



Former Honduras President Hernández freed from prison after Trump pardon

World Dec 2, 2025 12:00 PM EDT

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras (AP) — Former Honduras President Juan Orlando Hernández, sentenced last year to 45 years in prison for his role in helping drug traffickers move hundreds of tons of cocaine to the United States, was released from prison following a pardon from President Donald Trump, his wife announced Tuesday.

READ MORE: Hondurans vote in close presidential race overshadowed by surprise Trump intervention

The U.S. Bureau of Prisons inmate website showed that Hernández was released from U.S. Penitentiary, Hazelton in West Virginia on Monday and a spokesperson for the bureau on Tuesday confirmed his release.

His wife Ana García thanked Trump for pardoning Hernández via the social platform X early Tuesday.

"After almost four years of pain, of waiting and difficult challenges, my husband Juan Orlando Hernández RETURNED to being a free man, thanks to the presidential pardon granted by President Donald Trump," García's post said. She included a picture of the U.S. Bureau of Prisons listing for Hernández indicating his release.

On Sunday, Trump was asked about why he pardoned Hernandez by reporters traveling with him on Air Force One.

"I was asked by Honduras, many of the people of Honduras," Trump said.

"The people of Honduras really thought he was set up, and it was a terrible thing," he said.

"They basically said he was a drug dealer because he was the president of the country. And they said it was a Biden administration set-up. And I looked at the facts and I agreed with them."

Hernández was arrested at the request of the United States in February 2022, weeks after handing over power to current President Xiomara Castro.

Two years later, he was **sentenced to 45 years in prison** in a New York federal courtroom for taking bribes from drug traffickers so they could safely move some 400 tons of cocaine north through Honduras to the United States.

Hernández maintained throughout that he was innocent and the victim of revenge by drug traffickers he had helped extradite to the United States.

During his sentencing in New York, federal Judge P. Kevin Castel said the punishment should serve as a warning to "well educated, well dressed" individuals who gain power and think their status insulates them from justice when they do wrong.

Hernández portrayed himself as a hero of the anti-drug trafficking movement who teamed up with American authorities under three U.S. presidential administrations to reduce drug imports.

But the judge said trial evidence proved the opposite and that Hernández employed "considerable acting skills" to make it seem that he was an anti-drug trafficking crusader while he deployed his nation's police and military, when necessary, to protect the drug trade.

Hernández is not guaranteed a quick return to Honduras.

Immediately after Trump **announced his intention to pardon Hernández**, Honduras Attorney General Johel Zelaya said via X that his office was obligated to seek justice and put an end to impunity.

He did not specify what charges Hernández could face in Honduras. There were various corruption-related investigations of his administration across two terms in office that did not lead to charges against him. President Xiomara Castro, who had Hernández arrested and extradited him to the U.S., will remain in office until January.

The pardon promised by Trump days before Honduras' presidential election injected a new element into the contest that some said helped the candidate from his National Party Nasry Asfura, one of the leaders as the vote count proceeded Tuesday.

Catalini reported from Trenton, New Jersey. Associated Press writer Alanna Durkin Richer contributed from Washington, D.C.

A free press is a cornerstone of a healthy democracy.

Support trusted journalism and civil dialogue.

Donate now_ →

By — Christopher Sherman, Associated Press

By — Mike Catalini, Associated Press