

**Blanca Sarahí Izaguirre Lozano**

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

January 24, 2023

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre Lozano:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are outraged over the double assassination of environmental defenders **Aly Domínguez**, age 38, and **Jairo Bonilla**, age 28, from the community of Guapinol (Tocoa municipality, Colón Department, Aguán Valley). They were murdered by unidentified gunmen on Saturday, January 7, while returning home on a motor-bike from their job gathering payments for a cable utility.

The Guardian reported that they were “co-founders of Guapinol’s grassroots resistance against an iron ore mine... Local police and prosecutors immediately ascribed the deaths to a botched mugging—even though the assailants fled without...the victims’ moped, cellphones or money.”

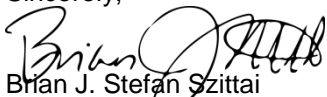
Five years of persecution points to an illegal iron oxide mine owned by Inversiones Los Pinares, located in a carved out slice of the Montaña de Botaderos National Park “Carlos Escaleras.” Aly Domínguez was among 32 community leaders falsely accused of crimes by the mining company. He is the brother of Reynaldo Domínguez, another of the 32 Guapinol residents criminalized and one of eight who were jailed for 914 days. Aly Domínguez and Jairo Bonilla had been receiving threats for weeks before their murders. The Municipal Committee in Defense of the Common and Public Goods of Tocoa has denounced since August 2022 a hate and smear campaign that has escalated to surveillance, harassment, and threats against the lives of leaders who oppose the destruction of the Park National Carlos Escaleras for the installation of two open-pit mining concessions. Agribusiness corporations like Dinant are surveilling and planning to assassinate peasant leadership because of the farmers’ efforts to reclaim lands stolen from them (cf our letter of November 23, 2022). Inversiones Los Pinares is co-owned by the politically powerful Lenir Pérez and his wife Ana Facussé, daughter of the deceased oligarch and land baron Miguel Facussé, who was also the owner of Dinant.

The impunity of the previous administration has to end. On November 24, 2022 we wrote to you about death threats against Indigenous environmental defender Reinaldo Baharona Reyes in Yoro. On December 25, we wrote to you about a police killing of Indigenous community leader Marco Antonio Pineda of the Guachipilín community in La Paz. On December 26, we wrote of the attempted assassination of Indigenous Lenca community leader **Nery González** in Comayagua. Also in December, Aguán Valley land rights defender Mauricio Esquivel was killed and dumped on a roadside (cf our letter of January 23, 2023).

We demand an investigation into the repeated persecution and violence against the rural community of Guapinol, whose residents have been unjustly stigmatized and criminalized because of their struggle to stop an illegally sanctioned mine. We call upon the State of Honduras to:

- transfer the investigation of the double assassination out of Tocoa so that the same police and prosecutors responsible for criminalizing the Guapinol environmental defenders are not leading the investigation
- once and for all, cancel the illegal mining concession, as President Xiomara Castro promised
- demilitarize the Guapinol community as a first step in distancing the government from protecting the interests of Inversiones Los Pinares over those of local residents

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  
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 Human Rights Officer ~ via email  
US State Department: Bryan Schell, Honduras Desk Officer ~ via email  
US Senators Brown & Vance and US Representatives Balderson Beatty, Brown, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Miller, Sykes ~ via email

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