

Blanca Sarahí Izaguirre Lozano National Commissioner for Human Rights of Honduras (CONADEH)	Rosa Seaman Vice-Minister of Protection Secretariat for Human Rights of Honduras
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December 13, 2021

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre and Vice-Minister Seaman:

We are writing to you today because another Honduran human rights defender has been targeted for her lawful work activities. **Nidia Castillo** is a staff attorney for the Network of Women Human Rights Lawyers in Choluteca, which provides free legal consultation to environmental defenders, territorial defense advocates, and others impacted by human rights violations in seven municipalities throughout Choluteca Department.

On December 2, Nidia Castillo was getting ready to leave her home when she noticed that her car, which was parked in front of her home, had been damaged. It was dented in several places, and there was a rock atop the motor. This suggests that unknown actors had thrown rocks deliberately at the vehicle to damage it. Then, upon leaving her home in the damaged vehicle, and accompanied by a family member, she was followed by an unknown man on a motorcycle all the way until she reached her destination.

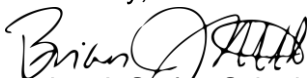
The same day of this attack, Nidia Castillo had attended a press conference to denounce the impacts that the Employment and Economic Development Zones (ZEDEs) will have on the people and environment of San Marcos de Colón municipality, where construction on the ZEDE Orquídea commenced in the village of Las Tapias in January. Due to the vast biological diversity of flora and fauna of this area situated near the border of Nicaragua, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) declared it a biosphere reserve in 2017. Opponents have concerns that the ZEDE's industrial agriculture projects, designed to produce exports to the U.S., will create severe negative environmental destruction.

We know that aggression and intimidation of this kind against human rights defenders is endemic and that there is little accountability for the perpetrators. Nidia Castillo's car was previously vandalized in a similar manner in 2017. Countless others have had their property damaged, been threatened, harassed, intimidated and even killed while carrying out their lawful and peaceful work for justice.

We strongly urge you to:

- conduct a thorough and transparent investigation into the damage of the vehicle of Nidia Castillo and subsequent surveillance by a person on a motorcycle on December 2, publish the results, and bring the perpetrators to justice
- condemn any acts of aggression or intimidation that aims to block the work of Nidia Castillo
- protect all human rights defenders from acts of aggression, intimidation and violence, as guaranteed by law under international conventions.

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator

and


Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: 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
Red de Abogadas Defensoras de Derechos Humanos en Honduras ~ 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, Brown, Gibbs, González, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

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