

OPEN LETTER

IM-Defensoras expresses extreme concern over the serious risk situation faced by LGBTTTIQ rights defenders in Honduras

Mesoamérica, February 20, 2016 – The 691 women human rights defenders in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, México and Nicaragua who make up the Mesoamerican Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders (IM-Defensoras) express our concern over the news from Honduras about the serious risk situation faced by #LGBTTTIQ rights defenders, especially the members of the Rainbow Association (Asociación Arcoiris).

The Rainbow Association was founded in 2003 with the commitment to empower and inform the #LGBTTTIQ community on issues concerning comprehensive health and the defense and promotion of human rights related to sexual diversity.

Even though the Rainbow Association has carried on its work in a framework of legality, it has faced many security incidents against Association members, including a number of murders and the need to seek exile outside the country, as in the case of Donny Reyes, Coordinator of Technical Support, who has been granted precautionary measures by the Inter-American Human Rights Commission (IACHR).

This situation has worsened during the past year, with an alarming rise in the number and seriousness of the attacks against members of the organization. Between July, 2015 and January, 2016, the Rainbow Association reported 36 security incidents, including five murders, as well as threats, surveillance, and harassment of leaders and members of the organization.

In January 2016 alone, there have been seven attacks, including the murder of Paola Barraza, member of the trans women group known as Grupo Muñecas, and who served on the Board of Directors of Arcoiris Association for eight years, and the murder of Estefanía Zúniga, which took place on January 20 and 24, respectively.

In June of 2015, Grupo Muñecas' Coordinator Angie Ferreira was killed, and one month later, an eye witness to that crime, Violeta R., was slain. In December 2015, her substitute on the Grupo Muñecas Coordinating Group, Kendry Hilton, received death threats. That same month, Rainbow Association's Coordinator Esdra Yaveth Sosa Sierra was obliged to leave Tegucigalpa due to security risks that she faced. Josselin Janet Aceituno Suazo and Henry Matamoros were killed after having been subjected to sexual violence and torture last October 5 and November 14, respectively.

All of these attacks have taken place in a general context of intolerance and violence specifically directed against LGBTTTIQ persons in Honduras, where they are victims of homicides, harassment, abuse of authority, death threats and intra-family violence, among other crimes. Between 1994 and May of 2015, at least 198 murders have been committed against persons who are members of the LGBTTTI community, 178 of which took place after the 2009 coup d'état. In 92% of these cases, the crimes remain in impunity and therefore unpunished.

Against this backdrop, the work of persons and organizations defending LGBTTTI rights is more necessary and urgent than ever. It is essential to continue denouncing omissions of State institutions and put an end to violence and impunity, demand preventive and protective measures for all human rights defenders, demand

the effective administration of justice and above all, continue combating the culture of intolerance based on the historic hegemony of the heteronormative Patriarchy. This is frequently instigated by fundamentalist groups that operate through fomenting hatred, discrimination and intolerance with the approval granted to them by the consent of the authorities.

This being the case, it is obvious that the serious and repetitive nature of the attacks against members of the Rainbow Association and other defenders of LGBTTTI rights has led to a tremendous increase in the vulnerability of the already vulnerable LGBTTTI communities, given that these crimes are perpetrated to punish and inhibit the work of those who defend their rights and raise demands for security and justice.

IM-Defensoras condemns all of these attacks, as well as the impunity surrounding them. We refer to and seek protection in a national and international legal framework to denounce the Honduran government's omission of compliance with its duty to guarantee due protection and the right to defend the rights of LGBTTTI right defenders, and especially, the members of the Rainbow Association. Likewise, we demand:

- That it assure compliance with the precautionary measures granted by the IACHR to members of the Rainbow Association.
- That each and every attack be duly investigated and that those responsible be punished.
- That in keeping with the highest international Human Rights standards, the hate crime be typified in the Honduran Penal Code in an effort to put an end to impunity for crimes of intolerance.
- That apologies for intolerance be prosecuted and sanctioned.
- That public educational campaigns be launched to foment a culture of respect for diversity and opposition to intolerance.

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