

## A new movement to fight corporate colonialism

Ana Caistor Arendar & Matt Kirkegaard

We write you from Honduras — with exciting news from the international delegation of diplomats, parliamentarians, analysts, and experts that traveled to Tegucigalpa.

Following three days of dialogue with citizens, communities, Members of Congress and representatives from across the Government of Honduras on the permanent resistance against the Zones of Employment and Economic Development (ZEDEs) that attempt to privatise national sovereignty — a new movement, convened by the Progressive International and the Presidency of Honduras, will support the Honduran people to defeat corporate colonialism.

This is not about Honduras alone. Special economic zones have invaded numerous countries in the Global South — creating spaces where companies can abuse workers rights, ignore international agreements and extract local wealth into bank accounts in tax havens. Honduras is now facing a total of ten international investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) claims for a democratic decision to overturn the ZEDEs law. One such claim is for \$10.7 billion, two-thirds of Honduras's planned budget for 2023. The so-called rules based international order has done little to prevent big corporations from using the ISDS regime to bankrupt governments of the Global South.



*Presidential Commissioner Fernando García, Finance Minister Rixi Moncada, Foreign Minister Enrique Reina and Attorney General Manuel Díaz Galeas open the Honduras Resiste forum – to hear expert testimony on fighting the ISDS regime.*

**What did we learn at the Tegucigalpa Forum?** Luisa Connor, President of the Crawfish Rock Community Governing Council presented searing testimony from the island of Roatán, on the authoritarian abuse of the most sacred rights of the Honduran people for the pirate, sordid, petty interest of foreign corporations: “In 2020, when we realized that the ZEDE was going to arrive in our community, we began to investigate and find out as much as we could about what the word ZEDE meant… At no time were we consulted, and we did not know how to fight it. We had to investigate pathways for ourselves, calling friends who do know about such struggles to guide us.”

In her opening remarks, Varsha Gandikota-Nellutla, the general coordinator of the Progressive International, noted that “a 100 years ago, the United Fruit company reached the shores of Honduras, billed itself a credible partner for development, and took over land and infrastructure, eventually controlling almost all railways, hospitals, ports, and telegraph lines — acting, in short, like a ZEDE.”

"The United States corporation turned the countries of Central America into ‘banana republics’ and the its citizens into plantation workers. If the traditional colonizers spilt blood for bananas, the new-age Silicon valley colonizers, it seems, do it for bitcoin. So, the real scandal with Honduras’s fight against the ZEDEs is in fact, this — the near unbroken chain of corporate colonialism.”



The delegation in conversation with the President of Honduras Xiomara Castro.

The only way to fight the ZEDEs, and fight the ISDS regime that keeps it in place — is collective action. Andres Arauz, Economist, Former Minister of Knowledge and Human Talent and former Director General of the Central Bank of Ecuador, “We must make the most of the wealth of knowledge that exists among the countries that

have already fought this fight; as well as that of other countries who are fighting it right now, perhaps unaware that they share exactly the same situation as the Honduran people and the Honduran State at this moment.”

The declaration read on the steps of the Presidential Palace included commitments to:

**Constitute the International Movement for Honduras in Resistance:** To convene allies from across the world to contribute to present struggle for the democratic refoundation of Honduras;

**Accompany Honduras in the Presidency Pro-Tempore of CELAC:** To support the government of President Xiomara Castro to seize the opportunity of its 2024 CELAC Presidency to forge a new agenda for Latin American sovereignty;

**Spread the Spirit of Resistance Across the World:** To learn from the example of President Xiomara Castro’s ‘Government in Resistance’, and to sustain the international dialogue initiated here in the days, months, and years to come.



*Colombian Congresswoman María Fernanda Carrascal reads out the declaration on the steps of the Presidential Palace.*

This is only the beginning. We know this won't be easy — legally or politically. But we are determined to bring the spirit of resistance from Tegucigalpa to the world — and dismantle, once and for all, an unfair system of international arbitration that destroys the sovereignty of the South.

We are so grateful for your support and promise to keep you posted. For now, you can [read the full Honduras Resiste Declaration in full here](#).

In solidarity,

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Campaign Coordinators