, civil-society resilience, and anti-corruption efforts in the region, including:

- Support to independent election observers and technical assistance to electoral authorities.
- Investigative journalism networks and fact-checking consortia that counter disinformation during elections.
- Digital-security programs that protect activists, monitors, and independent media from targeted attacks.
- Rule-of-law and anti-corruption initiatives that help insulate prosecutors, auditors, and judges from political interference.

Now I know that members of this Committee have asked what the administration is currently doing to support these democracy and governance programs.

The short answer is clearly not nearly enough. And while the State Department has stated publicly that some of these programs continue to be administered the reality on the ground tells a very different story.

- The foreign-assistance dismantling has terminated or halted the core program lines for democracy, civil society, and election support that this region depends on.

- DRL itself has undergone a significant structural downgrade—with its entire Western Hemisphere expertise purged and the effective elimination of most of its regional programming to support critical work in Honduras.
- Former USAID implementers tell us they are in “survival mode”—unable to plan, unable to hire, and unable to continue critical election-integrity and anti-corruption work.
- And the strategic messaging coming from U.S. leadership today prioritizes deportation and short-term security concerns, not the democracy, rights, and governance work that addresses the root causes driving instability.

The consequences are already visible across the region: weaker civic space, diminished oversight, and far greater room for authoritarian and criminal actors to manipulate electoral processes.

For decades, Democrats and Republicans alike understood that investing in these democracy and governance programs is not just about values—it is about U.S. national security.

Restoring and protecting these programs are critical as we have seen in the lead up to high-risk elections in Honduras and elsewhere in the region. It is in the strategic interest of the United States.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to your questions.