

via email: comunicaciones@pddh.gob.sv
Lic. Raquel Caballero de Guevara
Procuradora por los Derechos Humanos
Ombudswoman for the Defense of Human Rights
El Salvador

March 23, 2019

Dear Lic. Guevara:

We are disturbed to learn about defamatory attacks against LGBTI rights leaders **Andrea Ayala** and **Barbara Romero** of ESMULES (Salvadoran Lesbian Women's Space for Diversity) in San Salvador.

Slanderous language has been disseminated via social networks with the intent of defaming ESMULES Executive Director Andrea Ayala and member Barbara Romero. Furthermore, the language suggests that the lesbian activists should be criminalized. Because these messages via social media refer to the women in derogatory terms, this should be considered a case of hate speech. We are concerned that hate speech might lead to physical violence against the two women.


Authorities should take seriously any attacks—including messages circulated via social media—against members of the LGBTI community, especially leaders of LGBTI organizations. In its 2017 report on state violence against LGBTI persons in El Salvador, the Georgetown University Law Center stated that LGBTI victims are often prevented from filing complaints of human rights abuses. It also reported that police and prosecutors frequently fail to investigate crimes against LGBT people. We hope that progress has been made since this report was issued.

We urge that you

- carry out a thorough and impartial investigation into the slander campaign against Andrea Ayala and Bárbara Romero, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- support any legal proceedings that ESMULES seeks against the persons responsible
- take all necessary measures, in consultation with these LGBTI rights defenders, to guarantee their safety, in strict accordance with their wishes
- guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in El Salvador are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinators


Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Jean Elizabeth Manes, US Ambassador to El Salvador ~ via US mail
Claudia Ivette Canjura de Centeno, El Salvador Ambassador to the US ~ via email
El Salvador Desk, US State Department ~ via email
Margarette May Macaulay, Rapporteur for El Salvador, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
Flávia Piovesan, Rapporteur on the Rights of LGTBI Persons, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
US Senators Brown & Portman
US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, Gonzalez, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

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