

via fax: 011 504 2239 3298
Sr. Juan Orlando Hernández
President of Honduras

via fax: 011 504 2221 5667
Sr. Oscar Chinchilla Banegas
Attorney General of Honduras

October 25, 2016

Dear Sirs:

We are saddened and outraged by the recent assassinations of **José Ángel Flores** and **Silmer Dionosio George**, two land rights defenders in the Aguán Valley. José Ángel Flores was President of the Unified Campesino Movement of the Aguán (MUCA) and Silmer Dionosio George was a MUCA member.

In the evening of October 18, the two activists were attending a meeting with other land rights defenders in the farming cooperative of La Confianza in Tocoa in Colón Department. When José Ángel Flores stepped out of the meeting, he was shot repeatedly and killed instantly by unidentified men who immediately fled on motorcycles. Silmer Dionosio George was also shot and later died from his injuries.

The assassination of José Ángel Flores follows a long series of threats, acts of intimidation and judicial harassment against him, his family and other activists in the Aguán Valley. On March 15 police officers forced their way into his home in La Confianza, conducted a raid without a search warrant and arrested him, despite his poor health.

The assassinations of José Ángel Flores and Silmer Dionosio George happened just one week after assassination attempts against two leaders of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH): Tomás Gómez Membreño and Alexander García Sorto (cf our letter of October 23).

State repression against peaceful protests in the Aguán Valley and across the country continues:

- Sep 30: the Minister of Security publicly threatened repression for anyone planning to exercise their right to protest the privatization of highways near Tegucigalpa
- Oct 3: National Police, using quantities of tear gas, attacked a peaceful protest of the privatization of highways; among the protesters were elected members of the political opposition in the national congress.
- Oct 10: during a peaceful protest against privatization of the highways at the new toll road near Progreso, National Police from the COBRAS special unit (on-duty, in uniform and armed) threatened well-known writer, poet and photographer, Hector Flores (Chaco de la Pitoreta): "You are easy to find and to lose."

Since 2009 there have been 150 violent deaths and at least six disappearances related to land rights conflicts in the Aguán region. Because of the number of killings, disappearances, kidnappings, instances of torture, threats, forced evictions, persecution and stigmatization against members of land rights organizations in the Aguán Valley, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights granted precautionary measures on May 8, 2014 to 123 land rights defenders in the Aguán Valley, including members of the MUCA. This is the twelfth letter we have written since 2010 to Honduran authorities about attacks on MUCA members.

We condemn the killing of José Ángel Flores and Silmer Dionosio George and **strongly urge** that you

- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into these killings, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- take all necessary measures to guarantee the security of land rights defenders in the Aguán Valley, complying with measures No. 50-15 prescribed by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordiators

and

Christine Stonebraker-Martínez

copies: Jorge Alberto Milla Reyes, Honduran Ambassador 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

Francisco José Eguiguren Praeli, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Rapporteur for Honduras and for Rights of Indigenous Peoples ~ via email

US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

HSN and Frontline 10/18/2016_Honduras

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