

THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

Solidaria, digna, orientadora



International Religious Delegation Accompanying ERIC & Radio Progreso, with a banner, "IN ALL LOVE AND SERVE, St. Ignatius of Loyola" January 27, 2018

A PROPOSAL TO THE SHARE FOUNDATION

BY

THE JESUIT REFLECTION, INVESTIGATION AND COMMUNICATION TEAM
(Equipo de Reflexión, Investigación, y Comunicación, ERIC) &

RADIO PROGRESO

HONDURAS

JANUARY 2018

A Prophetic Voice
in the Darkness of
a Dictatorship

*Building the Beloved
Community & AS Culture
Of Peace, Justice, Human
Rights, and Authentic
Democracy*



Peace is the fruit of justice, and justice comes from the effective exercise of human rights.

Father Melo, SJ

Executive Director, ERIC/Radio Progreso



Honduran Police Attacking Peaceful Protestors with Tear Gas, January 27, 2018

The church, entrusted with the earth's glory, believes that in each person is the Creator's image ... Whoever tortures a human being, whoever abuses a human being, whoever outrages a human being abuses God's image, and the church takes as its own that cross, that martyrdom."

Archbishop Oscar Romero

Human history and ethical necessity require that human rights be the fundamental basis of public life. And so we must reclaim and demand the free exercise of human rights in sincere adherence to the precepts of Monseignor Romero's ministry.

ERIC/Radio Progreso

I. SUMMARY

The Jesuit Reflection, Investigation & Communication Team (ERIC) & Radio Progreso are requesting a grant in the amount of **\$197,780** to support our 60 year-old ministry at this critical moment in Honduran history.

Our mission: to build a politics that promotes peace, justice and human rights and to cultivate a culture of solidarity, respect for our Mother earth, for human dignity, and the Common Good.

Our work takes shape through a strong communications program in combination with intensive leadership training and community development. Our approach employs the Paolo Freire method of reflection, analysis and action in community.

The Radio: ERIC/Radio Progreso is one of the few independent, professional media outlets in Honduras promoting a culture of peace, justice, human rights and solidarity. 15 staff run the radio, supported by 36 professional journalists at a time when journalists have come under attack by the government.

Leadership Development, Civic Participation, and Building the Beloved Community: Our Team provides leadership training, civic participation, and development of Ecclesiastical Base Communities – the beloved community. In just the last few years, we have trained more than 900 young people under the age of thirty, including indigenous, campesinos, and religious and lay men and women. Themes include human rights, democracy, gender issues, and ecological justice.

In the face of increased repression, we have developed a legal team of 3 lawyers who provide legal assistance to staff and community members who have been targeted by the authorities. We have also intensified our program promoting international accompaniment with faith, civic, and human rights defenders from around the world.

II. BACKGROUND

Honduras, a Central American country of a little more than 9 million people (2016 census), is facing a constitutional crisis.

The recent fraudulent presidential election and the imposition of what Hondurans call “*the dictatorship*” has resulted in increased state-sponsored violence against the Honduran people. The “*dictatorship*” is reminiscent of other police states in Central American history: state-sponsored repression, political assassinations, arbitrary arrests, torture, suspension of due process, criminalization of peaceful protest, death threats, intimidation, political corruption and a culture of impunity. The Civil Wars in Guatemala and El Salvador resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of civilians, and the displacement of millions from their homes. Many sought refuge in the United States.

These abuses, taken together, threaten to foreclose peaceful means for social change.

The crisis marks the culmination of years of regional conflict, fueled by United States military intervention and national economic, political and social policies favoring the Honduran elite (the 17 wealthiest families in the country) and transnational corporate interests at the expense of the vast majority of Hondurans. 50% of Hondurans live below the poverty level.

Reform efforts to address endemic poverty and corruption were thwarted in 2009, when the Honduran Armed Forces overthrew the democratically elected President Manuel Zelaya.

After the coup, political and economic elites from the three branches of state government, together with the state-controlled media, the Honduran Armed Forces and conservative religious leaders conspired to block Zelaya's re-election bid and, instead, brought the conservative National Party's candidate, Juan Orlando Hernandez, to power.

During the Presidency of Hernandez, Honduras suffered from the accelerated application of the neoliberal model which included privatization of public institutions, expropriation of natural resources by large transnational and national corporations, propping up of the Armed Forces and police, and the attempted criminalization of any and all who challenged the policies attacking basic social, economic, political and human rights of Hondurans. Narco-trafficking and corruption permeated the highest levels of government. Political assassination, death threats, arrest, torture of human rights defenders became normative. Berta Caceres, the beloved champion of indigenous and environmental rights, was just one of the victims of this state-sponsored repression. Her assassination remains unresolved, and the state-sponsored violation of human rights with impunity persists. Today, Honduras remains stuck at 130th on the list of 170 countries ranked by the Index of Human Development.

In 2016, the Honduran Supreme Court approved the proposed re-election bid of Juan Orlando Hernandez despite the fact that the Constitution limits each president to one term.

In 2017, through massive civic education and mobilization, the Honduran people courageously participated in national elections in November and defeated Juan Orlando Hernandez at the polls, only to have their victory stolen by the powerful Honduran elite who control the state of Honduras.

The Organization of American States, the United Nations, the European Union and numerous international observers denounced the glaring irregularities and electoral fraud. But with the blessing of the United States's Trump Administration, more than 3 weeks after the election, the national election commission certified Hernandez's election, and he was inaugurated on January 27, 2018.

From the election in November, 2017 to the inauguration on January 27, 2018. Hondurans from across the country took to the streets in sustained, peaceful protest. The government's response: a state of siege, suspension of constitutional rights and a curfew. More than 35 people have been killed, many more detained, and countless subjected to tear gas, water canons (using chemicals), and police beatings.



Figure 1 Visitors to the Notre Dame Bilingual School

III. LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS: The Work of ERIC & Radio Progreso

Founded sixty years ago, the Team for Reflection, Investigation and Communication (ERIC)/Radio Progreso is a Jesuit-sponsored ministry. Our mission is to provide a platform for reflection, dialogue, action, civic participation and leadership formation. Working in close collaboration with the Mercy Sisters, the School Sisters of Notre Dame, and a broad network of Ecclesiastical Base Communities we aim to build a politics that promotes peace, justice and human rights. Together we seek to cultivate a culture of solidarity, respect for our Mother earth, for human dignity, and the Common Good.

The Radio: ERIC/Radio Progreso is one of the few independent, professional media outlets in Honduras and represents a unique alternative to state-sponsored propaganda. Our mission is to promote a culture of peace, justice, human rights and solidarity. 15 staff run the radio, supported by 36 professional journalists at a time when independent journalists have come under sustained attack by the government. We reach over 700,000 daily listeners. ERIC/Radio Progreso enjoys local and international respect for our integrity, professional standards, commitment to the Honduran people, and courage in the face of government-sponsored repression.

Leadership Development, Civic Participation, and Building the Beloved Community: Our Team provides legal aid, leadership training, civic participation, and development of Ecclesiastical Base Communities – the beloved community. In just the last few years, we have trained more than 900 young people under the age of thirty, including indigenous, campesinos, and religious and lay men and women. Themes include human rights, democracy, gender issues, and ecological justice.

In the face of increased repression, we have developed a legal team of 3 lawyers who provide legal assistance to staff and community members who have been targeted by the authorities. We have also intensified our program promoting international accompaniment with faith, civic, and human rights defenders from around the world.

We fulfil this mission with a 59-member staff.

In the midst of such dire circumstances, ERIC and Radio Progreso have faithfully maintained our commitment to amplifying the demands of the Honduran people and our commitment to nonviolent direct action.

SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

Led by Jesuit Father Ismael Moreno Coto (known as Fr. Melo) and our executive team, we have assumed the risks of confronting a dictatorial regime, where reason is routinely met with force, persecution, and even political assassinations, and a state-controlled media which promotes campaigns of hatred and slander.

We pursue our mission inspired by the nonviolent tradition of Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Martin Luther King, Archbishop Oscar Romero, Berta Caceres and the popular movements of the Americas who embody the beloved community and promote a culture of peace, justice and authentic democracy.

The cost of this discipleship has been the systematic targeting of our leaders, staff, and community leaders by the Honduran Security Forces and para military forces working with them.

IV. RATIONALE FOR PROJECT

Since the fraudulent election on November 26, 2017, Honduras has faced an existential crisis.

Massive mobilizations throughout the country by a majority of the population taking to the streets to express their outrage over the electoral fraud have been met by violent, state-sponsored repression. The National Commission of Human Rights has documented more than 35 deaths resulting from the disproportionate use of force by the national police and armed forces.

The systematic violation of human rights, persecution of leaders, cruel and inhumane treatment of detainees, illegal imprisonments and arbitrary detentions, and criminalization of the act of public protest has been sharply denounced by international human rights organizations including the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.



Emergency international religious delegation accompanying Honduran citizens at a peaceful demonstration

ERIC/Radio Progreso, has been instrumental in reporting on the current situation, employing our communications infrastructure and journalistic expertise to counter the propaganda disseminated by the state-controlled media.

The station's steadfast and courageous editorial stance denouncing the unconstitutional re-election of Juan Orlando Hernandez, its questioning of the fraudulent election results, its openness to public debate, and its independent, professional coverage of public protests, have provoked violent repression from the Juan Orlando Hernandez regime. The repression has taken various forms, including acts of intimidation against correspondents and others connected to ERIC/Radio Progreso, discrediting of the station's management, state-sponsored smear campaigns, as well as the sabotage of station property perpetrated over the weekend of December 9-10, 2017, that resulted in the destruction of transmission towers and antennae in the Cantagallo Mountain region (its 103.3 FM frequency), and in the capitol

region in the department (state) of Francisco Morazán. Interestingly, the sabotage took place directly after a surprise visit to Radio Progreso's offices in Tegucigalpa by employees of CONATEL, the national communications regulatory entity, who demanded to be given the precise location of the transmission towers.



Downed Transmission Tower for Radio Progreso

The December 9-10 incident was not the only instance of sabotage that Radio Progreso has suffered. The frequencies located in the Aguán and Valle de Sula regions have also been targeted, including a campaign to discredit Father Melo, the director of ERIC/Radio Progreso. Although this campaign was denounced by the Public Ministry, it was never investigated and there has been no formal legal response.

The Power of International Accompaniment

In the face of the attacks on popular mobilizations and death threats against Father Melo and staff at ERIC/Radio Progreso, the US-based SHARE Foundation and the Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity and the Mercy Sisters Justice Team, among others, sponsored a 50-person religious delegation to accompany us during the lead up to the inauguration. The presence of religious from the United States and around the world had a major impact – providing an added measure of safety and spiritual sustenance in the face of highly militarized streets.



US delegation of 50 religious and civic leaders pray with Fr. Melo and hundreds of Hondurans at the San Pedro Sula International Airport January 24, 2018

In order for ERIC/Radio Progreso to continue providing vital communication services and honest, professional and dedicated journalism, accompaniment and legal aid for victims of human rights violations, support for civic engagement, ongoing formation and development of Base Christian Communities, we submit this request for \$197,780 to the SHARE Foundation.

V. SPECIFIC REQUEST

A grant from SHARE Foundation will allow ERIC/Radio Progreso to strengthen our core mission in the following areas of vital infrastructure, security, accompaniment, legal aid, and ongoing organizational, leadership and community development:

1. **RESTORATION OF COMMUNICATION TOWERS & ANTENNAS:** We need to finance the restoration of the communication towers and antennas where Radio Progreso's frequency is carried in Francisco Morazán. As described above, this vital equipment was sabotaged on December 9-10, 2017.
2. **MAINTENANCE OF FREQUENCIES:** We need financial support to maintain the frequencies in the communities of Valle del Aguan, Valle de Sula and Atlátida.
3. **SECURITY FOR OUR STAFF AND CONSTITUENCY:** Enhancing security at Radio Progreso's central offices in El Progreso, Yoro, including installation of bullet proof windows in the building's front edifice, is essential in order to protect staff and visitors. The building as currently designed is

very vulnerable to attack, putting at risk the many journalists, human rights defenders and citizen correspondents who report for Radio Progreso on vital news.

