

REPORT OF THE EL MISSION TO THE SAO PAULO FORUM

(Tegucigalpa-Honduras, 27-29 June 2024)

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From 27th to 29th June 2024 the 27th session of the Sao Paulo Forum, the largest gathering of left and progressive parties in Latin America and the Caribbean, took place in Honduras.

Local context and the 15th anniversary of the coup

Based on the proposal of the Libre (Libertad y Refundación) party in Honduras, the date coincided with the 15th anniversary of the coup d'état (28-6-2009) that overthrew the constitutional government of President Manuel Zelaya. As will be recalled, the coup in Honduras was the first of the 'soft coups' (parliamentary and/or judicial) on the continent, followed by Paraguay against President Fernando Lugo, against Rafael Correa in Ecuador, Dilma Rouseff in Brazil, etc.

In the case of Honduras, the bloody repression of the coup and of the following years has meant the assassination of 174 people, including political, social, environmental, feminist and other leaders. Fifteen years later, justice has still not been achieved in the courts against the civilian and military culprits who remain free. The coup opened the door to a **narco-dictatorship** with an ultra-neoliberal regime, 'allied' with the narco-traffickers, which has governed the country (also thanks to the electoral fraud of 2017) until the electoral victory in 2021 of the current President Xiomara Castro of the Libre party. Xiomara Castro is the country's first female president and is currently president pro-tempore of CELAC.

I point out that Juan Orlando Hernández, the last president for two consecutive terms (January 2014 - January 2022) before Xiomara Castro, has just been sentenced to 45 years in the US for drug trafficking.

The Libre party revendicates 'democratic socialism as the political, economic and social model necessary to preserve the human species and the planet in the process of destruction by neo-liberal imposition and the terrible effects of capitalism'.

Some elements of the continental political phase.

The phase is characterised by a very hard dispute between the right wing and imperialism on the one hand and the left and 'progressive' governments with the popular movements on the other. As will be recalled, the right wing is in government in El Salvador, Costa Rica, Panama, Dominican Republic, Argentina, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay. Vice versa, there are 'progressive' governments in Mexico, Honduras, Cuba, Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Chile and Venezuela.

The pandemic and the economic crisis have meant a rise in inflation and an impact on national economies and societies. At the same time, the war in Ukraine and Israel's genocide against the

Palestinian people continue to have repercussions in the region, also in terms of geo-politics and global positioning.

Apart from Cuba and Venezuela, all the progressive governments are coalition governments, and, above all, they do not have their own parliamentary majority (except Mexico with 1 or 2 votes missing in the Senate to achieve the 2/3 and be able to change the Constitution). This has made very difficult (and in many cases impossible) to approve structural reforms such as tax reform, the pension system and labour reform. The only government that has managed to pass (in June 2024) the pension reform is that of Gustavo Petro in Colombia, thanks to the push of the Minister of Labour, the communist Gloria Inés Ramirez.

In many countries, in the face of 'friendly governments', popular movements and the trade union movement have become fragmented and demobilised and have lost their protagonism and street presence. Without popular mobilisation, any negotiations in parliaments (when they are in a minority) are destined to fail or to have clientelistic characteristics.

Vice versa, as in the case of Argentina, in the presence of important and growing popular mobilisations against the turbo-liberal government of Milei, the lack of a political subject is felt.

Faced with the growing presence of China and Russia in the region, the Whitehouse and the US Southern Command have redoubled the political pressure (which has been constant) and the dispute to secure natural resources (oil, lithium, water, etc.). The multiple statements by General Laura Richardson, head of the Southern Command, leave no doubt. On the contrary, they show that the US in its 'backyard' follows the imperialist logic of the Monroe Doctrine of 200 years ago.

In the dispute for the control of natural resources, some EU countries, hitherto secondary players, are trying to become more prominent. In the wake of the energy crisis in Europe, and against the backdrop of the 'energy transition', large German, Spanish and Italian companies (among others) are making their presence felt and trying to close contracts in this and other areas. The pending signing of the EU-Mercosur free trade agreement is part of this attempt at 'European recolonisation'.

At the same time, the 'legal warfare' (Lawfare) against political and social leaders continues in order to disqualify or imprison them. There are many cases, among them the case of Jorge Glas (former vice-president of Ecuador), Cristina Fernández (former president of Argentina), Daniel Jadue (Mayor of Recoleta in Chile and one of the leaders of the Communist Party).

