

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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November 22, 2017

Dear Sirs:

We are very concerned about the arbitrary arrest on October 23 of six women and their male companions of the New Ebenezer Campesino Associative Enterprise in the Aguán Valley, Colón Department: **Sindy Ramos, Vilma Rosa, Deysi Rosa, Elsy Rosa, Kenia Rosa and Raquel Méndez**. They are being unjustly accused of the criminal offenses of usurpation, robbery, and aggravated arson.

On October 22, 120 members of New Ebenezer Campesino Associative Enterprise set up camp on the lands of the Finca Remolino in Trujillo municipality, for which they have a document proving New Ebenezer's ownership of the land and their legitimate right of access. At around 11 am on October 23, anti-riot police and members of the Honduran Army began a violent evacuation using tear gas and bullets.

Ownership of the Finca Remolino has been disputed for decades. It was designated to be included in the national agrarian reform process in 1970. Today, Inversiones Cebeña (La Cebeña Investments), owned by large landholder Reinaldo Canales, is claiming ownership and using armed force to keep campesino families off the estate.

The violence waged by La Cebeña Investments has been going on for months. On August 28, the campesino land rights organization La Plataforma Agraria (Agrarian Platform) denounced an armed attack by security guards of La Cebeña Investments against campesino leaders of New Ebenezer Campesino Associative Enterprise. At least one campesino leader was injured with a gunshot to the leg.

The New Ebenezer Campesino Associative Enterprise is one of several peasant land rights associations active in the land recuperation (recovery) movement in the Aguan Valley, where at least 100 campesinos have been killed in recent years. Many of the campesino leaders involved in land recuperation were granted protective measures by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (Medida Cautelar MC50-14) in May 2014. The government of Honduras should be protecting them, not criminalizing them or deploying military and police to use force against them.

We condemn this act of repression against campesino leaders and **strongly urge** that you

- immediately drop the charges against Sindy Ramos, Vilma Rosa, Deysi Rosa, Elsy Rosa, Kenia Rosa and Raquel Méndez and other members of New Ebenezer Campesino Associative Enterprise unjustly arrested on October 23
- release from jail any New Ebezener members who are still being detained
- recognize New Ebenezer's ownership and legitimate right of access to Finca Remolino

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai and



Christine Stonebraker Martínez

copies: Jorge Alberto Milla Reyes, Honduran Amabassador to the US ~ via fax 202 966 9751 or US mail
 Heide B. Fulton, Chargé d'Affaires, US Embassy in Honduras ~ via email
 Olivia Franken, Honduras Desk, US State Dept ~ via email
 James Cavallaro, Rapporteur for Honduras, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
 Paulo Vannuchi, Rapporteur on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, 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

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