

via fax: 011 504 221 4552

Lic. Ricardo Maduro

President of the Republic of Honduras

via fax: 011 504 232 6894

Dr. Ramon Custodio López

National Human Rights Commissioner, HONDURAS

June 21, 2005

Dear Sirs:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are outraged at the targeted murder of **Edickson Lemus**, regional General Secretary of CNTC (National Organization of Rural Workers) and the recent shooting of **Gregoria Flores**, General Coordinator of OFRANEH (Fraternal Black Organization of Honduras) and an important leader of the Garífuna people.

Edickson Roberto Lemus was an important organizer in several communities, coordinating support for various campesino groups and leaders in the Department of Yoro. On May 24, he left a meeting in the northwestern city of El Progreso, Yoro, to go to the nearby community of El Pajules, where the campesino group 'Renacer' (Rebirth) had suffered a violent eviction on May 19. He boarded a city bus in the Bendeck neighborhood at 11:30 am; an unknown individual followed and shot him four times, killing him immediately.

On May 30, Gregoria Flores was shot in the arm along Avenue Isidro, the central avenue in the city of La Ceiba, Department of Atlántida, on the north coast. An unknown individual shot at her vehicle while she was traveling to the community of Triunfo de la Cruz to collect testimonies of human rights violations to present to the Inter-American Human Rights Commission.

OFRANEH has been defending Garífuna communal territory from the advances of mega-tourist projects, large landowners, and other initiatives such as PATH, the Honduras Land Administration Project, financed by the World Bank. These projects threaten the community existence of the Garífuna people. On March 25, state authorities illegally entered and searched the house of OFRANEH activist Miriam Miranda, supposedly looking for weapons. The government has not clarified this and other acts of political persecution against Garífuna community leaders.

We urge you to:

- Conduct an impartial and exhaustive investigation into the murder of regional CNTC Coordinator Edickson Lemus;
- conduct a thorough investigation into the shooting of Gregoria Flores;
- demand a response from state authorities regarding the violent search of Miriam Miranda's house on March 25;
- make public the results of the investigations of these crimes and bring their material and intellectual authors to justice;
- bring an immediate halt to the criminalization of social movements in Honduras and the repression of organization leaders and members.

Thank you for your prompt attention.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

Copies: Ambassador Mario Miguel Canahauti ~ via fax: 1 202 966 9751
Ambassador Larry L. Palmer ~ via fax: 011-504-236-9037
Marcos Mandojana, Desk Officer for Honduras, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202-647-2597
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Honduras Mission to the United Nations ~ via fax: 212-223-0498
U.S. Senators DeWine and Voinovich ~ via email
U.S. Representatives Brown, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

06_05 Rights Action_Honduras

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