

via fax: 011 504 2239 3298 <b>Sr. Juan Orlando Hernández</b> President of Honduras	via fax: 011 504 2221 5667 <b>Sr. Óscar Fernando Chinchilla Banegas</b> Attorney General of Honduras
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November 26, 2016

Dear Sirs:

We are angered by recent digital attacks against two human rights defense organizations: Honduras Solidarity Network (HSN) and the Committee of Relatives of the Disappeared in Honduras (COFADEH).

A new blog and Facebook page appeared recently calling itself *Defensores de Honduras* (Defenders of Honduras). On November 14, *Defensores de Honduras* published distortions and misinformation in an attempt to discredit the Honduras Solidarity Network and its co-coordinator in Honduras, Karen Spring.

This attack was part of an article published about the assassinations of two members of the campesino organization MUCA, including its president Jose Angel Flores (cf our letter October 25, 2016), that accuses human rights defenders, such as COFADEH director Berta Oliva, of protecting drug traffickers in northern Honduras. The article also prominently displays the logo of HSN and a picture of Karen Spring. It denigrates the solidarity work of HSN, asserting that HSN is “totally politicized and aligned with extremist ideas...”

The Honduras Solidarity Network (of which our organization is a member) was organized immediately after the 2009 coup to work in solidarity with people’s nonviolent pro-democracy movements in Honduras. HSN has organized accompaniment and educational delegations and speaking tours, denounced violence and repression, opposed the certification of human rights progress by the US State Department, and urged the US Congress to end financing of state violence in Honduras.

These verbal attacks are meant to confuse and destroy the social and political movements that are opposed to state-sponsored violence and increased militarization of Honduras, especially in the Aguán Valley. The attacks are also meant to isolate social movements in Honduras from international support. These attacks also increase safety risks of persons already at risk for their work in defense of human rights.

We **strongly urge** that you

- publicly condemn the digital attack on HSN and COFADEH by the group that calls itself *Defensores de Honduras*
- make a public statement that condemns similar phrasing, messaging, and false accusations against journalists, social movement leaders, and human rights defenders in Honduras
- guarantee, in all circumstances, that human rights defenders are free to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including public defamation and judicial harassment.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Co-Coordinators

and

Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Jorge Alberto Milla Reyes, Honduran Ambassador to the US ~ via fax 202 966 9751  
James Nealon, US Ambassador to Honduras ~ via fax 011 504 2236 9037  
Olivia Franken, Honduras Desk, US State Dept ~ via email  
Francisco José Eguiguren Praeli, Rapporteur for Honduras, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email  
José de Jesús Orozco Hernández, Rapporteur for Human Rights Defenders, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3650  
US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

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**The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter:**