

via fax: 011 504 235 7700

José Manuel Zelaya Rosales

President of the Republic of Honduras

via fax: 011 504 235 4926

General Alvaro Romero

Minister of Security of Honduras

May 16, 2007

Dear Sirs:

We continue to be extremely concerned for the safety of **all members of the Afro-descendant Garifuna Community of San Juan Tela** in Atlántida Department. At 2 pm on April 14, **Keydi Jorleny Marin, Yerli Isolina Ellis, Yanaira Briyed Lambert, Eusebia Guillen and Joselyn Lizet Rivas**, all young women between the ages of 15 and 20, were traveling back to San Juan Tela by taxi after attending college. As the taxi entered the San Juan Tela, two men with shirts covering their faces began shooting at the vehicle and then ran off. At least five bullets hit the taxi, but no one was wounded.

Since local police did come to the community to investigate, residents of San Juan Tela had to take the five victims to the nearest General Directorate for Criminal Investigation (DGIC) post to give their statements.

Joselyn Lizet Rivas is the daughter of **Jessica García**, a community leader, who was harassed throughout March 2006 by security guards working for PROMOTUR, a real estate and tourism company. On June 22, 2006 she was forced at gunpoint to sign over community land to PROMOTUR.

We have written on at least three previous occasions urging authorities to protect members of OFRANEH (Fraternal Black Organization of Honduras) and the Garifuna community:

June 21, 2005: OFRANEH coordinator Gregoria Flores was shot; Edickson Lemus, regional General Secretary of the National Organization of Rural Workers (CNTC) was killed.

Dec 11, 2005: the home of community leader Wilfredo Guerrero was burned, archives destroyed.

August 16, 2006: Jessica Garcia was threatened and forced to sign over land, as described above.

Other documented abuses against Garifuna members include:

February 25, 2006: security forces detained young men Epon Andres Castillo and Gino Eligio López, who were later found dead

August 6, 2006: 19-year old Mirna Isabel Santos Thomas was kidnapped and later found dead

To stop the repression against the Garifuna people, **we strongly urge you to**

- take immediate steps to implement the protection measures ordered by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on July 7, 2006 to ensure the safety of the Garifuna community of San Juan Tela;
- conduct a thorough, prompt and impartial investigation into the attack against Keydi Jorleny Marin, Yerli Isolina Ellis, Yanaira Briyed Lambert, Eusebia Guillen and Joselyn Lizet Rivas, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice;
- ensure that those responsible for the killings of Epon Andres Castillo and Gino Eligio Lopez are brought to justice swiftly and in accordance with international fair trial standards.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

cc: Licda. Jany del Cid, Special Prosecutor for Ethnic Affairs, Honduras ~ via fax: 011 504 221 5667

ORANEH, Fraternal Black Association of Honduras

Dr. Ramon Custodio, National Commission for Human Rights ~ via fax: 011 504 232 6894

Ambassador Roberto Flores Bermudez, Embassy of Honduras in the US ~ via fax: 202 966 9751

Ambassador Charles Ford, US Embassy in Honduras ~ via fax: 011-504-236-9037

Marcos Mandojana, Desk Officer for Honduras, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202-647-2597

Paolo Carozza, US Member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992 or 202.458.6215

U.S. Senators Brown & Voinovich and U.S. Representatives Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Sutton and Tubbs Jones ~ via email

UA Update 219/06 Honduras

The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: