

via email: mprelacionespublicas@gmail.com ngosorto@gmail.com

Oscar Fernando Chinchilla Banegas

Attorney General of Honduras

via email: karlacueva144@gmail.com

Lica. Karla Cueva

Secretary of State for Human Rights Affairs

May 23, 2020

Dear Attorney General Chinchilla and Secretary Cueva:

We are writing to you to express our concern about the recent death of **Edwin Noel Flores Sacaza**, a Garífuna man from Sambo Creek, Atlántida Department. His body was discovered on the afternoon of May 1 inside a container on the property of the Ensenada thermoelectric plant, where he worked as a security guard.

The owners of the thermoelectric plant (El Grupo Laeisz) and municipal authorities have been secretive about the incident, which conforms to their usual manner of handling relations with the communities of Sambo Creek and nearby Corozal. Because they did not report any official version of the events that occurred, endless suspicions have arisen amongst the inhabitants of the Sambo Creek community.

These communities face the greatest health risks from being exposed to the constant emissions from the turbines at the plant. The contamination from Bunker C (Fuel #6) is considered highly toxic and is banned in several countries. The communities are indignant about the blatant disregard for ILO Convention 169, of which Honduras is a signatory, which guarantees to indigenous peoples free, prior, and informed consent about development projects such as this plant that have a direct effect on their lives and ancestral lands. The communities of Sambo Creek reject the construction and operation of this plant because it is nestled between two national parks, and it operates without an environmental license.

The day after the death of Edwin Noel Flores Sacaza, a large group of protesters gathered outside the morgue in La Ceiba, hoping to learn of any autopsy results that might reveal the cause of death and clarify how the young Garífuna man ended up inside the container, where he may have suffocated to death. There are many doubts among the members of the community about what happened, how the investigations will be carried out, and how justice will be administered. Concerns are intensified because of the increase of killings of Garífuna people over the past year, especially of women Garífuna leaders of territorial defense.

We strongly urge you to:

- conduct an impartial investigation into the death of Edwin Noel Flores Sacaza, publish the results, and, if it is discovered he was murdered, find those responsible and hold them accountable
- adhere to the community's demand for the closure of the Ensenada Thermoelectric Plant, due to a lack of consultation and for not complying to environmental standards.

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai

Co-Coordínators



Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: María Dolores Agüero, Ambassador of Honduras to the US ~ via email and US mail
 Colleen Hoey, Chargé d'Affaires, US Embassy in Honduras ~ via email
 Nate Rettenmayer, Political Officer at the US Embassy in Honduras ~ via email
 David Tagle, Honduras Desk, US State Dept ~ via email
 Joel Hernández, Rapporteur for Honduras, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email and US mail
 Margarete May Macaulay, Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons of African Descent ~ via email
 US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
 US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, González, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

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