

via fax: 011 504 220 4352 Alvaro Romero Minister of Public Security of Honduras	via fax: 011 504 221 5667 Leonidas Rosa Bautista Attorney General of Honduras
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May 13, 2007

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned for the safety of transvestite activist and sex worker **Josef Fabio Estrada** (also known as Debora), a colleague of Donny Reyes, about whose harassment and March 18 arbitrary detention we wrote to you on April 23. On April 10 at 10 pm, Josef Fabio Estrada and two other transvestite sex workers who had been working in a well-known gay/transvestite red-light district in Comayagua, Tegucigalpa, were stopped and searched by a police patrol from Police Station No. 4. At the same time, the sex workers were approached by a group of five drunk men. The men began to assault Josef, throwing him to the ground, beating him and ripping off his clothes. The police watched the attack, laughing and offering encouragement to the attackers and preventing the other two sex workers from intervening. When Josef used a sharp object he found on the ground to defend himself from one of the five men, the police finally intervened. They arrested and handcuffed Josef Fabio Estrada but left his attackers free.

Josef Fabio Estrada was charged with attempted homicide (second degree) and robbery. At a preliminary hearing on April 27 the charges were increased to attempted homicide (first degree) and robbery. Since the preliminary hearing, he has been held at the state penitentiary, normally reserved for convicted, not pre-trial prisoners. He is in the so-called "cell of death" which houses prisoners suffering from tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and mental illness. Colleagues from Asociación Arcoiris who visited him on May 1 noted that he had received no medical attention and had visible injuries from the beating.

This incident is a continuation of severe mistreatment by officers from No. 4 Police Station in Tegucigalpa of members of Asociación Arcoiris and other members of the lesbian/gay/transgendered community in their custody. Therefore, we **strongly urge** you to:

- ensure that Josef Fabio Estrada is immediately provided with medical attention and moved from the state penitentiary to a place of detention for detainees awaiting trial;
- conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into the conduct of the police officers present during the attack on Josef Fabio Estrada and impose appropriate sanctions on any officer found guilty of dereliction of duty or homophobic abuse.

Thank you for your prompt attention.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

Copies: Salomon Escota Salinas, Head of Police ~ via fax: 011 504 237 9070
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 Marcos Mandojana, Desk Officer for Honduras, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202-647-2597
 Paolo Carozza, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, via fax: (202)458-3992 or 202.458.6215
 US Senators Brown & Voinovich ~ via email
 US Representatives Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Sutton, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

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