

via U.S. mail Sr. Juan Orlando Hernández President of Honduras	via fax: 011 504 2221 5667 and U.S. mail Sr. Óscar Fernando Chinchilla Banegas Attorney General of Honduras
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September 26, 2017

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned about the criminalization and arbitrary detention by police officers of **Cristian Marisol Hernández Pineda** and six other environmental defenders on August 29 in Villa de San Francisco, Francisco Morazán Department. She is active with Vecinos del Bulevar (Boulevard Neighbors), which was organized in March 2016 to oppose the installation, by the Tres Valles Sugar Mill, of a high voltage power line to run above housing on the main boulevard of Villa de San Francisco.

In 2015, the Minister of Energy, Natural Resources, Environment and Mines (MiAmbiente) gave the green light to Tres Valles Sugar Mill for the generation of electricity through biomass. The project requires the installation of high voltage cables through the main roadway. No consultation was held with townspeople on the project, which does not comply with legal requirements. Residents are concerned that high voltage lines over their homes will provoke serious health risks, especially to the town's children.

The neighbors, whose main demand is that the line run through an alternative route that bypasses the center of town, have been maintaining a protest to prevent the installation of the poles for the high voltage line. The police violently removed them several times, even threatening to take their children away from them if they continued with the protests. Moreover, they have received constant threats and intimidation by the Manager of the National Electrical Energy Company (ENEE), who filed a complaint with the Public Prosecutor, resulting in an injunction against ten members of Boulevard Neighbors for the alleged offense of land usurpation.

Starting at 4:30am on August 29, approximately 60 security forces (a combination of the National Police, the Police Office of Investigation, Military Police, and a large group of US-trained anti-riot police squad COBRAS) used excessive force—including teargas—to break up the peaceful protest. They then proceeded to forcibly enter people's homes. Cristian Marisol Hernández Pineda was arrested, along with five adult men and one teenager: **Jorge Aguilar**, president of CAPIRHO (Popular and Independent Environmentalist Committee for Water and Other Resources), **Julio Zúniga**, **Rodolfo Quezada**, **Mario González**, **Juan Camilo Palma**, and **Maicol Aguilar** (age 14). A delegation of the National Network of Women Human Rights Defenders in Honduras visited Cristian Marisol Hernández Pineda in detention and reported that she was handcuffed and subjected to cruel and degrading treatment. She suffered headaches, a skin allergy due to the teargas, and pain in her neck due to the physical attack by police.

Because of our serious concern about the violence, criminalization and arbitrary detention of individuals peacefully organizing to protect their communities, we **strongly urge that you**

- drop the injunction against the ten members of Boulevard Neighbors
- drop the criminal charges against the six adults, including Cristian Marisol Hernández Pineda, arrested August 29
- stop deploying police with military equipment to forcibly break up legitimate and peaceful protests
- respect the right of Villa de San Francisco residents to defend their environment and the health of their inhabitants
- re-route the high voltage grid lines, in a new route agreed to by CAPIRHO and Boulevard Neighbors

Sincerely,

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

copies: Jorge Alberto Milla Reyes, Honduran Ambassador to the US ~ via fax 202 966 9751
Heide B. Fulton, Chargé d'Affaires, US Embassy in 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 or email
US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Beatty, 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: