

Kirstjen Nielsen, Secretary of DHS Department of Homeland Security Washington, D.C. 20528	Ronald Vitiello, Acting Director of ICE U.S Immigration and Customs Enforcement 500 12th St., SW Washington, D.C. 20536
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February 22, 2019

Dear Secretary Nielsen and Acting Director Vitiello:

We are saddened and angry to learn of the murder of **Camila Díaz Córdova**, a transgender woman who sought political asylum in the US but was deported to her native country, El Salvador.

We understand that a number of threats against her prompted Camila Díaz Córdova to join a caravan of asylum-seekers that traveled from Central America to the US in 2018. We also understand that she petitioned for political asylum but was denied and deported back to El Salvador sometime in mid- or late 2018.

The US deportation of Camila Díaz Córdova to El Salvador put her in extreme danger. Friends reported her missing in late January. They discovered on January 31 that she had been admitted to Rosales Nationwide Hospital in San Salvador following an assault. She was hospitalized after being found on Carretera de Oro near the municipality of Soyapango, outside of San Salvador. Suffering from multiple injuries, she died on February 3.

According to ASPIDH Arcoiris, a transwomen advocacy and support organization based in San Salvador, Camila Díaz Córdova had been the victim of threats dating back to at least 2014, when she first filed a report with El Salvador's National Civil Police (PCN).


High rates of violence—including murders and assassinations—against members of the LGBTQ community in El Salvador are well documented. A 2016 study by the Office of the United Nation's High Commissioner for Refugees found that nearly 90 percent of LGBTQ asylum seekers and refugees reported suffering sexual and gender-based violence in their home countries in Central America. The number of registered asylum seekers and refugees has been growing since.

Asylum claims by members of the LGBTQ from Central America must be taken seriously. We ask that you:

- investigate (and publish a report on) the immigration case record of Camila Díaz Córdova: apprehension, detention, court proceedings, deportation
- ensure that LGBTQ asylum-seekers from Central America are held in the least restrictive detention conditions possible, are protected against assaults while in detention, and released to sponsors as early as possible to await their immigration court proceedings
- be in contact with the US Embassy in San Salvador and ask them to urge government authorities in El Salvador to carry out a thorough and impartial investigation into the murder of Camila Díaz Córdova, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

  
 Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Co-Coordinator

  
 Christine Stonebraker-Martínez

copies: Jean Elizabeth Manes, US Ambassador to El Salvador ~ via US mail  
 Claudia Ivette Canjura de Centeno, El Salvador Ambassador to the US ~ via email  
 El Salvador Desk, US State Department ~ via email  
 Margarette May Macaulay, Rapporteur for El Salvador, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email  
 Flávia Piovesan, Rapporteur on the Rights of LGTBI Persons, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email  
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, Gonzalez, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

2/17/19\_El Salvador

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