



abriendo espacios para la paz

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**GROWING RESTRICTIONS ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION
THE SECURITY SITUATION OF JOURNALIST DINA MEZA
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The purpose of this Alert is to draw the international community's attention to the security situation of freelance journalist Dina Meza, accompanied by Peace Brigades International - PBI since May 2014. PBI is concerned about the increase in security incidents reported over the past month because of Meza's work as a journalist and human rights defender.

Dina Meza is a recognized independent Honduran journalist and defender of the right to freedom of expression and information. Meza is president of PEN Honduras and, in the framework of the "Journalism and Democracy" initiative, provides legal, educational, and informative accompaniment to journalists and media workers at risk. This work can be seen in Meza's online newspaper titled "[Pasos de animal grande](#)" and has led to threats and harassment against her and members of her family. This situation forced her into exile for nearly five months in 2013. Since 2006 Meza has been a beneficiary of precautionary measures granted by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (CIDH), though these measures have not been properly implemented. There has been no progress in investigations of complaints filed by the journalist, and despite repeated requests she has not been able to access her records to date.

Since the start of 2015, Dina Meza has reported 20 security incidents to PBI, with at least 13 of these occurring in June. The journalist has linked the incidents to the work she has carried out during the first half of this year:

- On 8 April Meza participated in the pre-session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in Geneva, during which she denounced restrictions and attacks on freedom of expression. Meza and other social movement representatives participating in gathering were the subject of a smear campaign by the Honduran government.¹
- In early June, [Meza witnessed and documented the hearing in which a verdict was issued for the Garifuna community of Barra Vieja in Tela](#), prosecuted for the crime of usurpation of ancestral territory by the Honduran Institute of Tourism and the National Port Authority. This community was evicted several times by the state security forces.
- On 17 June **Héctor Orlando Martínez Motiño**, president of the Workers' Union for the National Autonomous University of Honduras (SITRAUNAH) in the Regional University Center of the Pacific Coast (Choluteca), was killed². He was a beneficiary of precautionary measures by the IACHR because of threats and harassment due to his involvement in SITRAUNAH³. Meza and lawyer Kenia Oliva accompanied the unionist throughout a lawsuit filed against him by a university professor. Meza [denounced the lack of response from the Justice and Human Rights Undersecretary Protection Mechanism](#) to a [request submitted on 10 June 2015](#). The two human rights defenders reported to PBI that they were under surveillance near their homes. Meza's vehicle, according to a report by two technicians, was sabotaged on two occasions in the days leading up to and following the murder.
- Meza has drawn attention to [allegations reported by various media outlets, in particular](#)

¹ Honduran Government, "[Partidos de oposición en campaña de desprestigio contra el Gobierno de Honduras](#)", April 7th, 2015.

² CIDH, Press release 73/15: condemning the murder of union leader in Honduras, June 24th, 2015.

³ CIDH, Resolution 20/15, Cautionary Measures N.253-14, Héctor Orlando Martínez and family, May 18th, 2015.

[Radio Globo and Canal 36](#), **following cases of alleged corruption in the Honduran Institute of Social Security, IHSS**. Meza denounced [State-sponsored censorship](#), which has resulted in charges against journalists for defamation, libel or slander along with the control of radio frequencies and **closure of many community radio stations**.

- Meza has been reporting on the **'torch marches' and hunger strike being carried out by the "Outraged Opposition"** who are calling for the installation of an International Commission Against Impunity in Honduras (CICIH) and the resignation of President Juan Orlando Hernández. Meza denounced the [expulsion of accredited journalists](#) and [the use of psychological operations, physical violence and persecution](#) by security forces in these spaces. In the following days, Dina Meza reported surveillance at public events and in the street.

The increase in security incidents affecting the journalist is framed in a context of growing insecurity and the closing of spaces for freedom of expression. Six years after the coup, Honduras remains one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists⁴. Since 2000, Reporters Without Borders has registered 28 instances of journalists and media assistants killed due to their work. In the first half of 2015, C-Libre documented 98 attacks on freedom of expression with alleged involvement of government actors in most cases⁵ and eight murders of media workers⁶. The last three of these occurred in within a period of ten days.⁷ This alarming situation is compounded by a high level of impunity, generating more violence along with the denial of attacks on journalists⁸. PBI is concerned by statements made by representatives of the State against journalists, including the president of Congress, who suggested journalists should take responsibility for their own security measures⁹, as well those made by the president of the Republic who, during the celebration of the Day of the Journalist in Honduras said: "These pseudo-journalists conceal, they distort and invent, in their eagerness to burn down the country."¹⁰

With regards to this situation PBI recommends to the international community:

- On 8 May Honduras received 152 recommendations in the UPR. 22 of these refer to the situation of freedom of expression¹¹. Fundamental to this process is to request monitoring and prompt implementation by the government of these recommendations.

- Consistent with the establishment of instruments to ensure the protection of defenders the Guidelines for the European Union, Switzerland, Norway and the UN declaration for the protection of defenders: a public statement on the inadequate implementation of precautionary measures from the IACHR granted to defenders, journalists and communicators at risk.

- On 15 May, 2015, the Protection Act for journalists, media and judicial officers was passed: Ensure that in the framework of this law adequate and efficient protective measures are granted to journalists and communicators at risk. In particular, petition the Honduran government to take positive measures to recognize the work of human rights defenders and appropriately punish any stigmatization against activists, either from public or private institutions.

4 Reporters Without Borders, [2015 World Press Freedom Index](#).

5 C-Libre, [Informe sobre el Estado del Derecho a la Información en Honduras 2014](#).

6 C-Libre, [Asesinan a empresario de la comunicación](#), Accessed July 7th, 2015.

7 Reporters Without Borders, ["Honduras: otros tres asesinatos en el país de la impunidad"](#), 8th, 2015.

8 Pen International, ["En la Honduras post-golpe, la violencia contra los periodistas y la impunidad se intensifican, la libertad de expresión y los derechos culturales se socavan"](#), October 2014.

9 El Libertador, ["La mejor medida de seguridad es uno solo", aconseja a hondureños presidente del Congreso"](#), November 6th, 2014.

10 Reporters Without Borders, ["Esos jefes de Estado y de gobierno que amenazan públicamente a los periodistas"](#), July 17th, 2015.

11 [UPR Info Database](#), 2015.