

via fax: 011 504 2290 5088 Sr. Juan Orlando Hernández President of Honduras	via fax: 011 504 2221 5667 Sr. Oscar Chinchilla Banegas Attorney General of Honduras
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December 26, 2014

Dear Sirs:

We are outraged at the murder of **Reynaldo Paz Mayes**, a regional TV station owner and news program host. He was gunned down outside a sports center in Comayagua, capital of Comayagua Department, on December 15. The sports center is located just 200 meters from a Transit Police post.

Reynaldo Paz Mayes, age 48, had received threats in connection with the opinions he expressed on the air. His program on *RPM TV Canal 28*, the station he owned for the past two years, often touched on sensitive issues such as impunity. He was also a member of the opposition party LIBRE.

Despite his outspoken political opinions, police say they think he was killed for his pistol, which he usually carried in the waist band of his pants. The pistol was not found at the scene of the murder.

Neighbors heard shots, ran out to investigate, and found his dead body. First on the scene were Military Police, who covered the body with cardboard and may have contaminated the crime scene. Other police authorities reported that there were at least two gunshots to his back.

The prevailing climate in Honduras is one of news control and media harassment, with opposition and community media, in particular, being subjected to judicial persecution. Since the coup d'état in June 2009, Honduras has been one of the most dangerous countries for media personnel in the world. Journalists are threatened, attacked and murdered with almost complete impunity. According to the National Commission for Human Rights (CONADEH), 91% of the 47 murders of journalists monitored since 2003 have remained unpunished. The 2014 Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index ranks Honduras 129th out of 180 countries.

We strongly urge that you

- carry out a thorough and independent investigation into the murder of Reynaldo Paz Mayes, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice;
- create a mechanism for protecting journalists and human rights defenders that is appropriate to their needs, and give it the required financial and human resources so that it can function.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator

copies: Jorge Alberto Milla Reyes, Honduran Ambassador to the US ~ via fax 202 966 9751
James Nealon, US Ambassador to Honduras ~ via fax 011 504 2236 9037
Kelsey Cambronne, Honduras Desk, US State Dept ~ via email CambronneKL@state.gov
Christopher Johnson, Diplomacy Officer for Central America, US State Dept. ~ via email JohnsonCD@state.gov
Tracy Robinson, Rapporteur for Honduras, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202 458.3992
Edison Lanza, Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202 458.3650
US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

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