

via fax: 011 504 2220 1756

Sr. Arturo Corrales
Minister of Security of Honduras

via fax: 011 504 2235 8379

Sra. Ana Pineda
Minister of Justice and Human Rights of Honduras

August 26, 2013

Dear Sir and Madam:

We are horrified at the attack on **Arely Victoria Gómez**, and transgender woman and head of the transgender movement within the Association for a Better Life (APUVIMEH) in Tegucigalpa.

On August 9 at approximately 8:20pm, as she and a group of eight other persons associated with APUVIMEH left a meeting at the Department of Human Rights in Tegucigalpa, two men on motorbikes passed them shouting, "*Here come the mad ones – shoot, shoot!*" The human rights workers quickly ran in a different direction. Two blocks away, a group of four men physically assaulted Arely Victoria Gómez, beat her severely and stole her valuables and other items she was wearing, including her shoes. She was treated for her injuries in a different location out of concern for her safety.

APUVIMEH works with the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community. It operates a shelter (Casa Renacer) and runs several projects, including a program for the prevention of HIV/AIDS and sexual infections, and a gay youth project.

We believe that Arely Victoria Gómez was targeted for her activities in defense of LGBTI rights. Recently she and other members of APUVIMEH brought a lawsuit against evangelical pastor Evelio Reyes, presidential candidate Salvador Nasralla, and other public figures for homophobic discrimination and hate speech. A media campaign has frequently targeted APUVIMEH with insults, negative comments and hostile attitudes.

On June 21, Sandra Zambrano, the daughter of APUVIMEH project manager, was kidnapped and held for three hours from the same spot where Arely Victoria Gómez was attacked. In June, Jonatan Cruz, another transgender member of APUVIMEH, was shot by unknown assailants two blocks from where the latest attack took place.

Because of these ongoing attacks on the LGBTI community in Honduras, we **strongly urge** that you

- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the attack on human rights defender Arely Victoria Gómez, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- take all necessary measures to guarantee the integrity and security of Arely Victoria Gómez, the other members of APUVIMEH and their families;
- guarantee that all human rights defenders are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Co-Coordinator

CC: Jorge Ramon Hernandez Alcerro, Honduran Ambassador to the US ~ via fax 202 966 9751
 Lisa Kubiske, US Ambassador to Honduras ~ via fax 011 504 2236 9037
 Mariana Grayson, Attache for Human Rights and Labor, US Embassy to Honduras ~ via fax 011 504 2238-4446
 Benjamin Gedan, Honduras Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax 202.647.2597
 Christopher Johnson, Diplomacy Officer for Central America, US State Dept. ~ via email
 Tracy Robinson, Rapporteur for Honduras, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202 458.3992
 US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
 US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

Frontline 8/8/13_Honduras

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