

Sr. Jorge Alberto Rivera Avilés

President of the Supreme Court of Justice of Honduras

via email: cedij@poderjudicial.gob.hn; justiciaenaccion@poderjudicial.gob.hn ; jarivera@poderjudicial.gob.hn

June 1, 2015

Dear Sr. Rivera Avilés:

We are extremely concerned for the safety of Gladys Lanza Ochoa, Coordinator of the Honduran Women's Committee for Peace (*Visitación Padilla*). She continues to face intimidation and harassment following her sentencing on March 26 to 18-months imprisonment. She has appealed the sentence to the Supreme Court.

As she was leaving her home on May 14, Gladys Lanza Ochoa was followed by two unknown men on separate motorcycles who stopped beside her before driving off in separate directions. As she got on a bus four blocks from her home, one of the motorcycles returned. When she got off the bus 45 minutes later at the San Felipe station, she noticed a black Honda CRV with tinted windows and no registration plates. When she took a taxi to a bank, the car followed and waited a half-hour while she was in the bank. When she saw the black car still waiting she returned to the taxi and informed the driver that they were being followed. The driver managed to lose the car by taking a different route.

Gladys Ochoa was convicted 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). The charges were 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 (cf our letter of February 13).

Gladys Lanza Ochoa, as well as other members of *Visitación Padilla*, have been victims for several years of threats, intimidation and surveillance in connection with their human rights work. We believe that the present acts of intimidation are linked to Gladys Lanza Ochoa's legitimate work in the defense of human rights and are linked to the charges brought against her and the resulting prison sentence. We therefore **strongly urge** that you

- take all necessary measures to guarantee the security of Gladys Lanza Ochoa and the other members of *Visitación Padilla*, in strict accordance with their wishes;
- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the intimidation and harassment of Gladys Lanza Ochoa, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- quash the conviction against Gladys Lanza Ochoa, which is motivated by her legitimate and peaceful work in the defense of women's rights;
- guarantee in all circumstances that human rights defenders in Honduras are able to carry out their legitimate 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
James Nealon, US Ambassador to Honduras ~ via fax 011 504 2236 9037
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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

Frontline 5/21/15_Honduras

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