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Óscar Fernando Chinchilla Banegas

Attorney General of Honduras

via email: karlacueva144@gmail.com

Lica. Karla Cueva

Secretary of State for Human Rights Affairs

January 11, 2020

Dear Attorney General Chinchilla and Secretary Cueva:

We are writing to you today to express our anger and sadness over the recent assassinations of two indigenous community leaders: **Santos Felipe Escobar García** and **Efraín Martínez Martínez**. Both of the deaths were confirmed by the Movimiento Amplio por la Dignidad y la Justicia (MADJ).

On December 29, the body of Efraín Martínez Martínez was found semi-buried in the department of Francisco Morazán after having been reported missing a week prior. Efraín Martínez was a leader of the indigenous Tolupán community in Montaña La Flor. The Tolupán people are historically one of the most impoverished and isolated groups in Honduras.

Just a few days later, on January 3 the tortured body of Santos Felipe Escobar García was found in El Carbón, Olancho Department. Family members had reported his disappearance on December 29, when he was apparently abducted. Santos Felipe Escobar was a leader of the indigenous Pech community of Santa María del Carbón.

This pattern of assassinating and burying indigenous leaders has been seen before in Honduras. Milgen Idán Soto Ávila, a 29-year-old member of the Tolupán indigenous community and the Broad Movement for Dignity and Justice (MADJ), was disappeared on September 24, 2018. Four days later his body was found at the worksite of the logging company he was fighting against in Yoro Department. Indigenous communities are among the most victimized groups in Honduras. Their land is rich with natural resources, which they are trying to defend, but it is being exploited and stolen from them with the state's complicity. Meanwhile, the bloodshed and violence wrought against the indigenous continues with total impunity.

We strongly urge you to:

- investigate the kidnapping and assassination of Santos Felipe Escobar García and Efraín Martínez Martínez and bring those responsible to justice
- adopt strong measures, such as the development of specific protocols, for the investigation of these types of crimes
- take the necessary actions to stop the systematic violence suffered by the indigenous communities

Sincerely,


 Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator


 Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: María Dolores Agüero, Ambassador of Honduras to the US ~ via website or fax, 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, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email and US mail
 Antonia Urrejola, Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 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

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