

via fax: 011 504 2239 3298 Sr. Presidente Juan Orlando Hernández President of Honduras	via fax: 011 504 2221 5667 Sr. Fiscal Óscar Fernando Chinchilla Banegas Attorney General of Honduras
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April 26, 2016

Dear Sirs:

We are very concerned about the ill treatment and arbitrary arrests of **José Miltiades Sánchez**, director of the organization LGBTI Association Youth Movement (AJEM), as well as **Cidar Armando Arias Mendoza** and **Evin Omar Ponce García**, both members of the association.

On the night of April 3, 2016 four policemen arrested Alex Eduardo Sorto, Cidar Armando Arias Mendoza and Evin Omar Ponce García, claiming they were allegedly drunk. The officers demanded money in exchange for their freedom. Because the three defenders rejected the false accusation and refused to pay, they were transferred to the traffic police squadron at the Kennedy neighborhood in Tegucigalpa.

Once there, Evin Omar Ponce, identified himself as an openly gay defender of human rights. He was then handcuffed to Cidar Arias and police officers began to beat and insult them. Before the attacks, Sorto, whose precautionary measures granted by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (CIDH) had been ignored, called the emergency number to report abuse. A plainclothes policeman stopped him and hit him in the chest, causing him to fall and hit his head on the floor. After the call, another officer threatened that “before the DPI (Police Investigation Department) come you will be gone.” Then three defenders were moved to the 4th police station in Comayagüela district. These facts were reported to the Research and Evaluation Career Police (DIECP).

It is important to note that this case falls within the framework of the continuous violations faced by human rights defenders in Honduras. Faced with this worrying situation, we must remember the murder, among others, in March of Berta Cáceres and Nelson García, members of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH), as well as the murders of several members of the association LGBTI Rainbow since July 2015.

We **strongly urge** that you

- carry out an immediate, independent, thorough and impartial investigation into the ill treatment, arbitrary arrest and threats against the lives of José Miltiades Sánchez, Cidar Armando Arias Mendoza and Evin Omar Ponce García, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- implement protective measures as soon as possible to ensure their physical and psychological integrity and that of the other members of the AJEM as well as all human rights defenders in Honduras;
- ensure the implementation of the provisions of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1998.

Sincerely,

Brian Stefan Szittai and Christine Stonebraker Martínez
Co-Coordinator

copies: Jorge Alberto Milla Reyes, Honduran Ambassador to the US ~ via fax 202 525 4004
James Nealon, US Ambassador to Honduras ~ via fax 011 504 2236 9037
Olivia Franken, Honduras Desk, US State Dept ~ via email
Francisco José Eguiguren Praeli, Rapporteur for Honduras and for the Rights of LGTBI Persons, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, ~ via email
US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

Observatory_1/11/2016_Colombia

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