4. **TRANSPORTATION – PURCHASE OF A VAN:** Purchasing a specialized van that will offer more secure transportation for staff and partners of ERIC/Radio Progreso as they travel to cover stories in various and remote regions of the country.
5. **ACCOMPANIMENT & LEGAL AID FOR NGOs & HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS:** Financial support to arrange accompaniment of & legal defense for the threatened staff of nonprofit organizations and victims of human rights violations is critical;
6. **ACCOMPANIMENT & LEGAL AID FOR FAITH BASED COMMUNITIES, ESPECIALLY THE SCHOOL SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME AND THE MERCY SISTERS:** Accompaniment of & legal defense for threatened faith-based communities, in particular the social justice and change work of the religious Sisters of Mercy of Notre Dame is also vital.
7. **ORGANIZING, LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & BASE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES:** Ongoing support for ecclesiastical base communities that participate in formation workshops and reflection is necessary to strengthen the activities of an engaged citizenry and social commitment of the religious Sisters of Mercy and Sisters of Notre Dame

V. DIRECT AND INDIRECT RESULTS/BENEFICIARIES

DIRECT:

- The staff of Radio Progreso/ERIC - 59 people (26 women and 33 men) who will have greater physical security and support as they pursue their work.
- National human rights organizations
- Victims of human rights violations in need of legal accompaniment
- Sisters of Mercy of Sisters and Sisters of Notre Dame

INDIRECT:

- Radio Progreso's listening audience that, according to the last study, numbers over 700,000 listeners daily
- Community organizations and communities accompanied by ERIC/RP
- Ecclesiastical communities accompanied by the Sisters of Mercy and Sisters of Notre Dame

VI. PERIOD OF PROJECT: One year upon receipt of grant

VII. VIABILITY OF THE PROJECT

Notwithstanding frequent threats, continual harassment, and vicious slander, ERIC/Radio Progreso journalists, radios announcers, analysts, and administrators have bravely remained on the job, committed to fulfilling their vital work without any reduction in hours or programming.

In addition, Radio Progreso/ERIC's well-trained, experienced and professional radio technicians will work side-by-side with specialized repair people to complete the needed repairs and restore the damaged towers and antennas.

ERIC/Radio Progreso administrative staff will ensure the efficient and transparent management of grant funds and provide financial and narrative reports on the use of funds to the donor.

VIII. PROJECTED BUDGET

Activities/Breakdown of Costs	Amount in Dollars
A.1.1.1. Acquisition and installation of the equipment necessary for the repairs of the transmission tower damaged in Francisco Morazan	\$25,000
Maintenance and repairs of the frequencies in the Agaun Valley, the Sula Valley, and Antlantida	\$20,000
Costs of transportation and qualified manual labor	\$5,000
Install security at the Radio Progreso Building	\$40,980
Legal costs and requirements imposed by the Honduran communications regulatory bodies for the five frequencies operated by Radio Progreso	\$10,000
Purchase of a microbus to more safely transport ERIC/Radio Progreso staff	\$43,700
Support for social COMPROMISO activities with the Religious Sisters of Mercy and Notre Dame	\$25,000
Legal accompaniment to victims of human rights violations and emergency support to journalists and human rights defenders	\$15,000
National and international conferences and other convenings focused on the human rights situation in Honduras	\$6,600
Delegation costs, including lodging, food, transportation within Honduras and miscellanea	\$3,000
Fundraising costs in the USA	\$3,500
TOTAL	\$197,780



Difusora Hondureña, S.A.

ERIC-SJ



Compañía de Jesús

January 29, 2018

Jose Artiga, Director Ejecutivo
Fundacion SHARE/Delegacion Religiosa de Emergencia a Honduras
2425 College
Berkeley, CA 94704

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Reflection, Investigation & Communication Team (ERIC), Radio Progreso, and the Honduran people send our profound gratitude for your accompaniment and solidarity in these moments in which our democracy is being lacerated and the Honduran people's human rights are violated.

