

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

February 26, 2017

Dear Sirs:

We are writing to express our deep concern regarding the assassination of **José de los Santos Sevilla**, a teacher and leader of the indigenous Tolupán people. He was killed on the morning of February 17 in the community of La Ceiba in Montaña de la Flor in Francisco Morazán Department when five heavily armed men broke into his house and shot him multiple times.

José de los Santos Sevilla was active in bringing electricity to the community and a hospital to the town of Orica, and in promoting Tolupán culture.

This is a further example of the ongoing violence to the Tolupán people. Recently, a Global Witness report stated that, "For nearly a decade, Tolupán indigenous peoples from northern Honduras have been threatened, criminalized and killed for taking a stand against illegal logging and mining operations which have pillaged their resources without consulting communities. The Tolupán are the most marginalized indigenous group in Honduras, living in extreme poverty in remote rural areas with little access to basic services."

The National Commission for Human Rights (CONADEH) has requested protective measures for the residents of Yerba Buena and La Ceiba. The level of violence is such that an estimated twenty children have stopped going to school because of attacks. One of our concerns is that this will lead to another forced displacement of the community.

We understand that the National Police, a mobile forensic unit, and a team from the Special Murder Investigations Unit are conducting an investigation into the murder of José de los Santos Sevilla.

In view of the information cited above, we **strongly urge** that you

- immediately publish the results of the police investigation and bring those responsible to justice;
- provide protective measures for the residents of Yerba Buena and La Ceiba as requested by CONADEH.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator

and

Christine Stonebraker Martínez

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, Rapporteur for Honduras and on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, ~ 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: