

via email: mpelacionespublicas@gmail.com, ngosorto@gmail.com <b>Óscar Fernando Chinchilla Banegas</b> Attorney General of Honduras	via email: karlacueva144@gmail.com, karen.lagos@sedh.gob.hn <b>Lica. Karla Eugenia Cueva Aguilar</b> Secretary of State for Human Rights Affairs
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July 20, 2020

Dear Attorney General Chinchilla and Secretary Cueva:

We are writing to demand an immediate investigation into the forced disappearance of four Garífuna community leaders on July 18. We are angered and saddened by this latest incident of harassment and human rights abuses targeted at members of the Garífuna community in your country.

At about 5:30a.m. on Saturday, July 18, four leaders of the Garífuna community of Triunfo de La Cruz, Atlántida Department—**Albert Sneider Centeno, Milthon Joel Martínez Suany, Aparicio Mejía** and another still **un-identified**—were kidnapped from their homes by heavily armed men who were wearing bullet-proof vests and uniforms of the Military Police and the Police Investigations Directorate (DPI).

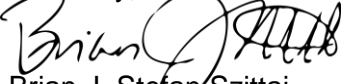
It is pertinent to note that in October 2015, the Garífuna community of El Trunfo de la Cruz, together with the community of Punta Piedra, obtained a favorable ruling on territorial rights issued by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (CIHD). The court verified that the State of Honduras intended to strip the Garífuna of their lands in order to promote the construction of large tourist projects by private developers. The decision ordered the State of Honduras to carry out reparations in favor of the communities, including actions to return land that is already being occupied by others.

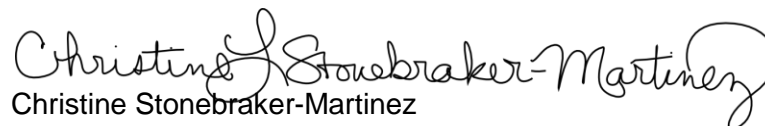
To date, the State has ignored the international court ruling. Instead, the government has continued to harass, persecute, and murder members of the Garífuna communities. The most recent crime, which still has not been adequately investigated, is that of Antonio Bernárdez, a 71-year-old leader of the Punta Piedra community, whose body was found on June 19, six days after he disappeared.

We strongly urge you to:

- carry out an urgent search to find the whereabouts of the Garífuna community members named above
- carry out a thorough investigation process that will lead to the capture and prosecution of the kidnappers
- stop all acts of violence and harassment against the Garífuna communities

Sincerely,

  
 Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Co-Coordinator

  
 Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies:

María Dolores Agüero, Ambassador of Honduras to the US ~ via email and US mail  
 Joel Hernández, Rapporteur for Honduras, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email and US mail  
 Margarete May Macaulay, Rapporteur on the Rights of Peoples of African Descent ~ 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  
 CESPAD: Centro de Estudio para la Democracia ~ via email  
 ODECO: Organización de Desarrollo Etnico Comunitario ~ via email  
 CIPROHEH: Centro de Investigación y Promoción de Derechos Humanos ~ via email  
 Honduras Solidarity Network ~ 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:**