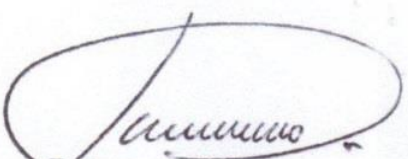
Solidarity in all its expressions strengthens the struggle for human life, the life of our sacred waters, and our mother earth. It is like an extra lung that comforts us and gives us the energy to continue walking with our people in the spirit of love and justice. This delegation has been an injection of love, reinforcing and animating our people. We have lived the words of Ruth 1:16: "Your people will be my people."

In this spirit, we write with confidence to ask for your collaboration, solidarity and accompaniment as we seek to raise funds in order to :

Strengthen our institution and communication systems that have been irreparably damaged by forces that would like to silence our voices. Specifically, we need financial assistance to reconstruct the tower that was destroyed and to maintain the frequencies of Radio Progreso. We need financial assistance to strengthen the security of our offices in the face of the new threats against our team and against defenders of human rights. We believe we could further mitigate the security risks by securing a microbus to enhance the safety of the staff of ERIC/EI Progreso as well as strengthen our programs and the program of civic participation which in turn will reinforce the work of our Mercy Sisters and the Sisters of Notre Dame.

With your solidarity, we hope to continue moving forward, deepening our labor of love and the promotion and defense of human rights as we walk with the people of God.

Con un abrazo,



R. Ismael Moreno, sj

El Progreso, Yoro 28 of January 2018

**Mr. Jose Artiga
Director, SHARE Foundation
Emergency Religious Delegation to Honduras**

Dear Courageous Brothers and Sisters of the Delegation:

Honduras is passing through one of the darkest moments of our history, but we know that every NIGHT (the darkness) brings the DAWN (light, the sunrise).

We write this letter, with profound sadness; yesterday in Honduras we suffered the loss of our DEMOCRACY in the saddest ceremony that was diabolical, disloyal and a mockery – an official funeral in which Honduran democracy died.

Our country, in this moment, is the poorest of Latin America, even though we should not be in this position given the vast resources of our territory. We are in this position due to the abuse by those in leadership, their hunger for power, their immorality that has brought a coup d'état, a constitutional coup, the consolidation of control of the three branches of government, the modification of laws, and the construction of a disgraceful DICTATORSHIP of the 21st century.

With these attacks, we have awoken as a people; on November 26 we took to the streets to cast our vote, which was not respected. We have sought to defend our democracy and were greeted with tear gas, peppered water, live bullets, searches, torture, imprisonment, disappearances, and around 40 deaths, including some that have not been recorded yet.

We fear that this is just the beginning of more to come ... and this is the purpose of this letter. We write to the international community, asking for your SOLIDARITY. How?

- 1. Demand that your governments respect our people and refrain from supporting this imposed, anti-democratic and corrupt government.**
- 2. Support communication networks that can overcome the media blackout that prevents the Honduran people from being well informed.**
- 3. Activate committees of solidarity with Honduras to facilitate the flow of communication and to educate political, religious, and civic leaders so that they can make informed decisions.**
- 4. Maintain delegations throughout the year.**
- 5. Send financial support for our ongoing work accompanying the victims of human rights violations.**

We give thanks to the fifty delegates who came in January: brave men and women who went from the WORD to ACTION and came to Honduras to SEE and document what is occurring here. We NEED your presence. We encourage you to keep coming since nothing good can come from this dictatorship.

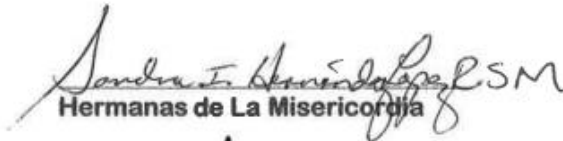
PEACE IS POSSIBLE, and is our responsibility; together, we can achieve it.

Thank you for your visit to Honduras and for accompanying our people which is also your people *"because your people will be my people."* Ruth 1:16.

SHALOM


Hermanas de Notre Dame


Hermanas Misioneras de La Iglesia


Hermanas de La Misericordia


Red de Mujeres del Progreso, Yoro


Hermanas de Nuestra Señora

REMUPRO

Soyafra
mesa de indignados