

via fax: 011 504 2290 5088
Excmo. Sr. Porfirio Lobo Sosa
 President of Honduras

via FAX: 011 504 2235 8379
Ana Pineda
 Minister of Justice and Human Rights of Honduras

December 26, 2013

Dear Sir and Madam:

We are outraged by a recent claim by an army colonel that **human rights advocate Annie Bird** was working to destabilize the Bajo Aguán region, where land disputes have led to violence. Such statements could endanger Annie Bird, other international human rights companions, and Hondurans who are active in peasant land rights or other human rights activities.

On December 12, 2013, the newspaper La Tribuna quoted Col. German Alfaro Escalante as saying: "...Annie Bird...is going around doing destabilizing work here in the Aguán sector, meeting with various campesino leaders." According to the newspaper, Col. Alfaro said that Annie Bird had pressured campesinos to rebel against government police and military forces. Alfaro's comments have been reproduced in national media, accompanied by photos of Annie Bird, a US citizen and co-director of Rights Action, a nongovernmental human rights organization based in the US and Canada. An article on the colonel's comments, published online, has attracted comments from readers that include death threats against Annie Bird.

Col. German Alfaro Escalante is commander of Operation Xatruch III, a military-police task force based in the Colón province, which includes the Bajo Aguán region.

We believe that Col. Alfaro's statements are in response to Rights Action's efforts to document recent abuses by government security forces. In a radio interview on December 10, Annie Bird described her work of documenting abuses and reporting them to international bodies. On December 11, Annie Bird accompanied a group of local people to the government human rights prosecutor's office to report abuses by members of the Xatruch III Task Force.

We strongly urge that the government of Honduras:

- repudiate the claims made by Col. German Alfaro Escalante;
- take all necessary measures to guarantee the security of land rights activists in the Bajo Aguan and the human rights defenders who accompany them.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator

copies: Jorge Ramon Hernandez Alcerro, Honduran Ambassador to the US ~ via fax 202 966 9751
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 US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
 US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

Frontline 12/21/13_Hondurad

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