

via fax: 011 504 448 2089

Judicial Authorities
 Tela, Atlántida Department, Republic of Honduras

via fax: 011 504 448 1758

Public Prosecutor's Office
 Republic of Honduras

December 11, 2005

Dear Sirs:

We are very concerned about the continuing repression in the Garifuna community of San Juan, municipality of Tela, Department of Atlántida, especially the November 7 burning of the home of community leader **Wilfredo Guerrero** and the resulting loss of all the archives related to the community of San Juan. He is active in defending Garifunal communal lands in Tela Bay from the land speculators, investors, politicians and businessmen seeking to appropriate the bay's beaches and lands for tourism.

Private developers, together with the Inter-American Development Bank, will threaten the Garifuna communities, who have inhabited the coastal region for centuries. (The communities were already forced to relocate by the United Fruit Company in the early 1900s.) The World Bank, through its Honduran Lands Administration Program (PATH), is also trying to break up communal lands by working to implement Chapter III of the recent Honduran Property Law. This law violates the International Labor Organization (ILO) Covenant 169.

As president of the San Juan Community Lands Defense Committee, Wilfredo Guerrero is committed to defending his community's territory, history and culture against private developers and government policies that would destroy them. He is also outspoken about repression against OFRANEH (Honduran Fraternal Black Organization), which has been in the forefront of defending the Garifuna communal territory from mega-tourist projects and other illegal initiatives.

On June 21 we wrote to you about attacks on OFRANEH leaders Miriam Miranda (March 2005) and Gregoria Flores (May 2005). The government has not clarified their acts of political persecution against Garifuna community leaders.

Because of these concerns for the Garifuna people, we strongly urge that you

- Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the destruction of Wilfredo Guerrero's home and the community archives and bring those responsible to justice;
- Support the efforts of OFRANEH and Garifuna communities in defending their communities;
- Follow the United Nations' ILO Covenant 169 that protects indigenous lands.

Thank you for your prompt attention to these grave concerns.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

Copies: Ambassador Mario Miguel Canahauti ~ via fax : 1 202 966 9751
 Ambassador Larry L. Palmer ~ via fax : 011-504-236-9037
 Marcos Mandojana, Desk Officer for Honduras, US State Dept ~ via fax : 202-647-2597
 President Ricardo Maduro ~ via fax : 011-504-221-4570
 Honduras Mission to the United Nations ~ via fax : 212-223-0498
 OFRANEH ~ via fax : 011- 504-443-24-92
 U.S. Senators DeWine and Voinovich ~ via email
 U.S. Representatives Brown, Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

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