

Blanca Sarahí Izaguirre Lozano

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

February 22, 2023

Dear Commissioner:

We are writing in anger and distress over the ongoing violence in the Bajo Aguán Valley, Colon Department. On January 18, the president of the Las Laureles cooperative **José Omar Cruz Tomé** was murdered in his home after receiving serious death threats multiple times, along with his father-in-law **Andy Martínez Murillo**.


Residents of Los Laureles and other campesino cooperatives in the area have been subject to constant threats from and attacks by the security company SEC that works for the Dinant Corporation, and irregular armed groups (i.e., paramilitaries) with which it coordinates its operations. According to the Plataforma Agraria, the mining company Inversiones los Pinares/Ecotek (owned by Lenir Pérez and Ana Facussé) and the Dinant Corporation (also owned by the Facussé family) are the main generators of violence and human rights violations against defenders of water and land in the Bajo Aguán region.

Just in the month of January 2023, at least five community leaders were killed in the region (cf our letters of 23 and 24 January 2023). They were executed by men in civilian clothes, using methods that are commonly associated with the paramilitary groups that have been acting with impunity in the region for over a decade. Many other territorial and environmental defenders are being followed by security forces; they and their families regularly receive death threats.

We greatly denounce this behavior and urge that your government

- conduct a thorough and transparent investigation into the assassination of José Omar Cruz Tomé and Andy Martínez Murillo, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- take urgent action to protect the social leaders currently receiving threats or fearing violent attacks, in strict accordance with their wishes
- effectively comply with the agreement between your government and the cooperatives that was signed on February 22, 2022, designed to manage a peaceful and democratic solution to the agrarian conflict in the Bajo Aguán Valley

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinators


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 ~ via email
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: