

via email: mprelacionespublicas@gmail.com ngosorto@gmail.com  
**Oscar Fernando Chinchilla Banegas**  
Attorney General of Honduras

via email: karlacueva144@gmail.com  
**Lica. Karla Cueva**  
Secretary of State for Human Rights Affairs

February 22, 2020

Dear Attorney General Chinchilla and Secretary Cueva:

We are writing with both sadness and outrage over the staggering number of homicides in Honduras in 2020, including victims of torture. By January 13, ninety-eight homicides were already registered.

Among those murdered was **José Leopoldo Navarro**, a 60-year-old campesino, whose relatives reported missing. He was found dead on January 11 with signs of torture near the Tocoa River in Colón Department. Police authorities reported that he had cuts to his throat, his feet were tied, his fingers were cut off, and his eyes were removed. Tocoa has been a center of organized resistance by campesinos and environmentalists who have been protesting negative environmental impacts resulting from large scale mining and trying to protect public access to water in Colón. Demonstrators have suffered from police aggression, criminalization, and forced eviction.


On January 12, two members of one family were violently murdered. Hitmen on a motorcycle murdered **Humberto Hidalgo Niño**, a merchant, age 23, whose body was found behind a clinic in the Mira Valle neighborhood of La Entrada municipality, Copán Department. (His driver, **Javier Francisco Velásquez Ulloa**, was gravely injured in the attack). The same day, gunmen arrived at the Hidalgo Niño family estate, in the community of San Pablo El Robre in Nueva Arcadia municipality, where they shot and killed **Auri Michelle Rivera Dubón**, the 18-year-old niece of Humberto Hidalgo Niño.

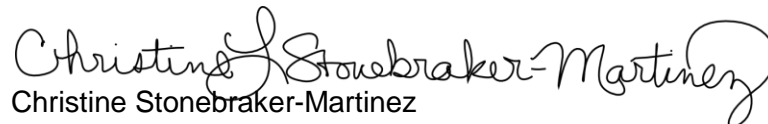
On January 11 at 9:00 pm, **Edwin Amílcar Mairena**, a moto-taxi driver, age 28, was shot dead in the El Molino neighborhood of Valle de Ángeles municipality in Francisco Morazán Department. It is believed his death is due to the collection of the "war tax." This is a bribe which Honduran gangs charge buses, taxis and motorcycle taxis. In the capital alone, business owners pay an estimated \$23 million to gangs each year. Nonpayment can mean death. Reports to police and military personnel are inadequate because of their corrupt connections to the gangs.

We **strongly urge** that you

- investigate the homicides of José Leopoldo Navarro, Humberto Hidalgo Niño, Aury Michael Rivera Dubón, and Edwin Amílcar Mairena, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- stop the culture of impunity that permits such violence to go unpunished, thus destabilizing the lives of innocent Hondurans throughout the country
- enforce the rule of law and increase public safety by promptly investigating homicides and bringing perpetrators to swift and appropriate justice

Sincerely,

  
Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Co-Coordinator

  
Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: María Dolores Agüero, Ambassador of Honduras to the US ~ via website or fax, and US mail  
Colleen Hoey, Chargé d'Affaires, US Embassy in Honduras ~ via email  
Nate Rettenmayer, Political Officer at the US Embassy in Honduras ~ via email  
David Tagle, Honduras Desk, US State Dept ~ via email  
Joel Hernández, Rapporteur for Honduras, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email and US mail  
US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, 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:**