



abriendo espacios para la paz

Peace Brigades International Honduras Project

Oficina de Coordinación:
Via Sacconi 19 Bloque F, Scala C, citofono 24
00196 Roma, Italia
Tel.: (+39) 3452690132
coordinacion@pbi-honduras.org

Equipo en Honduras:
Colonia Rubén Darío, Arturo López Rodezno #2321
Tegucigalpa DC, Honduras
Tel: (+504) 2262 5598
equipo@pbi-honduras.org

HONDURAS: LGBT COMMUNITY AT HIGH RISK SECURITY SITUATION OF ARCOIRIS ASSOCIATION ALERT NUM.1-2016 - 1 FEBRUARY 2016

The purpose of this Alert is to draw the attention of the international community to the security situation of the members of the Arcoiris Association, an LGBT organization accompanied by Peace Brigades International (PBI) since July 2015. PBI expresses its deep concern over the increase of security incidents reported by the organization. These security incidents demonstrate the endemic violence facing Honduran LGBT¹ organizations, which seriously affects their work and reduces the space necessary for the defence of human rights (HR).

The **Arcoiris Association** was founded in 2003 with a commitment to empower and inform the LGBT community on issues related to comprehensive healthcare, the defence and promotion of human rights and sexual diversity. The organization participates in national and international advocacy spaces such as the Platform for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Honduras. Recently the technical coordinator, Donny Reyes, was elected alternate member of the National Council for the Protection of Human Rights. Members of Arcoiris report numerous security incidents linked to this human rights work, especially those who lead the organization. Due to these incidents, several members have been forced into exile abroad,² and Donny Reyes was awarded precautionary measures from the Inter-American Human Rights Commission (IACHR). To date, the Honduran authorities have not properly implemented these measures.³

During the period between July 2015 and January 2016, the Arcoiris Association reported 36 security incidents, of which seven occurred in the month of January 2016.

- Murders, threats, surveillance and harassment of leaders of the organization:

from July 2015 to January 2016, 12 attacks against leaders of the organization were reported.

Paola Barraza, a member of Arcoiris' group of trans women known as Grupo Muñecas and member of Arcoiris' board of directors for more than eight years, was murdered on January 24th, 2016. Paola had been attacked previously in August 2015, when unidentified men shot her several times in the doorway of the office, leaving her seriously injured.⁴ Furthermore, on January 8th, 2015 Paola was threatened by armed men in vehicles without license plates who made reference to the murder of Angie Ferreira, ex-director of Grupo Muñecas.

Esdra Yaveth Sierra Sosa, coordinator of the Arcoiris Association, had to leave the country in December 2015 due to security risks. On November 20th, 2015, a day before the 'Miss Earth' event organized by Arcoiris Association, a vehicle with tinted windows and without license plates was carrying out surveillance on her home.⁵ Esdra had already temporarily left the country for security

¹ Official abbreviation according to the UN resolution on LGBT rights from June 2011

² "Resistencia LGTBI en Honduras". Made for Minds, July 31 2014

³ "Urgent Action: LGTB activist's life in danger". Amnesty International, August 12 2012

⁴ "Honduras – Killing of LGTBI rights defender Paola Barraza". Front Line Defenders, January 29 2016

⁵ PBI Honduras: incident reported by Arcoiris on November 23 2015

reasons in March 2015.⁶

Kendry Hilton, who took over the coordination of Grupo Muñecas after the assassination of the previous coordinator, Angie Ferreira, in June 2015,⁷ reported to PBI that she has received multiple death threats. On August 23rd, 2015, as she walked with two friends near the offices of the organization, a man in a vehicle aimed at her with a gun and pretended to shoot it several times. On December 1st, 2015 she denounced receiving death threats and intimidation via social media. A few days earlier she also reported being threatened in the street by an unknown aggressor.⁸

Marco Aurelio López, director of the LGBT NGO Amas, said he was intercepted by agents of the Military Police of Public Order on August 20th, 2015, one block away from the office of Arcoiris after a meeting with the organization.⁹ According to the human rights defender, the officers forcefully took him in a patrol car to the Northwest exit of Tegucigalpa where he was tortured and sexually assaulted. According to Marco Aurelio, the attack was directed at Donny Reyes, coordinator of Arcoiris.¹⁰ A few weeks later, representatives of the UPR Honduras Platform, including Donny, travelled to Geneva for the adoption of the recommendations of the UN Council under the UPR to Honduras.

