

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

Estimado Sr. Presidente
Salvador Sánchez Cerén
President of El Salvador

December 11, 2015

Dear Sir:

We are writing to express our deep concern for the safety of **Teresa Naves** and **Bertha de Leon**, human rights lawyers for the Study Foundation for the Application of the Law (FESPAD). FESPAD is a Salvadoran non-governmental organization that works for the protection and promotion of human rights through providing legal support. They work for the promotion of human dignity, freedom and equality, and the development of a more democratic society.

Teresa Naves and Bertha de Leon are currently working on a criminal lawsuit that Teresa Naves brought against former President Francisco Guillermo Flores Pérez, who was in office 1999-2004. FESPAD charges Mr. Pérez with embezzlement, illicit enrichment and disobedience for having allegedly stolen 15 million US dollars donated by the Government of Taiwan to El Salvador to help the victims of the 2001 earthquakes, and to help fight poverty. A preliminary hearing took place on November 5 and 6.

On November 10 and 12, Bertha de Leon was followed and chased by an unidentified vehicle. On November 17 at approximately 9:30am, Teresa Naves received a threatening phone call on her landline number. On November 18 she reported that an unidentified man had been following her since November 7 and that, on some occasions, he aimed a laser pointer directly at her face.

In January, Teresa Naves and Bertha de Leon were victims of judicial harassment regarding reports containing information that supports the case against Francisco Guillermo Flores Pérez. The Prosecutor's Office (Fiscalía) filed an administrative complaint against FESPAD for allegedly disclosing financial information that should be confidential. The General Prosecutor sent letters to FESPAD threatening to bring a criminal complaint against the organization for disclosing information contained in financial reports by the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) of the United States Department of Treasury.

Because we believe these incidents are attempts to silence human rights defenders, we **strongly urge** that you

- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the threats, intimidation and judicial harassment against Teresa Naves and Bertha de Leon, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- take all necessary measures to guarantee the security of Teresa Naves and Bertha de Leon and all members of FESPAD;
- guarantee, in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in El Salvador are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai and Christine Stonebraker-Martínez
Co-Coordiators

copies: Mari Carmen Aponte, US Ambassador to El Salvador ~ via fax: 011-503-2501-2775
Francisco Altshul, El Salvador Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 1-202-234-3834
Martha Pacheco, El Salvador Desk at 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 11/26/15_El Salvador

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

