



Peace Brigades
International - Canada

Brigades de paix
Internationales - Canada

Mr. Cameron MacKay,
Ambassador of Canada to Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Honduras
Embassy of Canada
Apartado 351-1007 Centro Colon
San José, Costa Rica
Tel: (506) 2242-4400
sjcra@international.gc.ca

May 11th, 2012

Dear Ambassador MacKay,

We, the undersigned Canadian organizations and individuals, would like to express our concern at the threats that members of the Honduras Accompaniment Project (PROAH) have received in recent weeks. PROAH is an international organization whose volunteers provide accompaniment to human rights defenders who are themselves at risk in Honduras.

On April 24th and April 26th, 2012, two different members of the PROAH team received serious threats via text message; one was a death threat directed at PROAH and the other was a death threat directed at human rights defenders that PROAH accompanies. These incidents are particularly concerning because they highlight the vulnerability of Honduran human rights defenders, especially given that human rights accompaniment is aimed at providing a protective international presence.

These threats come as human rights defenders in Honduras report receiving increased threats and harassment in recent months. In March and April of this year, several members of the organization *Committee of the Families of the Detained and Disappeared in Honduras* (COFADEH) received a series of threats, including those of sexual violence, via phone calls, text messages, and equally disturbingly, unknown people standing outside the organization's offices yelling threats. We also have information that members of the *Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras* (COPINH) were victims of harassing phone calls and threats throughout March and April, and that Santos Alberto Domínguez, a member of their organization, was murdered on May 1st. Most recently on May 8th, the body of Erick Martinez, a journalist and gay rights activist, was found with signs of strangulation.

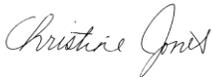
In its 2011 report, the *Inter-American Commission of Human Rights* (IACHR) highlighted the concerning situation that journalists and human rights defenders throughout Honduras face. It is also of grave concern that members of the LGBT community in Honduras have been specifically targeted with the same threats using the same modes of communication. These threats, harassment, and attacks come within a context of increasingly high levels of violence and impunity for the perpetrators. It is now public knowledge that Honduras has the highest murder and violent death rate anywhere in the world. The Honduras Observatory on Violence verifies that this violent death rate eight times higher than the global average (8.1 per 100.00 inhabitants). The IACHR has stated that the most effective means of protecting human rights defenders is to investigate the crimes committed against them and that those who are perpetrators be brought to justice.

It is in this context that we call on you to express deep concern on the part of Canada about the recent threats, which seem aimed at undermining important, legitimate work for human rights, and press the Honduran authorities clearly and unequivocally to:

- Take effective measures to stop the harassment and threats directed at all members of PROAH, as well as other human rights defenders in Honduras, and protect them from harm, in accordance with their wishes.
- Conduct a thorough and impartial investigation to determine who is behind these threats, and ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice.
- Report back on the steps taken to comply with these urgent requests.

Thank you in advance for raising these important concerns and for sharing with us the response you receive from Honduran authorities.

Sincerely,



Christine Jones
Executive Director, Peace Brigades International-Canada

Amnesty International Canada
Atlantic Solidarity Regional Network (ARSN)
CoDevelopment Canada
Common Frontiers
CUPE
Horizons of Friendship
Inter Pares
John W. Foster (Dr.), International Studies, University of Regina
Latin American and Caribbean solidarity Network
Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence Solidarity Network
Mining Watch Canada
Peace Brigades International-Canada

CC:

The Honourable John Baird, P.C., MP, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Government of Canada
Diane Ablonczy, MP, Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs)
Paul Dewar, MP, Foreign Affairs Critic, New Democratic Party of Canada
Hélène Laverdière, Americas and Consular Affairs Critic, New Democratic Party of Canada
Wayne Marston, MP, Human Rights Critic, New Democratic Party of Canada
Dominic Leblanc, MP, Foreign Affairs Critic, Liberal Party of Canada
Irwin Cotler, MP, Human Rights Critic, Liberal Party of Canada
Jean-François Fortin, MP, Foreign Affairs Critic, Bloc Québécois
Neil Reeder, Director General, Latin America & Caribbean, Foreign Affairs and International Trade
Margaret Biggs, President, Canadian International Development Agency