

# URGENT ACTION

## SEX WORKERS TARGETED AND KILLED IN HONDURAS

**A transgender sex worker was found dead in San Pedro Sula, northern Honduras on 7 January. Nine killings of sex workers have occurred in the city since early December. Exhaustive investigations into these attacks are urgently needed.**

On the evening of 7 January, **Marco Noé López Castillo**, a transgender sex worker, was approached by a grey vehicle on a street in the Barandillas neighbourhood of San Pedro Sula, where she usually worked. According to media reports, Marco Noé López Castillo was forced into the vehicle by a group of armed men who were carrying weapons and wore bulletproof vests and balaclavas. At around 5.00am, her corpse was found on the road in a plastic bag in the El Playon area of San Pedro Sula. The sex worker had been strangled to death, and her arms and legs had been tied behind her back. As part of ongoing investigations, the police mentioned that several cars had run over the corpse.

Since early December, violence against sex workers has increased in San Pedro Sula. On 30 December, five sex workers were attacked outside a bar in the city centre where they worked. A minivan with at least four passengers approached the women and opened fire against them. **Irina Marisela García Maradiaga** (23), **Irma Melisa Benítez Lewis** (21) and **Sandra Liseth Aldana Perez** died immediately. **Gabriela Alejandra Osorto** (21) died a day later, while another woman was injured and survived the attack. Two weeks earlier, in the early hours of 13 December, four sex workers were killed in the Medina area of central San Pedro Sula. In circumstances yet to be clarified, several men got out of a minivan and argued with the sex workers while pointing guns at them. The argument lasted a few minutes, after which the men shot dead **Ana María Sánchez Zaldívar** (37), **Doris Malene García** (30) and **Milagro Rosario Bonilla** (52). The fourth woman from the group, **Zoila Yamileth Sánchez Zaldívar** (30), was kidnapped and later found dead with firearm wounds in the El Polvorin area. The media additionally reported five killings of women between 30 December and 3 January in both the San Pedro Sula and Cortés departments.

### Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to conduct an independent, thorough and impartial investigation into the killings of sex workers and women in San Pedro Sula and Cortes (naming those above), and to bring those responsible to justice;
- Calling on the police to take all the necessary measures to prevent further attacks and protect those sex workers who may be at risk of similar attacks;
- Reminding them that in line with international and national legal norms, they must strengthen and enforce all the mechanisms to prevent hate crimes against LGBTI people and violence against women and girls.

### PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 21 FEBRUARY 2014 TO:

#### Regional Prosecutor

Diana Elvir  
Fiscalía Regional del Ministerio Público  
Bo. Lempira, 10 y 11 calle, 5ta y 6ta Ave.,  
Edificio Fernandez Guzman,  
San Pedro Sula, Honduras  
Fax: +504 2553 6314 (ask "tono de fax")

Salutation: **Sra. Coordinadora**

Regional de Fiscales / Dear Regional  
Prosecutor

#### Director of National Police

Ramón Antonio Sabillón Pineda  
Director de la Policía Nacional  
Secretaría de Estado en el Despacho de  
Seguridad, Plantel Casamata, subida al  
Picacho,  
Tegucigalpa, Honduras  
Fax: +504 2220 1711

Salutation: **Estimado Sr. Director /  
Dear Director**

#### **And copies to:**

RedTraSex Honduras  
Red Trabajadoras Sexuales de  
Honduras  
Comercial La Ronda  
2 Nivel  
Tegucigalpa, M.D.C.,  
Honduras  
Email: redtrasexhonduras@gmail.com

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:**

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

According to official statistics, the homicide rate in Honduras in 2012 was the highest in the world, at 85.5 by 100,000 inhabitants. Violence against women, as well as LGBTI individuals, is rife, with civil society groups reporting about 606 killings of women in 2012, the highest rate since 2005.

In November 2013, Amnesty International wrote an open letter to the presidential candidates ahead of elections to get their commitment to tackle a human rights crisis. Among the concerns raised there was the issue of violence against women and LGBTI individuals.

Amnesty International demands that the Honduran authorities address the high levels of violence against women and girls as a priority. Safe access to appropriate sexual and reproductive health services, including legal and effective access to emergency contraception needs to be provided. The authorities must move forward with the design and strengthening of special protocols for addressing the issue of violence against women and girls in all its different forms. They should also guarantee effective access to justice and the protection of women victims of violence, including adequate investigations which incorporate a gender perspective, and to the punishment of those responsible. Honduras must ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

LGBTI people in Honduras remain a target for discrimination and violence. Any crime against the LGBTI community must be investigated, punished and effective reparation provided. Recent reforms of the Criminal Code, including Article 321 which enabled punishment of these crimes and hate crimes, must be promoted and protected so that the norm can be maintained and effectively implemented. The Honduran authorities must strengthen and protect the institutional progress already made with investigations and punishment of these crimes and ensure that reparation is provided. They must promote, guarantee and implement differentiated protocols that enable fair and impartial access to the justice system both at the investigative stage and during prosecution and punishment of hate crimes. Article 321 of the Criminal Code, which currently recognizes and sanctions hate crimes, must be promoted and respected.

Name: Marco Noé López Castillo (transgender, identifying as female), Irina Marisela García Maradiaga (f), Irma Melisa Benítez Lewis (f), Sandra Liseth Aldana Pereza (f), Gabriela Alejandra Osorto (f), Ana María Sánchez Zaldívar (f), Doris Malene García (f), Milagro Rosario Bonilla (f) and Zoila Yamileth Sánchez Zaldívar (f).

Gender m/f: transgender identifying as female, female

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