

HSN Honduras Solidarity Network, USA

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February 20, 2013

Statement of the Honduran Solidarity Network (HSN) in the United States

The Problem in Honduras is not the Human Rights Defenders

On February 18, 2013, Infantry Colonel German Antonio Alfaro Escalante, the Commander of the Joint Task Force Xatruch III, which is the ongoing military-police operation in the Aguán Valley of Honduras, convened an unusual press conference. The Colonel, in a verbal and written statement, accused international and Honduran human rights defenders and advocates for social justice movements in Honduras of intimidation and harassment because he received numerous calls regarding the detention of a campesino leader, Juan Chinchilla on February 10, 2013. He listed the names and websites of Honduran human rights defenders and the phone numbers for some of the messages he received from international callers. He stated that the publication of urgent calls for action on human rights is part of “a well conceived disinformation campaign” that “deteriorates the image of Honduras”.

The HSN is one of many international human rights advocates that participated in the actions to protect Juan Chinchilla and in other action alerts on many other occasions. We declare the following:

We reject the accusations of Colonel Alfaro that communications regarding human rights emergencies or concerns are personal harassment or have an ulterior motive.

Furthermore, we see this press conference as a new attempt to intimidate and to discredit human rights defenders and to leave the social movements and political opposition more vulnerable to violations of human and political rights.

The organizations and individuals that the Colonel attacks are recognized inside and outside of Honduras as important human rights defenders, (COFADEH and Marvin Palacios, CODEH, Observatory for Human Rights in Aguán); communications media providing testimony on human rights (defensoresenlinea; vozsoberano; hondurastierralibre) and respected activists in the social justice movements (PARCA, Wilfredo Paz, Yony Rivas and Vitalino Alvarez).

The communication of human rights violations and situations in which individuals and communities are at high risk for human rights violations clearly falls well within an established, internationally recognized framework for the defense of human rights as

outlined in the United Nations Universal Declaration for Human Rights and other international covenants. International urgent action alerts are recognized as a legitimate and even essential tool for protecting the physical and emotional well being of individuals at risk.

Since the coup d'état of June 2009, several hundred people who were members of the social movements, political opposition or journalists, have died violently. In January of 2011, Juan Chinchilla himself was kidnapped in the Aguán region by a group of hooded men wearing police, military and private guard uniforms, some of whom spoke English and another non-Spanish language. He was tortured and only survived because he was able to escape captivity.

In the Aguán, where a military-police joint operation has been in effect since the end of 2010, currently commanded by Colonel Alfaro, approximately 100 people, mainly campesinos and their supporters have been murdered since the coup - more than 60 since the militarization. In Honduras impunity for all these crimes continues and has been noted by international human rights entities. As one example, while thousands of campesinos have arrest warrants related to the agrarian conflicts, there have been less than a handful of arrests related to the murders of members of campesino organizations.

The problem in Honduras is not the human rights defenders.

As international advocates for human rights and for social justice we look forward to the day that urgent actions, alerts, and accompaniment are no longer necessary in Honduras because the harassment, violence and repression no longer exist. Until that day, we shall not be intimidated, we will continue our work, and we will continue to support the courageous men and women in Honduras who defend human rights.

Honduran Solidarity Network, USA

Member Organizations

Agricultural Missions

Alliance for Global Justice

Bay Area Latin American Solidarity Committee-BALASC (San Francisco)

Center for Constitutional Rights

Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America – CRLN
Comite de Solidaridad Graciela Garcia (Los Angeles, California)

Colectivo Honduras USA Resistencia = libre (NY)
Comite de Solidaridad Seattle-Honduras (Seattle, Washington)

Friends of Honduras (Seattle, Washington)
Friendship Office of the Americas
Hands off Honduras (Minneapolis/St Paul, Minnesota)
Hondureños por la Democracia (Washington, D.C.)
Interfaith Committee on Latin America (St. Louis, Missouri)
InterReligious Task Force on Central America (Cleveland, Ohio)
International Action Center
La Voz de los de Abajo (Chicago)
Latin America Grassroots International
Latin America Solidarity Organization - LASO
Madre Tierra (Florida)
Marin Interfaith Task Force on the Americas (Northern California)
Milwaukee Latin America Solidarity Committee (Milwaukee, Wisconsin)
National Lawyers Guild Task Force on the Americas
Portland Central America Solidarity Committee – PCASC (Portland, Oregon)
Proyecto Hondureño (Boston, Massachusetts)
Rhode Island Mobilization Committee to Stop War and Occupation – RIMC
Rights Action
School of Americas Watch– SOAW
SOA Watch South Florida
Tonatierra (Phoenix, Arizona)
U.S. - El Salvador Sister Cities
US Peace Council
Witness for Peace National
Witness for Peace Southwest
Witness for Peace Upper Midwest