

via fax: 011 504 220 1756

Coronel Jorge Alberto Rodas Gamero
Minister of Public Safety of Honduras

via fax: 011 504 221 5667

Abogado Luis Alberto Rubi
Attorney General of Honduras

April 4, 2009

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned for the safety and lives of **Bertha Oliva**, coordinator of the Committee of Relatives of the Disappeared in Honduras (COFADEH), and **other members of the COFADEH staff**.

On March 11, while she was dining with a colleague and a relative in a restaurant in Tegucigalpa, Bertha Oliva was kept under surveillance by a man who fled when realized he had been seen. She called the police; they arrived 40 minutes later but did not question anyone at the restaurant. She has been receiving some police protection since March 14 but it is inadequate, and she and her colleagues are still in danger. The Public Prosecutor's Office has not reported any advances in their investigations into this incident or into the death threats Bertha Oliva received on January 27, 2009 (see our letter of Feb. 5, 2009).

Bertha Oliva, some of her colleagues and the COFADEH offices have been targeted on other occasions. Investigations have yet to take place regarding the following earlier incidents:

- *July 6, 2008*: Bertha Oliva and her daughter were followed by two men.
- *August 31*: a colleague of Bertha Oliva was followed by another two men.
- *July 3 and August 5*: the offices of COFADEH were broken into, files containing sensitive information and some valuables were stolen;
- *September 10*: two plainclothes police officers on surveillance outside the office of a trade union were discovered with a list of 135 activists and their organizations, including Bertha Oliva and COFADEH. The officers also had a camera with photographs of the offices of several NGOs, including COFADEH. The two officers were arrested but have since been released.

In light of these serious incidents, we **strongly urge** that you:

- ensure that immediate, effective and appropriate measures are taken to guarantee Bertha Oliva's safety and that of her colleagues at COFADEH, in strict accordance with their wishes;
- order a swift, full and impartial investigation into the January 27 death threats, the March 11 attempt to keep her under surveillance and other recent incidents mentioned above, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice,

We remind you that human rights defenders have the right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

cc: Comite de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos en Honduras (COFADEH) ~ via US mail
Roberto Flores Bermudez, Honduran Ambassador to the US ~ via fax
Hugo Llorens, US Ambassador to Honduras ~ via fax
Rebecca Valerin, Honduras Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax
Paolo Carozza, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ fax: (202)458-3992
US Senators Brown & Voinovich and US Representatives Bocchieri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Space, Sutton, Wilson ~ via email
UA28/09Update/Honduras

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