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Dear Mr. President,

As your new administration takes office today, the Global Forum on MSM & HIV (MSMGF) urges you to acknowledge the extreme levels of violence against the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community and take immediate steps to bring perpetrators to justice. Not only do the rising numbers of brutal attacks constitute serious human rights violations, they hold potential to add fuel to an already raging HIV epidemic among sexual minorities.

On December 13<sup>th</sup>, 27 year-old activist Walter Tróchez became the most recent casualty in a wave of violence against sexual minorities that has been escalating since June, 2009. In the past six months, activists report the slaying of at least 16 LGBT individuals. The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) has reported a list of these cases<sup>1</sup>.

Violence against the LGBT community in Honduras has been a clear and consistent problem for years. The Center for the Investigation and Promotion of Human Rights (CIPRODEH) has recorded 171 acts of anti-LGBT violence since 2004. Activists believe that three LGBT murders go unreported for every one that is documented.

The UNAIDS 2009 AIDS Epidemic Update reports that HIV prevalence among men who have sex with men (MSM) in Honduras has already reached 12.4%. Recent studies have shown that groups of MSM who experienced verbal, physical or other forms of violence were significantly more likely to engage in risky sexual behavior. In addition, the threat of hate crimes can hinder the provision of and access to HIV prevention and treatment services. Neglecting to address violence against MSM and other sexual minorities equates a serious threat to public health.

Police inaction and government silence have fostered an environment where violence against LGBT people carries no consequence. No arrests have been made for any of the cases cited by IGLHRC, many of which were reported to have been committed in public. Of the 171 cases identified by CIPRODEH, arrests have been made in only three.

Allowing homophobic abuse and violence to continue unchecked runs counter to the principles set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The United Nations Human Rights Committee has repeatedly affirmed the right of people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities to enjoy life, security of person, and equal protection under the law.



In a country with a history of hostility toward LGBT people, the weakening rule of law since June has clearly played a role in the recent surge of attacks. The inauguration of your new administration brings an opportunity to establish real accountability for crimes against LGBT citizens. These cases of violence and murder should be investigated and prosecuted, bringing justice to the victims and their families and discouraging those who would commit similar heinous crimes in the future. The MSMGF stands with IGLHRC, Human Rights Watch, and other members of the international and local communities in condemning these acts of violence and calls for immediate action to end this injustice.

*The Global Forum on MSM and HIV (MSMGF) is an expanding network of AIDS organizations, MSM networks, and advocates committed to ensuring robust coverage of and equitable access to effective HIV prevention, care, treatment, and support services tailored to the needs of gay men and other MSM. Guided by a Steering Committee of 20 members from 17 countries situated mainly in the Global South, and with administrative and fiscal support from AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA), the MSMGF works to promote MSM health and human rights worldwide through advocacy, information exchange, knowledge production, networking, and capacity building.*

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1. Vicky Hernández Castillo, transgender, June 29, 2009
2. Valeria, (Darwin Joya), transgender, June 30, 2009
3. Martina Jackson (Martín Jackson), transgender, June 30, 2009
4. Fabio Adalberto Aguilera Zamora, gay, July 4, 2009
5. Héctor Emilio Maradiaga Snaider, gay, August 9, 2009
6. Michelle Torres, (Milton Torres), transgender, August 30, 2009
7. Enrique Andrés García Nolasco, gay, September 2, 2009
8. Jorge Samuel Miranda Mata (Salome), transgender, September 20, 2009
9. Carlos Reynieri Salmerón (Sadya), transgender, September 20, 2009
10. Marión Lanza, transgender, October 9, 2009
11. Montserrat Maradiaga (Elder Noe Maradiaga), transgender, October 10, 2009
12. Juan Carlos Zelaya, transgender, October 26, 2009
13. Rigoberto Wilson Carrasco, transgender, November 2, 2009
14. José Luís Salandía, gay, November 2, 2009
15. Anonymous man, gay, November 4, 2009
16. Walter Tróchez, gay, December 13, 2009