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## FEATURED Q&A

# Why Is Honduras Ending a Treaty on Extraditions?



Honduran President Xiomara Castro's government is withdrawing from a more than century-old extradition treaty with the United States. // File Photo: @XiomaraCastroZ via X

**Q Honduras' foreign ministry announced Aug. 28 that it was withdrawing from a 112-year-old extradition treaty with the United States. The move followed Honduran President Xiomara Castro's accusation that the United States was meddling in Honduras' affairs after the U.S. ambassador in the country criticized a meeting between Honduran and Venezuelan defense officials. What are the main reasons behind Honduras' withdrawal from the extradition treaty? What do the developments mean for cooperation between U.S. and Honduran law enforcement agencies? How well is Castro's government fighting corruption, drug trafficking and other crimes?**

**A Javier Efraín Bú Soto, Honduras' ambassador to the United States:** "In 2009, the Honduran military staged a coup toppling the constitutional government and plunging the country into years of instability. At the time, reports of military plans were naively ignored. We will not allow history to repeat itself. President Castro's difficult but necessary decision to terminate the extradition treaty follows credible intelligence of a planned 'barracks coup' by radical military officers, following a statement by a U.S. diplomat. Honduras is approaching elections constitutionally safeguarded by our military. We will not allow the extradition treaty to be manipulated by anti-democratic elements, as it poses a serious threat to our democracy if the military were to be destabilized just days before the election is called. Nevertheless, cooperation between our nations remains robust. We are the United States' best and most reliable regional military partner. For instance, Honduras hosts the only permanent U.S. military deployment in Latin

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## TODAY'S NEWS

### POLITICAL

## Jamaica Sending Two Dozen Police, Soldiers to Haiti

Jamaica is sending 20 soldiers and four police officers to Haiti to support a U.N.-backed mission to fight gangs, Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness announced Tuesday.

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### ECONOMIC

## Argentina Eying \$16.5 Billion in Energy Investment by '26

Argentina's government is expecting to receive \$15 billion in energy investments next year and \$16.5 billion by 2026, said Energy Secretary Eduardo Rodríguez Chirillo.

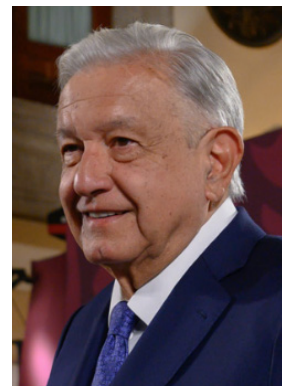
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### POLITICAL

## Mexico's Senate Approves Judicial Reform Plan

Mexico's Senate early this morning approved President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's sweeping and controversial judicial reform. The overhaul will now go to Mexico's states for ratification.

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López Obrador // File Photo: Mexican Government.

## POLITICAL NEWS

## Mexico's Senate Approves Sweeping Judicial Overhaul

Mexico's Senate early this morning approved President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's sweeping and controversial judicial overhaul, a reform that he says will increase accountability of the judiciary but that critics say will put the judiciary in the hands of the president's ruling Morena party, the Associated Press reported. Senators approved the overhaul, which requires judges, including supreme court justices, to stand for election rather than be appointed, at the end of a marathon session that lasted 12 hours, Reuters reported. The Senate held two votes on the measure, each time with a result of 86-41, and the second result came at 4 a.m., the AP reported. Senators were forced to suspend debate after protesters broke down the doors of the chamber and forced their way in, CNN reported. Video showed protesters banging on the Senate's doors, with others waving the Mexican flag from the chamber's gallery. At least one person was injured, CNN reported. "It's a sad day for Mexico," said Senator Alejandro Moreno, the president of the opposition PRI party, Reuters reported. The overhaul "was approved in the Senate via the worst tricks and under unimaginable pressures and coercions," he added. In addition to requiring more than 6,500 judges and magistrates to stand for election, the changes reduce the size of the supreme court to nine justices from 11 and shorten the length of their terms to 12 years. They also eliminate the requirement that justices be at least 35 years old and cuts in half the required work experience to five years, Reuters reported. Tamara Taraciuk Broner, director of the Peter D. Bell Rule of Law Program at the Inter-American Dialogue, told the Advisor that requiring judges to stand for election will politicize the justice system. "While international standards state that judges' selection should be free from political interference, these measures politicize decisions, as judges would be more interested in responding to their

voting constituencies than in adopting rulings based on law," she said in a [Q&A](#) published May 28. However, Arturo Zaldívar, coordinator at Diálogos por la Transformación, a group advising President-elect Claudia Sheinbaum, who takes office Oct. 1, told the Advisor in the same issue that the reform a "starting point for discussion and dialogue" about needed judicial changes in Mexico. "The judicial reform provides for accountability mechanisms for judges regarding the obligations they have toward citizens, in order to combat corruption, cronyism, networks of influence and impunity," he said. The United States and Canada have expressed concerns about the overhaul, saying it could undermine the USMCA trade accord and also harm investment, Reuters reported. The lower house of Mexico's Congress approved the reform last week, and, as it would change the constitution, it now goes to Mexico's states for ratification. Seventeen of the country's 32 states would have to ratify the changes in order for them to take effect, the AP reported. The ruling party is expected to be able to attain that threshold after major gains in the country's June elections.

