

via fax 011 504 2221 4552 Sr. Juan Orlando Hernández President of Honduras	via fax: 011 504 2221 5667 Sr. Óscar Fernando Chinchilla Banegas Attorney General of Honduras	via fax 011 504 2237 9070 Sr. Julian Pacheco Secretary of Security of Honduras
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June 24, 2017

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned about the intensifying threats against the **indigenous Lenca people in Vega del Achiotal and Vega del Culatón** in Lempira Department where the DESA corporation (Desarrollos Energeticos SA) wants to build the Agua Zarca project. The Municipality of Intibucá has illegally granted land rights on ancestral Lenca territory at Vega del Achiotal, facilitating the invasion of Lenca territory.

The Madrid family, originally from Santa Bárbara, illegally took over Lenca territory and sold part of it to the DESA corporation. Several of the family who are employees of the DESA corporation have threatened members of COPINH (Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras), including Berta Cáceres, who was assassinated on March 3, 2016. Franklin Madrid has pointed firearms at COPINH members in the Lenca community of Río Blanco and has fired into the air close to COPINH members while they work on their ancestral lands.

On the morning of June 21 several armed men again threatened COPINH members while they were working on their land in Vega del Culaton. One armed man threatened at any moment to kill the children of **Francisco Javier Sánchez**, Coordinator of the Indigenous Council of Río Blanco and member of the General Coordination of COPINH. COPINH has filed complaints with the authorities regarding the threats and destruction of the corn crops, but those responsible continue to be free. Police accompany those who make violent threats rather than penalizing them.

Because the frequency of threats from armed men is increasing and the COPINH members are in a state of complete vulnerability, we **strongly urge** that you

- denounce the threats against COPINH and prosecute those responsible;
- take immediate action to secure the life and physical well-being of the Lenca people of Río Blanco.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator

copies: CONADEH: National Human Rights Commission ~ via email
Jorge Alberto Milla Reyes, Honduran Amabassador to the US ~ via fax 202 966 9751
Heide B. Fulton, Chargé d'Affaires, US Embassy in Honduras ~ via fax 011 504 2236 9037
Olivia Franken, Honduras Desk, US State Dept ~ via email
James Cavallaro, Rapporteur for Honduras, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax or email
Francisco José Eguiguren Praeli, Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

COPINH_6/21/17_Honduras

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