

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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October 24, 2021

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre and Secretary Cueva:

We are writing to express our outrage over the persecution of three Honduran citizens: **Erika Tatiana Martínez García**, who was murdered in her home on September 26, **Fausto Vázquez**, whose bed was set on fire on September 30, and **Victoria Rodríguez**, who was beaten in her home on October 7. All are leaders of the LGBTI community.

Erika Tatiana Martínez García (known as Tatiana) became the fourth transwoman murdered in Honduras this year. Her body was found with stab wounds at her home in the Díaz Valenzuela neighborhood of Santa Rosa de Copán, Copán Department, on September 26. Tatiana García, age 32, was a respected community leader who advised and accompanied LGBTI people to file complaints when they were victims of crimes. She had been the victim of previous threats and attacks.

LGBTI rights defender **Fausto Vázquez** was victim of an attack a few days later. When he was away from home on September 30, unknown persons entered his house in the rural community of Azacualpa, Santa Elena municipality, La Paz Department, and set his bed on fire. The fire spread and caused tremendous damage. Fausto Vázquez serves as the LGBTI secretary for the Coordinating Body of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH). He and his family have suffered other attacks and harassment, including the murder of his brother Benito Velázquez by the military in 2013.

Victoria Rodríguez, better known as Vicky, was taken to the hospital after being attacked by unknown assailants on October 7. Her niece found her unconscious on the floor of her home in La Libertad, Comayagua Department. With her face, arms, and legs covered in bruises, the 64-year-old could not remember what happened to her. Vicky is a well-known model and the protagonist of the LGBTI-focused documentary *Victoria*, which won several international awards for cinematographic excellence in 2019. She has been attacked before due to her expression of gender identity.

Human rights defenders of the LGBTI community face serious risks. LGBTI rights groups report that 390 LGBTI people have been murdered in Honduras in the past 12 years, including 17 this year. In only nine percent of the cases has there been a murder conviction; more than 90 percent of the cases remain in impunity. Tatiana's murder, Fausto's harassment, and Vicky's attack must all be seen as transgressions against protections that human rights defenders should receive. The government of Honduras should adhere to the ruling handed down by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (June 28, 2021) when it found the State responsible for the murder of transwoman Vicky Hernández on June 28, 2009. There must be accountability and an end to the impunity provided to the perpetrators of these crimes.

We strongly urge you to:

- conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into the murder of Erika Tatiana Martínez García, publish the results, and bring the perpetrators to justice
- arrest and punish those responsible for the attacks on Victoria Rodríguez and the property of Fausto Vázquez
- follow all lines of investigation, which might lead to motives of hate crimes or retaliation for their LGBTI defense activities
- adopt a procedure for the recognition of gender identity in documents and public records
- adopt protocols for investigation and administration of justice during criminal proceedings for LGBTI victims of violence

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai and
Co-Coordinators


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
Flávia Piovesan, Rapporteur on the Rights of LGTBI Persons ~ 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

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