## Jamaica Sending Soldiers, Police to Haiti: Prime Minister

Jamaica is sending 20 soldiers and four police officers to Haiti to help a U.N.-backed mission that is seeking to help the country fight its violent gangs, Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness announced Tuesday, the Associated Press reported. The personnel are expected to arrive in Haiti on Thursday and will join approximately 400 Kenyan police officers who arrived earlier this year, said the chief of defense staff for Jamaica's military, Vice Admiral Antonette Wemyss-Gorman. The Jamaican soldiers and police will provide support for logistics, planning and command, Holness told reporters. While Jamaica has said it would send 170 soldiers and 30 police officers, Holness said Tuesday that it was not possible to send them all at one time. "It's not practical," Holness said, adding that a command structure along

## NEWS BRIEFS

## Nicaragua Strips Citizenship From 135 Freed Political Prisoners

Nicaragua's government said on Tuesday that it was revoking the citizenship of 135 people who were freed from prison and were being expelled to Guatemala and eventually sent to the United States, the Associated Press reported. The government is also seizing their property and assets, according to the announcement, which was made through a press release from the Supreme Court of Justice. For years, Nicaragua's government has cracked down on dissent, jailing opponents of President Daniel Ortega and outlawing civil society groups.

## Twelve People Killed in Western Colombia in Conflict Over Drug Money

Seven men and five women were killed in a rural part of western Colombia last weekend in a conflict over drug trafficking proceeds, Defense Minister Iván Velásquez said on Tuesday, Agence France-Presse reported. An unverified video uploaded to social media depicts people lying on the floor of a house with gunshot wounds to the head. Most of the individuals were members of the Jaime Martínez Front of the Central General Staff (EMC), the largest dissident group of the now-demobilized FARC.

## Venezuela's Bolívar Falls Following Disputed Vote

Venezuela's bolívar currency has fallen in unofficial markets by as much as 20 percent less than the official rate, Bloomberg News reported Tuesday. The decline, which is the currency's largest drop since 2022, follows the country's disputed July 28 presidential election. President Nicolás Maduro appears to have spent a large amount of money that the government had stockpiled in an effort to win re-election, the news service reported.

with facilities to house a full contingent of personnel would be needed before such a deployment. “We want a very successful operation,” holness added. Jamaica’s deployment of the two dozen soldiers and police comes as the United States is considering the establishment of a full U.N. peacekeeping mission that could help to increase funding and equipment for the operation. [Editor’s note: See related [Q&A](#) in the July 15 issue of the Advisor.]

## ECONOMIC NEWS

### Argentina Expecting \$16.5 Bn in Energy Investments by 2026

Argentina’s government is anticipating investments in the country’s energy sector to reach \$15 billion next year and \$16.5 billion by 2026, Energy Secretary Eduardo Rodríguez Chirillo said Tuesday, Reuters reported. The investments are attributable to the government’s deregulation of the market, as well as from the country’s RIGI investment promotion regime, which include funds ranging from \$2 billion to \$2.5 billion per year, Rodríguez said. President Javier Milei has promoted a series of reforms through an omnibus bill that limits the state’s involvement in the economy, including those that facilitate energy exports and access to foreign currency, as well as the deregulation of local prices. Juan Cruz Díaz, managing director of Cefeidas Group, and Macarena Michienzi, the group’s chief specialist, told the weekly Energy Advisor in a [Q&A](#) published July 5 that Milei’s omnibus bill aimed “to eliminate government intervention in the market, allowing oil and gas companies to freely sell their products both domestically and abroad.” They added, “The bill also introduces a promotion regime to improve fiscal and foreign exchange conditions and ensure stability for investments over \$200 million. This is expected to provide the private sector with predictability regarding operations and profits, and also generate further business opportunities.”

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America. The Soto Cano base serves as a hub to conduct counter drug operations, emergency responses to natural disasters and regional training. Since assuming office, President Castro has extradited 37 Hondurans and is committed to deepening our fight against criminals and gangs who prey on our citizens. She has also achieved success in significantly reducing the pandemic levels of corruption of the previous government. On the institutional side, she remains focused on establishing an U.N.-backed anti-corruption commission (CICIH). CICIH will ensure that the international community can support our efforts to end impunity. Our strategic relationship extends far beyond a single treaty. It encompasses collaboration in the security, law enforcement, immigration and anti-corruption realms. It is about shared interests and the mutual confidence between two democratic partners.”

