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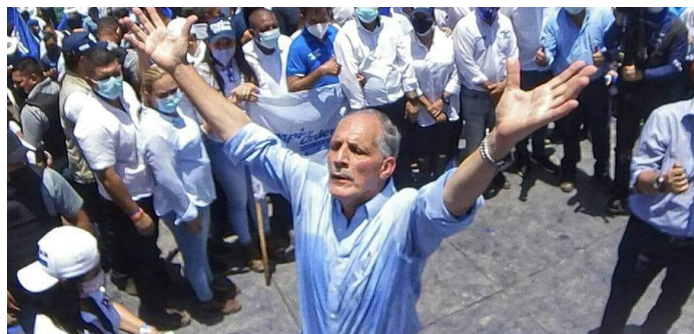
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FEATURED Q&A

Who Has the Edge Ahead of Honduras' Presidential Vote?



The mayor of Tegucigalpa, Nasry "Tito" Asfura, is leading the polls ahead of Honduras' Nov. 28 presidential election, though by just a few percentage points. // File Photo: National Party of Honduras.

Q National Party candidate Nasry "Tito" Asfura, the mayor of Tegucigalpa, is leading in the polls ahead of the Honduran presidential election in November, with 21 percent support, according to a CID-Gallup poll released Sept. 10. Former First Lady and Libre candidate Xiomara Castro, as well as television presenter Salvador Nasralla, were both three points behind Asfura in the poll. How is the race shaping up? What issues will be the most important to voters in November, and how significant will allegations of corruption and fraud against candidates and their close allies be? What is at stake for Honduras, given who wins the election?

A Luis Fernando Suazo, Honduras' ambassador to the United States: "Polls, including CID-Gallup, favor Nasry 'Tito' Asfura of the National Party in what looks like a three-way winner possibility among 15 candidates. In the end, the support must be translated to votes, so turnout and the excitement of voters going to the polls will be decisive. In our country, the party structure is also important because many voters need help getting to the polls. In terms of voter turnout and excitement, the three front-runners may have similar conditions, but the National Party appears to have a better and more well-organized structure. For example, Salvador Nasralla of the Savior Party of Honduras registered no local candidates in nearly 25 percent of the country's municipalities. The 90-day open campaign season recently began, and messaging has played a big role in how the race is shaping up. For example, former First Lady Xiomara Castro presented a plan that included the legalization of abortion. With 80 percent or more of the pop-

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Venezuela Reopens Borders With Colombia

Venezuela reopened its land borders with Colombia following a two-year diplomatic stalemate. Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodríguez said cross-border trade could resume.

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BUSINESS

Getnet Brasil Shares to Start Trading Following Spinoff

Brazilian payments company Getnet Brasil's shares will begin trading this month on the B3 and Nasdaq exchanges following their spinoff from Santander Brasil.

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POLITICAL

Mexico Wants More U.S. Action on Weapons

The United States must take more action to prevent illegal weapons from flowing to Mexico, Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard said in advance of talks with top U.S. officials.

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Ebrard // File Photo: Mexican Government.

POLITICAL NEWS

Mexico Wants More U.S. Action on Guns, Faster Extraditions

The United States must take more actions to reduce the flow of weapons into Mexico and also more quickly extradite suspects wanted for crimes in Mexico, Mexican Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard said Tuesday, ahead of meetings scheduled for Friday with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, the Associated Press reported. "It is important that you, [the] United States, take effective, efficient actions to drastically reduce the illegal trafficking of weapons," said Ebrard. The foreign minister also urged "quick judicial assistance" from the United States, saying that Mexico has quickly extradited suspects to the United States, but the United States more slowly extradites suspects to Mexico. "Extraditions should have the same speed from there to here, as from here to there, something that is not the case right now," said Ebrard, the AP reported. Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has also wanted the United States to contribute to an initiative in which he has sought to pay farmers to plant trees in order to keep drug gangs from recruiting them. Additionally, López Obrador has wanted more of the illicit money that is connected to Mexican suspects and seized in the United States to be returned to Mexico, the wire service reported. Ebrard said those two points would also be on the agenda for the talks on Friday in Mexico City. In addition to Blinken, U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland and Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas are also scheduled to participate in the meetings. López Obrador and Ebrard have both declared an end to the previous plan for cooperation between the United States and Mexico, known as the Mérida Initiative. Ebrard said earlier this year that the initiative "doesn't work" and is "dead." The program, which officials of the two countries launched in 2008, provided equipment including aircraft in its early years but then shifted more toward the United States providing training to Mexican

law enforcement authorities, the AP reported. Roberta Jacobson, a former U.S. ambassador to Mexico and former assistant secretary of state, told the Advisor in a [Q&A](#) published Aug. 17 that she agrees that the Mérida Initiative, which she helped to create, is "dead." However, she said that the initiative did not fail. "The real goal of the Mérida Initiative was to be a process—a way of developing a culture of security cooperation between Mexico and the United States," Jacobson told the Advisor. "Following the launch of the initiative, Mexican and U.S. law enforcement worked together for more than a decade, fulfilling the goal of the initiative."