- **Continued attacks and killings against active members of the organization:**

between July 2015 and January 2016 the Arcoiris Association reported to PBI 21 attacks and 5 murders, the most recent of which was the murder of Paola Barraza.

Estefanía Zúniga, lesbian and member of Arcoiris Association, was killed on January 20th, 2016, just days before the murder of Paola Barraza.¹¹

Henry Matamoros, a member of the Association, was abducted, tortured, sexually assaulted and killed on November 14th, 2015 in the village Yaguacire.¹²

Josselin Janet Aceituno Suazo, member of Arcoiris' bisexual lesbian group LITOS, was kidnapped, tortured and murdered on October 5th, 2015 in Colonia Sacramento.¹³

Violeta R., a member of Grupo Muñecas, was killed on August 16th, 2015 in the Colonia El Carrizal. Violet was an eyewitness to the murder of Angie Ferreira.¹⁴

Six years after the coup, Honduras still suffers from levels of violence that rank Honduran cities among the most dangerous in the world. This scenario of widespread violence particularly affects the LGBT community: three of every five hate crimes in Central America occur in Honduras. From 2009 to date there are more than 200 recorded murders of members the LGBT community. Not only is the numbers of violent deaths alarming, but also the number of cases that remain unpunished, without necessary investigations coordinated by the State. Of the more than 200 cases recorded only 33 have been prosecuted.¹⁵

⁶“Honduras : intimidación de la Sra. Esdra Yaveth Sosa Sierra, defensora de derechos LGBTI”, Front Line Defenders, April 7 2015

⁷ “Otro crimen de odio impacta a la comunidad de la diversidad sexual”, Pasos de Animal Grande, June 28 2015

⁸ PBI Honduras: incident reported by Arcoiris on December 2 2015.

⁹ Accusation number 6041 from August 20 2015 realized at Dirección Nacional de Investigación Criminal

¹⁰ “Honduras – Violencia extrema, incluidos tres asesinatos, contra defensores y defensoras de derechos LGBTI”, Front Line Defenders, September 3 2015

¹¹ “Tegucigalpa: Nutrida balacera deja dos mujeres muertas y tres heridos”, El Tiempo, January 20 2016

¹² “Hallan muerto a enfermero de Médicos Sin Fronteras secuestrado en Honduras”, Proceso Digital, November 28 2015

¹³ “Raptan, torturan y asesinan a una mujer”, El Herald, October 6 2015

¹⁴ “Honduras: WHRDIC condena los asesinatos de defensores/as de derechos LGBTI en Honduras”, FIDH, October 9 2015

¹⁵ PBI Honduras, Boletín 03, December 10 2015

In light of this situation, PBI recommends that the international community:

- Urge the government of Honduras to promptly implement the 152 recommendations received in the UPR, in particular the seven relating to the situation of the LGBT community.¹⁶
- Request that the government of Honduras fully comply with the implementation of precautionary measures granted by the IACHR to members of Arcoiris Association, as well as assuring that the safety of members and leaders of the organisation is guaranteed.
- Request the prompt regulation of the Law for the Protection for Human Rights Defenders, Journalists and Social Communicators and Operators of Justice, as well as closely monitoring the effective implementation of the law which was adopted on May 15th, 2015 by the National Congress of Honduras.
- Request that the new penal code, whose approval is scheduled for June 2016, include appropriate measures to prevent and punish acts of discrimination and hate crimes against the LGBT community based on gender and sexual identity.

¹⁶ [UPR Info Database](#), 2015