

## 2. Government

### 2.1 National Government

The 1965 constitution, which declared Honduras a Republic under a President elected by direct popular vote, has been partially suspended since the 1972 coup. Since that time, military juntas have controlled the country. (The second coup of April 1975, replaced Gen. Lopez Arellano with Col. Melgar Castro, his Minister of Government and Justice.) Even while the constitution was in force, the tradition of a strong executive, usually backed by the military, has led to a highly centralized government controlled by the President. Executive functions are shared by a Council of Ministers and 12 cabinet heads appointed by the Chief of State.

Despite constitutional authority, the National Congress and Supreme Court have had little real influence. Historically, the National Congress (unicameral, popularly elected by department) has been dominated by presidential supporters and reluctant to act in opposition to the executive. The seven Supreme Court Justices are named by, and serve at the pleasure of, the President.

### 2.2 1980 Status

On August 7, 1978, a three-man military junta, apparently approved by the highest Honduran military body, the Armed Forces Council, overthrew the government of President Juan Alberto Melgar. The junta announced it would respect international commitments and individual liberties. No violence or display of military force was reported. The coup was preceded by several months of conflict over land reform between right- and left-wing political groups.

In July 1980, power was handed over to a newly elected 71-seat Constituent Assembly in which the Liberal Party holds 35 seats, the Nationalist Party 33, and the National Innovation and Coalition 3. A Cabinet was named by President Gen. Policarpo Paz Garcia the same month. Presidential elections are slated for December 1981.

By the terms of a treaty signed in Lima, Peru in October, a 10-year old conflict between Honduras and El Salvador was settled and the border reopened.

### 2.3 Regional Organization

The country is divided into 18 departments, with the capital located in a central district consisting of Tegucigalpa and its suburb, Comayagua. Departments, headed by governors appointed by the President, carry out central government decisions. Departments are subdivided into municipalities; the departmental capital is the capital of its largest municipality. Some 282 municipalities, most of which did not qualify as urban centers, existed in 1976.

Municipalities are subdivided into aldeas, villages or hamlets. Widely scattered homes in rural areas are grouped into caserios, classed as subdivisions of aldeas. Localities with populations of 500-1,000 may elect a mayor, a legal representative, and a councilman. For each additional 1,000 citizens, another councilman may be elected, with the total not to exceed 7.

### 2.4 Key Leaders (January 1982)

President.....	Paz Garcia, Policarpo, Brig. Gen.
Sec. of State for Communications, Public Works & Transport.....	Casco, Mario Ivan
Sec. of State for Defense & Public Security.....	Flores Theresin, Mario, Col.
Sec. of State for Economy & Commerce.....	Mondragon Carrasco, Ruben T.
Sec. of State for Finance & Public Credit.....	Villanueva Tabora, Benjamin
Sec. of State for Foreign Affairs.....	Elvir Sierra, Cesar, Col.
Sec. of State for Government & Justice....	Mejia Arellano, Oscar
Sec. of State for Labor & Social Security.....	
Sec. of State for Natural Resources.....	Castillo Aguilar, Rodrigo
Sec. of State for Public Education.....	Pineda Ponce, Rafael
Sec. of State for Public Health & Social Service.....	Andonle Fernandez, Juan
Sec. of State for Tourism & Culture.....	Alvarez Martinez, Armando
Director, Natl. Agrarian Institute.....	Zuniga Robelo, Edgardo
Executive Secretary, Planning Council.....	Reconco Murillo, Efraín