**A Enrique Rodríguez Burchard, managing partner at Aguilar Castillo Love, former member of Honduras’ Congress and former general secretary of the Liberal Party:**

“Street protests lit by opposition torches, narco-videos of politicians arranging contributions with drug cartels, a government defending the indefensible while issuing threats to those who dare to challenge it – this may sound like a description of Juan Orlando Hernández’s administration, but no, this is the latest season of Honduras’ political reality show, now starring the Zelaya family and its Libre Party. The episode began with the government’s controversial decision to revoke the extradition treaty with the United States under the pretense of preventing its ‘selective use’ by the northern power and eliminating the threat of another coup d’état. The rationale behind the move baffled many, including some of Castro’s staunchest supporters. However, the puzzle started coming together when, just days later, two key figures resigned: the secretary of congress, Carlos Zelaya (brother of former

President Mel Zelaya), admitted to meeting with drug traffickers in the leaked video; and his son, José Manuel Zelaya, stepped down from his role as minister of defense. Many now believe Castro’s real motive for scrapping the treaty was to shield government officials and family members from legal jeopardy. In a matter of days, Libre seems to have lost its core mission, with its once-righteous crusade against the ‘narco-dictadura’ now boomeranging on them. The growing distance from the United States, the disregard for building national consensus and the appointment of the official candidate as the new minister of defense signal the government’s increasing radicalization. These moves suggest a strategy to hold on to power by any means necessary, a development that will undoubtedly test the limits of U.S. diplomacy. As more narco-videos are rumored to emerge, it seems this grim political saga will continue to captivate the nation for some time.”

**A Ryan C. Berg, director of the Americas Program at the Center for Strategic & International Studies:** “A recent video showing a member of the Castro-Zelaya family discussing campaign contributions from criminal organizations to Mel Zelaya’s campaign has put President Xiomara Castro under intense scrutiny. Relatedly, the alignment between Caracas and Tegucigalpa has been on full display: Defense Minister José Manuel Zelaya (Xiomara’s nephew) cavorting with Maduro’s defense minister, Vladimir Padrino López. Castro also immediately recognized Maduro’s brazen election theft. This has brought to light the historic role of Honduras as a key airbridge for the criminal regime in Caracas to traffic narcotics. Ironically, the Castro administration swept to power on an anti-corruption message. Castro juxtaposed her administration to the prosecution and eventual conviction of her predecessor, Juan Orlando Hernández, on drug trafficking charges. As it turns out,

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however, the Castro-Zelaya family, appears embedded in the same networks. This is the context in which Castro's abrupt and unilateral departure from the extradition treaty occurred. Castro cast the move as intended to respond to 'interference' in Honduran politics by U.S. Ambassador Laura Dogu, who had rightly criticized the Zelaya-López meeting. However, the timing intimates a more ulterior motive and smacks of hypocrisy: Castro was delighted to see her predecessor Hernández extradited, while closing the door on such a fate for anyone from her extended family, freshly accused of involvement in drug trafficking and bribery. Given these allegations, and Honduras' position as an outlier in relations with Caracas, we should expect a deterioration in the U.S.-Honduran bilateral until the country holds its presidential elections in November 2025."

**A** Sarah Phillips, associate for Northern Latin America at McLarty Associates: "The longstanding extradition treaty between the United States and Honduras has been a crucial policy tool for bilateral anti-narcotics efforts. Since 2014, the treaty has led to the extradition of dozens of Honduran politicians, most notably former President Juan Orlando Hernández. In June, Hernández was sentenced to 45 years in a U.S. federal prison on weapons and drug trafficking charges. While leftist President

Xiomara Castro cited the protection of Honduras' sovereignty as a principal reason for exiting the treaty, opposition leaders have alleged the decision seeks to shield Castro's family from criminal prosecution. Indeed, a recently leaked video shows Castro's brother-in-law, Carlos Zelaya, accepting bribes to fund the president's 2013 campaign. The video also references previous illegal payments to Castro's husband and former President Manuel 'Mel' Zelaya, raising serious questions about the family's ties to narco-trafficking groups. President Castro's move to end extradition will further weaken the rule of law in Honduras, negatively affecting bilateral efforts to combat transnational crime. Since taking office in January 2022, Castro has faced uneven progress in addressing systemic corruption and institutional weakness. Early on in her administration, Castro inked a deal with the United Nations to create an international anti-corruption commission (CICIH), but the body has yet to materialize due to a lack of necessary legal reforms. While it is too early to predict the outcome of the November 2025 election, the March primary may serve as a bellwether for voter disenfranchisement with the ruling party and its stalled rule of law agenda."

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

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