

via fax: 011 505 266 1222  
 Sr. Presidente Daniel Ortega  
 President of Nicaragua

December 25, 2016

Dear President Ortega:

We are outraged by the massacre of an indigenous Mayanga family of three in the autonomous Moskitia region: **Bernicia Dixon Peralta**, her husband **Feliciano Benlis Flores**, and their 11 year-old son, **Feliciano Benlis Dixon**. Community residents say that *colonos* (settlers from the outside) are responsible for the brutal attack that occurred at the Llano Sucio site of the Alamikamba community in the Awala Prinsu territory on November 27. The family was planting seeds on their land when they were killed.

Community residents report that the family had been receiving threats from *colonos*, whom the local indigenous residents describe as “invaders.” The settlers are encroaching on Miskito territory, acting as agents of a large scale land grab.

According to an official statement issued by the Miskito Council of Elders in August, the Moskitia region has become a conflict zone where heavily armed *colonos* from the Pacific coast and interior of Nicaragua continue to invade traditional and legal Miskito land. Violent confrontations have escalated since June 2015.

*The presence of 'colonos' has drastically altered our form of life. In such a short time [the invasion] has destroyed tens of thousands of hectares of our forests, which has led to [the drying of] our rivers, [causing] the animals [to] migrate and the climate to alter, and us to emigrate. Our large forests are now deserts, occupied for the livestock, and [we] can do nothing to curb the advance of the settlers as they have the support of the Government of Nicaragua, and [we] are alone.”*

Nancy Elizabeth Henriquez, deputy of the YATAMA Indigenous political party, explicitly categorized this recent massacre as a revenge killing. In her statement to *La Prensa*, she relayed, “The owner sued and won the right [to the land] that is theirs; and the *colonos* killed the entire family for revenge.”

We strongly urge that you respect the rights of indigenous communities in the autonomous Moskitia region and

- conduct a full and impartial investigation into the assassination of Bernicia Dixon Peralta, Feliciano Benlis Flores, and Feliciano Benlis Dixon, make the results public, and bring those responsible to justice
- implement Law no.445 to clear the indigenous territories of non-indigenous settlers and proceed granting land title to indigenous residents
- take measures to protect indigenous residents and leaders, in accordance with their wishes

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Co-Coordinator

copies: Francisco Obadiah Campbell Hooker, Ambassador of Nicaragua to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643  
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 Francisco José Eguiguren Praeli, Rapporteur for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202 458. 3650  
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

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