

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

March 22, 2022

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre and Vice-Minister Seaman:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are deeply angered over the February 26 **armed incursion into Triunfo de la Cruz** in the municipality of Tela, Atlántida Department, to find Garífuna leaders and the resulting death threats against **Miriam Miranda** specifically. Armed men entered the Garífuna community, and one hour after denouncing the incursion and intimidation on social media, Miriam Miranda, coordinator of the Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras (OFRANEH), received threats to her life and her family's life via text to her personal phone from an unknown number. For several years, Miriam Miranda has been threatened, harassed, and illegally jailed for her human rights defense work on behalf of Garífuna communities, whose members and leaders have been persecuted even more with criminalization and assassinations.

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights has criticized the government of Honduras for not adhering to its mandates to protect Garífuna ancestral lands from outside land invaders and adequately investigate the murders of Garífuna community leaders. In October 2013, the Inter-American Court ruled unanimously that Honduras was obligated to guarantee to the Garífuna people full and effective ownership of their disputed ancestral territories. As recently as May 2019, the Court acknowledged that Garífuna community members are still experiencing direct death threats, blackmail, increased robbery, and profiling of leaders.

The forced disappearance of four young Garífuna leaders from Triunfo de la Cruz is evidence of the ever-present dangers; on July 18, 2020 heavily armed men wearing bullet-proof vests and uniforms of the Policía Militar kidnapped the men, whose whereabouts are still unknown (see our letters to Attorney General Chinchilla and Secretary for Human Rights Cueva on July 20 & 24, 2020). On July 24, 2020, we wrote about the torture and assassination of a 71-year-old Garífuna leader named Antonio Bernárdez in Punta Piedra, Colón Department. In October 2020, we wrote about an armed incursion into the Vallecito community of Limón, Colón Department, where illegal multinational and narco-trafficking land seizures are too common. Miriam Miranda declared in April 2021 that Honduras has a genocidal plan for the Garífuna people.

Prove to us that this new Honduran administration is serious about Afro-Indigenous rights. Because of our anger at the repeated violence and threats to Garífuna leaders and deep concern, especially about the threats to the life of Miriam Miranda and her family, we strongly urge that you to:

- investigate the incursion of armed group into Garífuna communities, including the incident of February 26, 2022 in Triunfo de la Cruz, one and a half years after the disappearance of four of their leaders
- investigate the most recent harassment and threats against Garífuna leaders including **Miriam Miranda**, and her family on February 26, 2022
- respect the mandates of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights by working with Garífuna leadership to start a process of returning their illegally-seized Atlantic coastal lands to them and immediately put an end to the threats to them.

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
 Margarette 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 and US Representatives Beatty, Brown, Gibbs, González, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

27 FEB 2022_IM-Defensoras_Honduras

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