

**Blanca Sarahí Izaguirre Lozano**

National Commissioner for Human Rights of Honduras (CONADEH)  
 via email

December 25, 2022

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are deeply distressed over the killing of yet another Indigenous community leader, **Marco Antonio Pineda** of the Guachipilín community in the department of La Paz on November 23, yet again by the authorities. He was a leader in the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH). The National Police killed him. First they arrested him and his cousins arbitrarily for no apparent reason in the community of El Encinal, as they were walking toward Guachipilín. After the police brutally beat one of his cousins, Marco Antonio Pineda went toward his cousin to check on him. It was at that time one of the officers fired his weapon at Marco, causing a serious wound to his chest that eventually cost him his life.

After the assassination of Marco Antonio Pineda in November and the attempted assassination of COPINH leader Nery González in Río Blanco, Achiotal, on December 11, Peace Brigades International wrote on Facebook: "From PBI we show concern about the levels of risk, violence and criminalization faced by the defenders of land, territory and environment as a result of their advocacy work. We recall the importance of conducting extensive research to shed light on the facts that happened."


COPINH recently posted on social media: "We hold the State of Honduras responsible for the persecution and arbitrary harassment of the National Police against indigenous communities in #Honduras."

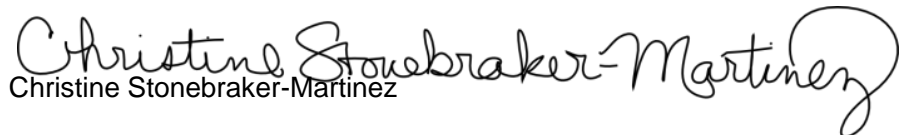
Our organization has been receiving alerts about human rights crimes against COPINH members and leaders for the past 20 years. We have met in Honduras with members and leadership of COPINH, including the slain world-renowned environmental leader Berta Cáceres. We have supported their freedom to organize and defend their land and lives from harassment, violence, degradation, and displacement.

**Because of the assassination of Marco Antonio Pineda** and patterns of violence to Indigenous rights defenders in Honduras, like the attempted assassination of **Nery Gonzalez**, we call upon your integrity and humanity to:

- conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of Marco Antonio Pineda by the National Police, publish the results, and hold those responsible in a court of law
- respect the self-determination of the peoples established in ILO Convention 169 to exercise sovereignty over their territory where they have historically inhabited
- establish a dialogue table to address territorial conflicts and state investment with the involvement of tribal and government leaders
- guarantee that all human rights defenders, in particular Indigenous defenders, are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities including defending the environment, without fear of criminalization or reprisals in Honduras.

Sincerely,

  
 Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Co-Coordinators

  
 Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Javier Efraín Bú Soto, Ambassador of Honduras in Washington, DC c/o Alejandra Sandoval Taixes ~ via email and US mail  
 Carlos Pulido, Rapporteur for Honduras, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) ~ via email and US mail  
 Esmeralda Arosemena de Troitiño, Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email and US mail  
 Jsabel Albaladejo Escribano, Representative to Honduras of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OACNUDH) ~ via email  
 Alice Shackelford, UN Resident Coordinator in Honduras, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ~ via email  
 US Embassy in Honduras: Ambassador Laura F. Dogu and Human Rights Officer ~ via email  
 US State Department: Bryan Schell, Honduras Desk Officer ~ via email  
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Beatty, Brown, Gibbs, González, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

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