

Blanca Saraí Izaguirre Lozano  
National Commissioner for Human Rights (CONADEH)  
Tegucigalpa, Honduras

July 11, 2024

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre Lozano:

We are deeply concerned about the continued **persecution by the State of residents and leaders of Garífuna communities** in northern Honduras.

Police forces threatened and attacked Garífuna community members in Trujillo, Colón Department, on June 24, June 26 and again on June 30. Police officers surrounded and tried to intimidate Garífuna residents who are trying to recupérate their ancestral lands that were illegally taken by Randy Jorgensen, a Canadian investor in international tourism who has been accused of money laundering and fraud related to the sales of around 140 lots of land in Trujillo, Guadalupe, and Santa Fé.


This is the latest in a pattern of government attacks on the Garífuna people. We wrote to you earlier this year when Cosme Ávila, a territorial defender of the Garífuna community of Guadalupe in Trujillo, was arrested by the National Police on January 24 (cf our letter 12 FEB 2024). Cosme Ávila had previously been accused of invading Garífuna communal land by the Canadian businessmen who own the Carivida Club Café in Trujillo. He was released and the charges were dismissed.

The arrest of Cosme Ávila in January and the incursions by police in June demonstrate the systematic persecution against the Garífuna people who, according to international human rights bodies, have the right to defend their territories against foreign investors who are illegally expropriating their ancestral territories. Foreign investors use false criminalization, stigmatization of community leaders, and judicial persecution as strategies to silence the Garífuna communities' defense of their territories.

It is deeply troubling that political forces in Honduras are placing the private interests of criminals (narco-traffickers and money launderers) who want to construct tourist and residential developments on ancestral Garífuna territories above the needs of the Garífuna people. We therefore call on the government of Honduras to

- develop mechanisms to comply with the international rulings in favor of wrongfully displaced Garífuna communities, namely those made by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights
- assume its responsibility to bolster the safety of Garífuna communities, ensuring the implementation of protective measures for Garífuna community leaders that have been prescribed by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

Sincerely,

  
Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Co-Coordinator

  
Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Javier Efraín Bú Soto, Ambassador of Honduras in Washington, DC ~ via email and US mail  
Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR): Rapporteurs Andrea Pochak (for Honduras), Gloria Monique de Mees (Afro-descendant rights) ~ via email and US mail  
Isabel 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  
OFRANEH (Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras) ~ via email  
US Embassy in Tegucigalpa: Laura F. Dogu (ambassador) and Joe Duran, Human Rights Officer ~ via email  
US State Department: Bryan Schell, Honduras Desk Officer (Washington, DC)  
US Senators Brown & Vance and US Representatives Beatty, Brown, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Miller, Sykes ~ via email

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