

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

March 26, 2020

Dear Attorney General Chinchilla and Secretary Cueva:

We are writing to express our concern over the aggressions suffered by the Channel 6 press team which was attacked by members of the National Police in Tegucigalpa, on the afternoon of Monday, March 23.

The television channel reported that their correspondent **Paola Cobos** and her cameraman were prevented from interviewing two people who were being detained by police as part of the suspension of constitutional guarantees, imposed in the country since last March 15 (Executive Decree PCM 021-2020). Journalist Lili Valladares reported through a transmission on the Channel 6 Facebook account that journalist Paolo Cobos was physically assaulted by police (vehicle license plate UMP 0104). Police also damaged the camera and the live transmission equipment.


In a video published on the Channel 6 Facebook account, Paola Cobos said: "they (the people being detained by the police) wanted to explain to the authorities why they were walking around; suddenly, however, the patrol officers placed them into the police car, and they (the police) pushed us and said not to interview them, not to approach them." In the video, Channel 6 journalists ask police authorities (Security Secretariat, Director of the National Police) to investigate the police officers responsible for the incident and hold them responsible.

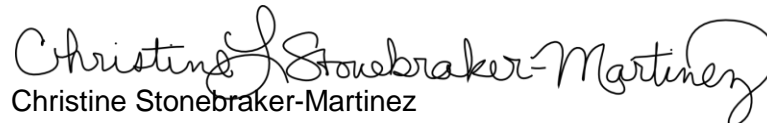
As we wrote to you yesterday (cf our letter March 25, 2020), we have great concern that the police and military are preventing freedom of movement, assembly, expression, and association. This was occurring even before Executive Decree PCM 021-2020 was issued on March 15. On March 8, journalist **Yesking Mairena** (of Zona TV Colón) was reporting from the entrance to Sabá (Colón Department) where the military was detaining several people. During his reporting, he was assaulted by a soldier. In a video transmitted via his Facebook account, a uniformed soldier is seen aggressively removing his regulation rifle, slapping Yesking Mairena, and preventing him from continuing the recording.

Violence against journalists—especially by government security forces—continues to seriously affect the exercise of the right to freedom of expression in Honduras. We therefore **strongly urge you to:**

- investigate the police who assaulted journalist Paola Cobos and her cameraman and the soldier who assaulted journalist Yesking Mairena, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- adopt prevention mechanisms that protect media workers from state-sponsored aggression or violence
- provide training of the police and security forces on guidelines for respecting freedom of expression
- hold accountable any police and security forces who unnecessarily or unlawfully restrict the work of journalists who are exercising the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression

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
Edison Lanza, Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, Inter-American Commission on Human ~ 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: