

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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February 24, 2022

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre and Vice-Minister Seaman:

We are writing to you today to express our outrage over the assassination of Indigenous Tolupán community leader **Melvin Geovany Mejía Rodríguez** on January 22 in Morazón, Yoro.

Melvin Geovany Mejía Rodríguez was gunned down by two unknown people on the highway to Morazón, Yoro. He was traveling with a friend who also died in the attack. Melvin Geovany Mejía Rodríguez was gravely injured and died a few minutes after being shot.


As a leader of the Tolupán Candelaria tribe, Melvin Geovany Mejía Rodríguez actively defended the territorial and cultural rights of his community. He was a member of the Movimiento Amplio por la Dignidad y la Justicia (MADJ), an organization that works to end corruption and protect natural resources and human rights. Through his activities with MADJ, Melvin Geovany Mejía Rodríguez worked to protect the ancestral lands of the Tolupán people from domestic and international mining operations. Together with his brother Luis Electerio Mejía, also a human rights defender, he was the victim of harassment, intimidation and death threats over the past few years, which led to him having to relocate his family to reside in a different town.

We strongly condemn the assassination of Melvin Geovany Mejía Rodríguez as well as the climate of persecution and all the other attacks perpetrated against those who defend the environment and the rights of Indigenous people in Honduras. We also underscore that the assassination of Melvin Geovany Mejía Rodríguez happened within a framework of criminalization of, and attacks against, the Tolupán people of Yoro and Francisco Morazón, which includes the assassination of Tolupán leader Adán Mejía in 2020.

We strongly urge you to:

- conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into the killings of Melvin Geovany Mejía Rodríguez and his companion in order to identify those responsible, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- adopt all necessary measures to guarantee the safety and well-being of Indigenous rights defenders, in strict accordance with their wishes

Sincerely,


 Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinators


 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
 Esmeralda Arosemena de Troitiño, Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 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

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