

via email: [diseloalpresidente@presidencia.gob.hn](mailto:diseloalpresidente@presidencia.gob.hn),  
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**Sr. Juan Orlando Hernández**  
 President of Honduras

via email: [mprelacionespublicas@gmail.com](mailto:mprelacionespublicas@gmail.com)  
[oscarfernando@protonmail.ch](mailto:oscarfernando@protonmail.ch)  
**Sr. Óscar Fernando Chinchilla Banegas**  
 Attorney General of Honduras

September 26, 2018

Dear Sirs:

We are concerned for the safety of freelance journalist **Nina Lakhani**, a British citizen who is in Honduras reporting on the high-profile trial of eight men charged in the 2016 assassination of indigenous environmental leader Berta Cáceres.

On September 17, a document labeled as a press release circulated on social media platforms, including Twitter and WhatsApp. The document accused Lakhani of "manipulating" the local population in the Bajo Aguán region, forcing residents to give false statements and inciting them to violence. The document called on authorities to investigate Lakhani and other foreigners visiting the region and engaging in "suspicious activities behind the façade of independent journalism for international outlets." It also declared Lakhani "persona non grata" in the region.

The document was circulated the day after Nina Lakhani published an article in the UK-based *Guardian* newspaper on criminal structures in the Bajo Aguán region and links between military intelligence officers and the men on trial for the assassination of Berta Cáceres. The organization named in the so-called press release, the Association of Independent Farmers of the Aguán Valley, appears to be a fake group or front group for others who want to restrict journalistic freedom in Honduras. The US-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has not been able to find any evidence that a group with that name exists.

Nina Lakhani is the journalist who previously reported that Berta Cáceres' name appeared on a military hit list shortly before she was killed. The journalist faced a similar harassment campaign after that article was published in June 2016.

We are deeply concerned about restrictions on freedom of the press in Honduras. We strongly urge that you

- thoroughly and impartially investigate the threatening smear campaign against journalist Nina Lakhani, publish the results, and bring the perpetrators to justice
- provide training of public officials, especially the police and security forces, and the adoption of guidelines on respect for freedom of expression
- ensure the right of all journalists to exercise their profession safely within your borders

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Co-Coordinator



Christine Stonebraker-Martínez

copies: Marlon R. Tábora Muñoz, Ambassador of Honduras to the US ~ via website or fax, and US mail  
 Heide B. Fulton, Chargé d'Affaires, US Embassy in Honduras ~ via email  
 Jason Smith, Human Rights and Labor Representative, US Embassy in Honduras ~ via email  
 Olivia Franken, Honduras Desk, US State Dept ~ via email  
 Joel Hernández, Rapporteur for Honduras, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email  
 Edison Lanza, Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email  
 US Senators Brown & Portman  
 US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

09/19/18\_CPJ\_Honduras

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