

via email: mprelacionespublicas@gmail.com, ngosorto@gmail.com Óscar Fernando Chinchilla Banegas Attorney General of Honduras	via email: karlacueva144@gmail.com, karen.lagos@sedh.gob.hn Lica. Karla Eugenia Cueva Aguilar Secretary of State for Human Rights Affairs
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July 1, 2020

Dear Attorney General Chinchilla and Secretary Cueva:

We are deeply concerned about recent attacks against the **Civic Council of Popular Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH)**. COPINH has a community center (called Utopia Center) in La Esperanza, Intibucá Department, which serves as a meeting place for sharing information, developing strategies, and conducting human rights trainings. COPINH recently offered the Utopia Center to be used as an isolation center for people in prison infected with COVID-19. They have been receiving threats as a result. On June 15, members of COPINH received information warning them about an imminent attack against its members and facilities.


On June 21, a group of about 60 people arrived at the Utopia Center and threatened to take control of the building. The following day, members of COPINH received a digital flyer in which an unknown group threatened to burn down the Utopia Center. In response to a request for protection from COPINH, the national Protection Mechanism sent two police cars. COPINH has requested ongoing protection from SNP (Sistema Nacional de Protección) which, as of June 24, has not been provided.

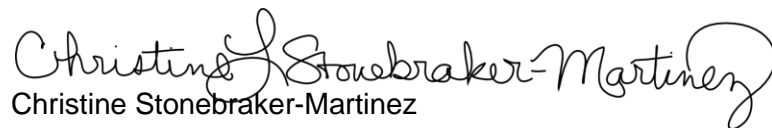
These threats occur in the context of several earlier attacks on COPINH, including the detention by the army on May 12 of **José Trochez**, member of COPINH's General Coordinating Body, while he was doing humanitarian work. In July 2019, the food crops of at least 25 families of the Río Blanco community, Intibucá Department, were intentionally destroyed. Around the same time, **Rosalina Domínguez**, finance coordinator for the Indigenous Council of Río Blanco, her four sons, and two other members of her community faced verbal death threats by a group of at least seven people, one of them armed (cf our letter of 14 August 2019). Members of COPINH and other human rights defenders have been facing additional risks in a hostile environment during the COVID-19 pandemic because of the executive withdrawal of protection decrees.

We **strongly urge** that you

- conduct an immediate and thorough investigation into the attacks on and threats against COPINH, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice
- consult with members of COPINH to devise security measures to ensure their safety so that they can carry out activities as human rights defenders without reprisals.

Sincerely,


 Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinators


 Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies:

- María Dolores Agüero, Ambassador of Honduras to the US ~ via email and US mail
- Joel Hernández, Rapporteur for Honduras, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email and US mail
- Antonia Urrejola Noguera, Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ~ via email 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
- CESPAD: Centro de Estudio para la Democracia ~ via email
- COPINH: Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas de Honduras ~ via email
- Amnesty International ~ via web form
- US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
- US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, González, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

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