

Blanca Saraí Izaguirre Lozano
National Commissioner for Human Rights (CONADEH)
Tegucigalpa, Honduras

August 6, 2024

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre Lozano:

We are writing with deep concern regarding the assassination of 34-year-old **Erlin Asbiel Blandín Álvarez**, a dedicated human rights defender and president of the community board (patronato) of the Los Laureles community in Danlí, El Paraíso Department. Erlin was committed to advocating for essential resources and social justice in his community, including managing a water project and bringing awareness to the trafficking of migrants.

On Sunday morning, July 14, while taking a weekend away from his final year of studies as a journalism student at the National Autonomous University of Honduras in Tegucigalpa, Erlin Asbiel Blandín Álvarez went outside his family home to work on a shed that he was building. Assailants arrived on a motorcycle and an ATV. Moments later, shots were heard and cries for help. Relatives came to his aid and saw the aggressors flee the scene at high speed. He died moments later. At 2pm that afternoon, the coroner ruled his death a homicide caused by open thoracic trauma, noting wounds to the upper chest, shoulder and back.

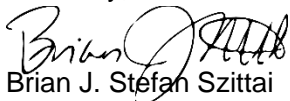
Erlin Asbiel Blandín Álvarez, who was openly gay, was a well-respected community leader and environmental defender. He managed a water project for the inhabitants of Los Laureles with public funds (municipal funds from the city of Danlí, El Paraíso), and this put him at odds with locals who had economic interests to privatize the system. His assassination occurred just a few days after the release from detention of Franklin Eduardo Alvarado Medina, age 26. Erlin Asbiel Blandín Álvarez had filed a legal complaint against Alvarado Medina for threats, extortion and setting fire to his house. Learning of Alvarado Medina's release from detention, Erlin Asbiel Blandín Álvarez had sought security measures from national security agencies and the Public Ministry, but his request was not heard, according to his classmates.

In addition to his work providing safe water for his community, Erlin Asbiel Blandín Álvarez was also investigating the profiting from human migration. During the weekend he was killed, he had been interviewing migrants passing through the eastern zone of Honduras. Many are clients of lucrative migration trafficking networks.

We urge that authorities in Honduras

- conduct a thorough and transparent investigation into the assassination of Erlin Asbiel Blandín Álvarez, identify both the material and intellectual authors of the crime, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- coordinate efforts among local and national authorities to combat exploitive criminal organizations such as migration trafficking networks and protect the vulnerable populations affected by them
- immediately respond to human rights defenders, journalists, and community leaders who express fear for their lives and develop protection mechanisms in strict accordance with their wishes

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-coordinators


Christine Stonebraker Martínez

copies: Javier Efraín Bú Soto, Ambassador of Honduras in Washington, DC ~ via email and US mail
Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR): Rapporteur Andrea Pochak (for Honduras) and Roberta Clarke (for LGBTI Rights) ~ via email and US mail
Isabel Albaladejo Escribano, Representative to Honduras of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OACNUDH) ~ via email
Alice Shackelford, UN Resident Coordinator in Honduras, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OACNUDH) ~ via email
C-Libre: Comité por la Libre Expresión / Committee for Free Expression
US Embassy in Tegucigalpa: Laura F. Dogu (ambassador) and Joe Duran, Human Rights Officer ~ via email
US State Department: Bryan Schell, Honduras Desk Officer (Washington, DC)
US Senators Brown & Vance ~ via email
US Representatives Beatty, Brown, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Miller, Sykes ~ via email

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