

via fax 011 504 239 3298

Dr. Hernan Estrada Santamaría

Attorney General of Nicaragua

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March 1, 2010

Dear Attorney General Estrada:

We applaud the efforts of your government to insure that indigenous lands in Nicaragua are properly demarcated and titled. However, we must also express our concern for the safety of native populations who are being threatened by settlers.

It has come to our attention that Spanish-speaking colonists, who were encouraged by previous governments to settle indigenous lands in the eastern half of Nicaragua, are now resorting to violence to disrupt the demarcation and titling process in the South Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAS). The Rama and Creole people within the municipalities of El Rama, Bluefields and Rio San Juan have recently been subjected to death threats and vandalism. Also, the government team sent to demarcate indigenous land has been severely impeded from finishing its work. Armed colonist groups have destroyed demarcation equipment and even threatened those who allowed the technical teams to come close to their homes.

We find the reported tactics of the settlers completely abhorrent. On one occasion, 12 hooded men dismembered a pig with the demarcation material and left a note calling the technical workers names and threatening their lives. Armed bands of colonists have burned and damaged indigenous homes and community buildings and threatened further violence. The leader of an armed settler group stated that, "We are going to terminate the Ramas," and "I am going to hunt the Ramas like deer when they are not expecting it."

Based on the facts presented above, we urge that you

- arrest and prosecute any individuals threatening or committing violence against indigenous communities or individuals;
- provide security for indigenous communities and technical workers involved in the demarcation and titling process;
- complete the demarcation and titling of indigenous lands.

We commend your commitment to the indigenous populations of Nicaragua and encourage you to make every effort to see that their rights are protected.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai

Coordinator

CC: Daniel Ortega, President of Nicaragua ~ via US mail
Political Affairs, Nicaraguan Embassy to the US ~ via fax: 202-939-6545
Harold Rivas Reyes, Nicaraguan General Consul ~ via fax: 202-939-6574
Robert Callahan, US Ambassador to Nicaragua ~ via fax: 011-505-266-3861
Albert Kraaimore, Nicaragua Desk at the US State Dept ~ via fax: 202-647-2597
Dinah Shelton, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202-458-3992
US Senators Brown & Voinovich ~ via email
US Representatives Boccieri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Space, Sutton, Wilson ~ via email U.S.

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