

Blanca Sarahí Izaguirre Lozano

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

February 23, 2023

Dear Commissioner:

We write to you today out of grave concern for **Abelino Sánchez**, a peasant leader and human rights defender from the municipality of Villanueva, Cortés Department, who recently had an attempt made on his life as a result of his work to protect land, territory, and life.

On January 25 at 7pm, two unknown men entered the home of Abelino Sánchez in the community of El Aguacate. After saying “we want land,” the two men shot him twice, once in the chest and once in the arm. Due to the severity of his injuries, he was transported to the Mario Catarino Rivas Hospital in San Pedro Sula to receive more extensive medical care. After the attack, his family commented that he had been receiving death threats for approximately two months prior, as a result of his work to defend the land and environment.

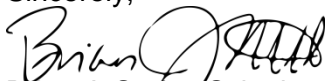
Abelino Sánchez is a member of the National Network of Defenders of Land and Territory (RENADETT), regional secretary of the National Union of Rural Workers (CNTC), and president of the Aguacatal Peasant Cooperative in Villanueva, Cortés Department. He has accompanied many peasant groups and is a tireless defender of land, territory, and human rights. In particular, the CNTC, which includes five peasant organizations, has been frequently involved in land occupations with large landholders, during which many campesinos have been subjected to violence and intimidation by members of private security forces and police.

We know that this attack on Abelino Sánchez is just the latest chapter in a string of aggressions against land defenders across Honduras. So far this year in the Bajo Aguán Valley alone, at least five defenders of territory and the environment have been assassinated (cf our letters 23 JAN, 24 JAN, 22 FEB). There have also been threats to land defenders in the departments of Lempira, La Paz, Ocotepeque, and Olancho.

In light of this continued nationwide assault against land defenders, we strongly urge you to:

- conduct a thorough and transparent investigation into the attempted murder of Abelino Sánchez, publish the results, and bring those responsible for the attack to justice
- take the necessary measures to guarantee the life, physical and psychological integrity, and safety of Abelino Sánchez and his family, in strict accordance with their wishes
- guarantee that all human rights defenders, in particular peasant land defenders, are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear for their lives

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
 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 & Vance ~ via email
 US Representatives Balderson, Beatty, Brown, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Miller, Sykes ~ via email

27 JAN 2023_COFADH_Honduras

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