

Blanca Sarahí Izaguirre Lozano

National Commissioner for Human Rights of Honduras (CONADEH)
via email

December 26, 2022

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre:

We are writing to you today to express our anger and outrage over a recent incidence of violence against an Indigenous Lenca peasant community leader. On December 11, **Nery González** was shot by an unknown assailant in the community of Achiotal, Siguatepeque, in the department of Comayagua. Mr. González was walking into his home when a bullet struck him in the head. He was transferred to Hospital Escuela in Tegucigalpa where he was conscious but in serious condition. In spite of the fact that he was attacked at his home, by an unknown armed man, the police never came to his home to investigate and, as of December 15, had not yet conducted any investigation into the facts of the case.

Nery González is one of the campesino leaders in Achiotal who is part of an effort to reclaim lands in order to plant food crops. Achiotal has been recognized as an Indigenous Lenca community with legal personhood. Due to the farmers' work there of reclaiming their ancestral lands, residents of Achiotal has been criminalized and persecuted by large private landowners, such as Walter Aguilar and Tiburcio and Gerardo Aguilar Donaire. Furthermore, the community has been the victim of attacks by the National Police and the 1st Engineers Battalion.

In October 2022, COPINH (Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras) denounced the persecution suffered by the Achiotal community after the National Police entered—at dawn—the houses of residents of the community without a search warrant and proceeded to arrest six members of the organization without an arrest warrant. Arrested were Doris Perez, Maria Lidia Díaz, Juana Fúnez, Abraham Hernández, Adalberto Mazariego, and José del Carmen Sanchez Martínez. They were previously victims of multiple attacks in order to evict them from the land. To our knowledge, these six members of COPINH are still facing criminal charges.

We strongly urge you to:

- condemn and investigate the assassination attempt on Nery González, and publish the results of the investigation
- capture and bring to justice those responsible for the attack
- dismiss the criminal charges against the six COPINH members from Achiotal who were unjustly arrested and falsely criminalized in October 2020
- return the ancestral lands to the community of Achiotal so they can grow food to feed themselves.

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator



Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Javier Efraín Bú Soto, Ambassador of Honduras in Washington, DC c/o Alejandra Sandoval Taixes ~ via email and US mail
Carlos Pulido, Rapporteur for Honduras, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) ~ 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
Jsabel 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 Human Rights Officer ~ via email
US State Department: Bryan Schell, Honduras Desk Officer ~ via email
US Senators Brown & Portman and 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: