

via fax 011 504 239 3298 <b>Roberto Micheletti</b> <i>De-Facto</i> President of Honduras	via fax 011 504 221 5667 <b>Sr. Luis Alberto Rubi</b> Attorney General of Honduras
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January 25, 2010

Dear Sirs:

We are gravely concerned for the safety of the **staff of Faluma Binetu**, an Afro-descendant radio station in the Garifuna community of Triunfo de la Cruz, eastern Honduras. On January 6, burglars broke into the station at 3am, stole some equipment and destroyed the rest in a fire which burned one of the two studios to the ground and partly destroyed the other. Previously, on November 21, a man brandishing a machete came to the station and challenged the radio staff to come outside and talk to him personally about a recent broadcast on land rights. He was kept out by staff who barricaded the doors.

We believe that the attacks on Faluma Binetu are a consequence of these facts: 1) it has been vocal in its opposition to the authorities installed by the June 2009 coup; 2) it has consistently broadcast in favor of the rights of the Garifuna people, who are at risk of having their land taken for large scale tourism development; 3) it provides the community with local and national news from non-state sources; 4) it gave use of its broadcasting frequency to another independent radio station, Radio Globo, whose broadcasts have been frequently interrupted since the coup.

The Garifuna are descendents of Africans and native Caribbean peoples who have maintained a strong communal way of life, language, and collective identity (in Honduras, linked to their land along the northern Honduran coast and La Mosquitia in the east). In 1992, Triunfo de la Cruz achieved an official communal land, but the house containing the communal titles mysteriously burned down, and the government lost its copies of the titles. Powerful business interests, which expect to benefit from major tourist projects, have since employed tactics from land invasion to intimidation and violence to secure possession of lands that they can then sell for a considerable profit. Due to ongoing harassment, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights requested in June 2005 that the government provide the community leaders of Triunfo de la Cruz with protection. We have written several letters to Honduran officials urging protection of the rights of the Garifuna communities.

Because of the harassing and threatening events of November 21 and January 6, we **strongly urge** that you

- take immediate steps to provide all necessary protection to the staff at Radio Faluma Binetu, in accordance with their wishes;
- guarantee that an independent, thorough and impartial investigation is conducted into the January 6 attack on Faluma Binetu, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Coordinator

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 US Senators Brown & Voinovich and US Representatives Boccieri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Sutton, Wilson, Space ~ via email

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