

Blanca Sarahí Izaguirre Lozano National Commissioner for Human Rights of Honduras	Lica. Karla Eugenia Cueva Aguilar Secretary for Human Rights of Honduras
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June 24, 2021

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre and Secretary Cueva:

We are writing to condemn the brutal **repression by state security forces against demonstrators in the Chamelecón neighborhood of San Pedro Sula**, Cortés Department, on June 18. Hundreds of residents of Chamelecón took to the streets to demand that the levee (*bordo*) that protects their neighborhood from the waters of the Chamelecón River be repaired. Instead of having their voices heard and their needs responded to, they were faced with brutal repression by the National and Military Police.

The levees (*bordos*) that protect the area suffered severe damage in November 2020 when hurricanes Eta and Iota hit barely twelve days apart, devastating the Valle de Sula (the largest alluvial valley of Honduras) and vast regions of the departments of Santa Barbara, Colón, Yoro, Atlántida and El Paraíso. According to official figures from the armed forces, there were 125 deaths and 2,941,000 persons affected by the storms throughout the country. Chamelecón was one of the worst hit sectors, where entire neighborhoods were wiped out, and more than 800 meters of the levee were damaged.

The residents of Chamelecón who demonstrated on June 18 were demanding that this section of levee be repaired and that the minister of the interior, Leonel Ayala, come in person to negotiate with them. They gathered peacefully with no intention of violence. Minister Ayala did not show up; instead, an armored vehicle arrived and police began using tear gas to disperse the crowd. Then police brutally attacked at least two defenseless residents and beat at least one other on the head with a club.


Concurrent with the violent dispersal of the demonstrators, the National Police released messages via Twitter that negotiations had been exhausted because the residents of Chamelecón had become violent, and the police needed to step in and restore order.

Because of their frustration with the lack of response from your government, some of the Chamelecón residents went so far as to reach out to Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele for help. They say that if their demands are not heeded, they will continue to gather and demonstrate in order to get the levees repaired and keep their communities safe from further flooding.

We strongly urge you to:

- protect the rights of citizens to peacefully protest without fear of violent reprisals
- find and hold accountable the police officers who attacked the demonstrators on June 18
- conduct fair and speedy negotiations with the residents of Chamelecón
- repair the damaged levees in Chamelecón to keep the residents safe

Sincerely,


 Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinators


 Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Hector Leonel Ayala, Minister of the Interior (Secretario de Gobernacion, Justicia, y Descentralizacion) ~ via email
 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
 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 and US Representatives Beatty, Gibbs, González, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

18 JUN 2021_ContraCorriente_Honduras

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