

via fax: 011 503 22 43 99 47 or 011 503 2271 0850

Estimado Sr. Salvador Sánchez Cerén
President of El Salvador

June 13, 2015

Dear President Sánchez Cerén:

We are deeply troubled at the assassination of **Francela Méndez Rodríguez**, age 29, on May 31 in the Las Palmeras Colonia of the city of Sonsonate in the Department of Sonsonate. Francela Méndez, a trans woman and human rights defender of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual and Intersexual (LGBTI) community, was murdered by unknown assailants at the home of her friend, **Consuelo Flores**, who was also killed in the attack.

Francela Méndez was a member of the board of directors of the Alejandría Collective, founded in 2010 to promote the rights of the LGBTI community through awareness, education, training and advocacy. She was also involved in the implementation of a Global Fund-sponsored program combating HIV, tuberculosis and malaria. She was a member of the El Salvadoran Network of Women Human Rights Defenders.

The police are attempting to link the murders to drug trafficking rather than investigating links to Francela Méndez's legitimate human rights work on behalf of the LGBTI community. The Regional Office for Central America of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Office of the Ombudsman for Human Rights denounced the killing as the most recent act of aggression against the transgender community. Francela Méndez is the tenth woman murdered in the transgender community in El Salvador in 2015.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), has demanded that the Salvadoran government "take additional measures to combat discrimination and violence against LGBTI persons," including adopting gender identity nondiscrimination laws and keeping official track of each occurrence of anti-LGBT violence.

Because the LGBTI community in El Salvador suffers from unacceptable levels of discrimination and high rates of violent attacks, we **strongly urge** that you

- order a full and impartial investigation into the death of Francela Méndez Rodríguez, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- work with human rights defenders and organizations to eradicate all forms of discrimination against the LGBTI community

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator

copies: Mari Carmen Aponte, US Ambassador to El Salvador ~ via fax: 011-503-2501-2775
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Martha Pacheco, El Salvador Desk at US State Dept. ~ via fax: 202-647-2597
Christopher Johnson, Diplomacy Officer for Central America, US State Dept. ~ via email
Rosa Maria Ortiz, Rapporteur for El Salvador, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992
US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

Frontline 6/3/15_ElSalvador

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