

Hundreds of Hondurans Protest Against CAFTA En Honduras

By: Associated Press

March 31, 2006

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras -- Hundreds of doctors, Indians, teachers, students and workers marched through the streets of the Honduran capital in protest Friday, a day before the government is scheduled to ratify a contentious free-trade agreement with the United States.

Carrying signs against newly inaugurated President Manuel Zelaya and the U.S., the demonstrators waged their protests in front of the U.S. Embassy and the federal building housing Zelaya's office.

The protests were organized by The National Coordinator of Popular Resistance, comprising more than 60 left-leaning organizations. Zelaya was expected to ratify CAFTA on Saturday.

"The treaty was designed to benefit big companies and the rich," group leader Juan Barahona said. "And this system of trade, which goes against the poor, will generate massive unemployment."

Proponents of the pact say it will open important U.S. markets to Honduran business.

Honduras has a 46 percent unemployment rate, while 71 percent of the country's 7 million people live in poverty.

Zelaya was not in his office during the protests..