

via fax: 011 504 239 3298

September 24, 2009

Dear Mr Micheletti:

We are extremely concerned about the escalating intimidation and harassment of human rights defenders and protesters in Honduras. On September 22 police officers parked outside the entrance to the office of the human rights organization, Committee of Relatives of the Disappeared in Honduras (COFADEH), tried to enter the building. Without issuing a prior warning, they fired tear gas canisters at the office where there was a full COFADEH staff together with approximately 100 people, including women with children. The people were gathered there to provide their testimonies about abuses committed by police during the break-up of a demonstration that had just happened outside the Brazilian Embassy in Tegucigalpa.

COFADEH is a renowned Honduran human rights organization which has been at the forefront of seeking justice and reparation for relatives and victims of enforced disappearance and torture. Our members have sent letters to officials in Honduras twice already this year, urging protection for COFADEH Coordinator Bertha Oliva, who has been receiving death threats (cf letters February 5 and April 4). The latest attack against COFADEH is indicative of a serious deterioration in the human rights situation in the country.

The same day as the attack on the COFADEH office, dozens of protestors were taken to unauthorized detention sites across the capital. Although most of those detained have been released, concerns remain that illegal detention methods have been used. **Human rights organizations have documented mass arrests and the excessive use of force by police against demonstrators**, including using beating as a method of punishment. These human rights violations have intensified since the *coup d'etat* of June 28. Limits have been imposed on freedom of expression, and there have been a number of attacks against journalists—including the closure of media outlets, the confiscation of equipment and physical abuse of journalists and camerapersons covering events. Those supporting the *de facto* regime do not suffer the same abuses as those openly opposing it.

We **strongly urge** that

- the *de facto* authorities immediately stop all attacks on human rights defenders;
- the *de facto* authorities stop using excessive force against protestors and respect freedom of expression and association.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Coordinator

Copies: Bertha Oliva, COFADEH ~ via US mail  
Eduardo Enrique Reina, Honduran Ambassador to the US ~ via fax  
Hugo Llorens, US Ambassador to Honduras ~ via fax  
Rebecca Valerin, Honduras Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax  
Christopher Webster, Central American Affairs, 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 Boccieri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Space, Sutton, Wilson ~ via email

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