

Blanca Sarahí Izaguirre Lozano

National Commissioner for Human Rights of Honduras (CONADEH)
 via email

December 21, 2022

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre:

We are writing to you in sadness and anger over two new reports of persecution against Honduran journalists and human rights defenders **Dina Meza** and **Gilda Silvestrucci**. The journalists are subjects to surveillance and death threats. Sadly, they are not the first journalists in Honduras to receive such threats this year.

In early December, Dina Meza publicly shared evidence of the surveillance of her home and members of her family on her social media. In her work, she recently denounced irregularities in the National Protection Mechanism and the Secretary of Human Rights. She has since noticed cars that are watching and following her and her family. She believes that the surveillance is being conducted by the National Police and ordered by state structures.

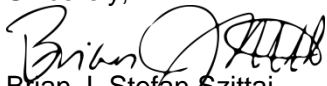
An independent journalist, Dina Meza is the director of the Association for Democracy and Human Rights (ASOPODEHU) and director of the digital newspaper Pasos de Animal Grande. Dina Meza has been recognized internationally for her work. In 2020, the United Kingdom bestowed on her the Sir Henry Brooke award in recognition of her contribution to human rights. In 2014, she received the Oxfam Novib/PEN International free expression award.

Gilda Silvestrucci is the director of the online media outlet EnLaPlaza.hn. After she published some criticism of former president Juan Orlando Hernández early this month, she received death threats through multiple phone calls, text messages, and via social media, targeting her as well as her underage daughter. She has published some of the threatening messages on her social networks to raise awareness, some of which specifically mention intentions to kill her and her daughter. The wave of cyber bullying targeting Gilda Silvestrucci is unlikely to stem from just one person.

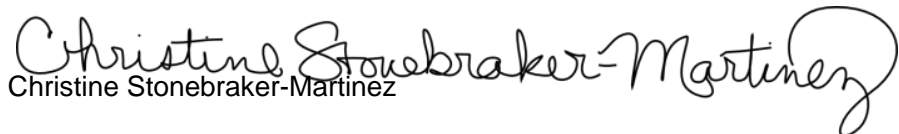
What Dina Meza and Gilda Silvestrucci have to endure is intolerable, and these are not the only cases of verbal or physical attacks against openly critical journalists or human rights defenders in Honduras. We highly denounce attacks on journalists who are rightfully making use of their right to freedom of speech, and we strongly urge you to:

- thoroughly investigate the two cases and prosecute the persons, organizations, or governmental structures responsible for the attacks
- provide proper protection to both Dina Meza and Gilda Silvestrucci to prevent any further persecution or attacks, in strict accordance with their wishes
- put into place sufficient measures of protection for journalists and human rights defenders in efforts to prevent further attacks on their health and privacy, such as death threats and surveillance

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinators



Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Javier Efraín Bú Soto, Ambassador 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
 Pedro José Vaca Villarreal, Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) ~ via email and US mail
 Jsabel Albaladejo Escribano, Representative to Honduras of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OACNUDH) ~ via email
 C-Libre: Comité por la Libre Expresión ~ via email
 Natalie Southwick, Central & South America Program Coordinator, Committee to Protect Journalists ~ via email and US mail
 Alice Shackelford, UN Resident Coordinator in Honduras, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ~ via email
 US Embassy in Honduras: Ambassador Laura F. Dogu and 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: