

via fax: 011 504 2239 3298 Sr. Presidente Juan Orlando Hernández President of Honduras	via fax: 011 504 2221 5667 Sr. Fiscal Oscar Chinchilla Banegas Attorney General of Honduras
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December 14, 2015

Dear Sirs:

We are writing to express our outrage about the attempted assassinations of land rights defenders on the Atlantic coast of Honduras: **Vidal Leiva, Irma Lemus and Rigoberto Duran.**

On November 27 an unidentified man shot Vidal Leiva three times, injuring his liver and lungs. He is the President of the Committee for the Defense of Land of the [Afro-descendant] Garifuna communities Crystals and Black River and has played a prominent role in the defense of land rights and the denunciation of forced evictions in Trujillo in Colón Department.

On November 29, at approximately 4:30pm, an unidentified white vehicle deliberately hit Irma Lemus and Rigoberto Duran, throwing them to the side of the road as they traveled on a motorcycle towards Zamora. Irma Lemus was severely injured. Both persons are members of the Permanent Observatory of Human Rights of Aguán (OPDHA), which works on reporting human rights violations and provides support to rural communities, particularly those who are forcibly evicted from their homes and are victims of violence due to land disputes in the Bajo Aguan region. They had previously reported being followed by similar white vehicles without registration plates.

Opposition to land rights defenders in Trujillo has increased since November 13 when a court hearing was held against foreign investors for allegedly conducting illegal seizures and forced evictions in Trujillo Bay in order to build Banana Coast, a cruise port in Trujillo Bay.

We believe these incidents are solely related to the peaceful and legitimate work in the defense of human rights. We **strongly urge** that you

- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the assassination attempts against Irma Lemus, Rigoberto Duran and Vidal Leiva, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- take all necessary measures to guarantee the safety of Irma Lemus, Rigoberto Duran and Vidal Leiva;
- guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai and Christine Stonebraker Martínez
 Co-Coordinators

copies: Jorge Alberto Milla Reyes, Honduran Amabassador to the US ~ via fax 202 966 9751
 James Nealon, US Ambassador to Honduras ~ via fax 011 504 2236 9037
 Olivia Franken, Honduras Desk, US State Dept ~ via email
 Tracy Robinson, Rapporteur for Honduras, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202 458.3992
 Rose-Marie Belle Antoine, Rapporteur on the Rights of Afro-Descendants, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

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

