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FEATURED Q&A

How Is an Ex-First Lady Shaking up Honduran Politics?



Ana García de Hernández, the wife of convicted former Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández, announced earlier this month that she will seek the country's presidency. // File Photo: @anagarciacarias via X.

Q Former first lady of Honduras Ana García de Hernández announced on March 12 that she plans to run for president in her country's election next year. Her announcement came only days after her husband, former President Juan Orlando Hernández, was convicted in a federal court in Manhattan of conspiring with drug traffickers to move cocaine to the United States. What factors are motivating García's campaign, and how strong of a contender could she potentially be in next year's election? Will Honduras' National Party embrace the former first lady as the successor to her husband, or might the right wing in Honduras attempt to create distance from Hernández in light of his recent conviction? What do García's candidacy and her husband's conviction mean for conservative politics in Honduras?

A Ana María Méndez-Dardón, director for Central America at the Washington Office on Latin America: "Juan Orlando Hernández's trial underscored how drug cartels have co-opted key institutions and worked hand-in-hand with the political class. It is very likely that Ana García not only knew about her husband's illicit business dealings, but also benefited from them. Her candidacy could be motivated by efforts to protect herself from criminal investigation and prosecution. However, García is not a strong candidate as the Hernández family has lost all legitimacy in the eyes of the people. The National Party hasn't turned its back on Ana García, but neither has it seen broad support because other candidates, such as Nasry Asfura, may have a greater advantage. The sentencing of Juan Orlando Hernández has

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TODAY'S NEWS

POLITICAL

More Than 33,000 Have Fled Haiti's Capital in Past Two Weeks: U.N.

More than 33,000 people have fled Port-au-Prince, over the past two weeks amid the explosion of gang attacks, according to a U.N. report.

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ECONOMIC

Argentina's Neuquén Province Hits Record for Oil Production

Argentina's Neuquén province reached record oil production in February, driven by activity in the Vaca Muerta shale formation.

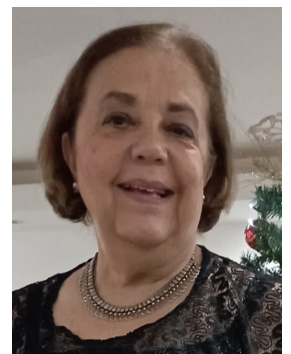
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POLITICAL

Venezuelan Opposition's Machado Names Substitute

Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado, who is banned from holding office, named Corina Yoris as her substitute ahead of the country's July presidential election.

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Yoris // File Photo: Facebook Page of Corina Yoris.

POLITICAL NEWS

Venezuela's Machado Names Professor as Substitute Candidate

Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado on Friday named a little-known university professor as her substitute in the country's upcoming presidential election, The Wall Street Journal reported. Machado won last October's opposition primary to challenge President Nicolás Maduro in the July 28 election. However, the government previously banned her from holding office for 15 years, and the supreme court upheld that ban in January. In a news conference on Friday, Machado said 80-year-old history and philosophy scholar Corina Yoris would stand in for her in this year's vote. "Today is a great day, and we have taken a big step, a great step, for the electoral victory in which we will defeat Nicolás Maduro," Machado said at her campaign headquarters in Caracas, the Associated Press reported. Machado called Yoris "a person with my full confidence, honorable, who will carry out this process with the support and trust of everyone." At the news conference, Yoris expressed solidarity with Machado. "I'm fully committed to the people, the citizenry and with María Corina," she said,

The Wall Street Journal reported. Machado's move to name Yoris as her substitute came days after Maduro's government arrested two staff members of Machado's campaign. In all, authorities have arrested seven of Machado's aides and have issued arrest warrants for seven more. The staff members who are being sought are believed to be hiding in embassies in Caracas, The Wall Street Journal reported Friday. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in the March 8 issue of the Advisor.]

More Than 33,000 Have Fled Haiti's Capital in Two Weeks

More than 33,000 people have fled Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, over the past two weeks as gang attacks on private homes and state institutions have soared, The United Nations' International Organization for Migration said Friday in a report, the Associated Press reported. Most of the people displaced from the capital have fled to southern Haiti, which is generally more peaceful as compared to Port-au-Prince. "Attacks and generalized insecurity are pushing more and more people to leave the capital to find refuge in provinces, taking the risks of passing through gang-controlled routes," the agency said in the report. More

NEWS BRIEFS

Mexican Authorities Rescue 58 People After Wave of Kidnappings

Mexican authorities rescued a total of 58 people over the weekend after a wave of kidnappings took place Friday around the Sinaloa city of Culiacán, Reuters reported. Authorities rescued 42 hostages on Saturday, including 18 children, and freed an additional 16 kidnapped people on Sunday. The Mexican government sent 600 special forces troops, as well as 300 soldiers, to Sinaloa following the wave of violence and abduction. Authorities have not yet declared what criminal group was responsible for the kidnappings.

