

**OPEN LETTER TO HONDURAN PRESIDENT JUAN ORLANDO HERNÁNDEZ:
HONDURAS MUST GUARANTEE HUMAN RIGHTS DURING PROTESTS**

We address you in this open letter to express our grave concern about the excessive use of force by security forces under your command as they respond to the protests that have been occurring in Honduras since April 2019 against health and education reforms.

According to information received by Amnesty International, government security forces have used tear gas, gunfire, beatings, and other physical violence indiscriminately since the protests began, causing injuries to dozens of people. Also, dozens of protesters and bystanders have been reported arrested or detained. For example, the Committee for the Families of the Disappeared in Honduras (COFADEH) has reported over 60 people injured between 29 April and 4 June 2019. According to government data, 19 people were injured in a single day of protests on Wednesday June 19, including 16 by gunfire. Further, two people have been reported killed, one by gunfire and another by unknown causes. Since the beginning of 2019, Amnesty International has also received information about interference with the work of journalists, media outlets, and certain human rights defenders who have been covering the protests.

In this context, Amnesty International expresses its grave concern about the National Security Council's decision on 20 June 2019 to deploy the Armed Forces, police, and intelligence services. This decision could lead to further excessive use of force against protesters. Amnesty International reminds you that under international law the military cannot participate in internal security activities, much less restrict or violate the right to demonstrate peacefully.

This situation is even more worrying considering that less than two years ago, various national and international organizations—including Amnesty International—denounced human rights violations committed by Honduran security forces as a result of excessive use of force and arbitrary detentions that occurred between December 2017 and January 2018 during the repression of post-election protests.

Amnesty International again urges the government to guarantee the rights of peaceful protest and freedom of expression in Honduras and limit the use of force to a proportional minimum to avoid injuries and deaths. On this point it is important to remember that neither the illegitimate behavior of individuals nor incidents of looting cause a protest to cease to be a peaceful demonstration.

Amnesty International also urges Honduran authorities to promptly, impartially, and independently investigate all cases of unnecessary and excessive use of force and other human rights violations committed during the protests.

Our organization will continue to document human rights violations in Honduras and support the efforts of victims and human rights organizations to secure rights and justice.

Sincerely,

Erika Guevara Rosas
Director for the Americas