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| via fax: 011 504 2239 3298 Sr. Juan Orlando Hernández President of the Republic of Honduras | via fax: 011 504 2221 5667 Sr. Oscar Chinchilla Banegas Attorney General of Honduras |
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February 13, 2015

Dear Sirs:

We are writing to express our grave concern for the safety and well-being of **Gladys Lanza Ochoa**, the Coordinator of the Honduran Women's Committee for Peace "Visitación Padilla." She is scheduled to be sentenced on February 25 for her conviction on January 28 on charges of defamation and slander against Juan Carlos Reyes, the executive director of the Foundation for Development of Urban and Rural Social Housing (FUNDEVI). Gladys Lanza Ochoa faces a possible sentence of 16-30 months imprisonment.

Visitación Padilla is a collective of women human rights defenders who work on issues of gender violence, women's participation in public life, and advocacy for democracy and human rights. Gladys Lanza Ochoa and other members of the organization have been the victims of previous threats, intimidation and surveillance (cf our letters of August 13, 2010 and September 22, 2012).

The charges against Gladys Lanza Ochoa are related to her public advocacy and peaceful demonstrations in support of a former employee of FUNDEVI who claimed in 2011 to have been terminated after being subjected to an extended period of sexual harassment by Juan Carlos Reyes. The victim was initially successful in her case claiming sexual harassment, but the ruling was overturned upon appeal. It is suspected that politics influenced the court: Juan Reyes is the husband of Gabriela Nuñez de Reyes, a current congresswoman and former finance minister of Honduras.

The case of Gladys Lanza Ochoa is so grave that it has been reviewed by both the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. In 2009 Honduras accepted the request for precautionary measures by the Inter-American Commission. On September 2, 2010, the Inter-American Court ordered provisional measures for her protection. However, to date neither of these orders have been complied with by Honduras.

The State of Honduras is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Article 2 of CEDAW requires that nation signatories "establish legal protection of the rights of women on an equal basis with men and to ensure through competent national tribunals and other public institutions the effective protection of women against any act of discrimination." Honduras could show its commitment to upholding international law by annulling the charges and conviction of Gladys Lanza Ochoa.

We are convinced that the charges against Gladys Lanza Ochoa are the result of her leadership role in Visitación Padilla. Therefore, we **strongly urge you** to

- quash the conviction against Gladys Lanza Ochoa since it is motivated solely by her legitimate and peaceful work in the defense of women's rights;
- take all necessary measures to guarantee the security of Gladys Lanza Ochoa and the other members of Visitación Padilla, in accordance with their wishes;
- guarantee in all circumstances that 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

copies: Jorge Alberto Milla Reyes, Honduran Ambassador to the US ~ via fax 202 966 9751
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 Christopher Johnson, Diplomacy Officer for Central America, US State Dept. ~ via email JohnsonCD@state.gov
 Tracy Robinson, Rapporteur for Honduras and Rapporteur for the Rights of Women, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202 458.3992
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

2/3/15_FrontlineDefenders_Honduras

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