Ecuador's Youngest Mayor, Staffer Fatally Shot

Ecuador's youngest mayor, 27-year-old Brigitte García of the town of San Vicente, and her communications director were fatally shot on Sunday, Reuters reported. The bodies of García and the staff member, Jairo Loor, were found in a car in Manabí province, according to police, who said the shots came from inside the rented vehicle. García was a member of former President Rafael Correa's Citizen Revolution Movement party.

Spain's Solarpack Closes Financing for San Martín Solar Plant in Peru

Spanish solar energy firm Solarpack closed financing for the San Martín solar plant in Peru, which will be the first Peruvian renewable energy project to be financed through a bilateral power purchase agreement, PV Magazine reported today. The \$191 million financing package came from a variety of lenders including BNP Paribas, BBVA and Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank. The San Martín plant is still under construction and will have 300 megawatts of total installed power when completed.

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dealt a severe blow to the National Party, and its current leaders are trying to improve its public image. They are making public statements to welcome all candidates in order to strengthen their internal processes and claiming that accusations against them have been politically motivated. As national and transnational corrupt criminal networks often operate as family clans, there needs to be a thorough investigation into the origins of García's campaign finances and those who are backing her as the trial revealed that political campaigns are based on illicit financing by organized crime. Given that Honduras will hold general elections in 2025,

it is important to use this case as an opportunity to promote institutional, electoral and political reforms to protect democratic values and ensure transparency, independence and integrity."

A **Enrique Rodríguez Burchard, managing partner at Aguilar Castillo Love:** "When García announced her pre-candidacy, she called it a family decision that she made so that the world would know the injustice committed against her husband, former President Juan Orlando Hernández. 'I'm not just doing it for my family,' she said. 'I'm

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than 90 percent of the people who have fled Port-au-Prince departed by bus, though they were forced to travel through the community of Martissant which is controlled by gangs that have been at war with each other and have killed dozens of civilians in the community, the AP reported. The country's southern region already hosts 116,000 others who have fled gang violence, and rural parts of the country lack the resources and infrastructure "to cope with these massive displacement flows coming from the capital," the International Organization for Migration said in the report. Approximately 17,000 people have been left homeless, the AP reported. The U.S. State Department said Friday that it had evacuated more than 130 Americans from Port-au-Prince and nearly 100 others since March 17 from the northern coastal city of Cap-Haïtien. Meanwhile, plans for an internationally backed transition council for Haiti appear to be coming together, the Financial Times reported Friday. U.N. Secretary General António Guterres on Thursday welcomed reports that all seven of the members of the country's transitional council had been nominated. The council is tasked with naming a temporary government to succeed Prime Minister Ariel Henry. Henry, who remains stranded in Puerto Rico following the closure of the country's main international airport, earlier this month agreed to resign and relinquish power to the transitional council once it is formed. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in the March 7 issue of the Advisor.]

ECONOMIC NEWS

Argentina's Neuquén Province Hits Record for Oil Production

The Argentine province of Neuquén reached all-time high levels of oil production in February, according to a statement that the local government released Friday, Reuters reported. The province saw oil output rise 17.6 percent in February when compared to the previous year, producing 381,570 barrels per day in February. The first two months of the year combined

THE DIALOGUE CONTINUES

What Will Result From Honduras Leaving ICSID?

Q Honduras' government informed the World Bank in February that it is withdrawing from its International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes, or ICSID, with the withdrawal taking effect in August. Honduras is withdrawing from the arbitration body over a nearly \$11 billion claim by Honduras Prospera over economic development zones, known as ZEDs, that President Xiomara Castro has sought to eliminate. The group claims that the zones' partial repeal has discouraged investment and harmed its prospects. What will Honduras' withdrawal from ICSID mean for the country and for companies doing business there? How will it affect investment in Honduras? After the withdrawal, how much confidence can companies in Honduras have that any disputes will be handled fairly?