Venezuela Reopens Land Borders With Colombia

Venezuela on Tuesday reopened its land borders with Colombia after more than two years of diplomatic stalemate, Agence France-Presse reported. In announcing the decision earlier this week on national television, Vice President Delcy Rodríguez said it was time to "turn the page" and that cross-border trade between the two countries could resume. Meanwhile, while traveling to the border department of Norte de Santander on Tuesday, Colombian President Iván Duque said that the reopening of the border crossing was a victory for citizens of both countries. "This triumph is not a triumph of any dictator, it is not the triumph of any government; it is the triumph of a people that claims to have that living border open for the well-being of the people," he said. The conservative leader cautioned against allowing the decision to open the border to score political points for the regime of socialist President Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela. "I want to make it clear that we Colombians are not going to lend ourselves to be useful idiots of the electoral pretensions that the dictatorship may have in the face of the local elections that they want to advance in Venezuela," he warned. Duque added that the reopening will be done gradually and with security standards, noting that the structure of the border bridges will be reviewed, since they

NEWS BRIEFS

Group of 200 Protesters Takes Over Petroperú Gas Pipeline Station

A group of more than 200 protesters has taken over a Petroperú gas pipeline station in Manseriche, the state-run oil company said Tuesday. The protesters are part of two groups—the Awajún Río Apaga Native Federation, or FE-NARA, and the Peoples Affected by Petroleum Activity, or PAAP—which are demanding Peru's government pay more attention to "alleged violations," the company said. Petroperú said it has evacuated its personnel from the station and stopped hydrocarbon pumping operations there.

Volkswagen to Extend Partial Production Halt at Mexico Plant

German automaker Volkswagen will extend a partial production stoppage at one of its plants in the Mexican state of Puebla until Oct. 15, Reuters reported Tuesday, citing a labor union document. Other automakers such as General Motors and Ford have also suspended some manufacturing operations in Mexico this year in the face of a worldwide semiconductor shortage and other supply chain problems related to the coronavirus pandemic, according to the report.

Peru's Central Bank Chief to Remain for Another Five-Year Term

Peruvian central bank chief Julio Velarde will remain in his position for another five-year term, the prime minister's office announced Tuesday in a posting on Twitter, Reuters reported. Velarde, who has headed the central bank since 2006, has won praise and is seen as a stabilizing official who could help to reassure markets following the election in June of Pedro Castillo, who belongs to a Marxist-Leninist party, as president.

had been blocked with metal containers for more than two years. Duque also said he was “open” to re-establishing consular services in Venezuela “if the conditions exist and if there are guarantees” of safety and security, EFE reported.

BUSINESS NEWS

Getnet Brasil Shares to Start Trading on B3, Nasdaq

The shares in Brazilian payments company Getnet Brasil, which Banco Santander Brasil is spinning off, are scheduled to begin trading on Brazil’s B3 stock exchange as well as the Nasdaq, Reuters reported Tuesday, citing regulatory filings from Santander Brasil. The shares are to begin trading on the B3 on Oct. 18 and on the Nasdaq on Oct. 22. Santander Brasil previously said it would spin off Getnet and list its shares as part of an overhaul in parent company Banco Santander’s payments businesses, the wire service reported. The bank’s payments businesses are grouped together in PagoNxt, which will have Getnet as a unit, Reuters reported. “This strategic step will enable Getnet Brasil to unlock the full potential of its businesses as part of PagoNxt,” Getnet CEO Pedro Coutinho said in a statement. Getnet currently operates in Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, and Santander has said it will expand to more countries in Latin America. Getnet is Brazil’s third-largest card processor and posted net income of \$37.6 million in the first half of this year, reporting a net income margin of 14.9 percent. Shareholders in Santander Brasil will receive a quarter of a share in Getnet for each share they hold in Santander Brasil, Reuters reported. Holders of American depository shares of Santander Brasil will receive 0.125 of an ADS in Getnet. Santander Brasil shareholders approved the spinoff in March, and the central bank, B3 and the regulator CVM have since approved the move, Seu Dinheiro reported.

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ulation being Christian or Catholic, this may affect her support. As in every election, we are looking at a war of narratives and accusations to generate political advantage. Previous allegations of corruption and similar accusations against candidates are already

“Turnout and the excitement of voters going to the polls will be decisive.”

