

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS UNDER ATTACK

Violence against human rights defenders monitoring and denouncing the violent repression of protests in the aftermath of the presidential elections has increased, with defenders reporting a murder, smear campaigns, threats and intimidation against them.

Local NGOs report that numerous social activists, human rights defenders, and people actively involved in protests occurring throughout Honduras since 29 November 2017 have been subjected to beatings, intimidation, harassment and stigmatization, and that some of their names appear on lists in the hands of security forces. The Coalition against Impunity registered at least 63 attacks against defenders since the post-election crisis started.

Among them, the Broad Movement for Justice and Dignity (Movimiento Amplio por la Dignidad y la Justicia, **MADJ**) reported that security forces brutally repressed a protest in La Masica, Atlántida on 16 December. Security forces beat and later fired taser guns at approximately 10 people, including MADJ member **Diego Aguilar López** and **Wilmer Paredes**, a collaborator with MADJ. On 29 December, Wilmer Paredes requested protection from the National Protection System for human rights defenders after he reported vehicles following him. Unknown assailants shot and killed Wilmer Paredes on 1 January 2018. On 14 January, a flyer began circulating on social media accusing MADJ's leaders, **Martín and Víctor Fernández**, of being responsible for Wilmer Paredes' murder.

On 30 December 2017 **Father Ismael Moreno Coto**, director of the independent radio station Radio Progreso and the Reflection, Investigation, and Communication Team (Equipo de Reflexión, Investigación y Comunicación de la Compañía de Jesús en Honduras, **ERIC-SJ**) reported a smear campaign against him. His name and picture were included, together with those of social activists **Karina Flores** and **Araminta Pereira** and six other defenders in a flyer named "Axis of evil" from El Progreso, accusing them of violence and of being involved in organized crime. In December, the National Protection System denied protection measures to ERIC-SJ's researcher **Joaquín Mejía**.

On 12 January 2018, security forces harassed several journalists who were covering a protest in Tegucigalpa, the capital, and violently forced them to leave the area. Two journalists from UNE TV were subsequently injured. According to the NGO C-Libre, another journalist from UNE TV has reported several security incidents since December, including death threats and tear gas thrown into her house at night.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to initiate a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation into the murder of Wilmer Paredes, and the injuries, threats, and smear campaigns reported by human rights defenders and organizations, to make the results public and bring those responsible to justice;
- Urging them to take all appropriate measures to guarantee the safety of human rights defenders at risk, in accordance with their wishes.
- Calling on them to publicly recognize the legitimate human rights work of human rights defenders in the country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 1 MARCH 2018 TO:

Attorney General

Señor Óscar Fernando Chinchilla
Ministerio Público Lomas del Guijarro
Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Email: mprelacionespublicas@gmail.com
(with wallekaz@gmail.com in copy)

**Salutation: Dear Attorney General/
Estimado Señor Fiscal**

Minister of Human Rights, Justice, Interior and Decentralization

Señor Héctor Leonel Ayala Alvarenga
Res. La Hacienda, Calle La Estancia,
Bloque A-Lote 8 Edificio Z y M.
Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Email: comunicacionshjgd@gmail.com

**Salutation: Dear Minister / Estimado
Señor Secretario**

And copies to:

Director of the National Protection System

Señora Nora Urbina
El Ocotal, Comayagua M.D.C. antiguo
Local de Academia de Policía (ANAPO),
Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Email: noraurbina2002@yahoo.com

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR IVAN ROMERO-MARTINEZ, Embassy of Honduras, 4th Floor 136 Baker Street W1U 6UD, 020 7486 4880, Fax 020 7486 4550, hondurasuk@lineone.net

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 271/17. Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr37/7595/2017/en/

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Security forces brutally repressed massive protests that have taken place since 29 November 2017 in several places around Honduras to denounce the lack of transparency around the presidential election on 26 November. On 17 December, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal declared current president Juan Orlando Hernández as the winner, and on 5 January 2018, the Tribunal denied all the appeals lodged by other political parties. The President is scheduled to begin his new term in office on 27 January.

Security forces used excessive force against these protestors, including lethal weapons. According to the Ombudsperson, at least 31 people have been killed, and multiple cases of people injured by firearms or brutally beaten by security forces were reported, as well as cases that could amount to torture and other cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment. Authorities arrested or detained hundreds of people during protests and the 10-day curfew implemented in December.

Honduran human rights organizations and independent media have been monitoring and denouncing the excessive use of force and human rights violations perpetrated in the aftermath of the presidential election.

Honduras is one of the most dangerous countries for human rights defenders, especially those working on territory, land and environmental rights issues.

In 2016, MADJ reported several security incidents to the authorities, including surveillance, threats and harassment, in particular against its General Coordinator Martín Fernández. MADJ provides legal representation on several paradigmatic and grave cases of attacks against territory, land and environmental rights defenders in Honduras. Martín Fernández reported new threats and persecution against him in December 2017, and security forces carried out illegal raids into MADJ's office in La Masica and into the house of MADJ members in Esparta, Atlántida.

Radio Progreso has been covering the elections and the repression that followed from their headquarters located in El Progreso. Radio Progreso's transmission has been interrupted for almost two weeks since 9 December, when an antenna near Tegucigalpa was damaged by criminal hands. Several members of Radio Progreso are beneficiaries of protection measures ordered by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), because of the harassment and threats and they received after the coup in 2009.

Name: Diego Aguilar Lopez (m), Wilmer Paredes (m), Martín Fernández (m), Víctor Fernández (m) and other members of MADJ; Father Ismael Moreno Coto (m), Joaquín Mejía (m) and other members of ERIC-SJ; Karina Flores (f), Araminta Pereira (f) and other social activists and human rights defenders.

Gender m/f: all

Further information on UA: 271/17 Index: AMR 37/7748/2018 Issue Date: 18 January 2018