

via fax: 011 504 2290 5088 Sr. Juan Orlando Hernández President of Honduras	via fax: 011 504 2221 5667 Sr. Oscar Chinchilla Banegas Attorney General of Honduras
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October 11, 2015

Dear Sirs:

We are disappointed to hear of the Honduran government's continued misuse of the judicial system to stifle freedom of expression. The Honduran Supreme Court failed to implement a legally-binding order by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IAHCR) to protect the right of journalist **Julio Ernesto Alvarado** to work in his profession. The Radio y TV Globo journalist's last possible appeal against a court ban on working as a journalist was rejected on September 4. Since Honduras has legally committed itself to respect IAHCR rulings, this Supreme Court decision is a clear violation of the IACHR mechanism.

Legal proceedings against Alvarado began two years ago. On December 9, 2013, the Honduran Supreme Court ordered a 16-month work ban on Julio Ernesto Alvarado. This resulted from charges brought against him by the former dean of the economics faculty at the Autonomous National University of Honduras because he had reported on Supreme Court charges against her on his TV Globo news program *Mi Nación*.

After a long investigation, in November 2014 the IAHCR ordered the Honduran government to implement legally-binding precautionary measures to protect Alvarado's right to work and to postpone the ban. But on December 4 the ban was upheld by a Honduran court ruling. Alvarado did continue working under the IACHR's precautionary measures until his last possible legal appeal was exhausted on September 4.

Repression against journalists in Honduras has increased significantly since the June 2009 coup d'état. Reporters Without Borders has ranked Honduras 132 out of 180 countries on its 2015 Press Freedom Index. At least three dozen journalists have been killed since the coup, including five employees of Radio Globo y TV since 2011. Emmanuel Colombié, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Latin America desk, stated that "this [Supreme Court] ruling sets an appalling precedent for freedom of information in Honduras and defies the IACHR request...[and is] a repressive tool against a journalist with one of the country's most popular critical radio stations."

In addition to these legal barriers that inhibit Alvarado from working as a journalist, he has also been the target of disturbing surveillance measures and acts of intimidation, including death threats. He suspended his program "Medianoche" in 2013 after receiving constant threats for more than a year.

To demonstrate that Honduras is serious about upholding the freedom of the press, **we strongly urge you to:**

- withdraw all legal proceedings against Alvarado
- uphold the IAHCR order to allow Alvarado to continue working as a journalist
- end repression against journalists and prosecute those who intimidate and attack them

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator

copies: Jorge Alberto Milla Reyes, Honduran Amabassador to the US ~ via fax 202 966 9751
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 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

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