



Comité de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos en Honduras
COFADEH

Urgent Action

The Committee of Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared in Honduras (COFADEH), expresses its full condemnation and concern regarding the illegal detention, and degrading, inhuman and cruel treatment against José Guadalupe Garcia Ruelas, Director of Casa Alianza Honduras.¹

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On May 8, 2014 at approximately 11:30 p.m., José Guadalupe Garcia Ruelas, was driving a vehicle owned by Casa Alianza to his home, after having attended a social gathering with other human rights organizations that work on the rights of children, held at the Marriot hotel in Tegucigalpa. Ruelas was wearing clothes with institutional identification. When he passed in front of the Presidential Palace, he noticed military police signaling him to stop at a military checkpoint, just at the moment that a press conference given by the President, Juan Orlando Hernandez, regarding the extradition of Carlos Arnaldo Lobo to the United States was ending.

When Ruelas was parked, a motorized patrol with two police officers, members of the Secretary of State Security for Security Minister Arturo Corrales Álvarez, struck the vehicle's passenger door.

Immediately, six officers pulled Ruelas violently from his vehicle. He was beaten on the forehead, nose, back, right side, head, and right leg. Then a military officer dragged his body, face down, by his feet on the pavement while another officer struck his body, leaving boot marks stamped upon his work shirt while verbally abusing him.

An officer took his wallet in which Ruelas was carrying his personal identification and \$200 dollars. They impounded his vehicle with the items he carried, including his work computer.

At about midnight, he was handed over to a Transit Police patrol, handcuffed and taken to the Transit police station in the Kennedy neighborhood of Tegucigalpa.

At 1:10am, the Coordinator of Cofadeh, Bertha Oliva de Nativi, arrived at the facility. Upon seeing his physical state, she asks that he be transferred immediately to a medical center. The authorities on duty denied the request on the grounds that a blood alcohol level test needed to be performed on him. They performed the test six times. They read him his rights, he signed a document, and immediately he is transferred in patrol car to the Metropolitan Police station.

¹ Casa Alianza is a nongovernmental organization that has attended the needs of children at risk since 1968. In 1972 the current organization was founded as a private, nonprofit under the name Covenant House, or Casa Alizana in Spanish. Later, in New York, Covenant House expanded to other cities in the United States and Canada; 1987 in Honduras, in 1988 it was instituted in Mexico and 1998 in Nicaragua. Today, Casa Alianza attends over 20,000 children at risk in Honduras, México and Nicaragua.

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The Public Prosecutor on duty reviewed the file and ordered that the victim be taken to a doctor. On discovering that there is no forensic doctor on duty, his family is authorized to transfer him to the emergency room of the private Hospital Viera, where he is admitted immediately and attended by a doctor. After evaluating him, the doctor orders x-rays and permanent medical observation.

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As we issue this Urgent Action, he is still in police custody in the hospital center, until the Office of the District Attorney for Common Crimes concludes its investigation for crimes of Malicious Injury and Malicious Damage.

The Commissioner Carlos Mejía, director of Transit, declared to the media that at no point did police officers use excessive force and the injuries that Mr. Rúela presents are the product of a collision with a motorcycle, that is to say a traffic accident.

Background

On April 23, José Guadalupe Ruelas, Director de Casa Alianza², presented a report on the first three months of 2014 which states that 270 youths under 23 years of age have suffered violent deaths in Honduras, an average of 90 deaths per month. The monthly report on the situation of the human rights of children and youth underscored that in January, 93 youths were killed, 84 in February and in March the number rose to 94 youths. During the period February 1998 to March 2014, nine thousand, two hundred and ninety one (9,291) young people under the age of 23 were murdered in Honduras.

On May 5, Ruelas, issued statements to the media regarding the *Guardians of the Fatherland* program developed by the Armed Forces in various regions of the country, strongly questioning the program and qualifying it as a program without vision, sustainability nor participation and ineffective in lowering levels of insecurity. He considered it a pathway to militarization.

COFADEH asks the national and international community to demand that the State of Honduras take all steps necessary to guarantee effective measures to protect the life and integrity of José Guadalupe Ruelas García, his family and colleagues at Casa Alianza, and guarantee the universally recognized right to defend human rights as established by the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights Defenders approved in 1998 and OAS Resolutions of 1999 and 2000.

² Casa Alianza Honduras has developed an Observatory for the Rights of Children and Youths in Honduras which monitors, advocates for public policy and develops proposals to improve conditions for the respect of the rights of infants and youth in the country. [Trabajo Infantil en Honduras, Diagnóstico situacional de algunas de las peores formas de trabajo infantil en Honduras Informe de Verificación de Derechos de la Infancia en la Zona del Bajo Aguan.](#)

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Remind the State of Honduras that it has the responsibility to apply and respect all provisions of the Declaration; in particular articles 2, 9, 12, 14 and 15 which make special reference to the function of States and establishes that each and every one of them has the responsibility and obligation to: Protect, promote and uphold all human rights.

Remind the State of its obligation to initiate investigatory proceedings that result in charges against the State Security agents that abused authority and violated the rights of José Guadalupe Ruelas.

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Also to investigate the names, ranks and positions of the military officers that participated in and ordered the aggression.

Please call the following authorities:

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