

via fax: 011 504 2239 3298 Sr. Juan Orlando Hernández President of Honduras	via fax: 011 504 2221 5667 Sr. Óscar Fernando Chinchilla Banegas Attorney General of Honduras
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April 12, 2017

Dear Sirs:

We are writing to express our anger, frustration and condemnation of the continuous threats and harassment towards persons working in community radio stations that are reporting on environmental and indigenous rights issues.

On March 8 a group of men vandalized the **headquarters of Radio La Voz Lenca**. The Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) operates this community radio station to inform indigenous people of their rights and the effects of mega-projects on their lands and traditional way of living.

On March 23 **members of Radio Dignidad**, a project of Movement for Dignity and Justice (MADJ), were threatened through Facebook from a profile with the name of Ismael Arteaga. MADJ is currently campaigning against human rights violations linked to industrial mining and other mega-projects. The threat ("you will die...you have little time to close your page...") was followed by another message that contained a photograph of the director of Radio Dignidad.

On March 28 a group of men approached **Esteban Vásquez**, who is a member of the indigenous Simpinula community, a correspondent for **Radio Progreso**, and a local leader of the Independent Movement of La Paz (MILPAH), which advocates for the rights of Lenca indigenous peoples to self-determination and to their ancestral lands. As a correspondent for Radio Progreso, he has denounced the threats posed by mining and dams to the environment and communities in La Paz. He recognized the men as being connected to the National Party in the Arenales sector of Santa María, La Paz. They told him that "if he continued his work of informing he would be murdered."

During the same week, a new smear campaign against Radio Progreso's director, Jesuit priest **Ismael Moreno**, appeared on social networks. The biased campaign accused "Padre Melo," as the director is known, of receiving "dirty money from drug-related activity and of using Radio Progreso to discredit Honduras."

These three radio stations and the movements linked to them have been subjected to previous attacks and threats. International and national organizations have highlighted the risky situation for media workers in the country. Therefore, we **strongly urge** that you

- condemn the acts of intimidation against community radio contributors in the country;
- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the threats and acts of intimidation against members of Radio Progreso, Radio Dignidad and Radio La Voz Lenca, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinators

and

Christine Stonebraker-Martínez

copies: 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
James Cavallaro, Rapporteur for Honduras, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax
Francisco José Eguiguren Praeli, Rapporteur for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
Edison Lanza, Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, 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

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