

via email: mrelacionespublicas@gmail.com,
Sr. Óscar Fernando Chinchilla Banegas
 Attorney General of Honduras

via email: karlacueva144@gmail.com
Lica. Karla Cueva
 Secretary of State for Human Rights Affairs

November 26, 2018

Dear Sirs and Madam:

We are very disturbed by the media smear campaign that is being carried on against **Juana Esquivel**, director of the Fundación San Alonso Rodriguez in Tocoa, Colón Department.

Fundación San Alonso Rodriguez, a civil non-profit organization, is a member of the Municipal Defense Council on the Common and Public Goods of Tocoa. They have supported residents of El Guapinol who organized the Encampment on the Defense of Water and Life (aka Encampment for Life) in August. Their protest began when hundreds of residents of Guapinol occupied the margins of a road leading to the Los Pinares mining company because of negative environmental impacts resulting from large scale mining. The demonstrators suffered police aggression, criminalization, and finally forced eviction by authorities (cf our letters of October 23 and November 11). As the spokesperson for Fundación San Alonso Rodriguez, Juana Esquivel has issued numerous interviews and reports on the Guapinol camp case.

Social and mainstream media are conducting a defamation campaign against Juana Esquivel and Fundación members. A Facebook post of *The Radio Cadena Voces* claims that Fundación San Alonso Rodriguez was the cause of all conflicts in Colón and portrayed it as being “against progress.” Several media teams filmed the organization’s employees outside their office and portrayed them as criminals. *Mundovision Media’s* Facebook page accused all members of the Municipal Defense Council on the Common and Public Goods of Tocoa of destroying the property of the mining company Empresa Minera Inversiones Los Pinares. Another post accused Juana Esquivel and other members of the Fundación San Alonso Rodriguez of being terrorists and arming the camp protesters.

We believe these media attacks are an attempt to delegitimize the work of Fundación San Alonso Rodriguez to protect environmental rights and the right of access to water in the region of Colón. We are concerned that such smear campaigns can lead to an increase in violence against other human rights defenders in Honduras. Therefore we **strongly urge** that you

- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the smear campaign against Juana Esquivel and Fundación San Alonso Rodriguez, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice;
- take measures to ensure that government officials or other public figures refrain from stigmatizing the legitimate work of human rights organization Fundación San Alonso Rodriguez and its members

Sincerely,


 Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator


 Christine Stonebraker-Martínez

copies: Marlon R. Tábora Muñoz, Ambassador of Honduras to the US ~ via website or fax, and US mail
 Heide B. Fulton, Chargé d’Affaires, US Embassy in Honduras ~ via email
 Jason Smith, Human Rights and Labor Representative, US Embassy in Honduras ~ via email
 David Tagle, Honduras Desk, US State Dept ~ via email
 Joel Hernández, Rapporteur for Honduras, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
 US Senators Brown & Portman
 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: