

via email: mprelacionespublicas@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

March 24, 2019

Dear Attorney General Chinchilla and Secretary Cueva:

We are writing to express our sadness and anger at the assassination of journalist **Leonardo Gabriel Hernández**, age 54, who was killed on March 17 in Nacaome, the capital of Valle Department.

Hernández was walking to his home from a private university where he was studying for a law degree when he was attacked by an armed person who shot him six times, leaving him seriously wounded. He died on the way to the hospital.

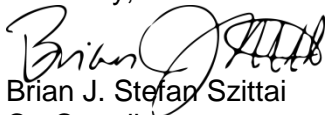
Leonardo Gabriel Hernández was the director and presenter of the program *El Pueblo Habla* (The People Speak), broadcast on *Valle TV* Channel 25. He discussed social issues and local politics and was known to speak out critically against the municipal government. Hernández had received threats related to his work. In 2018 he requested assistance from the National Protection Mechanism for journalists and human rights defenders. The assistance was denied because the Mechanism responded that the measures “did not apply” to the journalist’s case.

According to the National Commission for Human Rights in Honduras (CONADEH) “92 percent of crimes against journalists, social communicators, camera operators, photographers and media owners remain unpunished for lack of investigation.” The Departments of Valle and Choluteca, particularly, have reported a number of attacks on journalists who exercise their right to freedom of expression. Honduras is ranked 141st out of 180 countries in the 2018 World Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders (RSF, or *Reporters Sans Frontières*).

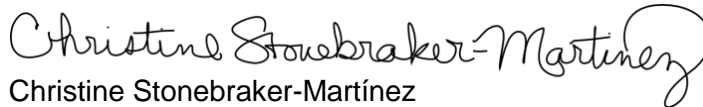
Therefore we **strongly urge** that you

- undertake a credible and rigorous investigation into the killing of Leonardo Gabriel Hernández, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- increase efforts to prevent violence against the press that is especially rampant in the southern zone
- guarantee in all circumstances that all journalists are able to carry out their legitimate work of investigating and reporting the news—as well as making commentary—without fear of retaliation

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
 Edison Lanza, Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
 Natalie Southwick, South and Central Americas Program Coordinator, Committee to Protect Journalists ~ via email
 US Senators Brown & Portman
 US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, Gonzalez, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

3/18/19_CPJ_Honduras

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