

via email: comunicacionsdhjgd@gmail.com Sr. Héctor Leonel Ayala Alvarenga Minister of Human Rights, Justice, Interior and Decentralization	via email: mprelacionespublicas@gmail.com Sr. Óscar Fernando Chinchilla Banegas Attorney General of Honduras
---	---

October 25, 2019

Dear Minister Ayala and Attorney General Chinchilla:

We are writing to urge you to release all political prisoners in Honduras.

We understand there are still 15 imprisoned and that most have been charged with crimes in the past two years, after the disputed presidential election of November 2017 (which many call fraudulent). They are often detained on false charges, such as arson and property damage. They are unnecessarily and unjustly investigated for terrorism. Sometimes cases are heard in national jurisdiction courts that have no jurisdiction over the charges against them. All of this illustrates the systematic political persecution and targeting of pro-democracy activists opposed to the government. Honduran law and due process are being violated.

Prior to their detention, some prisoners are abducted and tortured by Honduran police. They are detained in high security prisons like La Tolva, run by a military coronel, where they await trial on false criminal charges. Physical conditions (food, water, heat, and lack of fresh air) are horrendous. Some have been allowed just one-hour of sunlight every two weeks. Visitor access is restricted. They are subject to arbitrary transfers to other detention locations without notification to their families. Because conditions are so volatile, violence can erupt at any moment.

In addition to protesting in the streets, other pro-democracy activists are organizing in rural areas to recuperate lands that are illegally seized by large landholders who want to displace peasant communities, clear cut biodiverse tracks of land, and plant mono-culture cash crops. Many others are organizing to block the construction of large megaprojects—often with international financing—that damage land, air, and water, as well as displace human communities. The Honduran justice system is too focused on criminalizing and arresting these defenders of human lives, property, freedom, and the physical environment. The justice system should, instead, be focused on offenders who commit violent crimes and corrupt public officials, such as those involved in narco-trafficking.

Popular social movements in Honduras continue their demonstrations in favor of economic, political, and social change. Hondurans fleeing the country as refugees and political prisoners alike are seeking an end to the repression they have experienced since the 2009 military coup and increased repression and other violent state policies linked to the 2017 disputed election fraud. Those who remain in the country and demonstrate are being persecuted; they are falsely charged and imprisoned under harsh conditions. This must stop.

We strongly urge that you work to promote democratic freedoms in Honduras and

- immediately release all political prisoners and drop criminal charges against them
- refrain from criminalizing legitimate protest

Sincerely,


 Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator


 Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Karla Eugenia Cueva Aguilar, Secretary for Human Rights in Honduras ~ via email
 María Dolores Agüero, Ambassador of Honduras to the US ~ via website contact form and US mail
 Colleen Hoey, Chargé d'Affaires, US Embassy in Honduras ~ via email
 Nate Rettenmayer, Political Officer at the US Embassy in Honduras ~ via email
 David Tagle, Honduras Desk, US State Dept ~ via email
 Joel Hernández, Rapporteur for Honduras and on the Rights of Persons Deprived of Liberty, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email and US mail
 Honduras Solidarity Network ~ via email
 US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
 US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, González, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

10/22/19_HSN_Honduras

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