

via fax: 011 504 2239 3298
Sr. Juan Orlando Hernández
 President of Honduras

via fax: 011 504 2221 5667
Sr. Óscar Fernando Chinchilla Banegas
 Attorney General of Honduras

November 22, 2016

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely alarmed by the murder of **Fernando Aleman Banegas**, the son of Libre party mayoral candidate Elsy Banegas, whose candidacy threatens the economic interests of mining companies and large landholders in Atlántida Department.

Fernando Aleman Banegas was shot dead early on the morning of October 30 when he was getting into his car after leaving a club in the city of La Ceiba, Atlántida Department. The gunmen reportedly fled the scene on a motorcycle.

Fernando Aleman is the son of **Elsy Banegas**, who, as president of the Coordinating Body of Popular Organizations of the Aguán (COPA), has accompanied the campesinos' struggle for land and wage justice for many years. She is also an aspiring Libre party mayoral candidate for the municipality of Tocoa in Colón Department. The Libre party was founded in 2011 as an offshoot of the popular resistance movement in the wake of the 2009 coup. Aleman's assassination came hours before Libre began its internal elections process to select the party's new leadership leading up to the 2017 general election.

According to the Committee of Relatives of the Disappeared in Honduras (COFADEH), Banegas' candidacy "threatens the interests of transnational mining companies and large landowners in the region." COPA reported after her son's murder that Elsy Banegas has "on many occasions received death threats for acting against mining companies, privatization and against the violation of human rights."

The killing of Fernando Aleman Banegas comes just two weeks after two Aguán Valley campesino activists were murdered on October 17: José Angel Flores, president of the Unified Campesino Movement of the Aguán (MUCA) and Silmer Dionisio George (cf our letter of October 25). According to human rights groups, the bloody land conflict in the Aguán Valley has claimed the lives of nearly 150 campesinos since 2010.

We **strongly urge** that you

- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of Fernando Aleman Banegas, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- take all necessary measures to guarantee the safety and security of Elsy Banegas, in strict accordance with her wishes.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinators

and

Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Jorge Alberto Milla Reyes, Honduran Ambassador to the US ~ via fax 202 966 9751
 James Nealon, US Ambassador to Honduras ~ via fax 011 504 2236 9037
 Olivia Franken, Honduras Desk, US State Dept ~ via email
 Francisco José Eguiguren Praeli, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Rapporteur for Honduras ~ via email
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

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