

via email: mprelacionespublicas@gmail.com ngosorto@gmail.com
Oscar Fernando Chinchilla Banegas
Attorney General of Honduras

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

September 23, 2019

Dear Attorney General Chinchilla and Secretary Cueva:

We are deeply concerned about the death threats against journalist **Miguel Ángel Tróchez** in Santa Barbara Department. During the last two weeks of August, he was the victim of extortion actions, death threats, and on September 1 his vehicle was set on fire.

The person (or persons) trying to extort money sent a series of text messages to his mobile phone, demanding payment of five thousand—and then eight thousand—dollars. A day before the burning of the car, he received a call from an unknown number in which, the communicator said he “would regret not having complied”, referring to the extortion money.

On his television program on Channel 24 (Paradise TV), Miguel Tróchez presents music, local events and news. Because of these recent threats, he filed a complaint with the Police Directorate of Investigations (DPI). We are disturbed that his case was dismissed by the National Mechanism for the Protection of Journalists, Social Communicators, and Human Rights Defenders, after claiming that “there is no” causal link “between the risk situation with the exercise of his role as [journalistic] communicator.”

We disagree. Journalists in Honduras are at great risk. The Committee for Free Expression (El Comité por la Libre Expresión, or C-Libre) has registered similar reports of death threats and extortion from journalists Selvin López Anariba and Dulce Valle, who left the country at the end of February. In Comayagua, Carlos Caballero, owner at the time of Lajas TV, denounced threats in January 2019. Furthermore, the burning of Miguel Tróchez’ vehicle occurred less than 24 hours after the murder of journalist Edgar Joel Aguilar, a correspondent for Channel 6 in the neighboring department of Copán (cf of letter of Sep 22). Edgar Joel Aguilar was the third journalist murdered this year in Honduras.

We **strongly urge** that you:

- take swift action to investigate the threats against Miguel Ángel Tróchez, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice;
- make increased efforts to guarantee the safety of all journalists.

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinators



and Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Marlon Ramsses Tábora Muñoz, Ambassador of Honduras to the US ~ via website or fax, and US mail
Lawrence J. Gumbiner, Chargé d’Affaires, 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 and US mail
Edison Lanza, Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email and US mail
US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, González, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

09/04/19_C-Libre_Honduras

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