

URGENT ACTION

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS DEFENDER BEATEN, DETAINED

The Director of Casa Alianza Honduras, a children's rights organization, was beaten and detained by military police on 8 May. He believes his mistreatment was in retaliation for speaking out against violence against children in Honduras and denouncing government inaction on the matter.

Late in the evening on 8 May, **José Guadalupe Ruelas**, director of the children's charity Casa Alianza in Honduras, was driving the organization's car and wearing clothes with the organization's markings, when he was signaled to stop at a military police checkpoint in front of the presidential residence in Honduras' capital, Tegucigalpa. José Guadalupe Ruelas says his car was stationary when a policeman on a motorbike collided with it. He stated that he was pulled out of the car by military police and beaten in the face, head, ribs and legs. He was then pulled by the legs face down and kicked. The police also took José Guadalupe Ruelas' belongings, including a laptop, before bringing him to a police station. When local human rights organizations intervened, José Guadalupe Ruelas was taken to hospital for check-ups, where he remained under police custody until late on 9 May.

José Guadalupe Ruelas believes that his mistreatment was in retaliation for speaking out against the government in the previous weeks. In April, he presented a report denouncing the high levels of killings of children and young people in the country, with at least 270 violent deaths of people under the age of 23 occurring in the first four months of 2014. Ruelas wrote "there is an emerging pattern of organized people with access to expensive vehicles, weapons and equipment, who kidnap, torture and kill poor children and youths, in almost total impunity". In May, after the discovery of the dismembered bodies of four children, José Guadalupe Ruelas was interviewed by the media and said that none of the numerous Honduran laws aimed at protecting children were being implemented by the government due to corruption and impunity.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to investigate the ill-treatment of José Guadalupe Ruelas, bring those responsible to justice and send a clear message that torture and ill-treatment will not be tolerated;
- Urging them to take immediate steps to provide appropriate protection to José Guadalupe Ruelas, his family, and other members of Casa Alianza, in strict accordance with their wishes;
- Calling on them to establish a protection mechanism for human rights defenders and journalists following consultation with civil society in accordance with their recommendations and needs.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 23 JUNE 2014 TO:

Attorney General

Oscar Chinchilla Banegas

Ministerio Público, Lomas del Guijarro

Avenida República Dominicana

Edificio Lomas Plaza II

Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Fax: 011 504 2221 5667

Twitter: @MP_Honduras

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/ Señor

Fiscal General

Also send copies to:

Ambassador Jorge Ramón Hernández Alcerro, Embassy of Honduras

3007 Tilden St. NW Suite 4M, Washington DC 20008

Fax: 1 202 966 9751 | Email: iprado@hondurasemb.org

Please check with the AIUSA Urgent Action Office if sending appeals after the above date.

Minister of Interior

Sr. Arturo Corrales

Secretaría de Estado en el Despacho de

Seguridad

Aldea el Ocotol, Antiguo Local de la

Academia Nacional de Policía ANAPO

Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Email: comunicacionCNDS@gmail.com

Salutation: Señor Ministro del Interior/

Dear Minister of Interior

And copies to:

Central America team

Amnesty International

Email: equipoca@amnesty.org

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INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

According to official statistics, the homicide rate in Honduras in 2012 was the highest in the world, with 85.5 killings per 100,000 inhabitants. The National Human Rights Commission (Comisionado Nacional de los Derechos Humanos, CONADEH) documented that between 2010 and 2013, 458 children under the age of 14 died a violent death, with an increase from 92 in 2010 to 146 in 2013.

Human rights defenders face high levels of risk in Honduras. According to the National Commissioner for Human Rights, 30 journalists and 70 lawyers have been killed in Honduras since January 2010. Among the dozens of cases of human rights violations and abuses committed against human rights defenders in the last five years, according to the information Amnesty International has received, in only one case were those responsible prosecuted, convicted and sentenced. For more information, see Amnesty International's *Open letter to the presidential candidates of the Republic of Honduras*, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR37/014/2013/en>.

In April 2013, the then Attorney General explained to the National Congress that the Attorney General's Office only had the capacity to investigate 20 per cent of the country's homicides. This institution is overwhelmed by the high levels of violence and crime in the country and it lacks the necessary resources to do its job effectively. In some cases even the prosecutors themselves have been afraid of taking action given the dangerous context. The justice system in the country should be strengthened and adequately resourced.

Name: José Guadalupe Ruelas (m)

Issues: Ill-treatment, Freedom of speech, Fear for safety

UA: 122/14

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Country: Honduras