

Blanca Sarahí Izaguirre Lozano
 National Commissioner for Human Rights of Honduras
 CONADEH: Comisionado Nacional de los Derechos Humanos
 Colonia Florencia Norte, Boulevard Suyapa, contiguo a Banco Lafice
 Tegucigalpa, Honduras

March 24, 2021

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre Lozano:

We are astounded that, to date, there has been no response from the Honduras Government to the strong and clear message which the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention sent on February 9 calling for the immediate release of the eight Guapinol water defenders who have been in pre-trial detention since September 2019 (cf our letters of Aug 25, 2020 and Dec 30, 2020). Those being held in Olanchito Penitentiary are **José Daniel Márquez Márquez, Kelvin Alejandro Romero Martínez, José Abelino Cedillo, Porfirio Sorto Cedillo, Orbín Nahúm Hernández, Arnold Javier Alemán, Ewer Alexander Cedillo Cruz. Jeremías Martínez Díaz** is being detained separately at La Ceiba Penitentiary.

In its resolution 85/2020, the UN Working Group (which belongs to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) stressed that there is no legal reason to hold these eight men in pre-trial detention and that there is no legal reason to prosecute them. The UN Working Group also recommended that those responsible for the illegal detention should be investigated, suggesting that the State is punishing them for exercising their legitimate rights in defending the environment.

The UN Working Group stressed that the immediate release of these defenders is especially urgent because of the COVID-19 health crisis. One of the defenders, who suffers from a pre-existing condition, has tested positive for COVID-19. Other defenders are at risk because there are at least 15 more positive cases in the Olanchito detention center. The number may be much higher because of the overcrowded conditions and lack of prevention measures. Families of the defenders, their support committee, and their legal team have been following up with all the institutions responsible for guaranteeing the release of the defenders. They await a response.

We **strongly urge** that you

- immediately release the eight Guapinol defenders and follow the recommendations of the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention
- take all necessary health measures to protect the lives of the eight Guapinol water defenders and inform their families about their health condition.

Sincerely,


 Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator


 Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Lic. Rolando Edgardo Argueta Pérez, President of the Supreme Court of Justice ~ via email
 Lica. Karla Eugenia Cueva Aguilar, Secretary for Human Rights ~ via email
 Oscar Chinchilla Banegas, Attorney General ~ via email
 Luis Suazo Barahona, 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
 Isabel Albaladejo Escribano, Representative to Honduras of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OACNUDH) ~ via email
 HSN: Honduras Solidarity Network ~ via email
 US Embassy in Honduras: Colleen Hoey, Chargé d'Affaires; Nate Rettenmayer, Political Officer ~ via email
 US State Dept: Honduras Desk ~ via email
 US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
 US Representatives Beatty, 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: