

**Message from Yolanda Gonzalez, Radio Progreso**  
**June 26, 2019**

Dear companions on the road, I send you greetings and hope that you're well.

As you know, for more than two months there has been another social and political crisis in Honduras triggered by demonstrations defending the right to education and health, in the face of the privatization initiatives promoted by the executive branch. Currently, the crisis has expanded beyond these two issues and is now an expression of the continuous accumulation of conflicts rooted in the coup d'état 10 years ago, and its more immediate origin in the illegal and fraudulent elections of November 2017. It is fueled as well by the ongoing corruption and impunity of President Juan Orlando Hernández and his links to drug trafficking. The increase in social and political pressure has been met by a brutal response from the regime, especially in recent weeks, in which the escalation of repression and the systematic violation of human rights have been very serious.

Juan Orlando Hernández has made a clear and public decision to repress all expressions of discontent and social protest that are arising in the country, driven by a variety of organizations. According to the Coalition Against Impunity, during the week of June 16 to 22 protests took place in at least 75 places around the country. Ninety percent of them were repressed through the indiscriminate use of tear gas, which reached homes, health centers and other public places where there were children; there were repeated cases of live ammunition used against the demonstrators. The repression on Thursday, June 20, for example, resulted in two deaths and 19 people injured, 16 of them by firearms, according to a statement issued by Amnesty International. That same day, the National Defense and Security Council announced the deployment of the armed forces, police, and intelligence agencies with the aim of "restoring order." On Monday, June 24, the military police of the public order broke into the National Autonomous University of Honduras to pursue students with live ammunition, leaving four students gravely injured and countless others with less serious wounds.

Coupled with this has been a strategy and a growing advertising campaign to criminalize and discredit human rights defenders. In public statements to a television network on June 25, Juan Orlando Hernández claimed that some human rights defenders carry Molotov cocktails and rocks in their backpacks. News has circulated declaring some civil society leaders to be leaders of "armed bands," including a lay catechist leader in the parish of Tocoa. In addition, profiles of people identified as leaders have been drawn up, with clearly criminal intentions against them. Among these is a military intelligence document in which Father Ismael Moreno Coto, director of ERIC and Radio Progreso, is profiled as one of the "political leaders behind the planning of marches, riots and looting." This is especially worrisome and adds to the aggression and intimidation that have been directed toward several members of the institution in recent weeks.

In the middle of this critical situation, the Platform for the Defense of Health and Education has convened other civil society groups to collectively create alternative proposals for public

policies, which guarantee the right to health and education for all. We believe this initiative is very worthwhile, and ERIC and Radio Progreso are collaborating to the best of their ability.

Faced with this critical situation, we ask you to amplify our message in the spaces to which you have access, and to publicize what is happening. And in the short term:

1. Denounce the serious and systematic human rights violations that the regime is escalating, which breach the rule of law in Honduras and increase social and political chaos.
2. Demand an immediate end to militarization and repression, and the removal of responsibilities from public authorities, especially the National Defense Council and Juan Orlando Hernández.
3. Denounce the strategy of criminalizing people such as Father Ismael Moreno and attacks on journalists in the media such as Radio Progreso.
4. Show solidarity with the people opposing the regime, and support for the alternative citizen dialogue initiative promoted by the Platform for the Defense of Health and Education in coordination with other actors, and the population that opposes the regime
5. Demand effective actions against the impunity and corruption of the current political regime. I'm sharing a link to two recent productions in case you're interested: The origin of the current crisis, a brief 2 minute audiovisual that explains the background of the current crisis in simple terms: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=4&v=dtVtmGezN8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=4&v=dtVtmGezN8)

And Eblin Noel: the voice shut down by the military, the history of the life and death of this youth who was murdered on June 19 by the military during the repression of a peaceful demonstration: <https://wp.radioprogreso.hn.net/eblin-noel-la-voz-apagada-por-las-balas-militares/>

We'll continue to be in touch, and we send you brotherly hugs,

Yolanda Gonzalez, Radio Progreso