

Honduras: IGLHRC Expresses Outrage at Human Rights Abuses After Military Coup

Saturday 18 July 2009, by [IGLHRC](#) (Date first published: 17 July 2009).

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Press Releases

07/17/2009

(New York, July 17, 2009) The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) strongly condemns the recent murder and arbitrary arrests of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) activists in Honduras. IGLHRC has learned that these human rights abuses have occurred as a direct result of the military coup on June 28, 2009, which ousted that country's democratically elected government. The coup was apparently precipitated by now-exiled President Manuel Zelaya's attempts to amend the constitution and seek an additional 4-year term in office after his original term expired in 2010.

"The recent coup in Honduras is an illegal assault on democracy that violates the rights of all Honduran citizens, including those who identify as LGBT," said IGLHRC executive director Cary Alan Johnson. "We especially deplore the vicious murder and arbitrary arrests of LGBT people in the wake of this crisis."

The transgender activist's murder occurred on the night of June 29, 2009, after she went to work during the military-imposed two-night curfew. She was found dead in the morning of June 30, 2009, one block away from San Pedro Sula's Gay Community Center, with two gunshot wounds: one through her head and one in her back. Local activists in Honduras claim she was killed by military police patrolling the streets. Representatives from Colectivo TTT/REDLACTRANS have protested the murder.

Five other LGBT activists—Hector Licona, Donny Reyes, Patrick Pavon, Claudia Cervantes and Lizeth Ávila—were arrested, detained and then beaten while in custody on June 29. The arrests occurred while the activists were participating in a demonstration in support of the democratically elected government. All of the activists are well-known public figures, known to be leaders in the LGBT movement.

Honduras has a checkered history on LGBT rights. IGLHRC contributed to a 2006 report about human rights violations on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in Honduras. The report emphasized that the Honduran government engages in widespread discrimination against the LGBT community. It documented over 200 murders of transgender people and sex workers by state and non-state actors, as well as numerous incidents of police brutality. In 2007, IGLHRC issued an action alert after four transgender people were arbitrarily arrested and physically, verbally and psychologically abused in police custody.

"Human rights and fundamental freedoms are being challenged in Honduras in the aftermath of the coup," said Marcelo Ferreyra, coordinator of IGLHRC's Latin America and Caribbean Program.

“Under such circumstances, there is always danger for those whose sexual orientation or gender identity does not conform to social norms. We ask for the restoration of democracy and the rule of law in Honduras.”

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*The mission of The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) is advancing human rights for everyone, everywhere to end discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. A non-profit, non-governmental organization, IGLHRC is based in New York, with offices in Cape Town and Buenos Aires. Visit <http://www.iglhrc.org> for more information.