

via fax: 011 504 2221 5667 Sr. Oscar Chincilla Banegas Attorney General of Honduras	via fax: 011 504 2220 1756 or 2232-0226 Sr. Arturo Corrales Minister of Interior of Honduras
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May 26, 2014

Dear Sirs:

We are very disturbed about the beating and detention of **José Guadalupe Ruelas**, director of the children's charity Casa Alianza in Tegucigalpa. On May 8 when he was driving a car which clearly bore the organization's name, he was signaled to stop at a military police checkpoint in front of the presidential residence. A policeman on a motorbike collided with the stopped car. Military police pulled Ruelas from the car, beat and kicked him in his face, head, ribs and legs and stole his belongings, including a laptop, before bringing him to a police station. Ruelas remained under police custody until his discharge from the hospital on May 9.

José Guadalupe Ruelas believes that his mistreatment was in retaliation for his recent denunciations of the government. In April, he presented a report exposing the high levels of killings of children and youth, which included at least 270 violent deaths of people under the age of 23 between January and April 2014. He wrote "there is an emerging pattern of organized people with access to expensive vehicles, weapons and equipment, who kidnap, torture and kill poor children and youths, in almost total impunity." In May, when interviewed by the media after the discovery of the dismembered bodies of four children, he said that, because of corruption and impunity, none of the numerous laws aimed at protecting children were being implemented.

Casa Alianza is a reputable and well-respected organization. It is the Latin American arm of Covenant House International and shares the same mission of serving the homeless, abandoned, trafficked and exploited youth. Casa Alianza operates homes for such children and teenagers in Mexico, Nicaragua, Guatemala and Honduras. Covenant House operates 18 others homes across the US and Canada.

We **strongly urge** that you

- carry out an immediate, thorough, and impartial investigation into the mistreatment of José Guadalupe Ruelas, clearly denounce torture and mistreatment, and bring those responsible to justice;
- provide appropriate protection to José Guadalupe Ruelas, his family, and other members of Casa Alianza, in strict accordance with their wishes and safety concerns;
- establish mandatory protection measures for human rights defenders and journalists, in accordance with their recommendations and needs.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

copies: Central America Team, Amnesty International ~ via email
Jorge Ramon Hernandez Alcerro, Honduran Ambassador to the US ~ via fax 202 966 9751
Lisa Kubiske, US Ambassador to Honduras ~ via email
Kelsey Cambronne, Honduras Desk, US State Dept ~ via email
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
Rosa Maria Ortiz, Rapporteur on Rights of the Child, Inter-America Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
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: