Source: Honduras Culture and Politics with updates from Upside Down World

In late November, the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court ruled 4-1 that the "controversial and poorly implemented Police Purification Law is unconstitutional on the grounds that it violates the right to due process for police officers." President Porfirio Lobo and the Congress rejected that decision, and said that "the justices were colluding with business leaders to undercut his power."

James Bosworth writes for the Christian Science Monitor that "Several media outlets, including El Heraldo and La Prensa (both of which supported the 2009 removal of President Zelaya), are calling the Congress's vote a "technical coup" against the judiciary. Not helping, Army soldiers deployed near the presidential palace and Congress to "protect" those branches create the image of the military taking sides."

El Heraldo reports that the military were called in by president of Congress Juan Orlando Hernandez to guard Congress in an extraordinary session on the evening of December 11th, while it debated a report from the commission appointed yesterday to make recommendations about the Supreme Court in Honduras.

El Heraldo reports that the commission recommended removing 4 to 7 of the justices.

Marvin Ponce, vice president of Congress, told the press that the removal of justices was the starting *point* of the discussion.

The decision to proceed, according to Ponce, comes from an imminent political crisis resulting from the primary elections carried out a month ago, combined with the Sala Constitucional's declaration that the Police Purification Law is unconstitutional.

Ponce's understanding is that "there is conflict at the highest levels...I understand that the

vacant justice positions will be divided between Yani [Rosenthal] and the National Party. In play is the subject of the recent elections, powerful groups that want to move pieces to stop the process."

Ponce went on to tell *El Heraldo* that to not dismiss the justices would be to imperil the candidacy of Juan Orlando Hernandez, the head of Congress.

But wait a minute. Ponce has spread wild rumors before that had no basis in reality, so we need to take his information with a grain of salt.

First, Congress does not actually possess the power to remove a justice of the Supreme Court, who can only be removed for legal cause.

Mauricio Villeda, newly elected presidential candidate of the Liberal Party, agrees that Congress hasn't got a legal leg to stand on.

Roy Utrecho, of the Public Prosecutor's office, says what Congress is trying to do is an act of treason.

Finally, Yani Rosenthal denies any involvement.

Ramon Custodio, commissioner of Human Rights in Honduras, commented that "The abuses that they are committing in the name of the people of Honduras from the National Congress are a terrible example for Rule of Law where you have an independence of the powers and things are worked out within the framework of institutionality."

Wenceslao Lara, Congressman for the Department of Cortes said : "We are the most corrupt [country] in Central America right now and one of the most corrupt in Latin America. They're the incompetent ones, they're the ones doing harm; they're putting us in a situation that the people of Honduras don't want . . . I call on the President of the Republic to reflect, and on Congress to stop this diabolical attempt that they are making against Honduras. They are the ones who are incapable of governing the country at this time. "

Update by UDW editors:

In the early hours of the morning on December 12th, the Honduran Congress passed a bill that allows the congress or president to put the police reform law and other issues to public

referendum. The constitutionality of the bill and the referendum process are debatable.