

Blanca Sarahí Izaguirre Lozano National Commissioner for Human Rights of Honduras (CONADEH)	Rosa Seaman Vice-Minister for Protection Secretariat for Human Rights (SEDH)
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January 24, 2022

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre and Vice-Minister Seaman:

We continue to be disillusioned and outraged at the constant persecution of Garífuna defenders of their ancestral territories along the northern coast of Honduras.

On January 13, police arrested **Leonard Brown** and **Luis Alberto Gutierrez**. When they were presented in court in Trujillo, Colón Department, Leonard Brown had fractured ribs and bruises on his back. Authorities transferred both men to a detention facility in Tocoa. We understand that Leonard Brown was released from detention but was ordered to appear in court again on January 26. He is facing unsubstantiated charges of usurpation of ancestral territories.

Luis Gutierrez was arrested and detained without a warrant. In a statement released through social networks on January 14, OFRANEH (Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras) denounced that both men were "savagely beaten inside the cell" of the local police center.

Leonard Brown and Luis Gutierrez are residents of the Garífuna community Waba To (Trujillo, Colón), which feels pressure from the state to abandon their ancestral territory because of pressure from foreign investors. In September 2021, the National Police and the Investigative Police Directorate (DPI) arrived at Waba To (in vehicles without license plates) with an order to evict community resident Antonia Portillo. Fortunately, the community councils of two neighborhoods quickly rallied and defended Ms. Portillo, preventing the eviction. Nevertheless, residents of Waba To continue to feel threatened. They say that the State is acting in the interest of foreign investors who want to take over their ancestral territory.

We urge that authorities in Honduras:

- drop criminal charges against Leonard Brown and Luis Alberto Gutierrez
- investigate any physical harm inflicted on the men during their arrest and make accountable police agents who are responsible for those injuries
- intensify efforts to find the whereabouts of the four Garífuna leaders who were disappeared on July 18, 2020, and incorporate SUNLA (Triunfo de la Cruz Garífuna Committee for Investigation and Search of the Disappeared) into the investigative process the
- comply with judgments of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to protect the Garífuna communities of Triunfo de la Cruz and Punta Piedra against hostility and pressure from intruders and criminal groups
- work with Garífuna leaders to demarcate and register land titles

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator



Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Luis Suazo Barahona, Ambassador of Honduras to the US ~ via email and US mail
 Carlos Bernal Pulido, 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, 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
 Alice Shackelford, UN Resident Coordinator in Honduras, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ~ via email
 US Embassy in Honduras: Colleen Hoey, Chargé d'Affaires; Nate Rettenmayer, Political Officer; Ariel Jahner, Human Rights Officer ~ via email
 US State Department: Molly Runyon, Honduras Desk Officer ~ via email
 US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
 US Representatives Beatty, Brown, 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: