

Blanca Sarahí Izaguirre Lozano National Commissioner for Human Rights of Honduras	Lica. Karla Eugenia Cueva Aguilar Secretary for Human Rights of Honduras
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May 14, 2021

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre and Secretary Cueva:

We are dismayed at **police violence against residents of Baracoa**, Cortés Department, who are protesting the installation of a thermoelectric plant near their community. They insist that the power plant will have negative impacts on the sources of water for their community for years to come.

Residents held an early morning demonstration late last month on the CA-13 highway, which leads from San Pedro Sula to Puerto Cortés, demanding that the thermal project not be imposed in their community. National Police broke up the demonstration at 10:00am when, without warning, they fired tear gas canisters at the residents.


The National Electric Power Company (ENEE) has been granting licenses to private companies to construct electric generation plants without the prior consultation and consent of impacted populations. In Baracoa, residents oppose plans by town leaders to hold virtual town meetings (instead of in-person meetings) to make decisions on the proposed thermoelectric plant. Legislative Decree 154-2020, which suspends open face-to-face meetings and allows for the meetings to be held via the internet, is discriminatory and restricts political participation of residents; fewer than 32% of Hondurans have access to the internet.

People in other parts of Honduras have also been organizing opposition to the installation of privately-owned thermoelectric plants. Starting in 2018, residents of La Ceiba, Atlántida Department, began convening town meetings to discuss the installation of a thermoelectric plant in La Ensenada, located between the Garífuna communities of Sambo Creek and Corozal, an area highly rich in biodiversity. The private energy company El Grupo Laeisz prevailed and constructed the plant. The Garífuna communities continue to the thermoelectric plant because it is nestled between two national parks and it operates without an environmental license. Residents face health risks from being exposed to constant emissions from turbines at the plant, including emissions from fuels so toxic that they are banned in other countries.

We **strongly urge** that you

- instruct the National Police and military to stop violent repression against peaceful assemblies, such as the demonstrators in Baracoa who are defending their environment
- allow residents to hold in-person meetings (with proper precautions related to the coronavirus) to maximize the democratic participation of impacted residents
- cease the granting of state licenses to private electric companies without prior consultation and consent of local residents

Sincerely,


 Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator


 Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Oscar Chinchilla Banegas, Attorney General ~ via email
 Luis Suazo Barahona, Ambassador of Honduras to the US ~ via email and US mail
 ENEE: Empresa Nacional de Energía Eléctrica
 Joel Hernández, Rapporteur for Honduras, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IAHCR) ~ 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 Congress: Senators Brown & Portman and 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: