

<b>Blanca Sarahí Izaguirre Lozano</b> National Commissioner for Human Rights of Honduras (CONADEH)	<b>Rosa Seaman</b> Vice-Minister for Protection Secretariat for Human Rights (SEDH)
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May 21, 2022

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre and Vice-Minister Seaman:

We are writing to you today with sadness and anger in our hearts over the continued loss of life, abuse of human rights and destruction of Indigenous land in Honduras. In just the past few weeks, three more environmental and Indigenous rights defenders were assassinated and the killers remain sheltered in impunity. We mourn the loss of these three environmental defenders: **Justo Benítez, Wilmer Domínguez Madrid, and Donaldo Rosales.**

On April 30 in Santa Bárbara Department, 52-year-old **Justo Benítez** was shot six times on the patio of his house in San Isidro. Seeing that he was still alive after being shot, the criminals threw burning firewood on him. Justo's lifeless body was left lying in the place used to dry the coffee. According to the mayor, he was a calm, honest man who educated his children and worked a small farm. Justo Benítez was a political leader of the Libertad y Refundación party (LIBRE) and was a vocal opponent of the government imposed after the June 2009 coup, undertaking the fight for the defense of the natural resources of the municipality of San Francisco de Ojuera.

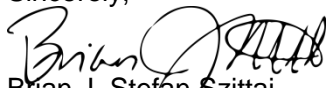
On May 10 in Río Blanco, Intibucá Department, **Wilmer Domínguez Madrid**, defender of land and natural resources in the Lenca peoples' movement against the Agua Zacra dam, was killed. His body was found near the Valle de Angeles community with machete wounds on his head, back, face and legs. Wilmer Domínguez Madrid was the brother of well-known Lenca land-rights activist Rosalina Domínguez. He was unarmed at the time of the attack.

Finally, on May 15, as he was walking to church in Minas de Oro, Comayagua, **Donaldo Rosales** was assassinated by hitmen. A delegate of the word of God at his church, he was heading to a neighboring community to preside over the Sunday worship. An active member of the Environmental Committee of the Municipalities of the Northeast of Comayagua (Camneco), Donaldo Rosales was held in esteem as a community leader and defender of Indigenous waterways, land and forests.

**We strongly urge you to:**

- carry out a thorough and impartial investigation into the murders of Justo Benitez, Wilmer Domínguez and Donaldo Rosales in order to find and prosecute the perpetrators
- protect the families of the victims from further aggression, threats and attacks, in strict accordance with their wishes
- create and implement legal instruments to eradicate all types of violence against those who lawfully work to protect the land, natural resources and territorial rights of Indigenous Honduran communities

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  
 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: Ambassador Laura F. Dogu and 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:**