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### **Statement- Honduras: Concern regarding the lack of protection and increasing violence against LGBTIQ+ human rights defenders**

Front Line Defenders expresses its deep concern regarding the increase of violence, hate speech and harassment against organisations and individuals defending LGBTIQ+ rights in Honduras. Of particular concern is the lack of measures to prevent attacks and hate speech against LGBTIQ+ rights defenders in the run-up to the general elections on 28 November 2021.

The intensification of hate speech and harassment by media and fundamentalist religious groups against organisations and individuals working for the recognition and respect of the human rights of the LGBTIQ+ community takes place in a context of strong discrimination and violence. According to local organisations, impunity for hate crimes committed against the LGBTIQ+ community from 2009 to date exceeds 90%.

In this context, organisations such as the [Asociación Arcoíris](#) and the [Centre for LGBTIQ+ Development and Cooperation SOMOS CDC](#) provide support to victims of violence by developing programmes and cooperation initiatives in the areas of education, sexual health, civil participation and human rights for the LGBTIQ+ population. Since 2008, the organisation SOMOS CDC has promoted an appeal of unconstitutionality against the 2005 Reform Bill that prohibits the recognition of same-sex marriages in the country. This legal action has exposed members of the organisation to attacks and harassment.

On 6 August 2021, a private security guard from the local council of Payaquí went to the offices of SOMOS CDC in the city of Tegucigalpa and informed the organisation's director and human rights defender **Alex Sorto** that the administrator of the local council, the board of trustees and private security of the Payaquí neighbourhood in Tegucigalpa were unhappy with the work of the organisation in promoting and defending the human rights of LGTBIQ+ people. On the same day SOMOS CDC made early warning calls to the National System for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Journalists, Social Communicators and Justice Operators but all its requests were rejected. SOMOS CDC has been recognised as a beneficiary of protection measures by the National System in Honduras since 2016 due to the risks faces for its advocacy work

On 7 August 2021, human rights defender Alex Sorto noticed that his car had been forcibly opened and his computer, camera and wallet with IDs and personal cards were stolen in Tegucigalpa. He reported the incident to the Ministry of Security but the authorities classified it as a common robbery.

On 19 August 2021, human rights defender [Donny Reyes](#), member of the Arcoíris association and director of CIPRODEH, realised that a private security guard was filming him as he left the offices of SOMOS CDC. On 21 August 2021, after filing a legal protection before the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice against the State of Honduras for denying him the right to marry, Donny Reyes [reported](#) having been the victim of a robbery by unknown individuals who

broke the lock and window of his car and stole his and his partner's personal documents. Although the human rights defender reported the incident to the authorities, a formal investigation has yet to be launched.

High-level public officials have made stigmatising statements during the electoral campaign that has put LGBTIQ+ defenders at further risk. On 7 September 2021, the representative of the National Party of Honduras in the Political Commission of the National Electoral Council, Fernando Andulay, [stated](#) in an interview that discussing equal marriage in the electoral context is a direct aggression against the church, God's plan for the family and its functioning in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic.

On 15 September 2021, President Juan Orlando Hernández gave a nationwide public speech on the bicentenary of the independence of Honduras in which he called those who promote same-sex marriage "enemies of independence".

On 19 September 2021, Nasry Asfura, the Mayor of the Central District and Presidential Candidate for the National Party of Honduras [responded](#) in an interview that equal marriage is not a debatable issue in his campaign "Papi, God's creation is not debatable".

On 26 September 2021, LGBTIQ+ human rights defender **Tatiana García** was murdered at her home in the city of Santa Rosa de Copán. Tatiana García was a well-known trans defender in her community who worked as a legal facilitator providing accompaniment to LGBTIQ+ people and helped file complaints about abuses since 2018. Tatiana García reported to colleagues that she had received threats from conservative groups in her community in the days prior to her murder.

In the past, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders expressed [concern](#) about the Honduran State's inaction to reduce hate speech against the LGBTIQ+ community and [called](#) on the government to tackle violence and intimidation against people promoting LGBTIQ+ rights.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the escalation of hate speech generated by the Honduran authorities and widely disseminated in the media against persons who work to recognise the rights of the LGBTIQ+ community in the country. It also warns that in the context of electoral campaigns such messages put at exponential risk the physical integrity of those who are legitimately defending their human rights and urges the authorities to protect all individuals and organisations defending LGBTIQ+ rights from attacks, intimidation and discrimination.

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