— Luis Fernando Suazo

considered in the polls and may not have further impact. The fact that the opposition has a majority in the electoral authority should avoid allegations of electoral fraud by the official sector. Geopolitics and regional security are at stake. A change in the Honduran political system would generate an imbalance in SICA votes and in international political and economic organizations. Those who are undecided to this day remain the ones that could define the outcome, and anything could happen.”

A **Emily Mendrala, deputy assistant secretary for Western Hemisphere affairs at the U.S. Department of State:** “The United States and Honduras enjoy a long history of collaboration and are closely connected by culture, geography, family ties and trade. The U.S. government is dedicated to supporting essential democratic institutions in Honduras and across Central America. The Honduran people deserve to have confidence that the results reflect their will. We call for calm and patience during the electoral process. We are partnering with the people of Honduras to offer support for free, fair, transparent and peaceful elections on Nov. 28. The freedom to elect political leaders is one of a set of core democratic institutions that are essential to keeping government

leaders accountable. The United States and our democratic neighbors are concerned by recent attacks on democratic institutions among Honduras’ neighbors, particularly in Nicaragua, where the Ortega-Murillo government has completely closed off the possibility of free and fair elections through an alarming wave of repression, but also in neighboring El Salvador where a weakening of checks and balances between democratic institutions has produced judicial decisions that undermine electoral integrity. Given this context, it is more important than ever that the Honduran people engage in a peaceful and transparent electoral process, and we congratulate them on their progress toward this goal. These elections offer a critical opportunity to demonstrate the resilience and strength of Honduras’ democracy, setting a simple but important example to the region. As President Biden has repeatedly stated, the U.S. government is committed to assisting the people of Central America, including Honduras, to address the root causes of migration. Central to this effort is our focus on driving improvements in transparency, rule of law and an end to corruption. The United States remains committed to supporting Honduras in promoting inclusive economic growth, addressing shared migration challenges, combating corruption, promoting human rights, fighting transnational crime, mitigating the impact of the climate crisis and helping to protect vulnerable populations.”

A **Juan Carlos Sikaffy, president of the Honduran Council of Private Enterprise (COHEP):** “This November will be an important month for all Hondurans. The people will choose a new president, members of Congress and mayors to govern us for four years. Honduras has suffered from the pandemic and two hurricanes during 2020, which caused an economic contraction of more than nine percentage points. This year has signified a lot of work to recover the

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lost jobs and reconstruct the infrastructure and agricultural areas that were devastated. Next year promises to be one with a lot of good opportunities to recover our economy, but we need peace and the best conditions to achieve it. With that in mind, we are convinced that the election process must be transparent, peaceful and that the popular will must be respected. It is important for the international community and national organizations to closely observe the election in order to give the population the security of a credible and legitimate process. Honduras deserves a bright future with opportunities for its youth, which will be acquired through hard work, as well as new and better jobs. We will work hard for this alongside any candidate that the majority of our population elects. All of the candidates running for public office must do so thinking of our country and sharing their governing plans with the population to prove they are the best option. Violence, insults and accusations are not the way to go, and our people must reject that. The private sector is ready to work for Honduras, and we hope the winners of our November elections are ready too."

A **Hugo Llorens, former U.S. ambassador to Honduras:** "The upcoming Honduran elections will be among the most consequential since the nation's return to democracy in 1982. President Hernández's constitutionally suspect re-election in 2017 and second term have undermined the public's faith in democracy's capacity to respond to citizen needs. The latest polls reflect public frustration in the face of an economic crisis compounded by the devastating effects of hurricanes and Covid-19. The Honduran people are seeking a leader

who puts the nation above narrow personal interest. They want a president committed to more honest government, prudent policies to kickstart the economy and create jobs, fight crime and reform the health and education sectors. While the polls are tight, and the Nationalists can count on ample financing, a strong organization and loyal followers, a fourth consecutive triumph by the incumbent

“The upcoming Honduran elections will be among the most consequential since the nation's return to democracy in 1982.”

— Hugo Llorens

party would be unusual. The undecided third of the electorate, mostly disaffected youth, is likely to swing massively in the direction of one of the leading four candidates and be the decisive factor. Recent electoral reforms, including new technology, can contribute to a more transparent result, as will a robust national and international observer presence at polling stations and at the National Elections Council headquarters. Assuming the elections are free and fair, no candidate is likely to receive a resounding verdict. Let's hope the winner wisely agrees to share power by creating a unity government with broad representation from all sectors. A genuine commitment to find practical solutions to core problems, not ideology, is key to getting Honduras back on a virtuous path."

The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta at gkuleta@thedialogue.org.

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