

via fax: 011 504 2239 3298 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 23, 2016

Dear Sirs:

We are outraged at the latest assassination attempts against two indigenous leaders: **Tomás Gómez Membreño**, the General Coordinator of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH), and **Alexander García Sorto**, the elected COPINH leader for the community of Llano Grande in Colomoncagua municipality in Intibucá Department.

On the evening of October 10, Tomás Gómez Membreño was driving to his house from the COPINH office in La Esperanza, Intibucá, when gunmen opened fire on his vehicle. That morning, in Llano Grande, Alexander García Sorto was awakened by shots fired through the door of his house and the window of the bedroom where he, his wife and two daughters were sleeping. Both men survived the assassination attempts.

COPINH advocates for environmental conservation and indigenous peoples' rights. COPINH members have been the targets of persistent violence as a result of their legitimate human rights work, with attacks having intensified after the killing of its co-founder and leader Berta Cáceres on March 2. On March 5, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights granted precautionary measures (No. 112-16) to COPINH members. However, those measures remain inadequately implemented by Honduran authorities.

Tomás Gómez Membreño and Alexander García have survived previous attacks. On May 8, Tomás Gómez Membreño was travelling with colleagues to a demonstration in Tegucigalpa when an army vehicle driven by military personnel attempted to force them off the road. The driver was able to control the vehicle barely avoiding an accident. On May 6, a gunman repeatedly shot Alexander García Sorto outside his home in Llano Grande, wounding him in his left shoulder. The attacker was identified as Enecto Alvarado, a former member of the military and private security guard who had previously threatened to kill Alexander García Sorto and had exhibited hostile behavior against COPINH members. The local police briefly detained Mr. Alvarado but released him on the same day after charging him with illegal possession of firearms (cf our letter of June 2).

We condemn these assassination attempts against COPINH leaders Tomás Gómez Membreño and Alexander García Sorto and we **strongly urge** that you

- conduct an independent, impartial and exhaustive investigation into the assassination attempts, publish the results and bring the perpetrators to justice;
- adequately implement the precautionary measures granted by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, in consultation with the human rights defenders affected.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinators

and

Christine Stonebraker-Martínez

copies: CODEH: Comité para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos en Honduras ~ via email
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
Olivia Franken, Honduras Desk, US State Dept ~ via email
Francisco José Eguiguren Praeli, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Rapporteur for Honduras and Rights of Indigenous Peoples ~ via fax: 202 458 3650
US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

Frontline 10/14/2016_Honduras

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