

<b>Blanca Sarahí Izaguirre Lozano</b> National Commissioner for Human Rights of Honduras	<b>Lica. Karla Eugenia Cueva Aguilar</b> Secretary for Human Rights of Honduras
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April 30, 2021

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre and Secretary Cueva:

We are extremely concerned about the death threats against environmental defender **Juan María Cruz**, who is part of the Triunfeño Front in Defense of Life and the Social Environmental Movement of the South for Life (MASS-Vida, *Movimiento Ambientalista Social del Sur por la Vida*). He was threatened with a firearm by individuals linked to landowners in the logging industry in the community of Santa Catarina in El Triunfo municipality, Choluteca Department.

MASS-Vida is a volunteer regional network of civil society and community organizations in Valle and Choluteca Departments, which have coast line on the Gulf of Fonseca. It works to provide psychological and legal assistance, as well as environmental support, to expose and stamp out the corruption that fuels exploitative extractive and logging projects that destroy community lands. The Coalition Against Impunity (CCI) points out that MASS-Vida is subject to criminalization, persecution and selective assassinations, which involve the military, police, and paramilitary forces that are defending the interests of extractivist companies.

We believe that the recent death threats and other instances of persecution and intimidation against Juan María Cruz are the result of his affiliation with MASS-Vida and their efforts to preserve the land, water, beaches and forests that, says CCI, are "the main means of life" for the community.

We **strongly urge** that you

- conduct an immediate and thorough investigation into the threats against Juan María Cruz, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- respond to local communities' demands to authorities responsible for management in the territories to prioritize human rights and environmental protection in their decision-making

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Co-Coordinator



Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Oscar Chinchilla Banegas, Attorney General ~ via email  
Luis Suazo Barahona, 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  
Isabel Albaladejo Escribano, Representative to Honduras of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OACNUDH) ~ via email  
HSN: Honduras Solidarity Network ~ via email  
US Embassy in Honduras: Colleen Hoey, Chargé d'Affaires; Nate Rettenmayer, Political Officer ~ via email  
US State Dept: Honduras Desk ~ via email  
US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email  
US Representatives Beatty, 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:**