

via fax: 011 504 235 7700

José Manuel Zelaya Rosales
 President of the Republic of Honduras

via fax: 011 221 5666 / 5667

Sr. Ramón Ovidio Navarro Duarte
 Attorney General of Honduras

February 11, 2006

Dear Sirs:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, find it unconscionable that the indigenous leaders **Feliciano Piñeda, Marcelino Miranda and Leonardo Miranda** from Montaña Verde, Gracias, Lempira Department, are still in prison for politically motivated charges. Amnesty International has classified them as "prisoners of conscience."

Feliciano Piñeda was arrested on June 6, 2005 for the 2001 killing of Juan Reyes Gómez in a land dispute; he was acquitted in December, but remains in prison on false charges of theft. He was arrested in a Tegucigalpa hospital after suffering severe machete injuries from three men who had been paid to kill him. He was taken to jail before receiving proper treatment and he has been threatened and mistreated in prison.

Marcelino and Leonardo Miranda were convicted of the Reyes Gómez murder in December 2003 and sentenced to 25 years. They are indigenous leaders with COPINH who have made enemies for trying to secure a communal land title for their community. They have been tortured in prison.

We concur with Amnesty International's assessment that "the criminal charges against Feliciano Piñeda and the Miranda brothers are part of a campaign against indigenous leaders and human rights defenders in Honduras that aims to deter them from their work to secure land titles and to protect the environment."

We have written to Honduran officials on several occasions, urging them to protect the life and liberty of Feliciano Piñeda, the Miranda brothers and other COPINH members (May 21 2003, November 1 2003, January 12 2004, June 3 2004, October 21 2004, August 2 2005). Again, we urge you to:

- immediately and unconditionally release Feliciano Piñeda and the Miranda brothers;
- investigate the machete attack against Feliciano Piñeda and the threats made against him in prison;
- investigate the torture of the Miranda Brothers in prison;
- provide Feliciano Piñeda and Marcelino Miranda with the medical attention they may need;
- Conduct a proper, independent investigation into the killing of Juan Reyes Gómez;

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

cc: Licda. Jany del Cid, Special Prosecutor for Ethnic Affairs, Honduras ~ via fax
 Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas (COPINH) ~ via US mail
 Ambassador Mario Miguel Canahuati, Embassy of Honduras in the US ~ via fax
 Ambassador Larry Palmer, Embassy of the U.S. in Honduras ~ via fax
 Marcos Mandojana, Desk Officer for Honduras, US State Dept ~ via fax
 U.S. Senators DeWine and Voinovich ~ via email
 U.S. Representatives Brown, Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email