

via U.S. mail Sr. Juan Orlando Hernández President of Honduras	via fax: 011 504 2221 5667 and U.S. mail Sr. Óscar Fernando Chinchilla Banegas Attorney General of Honduras
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October 21, 2017

Dear Sirs:

We are writing to express our concern about the criminalization and harassment by authorities of **Miriam Miranda**, General Coordinator of the Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras (OFRANEH).

At noon on September 5, two agents from the offices of the Police Investigations Division (DPI) came to the OFRANEH offices in the Sambo Creek Garífuna community in La Ceiba Department with a citation for Miriam Miranda. It contained criminal accusations made against her by Patrick Forseth and Randy Jorgensen, two Canadian businessmen who have illegally usurped Garífuna lands for the development of tourist projects. When OFRANEH members told the agents that Miriam Miranda was not there, could not say where she was, and would not sign the citation, the agents threatened to look for her and arrest her.

Since 1978 OFRANEH has worked for the promotion of the Afro-Caribbean Garífuna people's right to self-determination through programs that support their political, social, economic and cultural advancement. Miriam Miranda is a highly respected land, human rights and environmental defender in Honduras. For many years she has suffered attacks and acts of repression. On March 29, 2011, while participating in a peaceful protest in Triunfo de la Cruz., she was shot with a tear-gas canister, hospitalized, and subsequently charged with sedition (cf our letter of Apr 5, 2011). On July 17, 2014, heavily armed men kidnapped her and five other Garífuna community defenders for peacefully protesting the operation of an illegal landing strip on Garífuna territories used by organized crime drug traffickers (cf our letter of Aug 16, 2014). In January 2017 she was arbitrarily arrested on and accused of the alleged offense of "slander and defamation" against Patrick Forseth (cf our letter of January 22). These threats and attacks continue to happen, despite the fact that the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights granted precautionary measures to Miriam Miranda on September 20, 2011 (MC 322/11).

We **strongly urge** that you

- guarantee the safety and security of Miriam Miranda, in accordance with her wishes
- stop the police and judicial harassment to which she has been subjected because of her defense of Garífuna territories
- work to protect and defend ancestral Garífuna land rights in Honduras, as ordered by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (October 8, 2015 and September 1, 2016)

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinators

and

Christine Stonebraker-Martínez

copies: Jorge Alberto Milla Reyes, Honduran Ambassador 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
José de Jesús Orozco Hernández, Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
Margarette May Macaulay, Rapporteur on Rights of Afro-Descendant Persons, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Beatty, 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: