

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

July 15, 2024

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre Lozano:

We write to you today out of grave concern for the **campesino community of La Guacamaya**, located south of El Progreso in Yoro Department, which recently suffered physical violence and forced eviction at the hands of the Honduran National Police and the Commission of Agrarian Security and Access to Land (CSA, Comisión de Seguridad Agraria y Acceso a La Tierra). The community of La Guacamaya, which is associated with the peasant organization Movimiento de Campesinos y Campesinas Sin Tierra (Peasants Without Land Movement), has been home to 300 families who have occupied the farm land since May 10, 2023; the land was obtained through the government's agrarian reform.

On June 5 and 6, the Secretary of Security, under the direction of Sec. Gustavo Sánchez, mobilized a strong contingent of the National Police, the Police Investigation Directorate (DPI) and the "Cobras" Special Forces to evict campesino families. The police used heavy machinery owned by the sugar company AZUNOSA (Azucarera del Norte) to destroy their modest houses (built with wood, sheets of zinc, and pieces of plastic), their few possessions, and food crops—ruining their livelihoods and forcing them to live without shelter and means of subsistence. During the violent eviction, the security forces assaulted some of the residents, including women, children and the elderly.

A report by OACNUDH documented showed 145 attacks against journalists in 2023, and the police used physical violence to prevent journalists from covering this incident. A police officer grabbed **Erick Pineda** of Radio Progreso by the neck and then pushed him and escorted him to the limits of the camp. Between pushing and verbal expressions, police tried to prevent **César Obando Flores**, also from Radio Progreso, from reporting on the eviction. (It is worth noting that the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights issued precautionary measures to protect César Obando Flores in 2016 when they determined he was in a "serious and urgent situation" with risk to his life because of his work as a journalist.)

The eviction of La Guacamaya is one of at least 24 forced evictions carried out by the CSA since its creation in June 2023, according to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OACNUDH). Ostensibly created to review the legal status of properties and to guarantee the security and food sovereignty of rural Hondurans, the CSA has instead violated the human rights of the very people it is supposed to protect. OACNUDH reports that in addition to the excessive force used in CSA evictions, there has been no due legal process or investigations beforehand. The evictions violate UN protocols by failing to provide for the basic human rights of the people evicted, including giving prior notice and providing housing assistance to those who have been evicted.

The eviction of La Guacamaya comes as part of a nationwide pattern of increased violence towards campesino and Indigenous communities, as well as journalists. We strongly urge that authorities:

- take responsibility for this eviction and safeguard the well-being and integrity of every family in this community as well as every member of the Movimiento Campesino Sin Tierra
- require all Honduran National Police to comply with the human rights protection measures issued by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IAHCR)
- investigate the Comisión de Seguridad Agraria (CSA) for its practices of forced eviction without due process and use of excessive force against both peasant farmers and journalists

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Sziittai
Co-Coordinators


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): Rapporteur Andrea Pochak (for Honduras) ~ 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 (OACNUDH) ~ 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: