

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
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March 25, 2020

Dear Attorney General Chinchilla and Secretary Cueva:

We are deeply concerned about the police and military crackdown on the Honduran population during this health crisis. We understand that more than 500 people have been arbitrarily detained (and some tortured) by the military in various cities as they carry out the executive decree (PCM 021-2020) which was issued by your government on March 16.

The police and military are not respecting international protocols on the use of force. Furthermore, they are preventing freedom of movement, assembly, expression, and association. Harsh crackdowns by security forces against basic human rights will only exacerbate the health crisis. Arresting people and locking them in jails and prisons (in tightly confined spaces) will only lead to more spread of the coronavirus.

In Choluteca, Comayagua, San Pedro Sula, Tegucigalpa, Puerto Cortés, Choloma, La Ceiba and El Progreso, there are have been reports of arbitrary detentions followed by beatings, "moralizing sermons," vulgar insults, and cruel torture in isolated places. Many of those detained have been outside to get food or medicine for their family or neighbors. Yesterday, in a neighborhood of Comayagüela, neighborhood women prepared food and took it to the street. When five men gathered to share the meal, police arrested and locked them up in a nearby police station; police warned the women to stop any such solidarity activities and shut themselves in their houses. (After advocacy by the women, the men were later released.)

To protect health and human rights, and to prevent social unrest, we urge you to:

- issue clear guidelines and training on how to enforce the executive decree and local curfews
- stop unnecessary and arbitrary detention of Honduran citizens
- work to reduce crowding in jails and prisons
- heed the call of several human rights organizations who, on March 24, presented a *Habeas Corpus Correctivo* to the Supreme Court to release 12 political prisoners, including 8 who are El Guapinol environmental defenders who are imprisoned in the Olanchito prison (cf our letters from 2018: November 11, 23, 26)

We reiterate: The health crisis will only be exacerbated by more violations of human rights.

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinators



Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Lic. Rolando Argueta Pérez, President of the Supreme Court ~ via email
 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
 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: