

Lica. María Consuelo Porras Argueta
Attorney General of Guatemala
15 avenida 15-16 zona 1, Barrio Gerona
Ciudad Guatemala, Guatemala
via email: fiscalgeneralmp@gmail.com

January 15, 2021

Dear Attorney General Porras:

We are concerned about the criminalization of the **Reverend Delia Adelina Leal Mollinedo**, a Christian minister in Cobán, Alta Verapaz Department. We welcome the decision on January 11 of the Second Court of First Criminal Instance of Cobán to reduce the charges against Delia Leal and to release her from prison. However, we are quite disturbed that some of the fabricated criminal charges remain and that she has been placed under house arrest at least until her next scheduled hearing on May 27.

Delia Leal, a Nazarene and Baptist minister, has served as Regional Women's Ministry Coordinator for the Protestant Center for Pastoral Studies in Central America (CEDEPCA) since 2007. She has committed her life to promoting sexual and reproductive health for women from indigenous communities of the Q'eqchi' y Poqomchi' region. In December 2020 two young women in a precarious, unsafe living situation sought refuge at her home. They had previously stayed with her when their circumstances were uncertain.

On the morning of December 29, 2020, members of the National Civil Police violently entered Delia Leal's home with a warrant (without her name) issued by the Prosecutor's office. They took her to the sub-station of the Specialized Division in Criminal Investigation (DEIC) of Cobán, seized her cell phone, and arrested her for the crimes of kidnapping, trafficking of minors, and obstruction of an investigation. Although Guatemalan law establishes that the initial hearing must be held within 24 hours of arrest, Delia Leal was not permitted to give her first statement before a judge until January 6. The hearing was then promptly suspended because there was no report from the Prosecutor General's Office (PGN). She remained in jail until the first deposition hearing on January 11.

Since her arrest, Delia Adelina Leal Mollinedo has been the victim of smear campaigns. Several media outlets have distorted the facts with misogynist content; this has contributed to an atmosphere of misinformation and stigmatization around the case.

We believe the charges against Delia Leal have been fabricated because of her human rights work particularly on behalf of women and children. We **strongly urge** that you

- immediately drop all charges against Delia Adelina Leal Mollinedo and release her from house arrest
- take all necessary measures to guarantee her safety and security
- guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions and judicial harassment.

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-coordinators



Christine Stonebraker Martínez

copies: Alfonso José Quiñónez Lemus, Ambassador of Guatemala to the US ~ via email, US mail
IAHCR: Esmeralda Arosemena de Troitiño, Rapporteur for Guatemala, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email and US mail
IAHCR: Margarette May Macaulay, Rapporteur on the Rights of Women, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email and US mail
OACNUDH: Mika Kanervavuori, Representante de la Oficina del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos en Guatemala ~ via email
US State Department: Guatemala Desk ~ via email
US Embassy: William Popp, Ambassador of the US to Guatemala, c/o of Mary Nameth, human rights officer ~ via email
NISGUA ~ via email
Guatemala Human Rights Commission-USA ~ via email
US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, Gonzalez, 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: