News
Supporters of Honduran President-elect Xiomara Castro pray inside the National Congress aft

Supporters of Honduran President-elect Xiomara Castro pray inside the National Congress after the installation of the new Congress in Tegucigalpa Jan. 25, 2022. (CNS photo/Fredy Rodriguez, Reuters)



David Agren

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MEXICO CITY — The Honduran bishops' conference has urged dialogue as a political crisis threatens to torpedo the Central American country's presidential inauguration.

A prominent Honduran Jesuit, meanwhile, called the prospects of dialogue "remote" as rival groups vie for control of the country's Congress.

"We are making a sincere and open call to dialogue as soon as possible between the president-elect and representatives of both groups that aspire to the presidency of congress, so they can come to an agreement and find a solution that respects the

law and restores serenity, peace and order," the bishops said in a Jan. 24 statement titled, "Let's not put the rule of law in danger."

Honduras celebrates the feast of Our Lady of Suyapa Feb. 3, with a novena leading up to the feast. The bishops asked that Hondurans pray for political calm during the novena, saying, "Let us ask with faith that this crisis can be overcome as soon as possible."

In the Nov. 28 elections, Hondurans voted overwhelmingly for change, opting for opposition candidate Xiomara Castro. She was scheduled to take office Jan. 27.

But a dispute erupted in congress as 18 lawmakers from Castro's Liberty and Refoundation Party joined the ruling National Party in electing their own president in the congress. The maneuvering — which resulted in violence within the Congress — ruptured a deal Castro had with a political ally, who was supposed to be elected president of congress.

The two groups are both claiming rightful control of the presidency of Congress.

"Conditions for dialogue are remote at this time," said Jesuit Father Ismael Moreno Coto, founder of Radio Progreso. "Tempers are quite heated and the interests of these groups are ... based on personal calculations."

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"Millions of people are backing Doña Xiomara, and there are these politicians who are looking to maintain (power) structures and control of the state, particularly the national congress, for their own personal interests. ... They're not interested in change."

The November elections captured the widespread fatigue with 12 years of National Party rule, which started shortly after the ouster of Castro's husband, President Manuel Zelaya, in a 2009 coup. Rule under National Party and outgoing President Juan Orlando Hernández has been marked by gross corruption, accusations of electoral fraud in 2017, outward migration and suspicion of narcotics traffickers entering government. Hernández's own brother was convicted on drug charges in a U.S. court.

Hernández "totally lost credibility with the people," said Father Germán Calix, former director of Caritas Honduras.

"What people wanted to change is the system of corruption in the country, which was really aberrant. ... People could no longer bear that every day there was a new act of corruption, so people were fed up," Father Calix added.