



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
EXTERNAL RELATIONS DIRECTORATE GENERAL

DIRECTORATE Latin America
Mexico, Central America

Brussels, 19 October 2010

Dear Mr. Santibañez,
Dear Mr. van Drimmelen,
Dear Mr. Nilles,
Dear Ms. Robletto,
Dear Mr. Valente,
Dear Ms. Figueora,
Dear Mr. van Mele,

Thank you for your letter of 5 October 2010 to Baroness Ashton, whereby you express the concerns of the civil society networks you represent about the situation of human rights in Honduras.

The European Union is concerned about the situation of human rights in Honduras, particularly the level of impunity, the alarming rise in murders of journalists and the persistence of violence against politically active citizens. We also note with concern the decision of dismissal of judges by the Supreme Court. At this point in the political life of Honduras, the state institutions are expected to play a positive role in the efforts of national reconciliation by strengthening the democratic institutions and promoting tolerance and respect for human rights.

These principles were reaffirmed when the European Union, represented by its Delegation in Tegucigalpa, together with the main donors, the members of the G-16 Group, met the Honduran Congress and issued a statement on June 7th, to draw the attention of the government on the situation and requested their contribution to the strengthening of the democratic institutions, tolerance, respect for human rights and national reconciliation.

We are aware that in this context the civil society has a major role to play and the European Union is supporting civil society organizations and human rights defenders.

In Honduras, the EU has for the first time ever in the world provided direct financial support to three organizations of human rights defenders under a special procedure that enables immediate *ad-hoc* measures for human rights defenders in urgent need of protection.

The EU continues its support to Honduran NGOs in the framework of the regular calls for proposals launched under the European Initiative for Democracy and Human rights. In this perspective, the last call for proposals has oriented the intervention of the funding towards activities proposed by human right defenders. The programme *Proyecto de Apoyo al Sector Justicia* (PASS) will also fund prevention and rehabilitation initiatives from Civil Society through a Call for Proposals that was recently published.

The EU has doubled efforts to support Honduras to consolidate peace and democracy by also making use of the Instrument for Stability. Under this instrument the EU has allocated 1.1 M€ for a project targeting the authorities, all national political parties, the Honduran civil society, the media, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This project will focus on four particular areas: strengthening of democratic governance, promotion of respect for human rights, technical support to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and building up conflict prevention capacities of media actors.

The EU has endorsed the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as an integral component of the San Jose/Tegucigalpa Agreement and considers that its approach to carrying out its mandate is an inclusive one that also covers aspects of human rights. In that regard we understand that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is open to receiving information and submissions from all interested parties and would therefore encourage civil society institutions to take advantage of this opportunity.

We acknowledge that impunity is one of the most serious challenges currently faced by Honduras. At present institutions in charge of investigation and judicial pursuit of crimes and violation of human rights do not have sufficient means and capacity to address this problem.

One of the main objectives of the PASS program is to support Honduran Government by providing the authorities with proper tools and training aimed at improving the investigative process and reducing the levels of impunity.

The programme implies some conditions such as the approval and publication of a Public Security Sector Strategy, which will outline the policies, reforms and other priorities of the Government of Honduras, with social emphasis on prevention and rehabilitation. The Government is designing this strategy with the help of the United Nations and the European Union.

The programme is structured in two phases. The first phase, with a contribution of 9 M€, is currently in progress and the second is expected to be submitted for approval by the European Commission in 2011. The new phase, when adopted, will focus on strengthening institutions such as the Human Rights Public Prosecutor, the new Human Rights Ministry and the recently created National Torture Prevention mechanism.

The PASS programme can be effectively used to engage the European Union and Honduras in a dialogue on human rights, as well as to foster greater transparency and to promote important reforms and tools that will improve the security and human rights situation in the country.

The EU will continue its commitment to fight impunity and protect human rights. We will continue to monitor the situation in order to make sure that the Government of Honduras steps up its efforts in favour of national reconciliation and good governance, respect of human rights and democratic values.

Your sincerely,



Petros Mavromichalis

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