

Blanca Sarahí Izaguirre Lozano National Commissioner for Human Rights of Honduras	Lica. Karla Eugenia Cueva Aguilar Secretary for Human Rights of Honduras
---	--

October 23, 2021

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre and Secretary Cueva:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are concerned about the developing pattern of violence inflicted on opposition LIBRE party (Freedom and Refoundation Party) officials and candidates. A mayoral candidate, **Nery Fernando Reyes Pineda**, was assassinated on October 8. The following day, there was an attempted killing of **Olivia Marcela Zúniga Cáceres**, a LIBRE party congresswoman and the daughter of Berta Cáceres, the indigenous environmental defender who was assassinated in March 2016.

At dawn on October 9, at least four unknown assailants broke into the house of Olivia Zúniga Cáceres in the Planes de Santa Catalina neighborhood of La Esperanza, Intibucá. They beat her badly and tried to strangle her, but she was able to escape death. The assailants left the home, stealing a white truck that she had at her house. The legislator, who is a beneficiary of Protection Measures issued by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), filed a complaint with the Police Investigations Directorate (DPI).

The previous night in Choluteca Department, the LIBRE party mayoral candidate for the municipality of Santa Ana de Yusguare, **Nery Fernando Reyes Pineda** was shot to death, less than two months before the scheduled elections. He was killed on the outskirts of Choluteca city. His body was found inside a green Mitsubishi van with gunshot holes on the left side of the vehicle.

According to the National Observatory on Violence at the National Autonomous University of Honduras (ONV-UNAH), 15 people linked to politics have been murdered from December 2020 to September 15, 2021. The assassination of Nery Fernando Reyes Pineda and the attempted assassination of Olivia Marcela Zúniga Cáceres are recent examples of an ongoing climate of anti-LIBRE hate crimes leading up to the presidential elections, which are scheduled for November 28.

Because of our concern over the lethal violence against opposition party officials and candidates, we urge that authorities in Honduras:

- carry out a thorough and impartial investigation into the assassination Nery Fernando Reyes Pineda, publish the results, and bring the perpetrators to justice
- carry out a thorough and impartial investigation into the attempted assassination of Olivia Zúniga Cáceres, publish the results, and bring the perpetrators to justice
- implement security measures for Olivia Zúniga Cáceres, in strict accordance with her wishes
- respect the rights of all voters and candidates before, during, and after the election on November 28

Sincerely,


 Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator

and


 Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Oscar Chinchilla Banegas, Attorney General of Honduras ~ via email
 Luis Suazo Barahona, Ambassador of Honduras to the US ~ via email and US mail
 Joel Hernández García, 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
 Alice Shackelford, UN Resident Coordinator in Honduras, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ~ via email
 US Embassy in Honduras: Colleen Hoey, Chargé d'Affaires; Nate Rettenmayer, Political Officer; Ariel Jahner, Human Rights Officer ~ via email
 US State Department: Molly Runyon, Honduras Desk Officer ~ via email
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Beatty, Gibbs, González, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

11 OCT 2021_Defensoresenlinea_Honduras

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