A Odín Guillén Leiva, partner at Mayora Mayora in Tegucigalpa: "The Convention on the Settlement of Investment Disputes between States and Nationals of other States (The 1965 ICSID convention) serves as a safeguard for conflicts between investors and host states, seeking world peace. States, each with their own agenda

represent a 20.3 percent increase in production when compared to the same time period in 2023. The record-breaking levels of oil production output were primarily driven by an increase in activity in the province's Vaca Muerta shale formation, which is the world's fourth-largest shale oil reserve and second-largest shale gas reserve, the wire service reported. Gas output from Neuquén also rose significantly, up to 89.4 million cubic meters per day, representing a jump in production of 8.6 percent in February when compared to the same month in 2023. "It should be noted that unconventional oil extraction represented 93 percent of Neuquén's

and lacking a unified global authority, have agreed upon this international framework to navigate such disputes. Honduras' abrupt withdrawal from this convention marks a regressive step in its legal evolution related to investment, turning back the clock six decades. This decision—not yet endorsed by the Honduran Congress, as a check and balance authority—determines not only the interests of other nations and investors, but those of Honduras as well. Despite the setback, Honduras remains subject to its jurisdiction, through the previous consent principle under Article 72 of the convention. This move exposes the country to alternative legal and international relations mechanisms, which can still place it as a defendant for infringing the rights of foreign investors. Exiting the ICSID convention is not covered as a legitimate exercise of sovereign will, but rather a political gambit. Such a maneuver threatens to further isolate Honduras from an increasingly interconnected world."

EDITOR'S NOTE: The comment above is a continuation of the [Q&A](#) published in the March 20 issue of the Advisor.

total production in February, while 86 percent of gas production was from the same origin," Neuquén's government said in a statement, Reuters reported. Despite the increase, the Vaca Muerta formation needs infrastructure upgrades, Alex Choinski, counsel at Hunton Andrews Kurth, and Tomás Lanardonne, a partner at MHR Abogados, told the Dialogue's weekly Energy Advisor in a [Q&A](#) published Dec. 1. "Argentina's energy industry, including its crown jewel—Vaca Muerta—is in dire need of infrastructure improvements even as Milei tackles stubborn stagflation and structural deficits," they said.

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doing it for all the Honduran people, who were attacked by being called and treated in the worst way during this entire process.' Obviously, her candidacy in no way changes the verdict in New York, and it seems that behind this message what really lies is a desire to take justice into her own hands and take revenge on all those, inside and outside the country, whom she has pointed out as her husband's executioners. National Party leaders received the news lukewarmly. García is a living memory of a recent past, which created division like never before. Xiomara Castro's victory in the 2021 election is only understood as the triumph of anti-Hernández sentiment in the country. García is a controversial figure. Her role as first lady was very active, and many claim that she exercised a large amount of power. A recent publication by the Argentine newspaper Infobae assures that the Public Ministry is carrying out an investigation into the former first lady, for alleged money laundering and irregular transfer of immobilized family assets. The frustration of the Honduran people with their leaders and the democratic system in general is high. 'There is nowhere to go, everyone is the same' is a common phrase among voters, to the point that the punishment vote is very high in the country."

A **Roberto Flores Bermúdez, former Honduran foreign minister:** "The former first lady of Honduras' motives to run for president in the next general election are ambiguous. The eight-year Hernández administration leaves little room for an unfulfilled-agenda argument. They rather seem related to a desire to vindicate her husband's name. García was a staunch supporter of the former president during his trial in Manhattan, which she called biased, as did an eclectic

assortment of Hondurans. Her potential to be a strong contender in the next election will not depend on her abundant virtues and merits but rather on the National Party embracing her candidacy. It's a party with a sound structure, robust discipline and a significant national presence. Nevertheless, it has been strongly identified with unprecedented levels of corruption. It has also been copiously accused of involvement in drug

“**The eight-year Hernández administration leaves little room for an unfulfilled-agenda argument. ”**

— Roberto Flores Bermúdez

trafficking and organized crime. The present government largely owes its electoral victory to a coalition campaigning to remove Juan Orlando Hernández from office. Because of the ongoing impression—and in many cases, conviction—that the National Party is riddled with these iniquities, there is a strong movement within the party seeking untainted players, distanced from the three previous consecutive National Party administrations, to bring new breath in time for the next elections. Many may find that the alternative they need is not the former first lady leading the ticket. Several conservative politicians are seeking separation from, and not identification with, the aura of the crimes for which her husband was convicted."

The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta.

LATIN AMERICA ADVISOR

is published every business day by the Inter-American Dialogue ISSN 2163-7962

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Latin America Advisor is published every business day, except for major U.S. holidays, by the Inter-American Dialogue at 1155 15th Street NW, Suite 800 Washington, DC 20005 www.thedialogue.org

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