The EL at the FSP

Once again, the Party of the European Left has been present as a guest-observer at the work of the FSP, an organisation with which there is a fraternal relationship consolidated over many years.

On this occasion, the EL delegation consisted of Valentina Skafar (Levica of Slovenia), Marta Martín (PCE of the Spanish State), Cristina Simò (Coordinator of the Feminist Assembly of the European Forum), Hans Haalborg (Red-Green Alliance of Denmark) and Marco Consolo, who

writes this note, as Coordinator of the WG on LAC of the EL (and of the Communist Refoundation Party from Italy).

The meeting of the 'CELAC social'.

The main novelty of this session of the FSP (n° 27) was the presence and the joint organisation of the FSP with other international bodies such as the Puebla Group, the Progressive International and, above all, the so-called 'social CELAC'. This last group, which is relatively new, brings together the social and popular movements of Latin America, autonomously from the official CELAC, which is made up of the governments of Latin America. The social CELAC was present with almost 400 people representing their respective organisations.

The Celac Social meeting (and its very existence) has provoked an attack from the governments of the Latin American right (together with Chile and Guatemala) which, far from looking favourably on the organisation from below, have stated in a declaration that: 'There does not exist within the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (Celac) a segment, programme, or initiative called "Celac Social", and therefore no manifestation disseminated under that name represents an official communication from Celac'. The unfortunate communiqué is signed by Costa Rica, Panama, Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic and Uruguay.

The debates

The debates were interesting, with different and enriching points of view and a wide participation. In particular, there were workshops on youth, students, the ICSID tribunal of the World Bank, tax justice, lawfare, migration, imperialist interference in LA, the rise of the far right, communication, women and popular resistance, indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, food sovereignty, decent work and feminist economy, regional integration, elections in Venezuela, freedom of expression and fake news, environmental and climate justice and integration, self-determination of peoples.

As can be seen, a very rich and varied programme.

Meetings held

The PIE delegation was received at the Presidential House by President Xiomara Castro to whom we conveyed our greetings.

Many meetings were held with personalities and parties, including Monica Valente (Secretary of the Sao Paulo Forum), Morena of Mexico, the Minister of Labour of Colombia, the PSUV of Venezuela, the Pc of Brazil, Winaq of Guatemala, Revolución Ciudadana of Ecuador, the coordinator of the Argentinean Chapter of Celac Social, the Frente Transversal of Argentina.

At the same time, we met with Lorena Peña, President of FDIM and Gloria Ines Ramirez as Vice-President of FDIM for the Americas and Caribbean region.

Regarding the Partido Libre and the Honduran government, we met several figures. We also met with Jennifer Erazo (Oxfam Honduras).

“Shared Visions” Seminar

We also met with the FSP Secretary and the FSP-EL ‘Contact Group’ to clarify the details of the next joint FSP-PIE seminar, ‘Shared Visions’, which is now in its ninth edition.

The next seminar will take place in Paris on 22 November 2024 and, as always, will be dedicated to the themes of the common agenda.

Attempted coup in Bolivia

In the midst of our work, on the 26th we were informed of the attempted coup in the Plurinational State of Bolivia. Apart from speaking out immediately on social networks in defence of democracy, we have expressed to all our interlocutors our deep concern and the need to seek unity between the two sectors of the MAS-ISP currently very distant from each other. The division (escalated and exacerbated with the help of the US embassy) offers on a silver platter to the right wing the possibility of winning the next elections and to the US to take over the reserves of lithium and other natural resources that Bolivia possesses.

Adopted documents

Finally, here are the links to the main documents adopted.

Final declaration of the 27th FSP meeting

This declaration updates the Forum's views on the current situation and condenses a synthesis of the parties' positions on various issues.

<https://forodesaopaulo.org/declaracion-final-xxvii-encuentro-del-fsp/>

Specific resolutions

The Forum adopted a set of 15 specific resolutions on: Cuba, El Salvador, Lawfare, Saharawi Republic, Palestine, China, USA and NATO, Assange and Press Freedom, elections in Venezuela, Bolivia, Colombia, Nicaragua, Puerto Rico, Free Trade and poverty and COP-16 positioning the Forum on these issues.

<https://forodesaopaulo.org/resoluciones-especificas-xxvii-encuentro-del-fsp/>

CELAC social

- Tegucigalpa Declaration - Welcome to CELAC Social 2024
- Response of CELAC Social to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica
- Final Declaration of the II CELAC Social 2024 - June 29th

<https://forodesaopaulo.org/documentos-aprobados-en-la-celac-social-2024/>