

<b>Blanca Sarahí Izaguirre Lozano</b> National Commissioner for Human Rights of Honduras (CONADEH)	<b>Rosa Seaman</b> Vice-Minister for Protection Secretariat for Human Rights (SEDH)
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October 23, 2022

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre and Vice-Minister Seaman:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are deeply distressed about the assassination of yet another LGBTIQ+ activist in Honduras. **Melissa Núñez** was shot near her home in colonia José Tomás Moncada in the municipality of Morocelí, El Paraíso Department, on October 19. As Melissa Núñez was walking home in the afternoon, unknown hooded assassins got out of a car and shot her several times. She died as the result of two gunshots to her head.

Melissa Núñez, age 25, was born as Kelvin Núñez. She was a well-known human rights defender. Shortly before her killing, she had returned from an extended stay in Miami. During her time in Florida, she had compiled a strong following on social media because of her activism for sexual and gender minorities. Melissa had over 20,000 followers on TikTok.


Melissa Núñez is the 131<sup>st</sup> transgender person assassinated in Honduras since 2009 and the 434<sup>th</sup> member of the sexual diversity community murdered during this same period, according to the Observatory of Violent Deaths of Cattrachas. In 2022, she is the 34<sup>th</sup> LGBTIQ+ person in Honduras who has been murdered, according to Reportar Sin Miedo, a non-profit investigative journalism organization. The rate of killings is already worse than last year. The rate of impunity for crimes against the sexual diversity community is 91%.

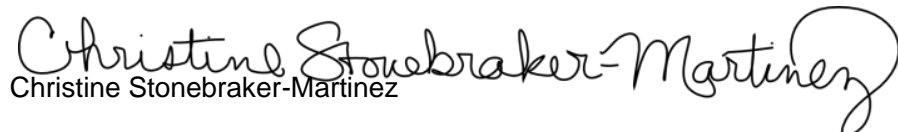
Despite the pervasive violence towards LGBTIQ+ members and activists, the media either disrespected the deceased by misgendering and misnaming Melissa Núñez. More than a year after the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR) ordered reparations for the state's responsibility for the assassination of Vicky Hernández in 2009, the state still does not have a law to protect the documentation of the proper name and gender of transgender persons in Honduras. The government's failure to create this protection—despite the court's order to do so—only strengthens a culture of impunity and disrespect of transgender persons, especially by allowing the media to act as conveyors of ignorance and hate. Victims should not be re-victimized by the media and government officials upon their death.

Because of the assassination of Melissa Núñez and our ongoing concern for the safety of all members of the LGBTIQ+ community in Honduras, we call upon your integrity and humanity to:

- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the intellectual and material actors in the assassination of Melissa Núñez, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice, in accordance with international standards
- carry out the demands of the IACtHR sentence (issued 28 June 2021) and reform the law and regulations of the National Registry of Persons to allow transgender persons to legally change their names
- take measures to eradicate transphobia in Honduras and guarantee that defenders of LGBTIQ+ rights be able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of restrictions or reprisals

Sincerely,

  
 Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Co-Coordinators

  
 Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Embassy of Honduras in Washington, DC c/o Alejandra Sandoval Taixes ~ via email and US mail  
 Carlos Pulido, Rapporteur for Honduras, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) ~ via email and US mail  
 Roberta Clarke, Rapporteur on the Rights of LGTBI Persons, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) ~ 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 Lésbica Cattrachas ~ via email  
 US Embassy in Honduras: Ambassador Laura F. Dogu and Ariel Jahner, Human Rights Officer ~ via email  
 US State Department: Bryan Schell, Honduras Desk Officer ~ via email  
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Beatty, Brown, 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:**