

UN: Honduran police used lethal force against protesters



Geneva, March 12 (RHC)-- Honduran security forces, especially the military police, used excessive and lethal force against protesters demonstrating against President Juan Orlando Hernandez's disputed re-election in November, the United Nations said on Monday.

The security forces shot dead at least 16 people, including two women and two children, out of at least 23 people known to have died during the protests, the U.N. human rights office said in a report.

"These cases raise serious concerns and may amount to extra-judicial killings," the report said.

Hernandez, a conservative supported by the United States, appeared set to lose the Nov. 26 election until an abrupt halt in the vote count and a shift in the results took victory away from his center-left rival, Salvador Nasralla.

Allegations of fraud sparked protests but the result was eventually ratified by the country's electoral tribunal and both Mexico and the United States backed the incumbent.

Hernandez had pledged a hard-line strategy criticized by human rights groups to bring order to the impoverished Central American country, which has been plagued by battles between security forces, local gangs and drug traffickers.

By Jan. 27, the date of the presidential inauguration, no charges had been brought against any member of the security forces in relation to the killings, the U.N. report said.

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