

WOLA: Paraguayan President Lugo's Removal is Undemocratic
By WOLA
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Last week the Paraguayan legislature impeached, convicted, and replaced President Fernando Lugo in a period of thirty hours—a process that the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) has described as undemocratic.

"While it has the veneer of legality, President Lugo was railroaded out of office," said Joy Olson, Executive Director of WOLA. "On the scale of undemocratic ways to remove presidents in Latin America, it is not quite Honduras, but the result is the same."

Lugo's election in 2008 marked the first time in more than sixty years that a candidate outside the traditionally dominant Colorado Party won a presidential election in Paraguay. Lugo's political coalition promised a new and more inclusive political approach, and his victory suggested that the political system in Paraguay might become more open and diverse.

"Even if a large majority of the Congress voted to impeach, impeachment is the ultimate step in the democratic process and should never be put in the express lane. It is tragic that Lugo's government ends with another black mark on Paraguayan democracy," Olson said.

Vice President Federico Franco has come into office through a fast-tracked impeachment process that did not allow President Lugo time to defend himself, and therefore doesn't meet democratic standards. At this time, we believe that the United States should not recognize Franco as the President of Paraguay.

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