

Blanca Sarahí Izaguirre Lozano

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

May 26, 2023

Dear Commissioner:

We are writing today express our outrage at the ongoing violence inflicted upon members of the Tolupán Indigenous peoples who are defending their land, natural resources and way of life. In particular, we are concerned for the safety of José María (Chema) Pineda, coordinator of the Tolupán Tribal Preventive Council of San Francisco de Locomapa, and his family. Criminal groups at the service of extractive industries that operate in the territory of the Tolupán people have threatened to kill José María Pineda, publicly stating that they would look for José María Pineda and his daughters to attack them and burn down their house.

For many years, Tolupán communities have been organizing to defend their ancestral lands from the economic interests of outsiders: large private landholders, hydroelectric dam companies, mining companies, and the timber industry. The Tolupán territory in San Francisco de Locomapa, Yoro Department, has one of the best pine forests in Honduras. Tolupán tribal leader José María Pineda has affirmed on several occasions that government authorities are implementing forest management plans that represent capitalist interests but disrespect the ancestral title processed in 1864. The San Francisco de Locomapa tribe has previously denounced that the previous administration of the National Institute for Conservation and Forest Development (ICF) granted a forest management plan in favor of the timber businessman Wilder Domínguez, owner of the INMARE logging company.

After the election of new tribal leaders on March 26, there has been increased pressure from logging companies to threaten and discredit the Tolupán tribes, who are organized into 26 tribes throughout Yoro Department and organized in the Federation of Xicaques of Yoro Tribes (FETRIXY). In April, criminal groups threatened members of various tribes when they were on their way to participate in a workshop on the rights of indigenous peoples, which gathered leaders of most FETRIXY tribes. Stefany Contreras, a lawyer with the Broad Movement for Dignity and Justice (Movimiento Amplio por la Dignidad y la Justicia, MADJ), told the media that the loggers are retaliating for recent actions taken by the new tribal board of directors. The newly elected leadership has asked the ICF to not receive or process any requests for forest management plans in the territory that corresponds to the tribe of San Francisco de Locomapa.


We demand that the Honduran state fulfill its responsibility to guarantee the life and liberty of Indigenous territorial defenders and that your government:

- investigate the threats made against José María Pineda and his daughters and hold those responsible accountable
- guarantee the safety of José María Pineda, for whom the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) ordered protection measures in 2013, in strict accordance with his wishes
- investigate any threats or acts of violence targeting the leaders of the Federation of Xicaques of Yoro Tribes (FETRIXY), publish the results, and bring those to justice

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinators



Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Javier Efraín Bú Soto, Ambassador of Honduras in Washington, DC ~ 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 (IACHR) ~ via email and US mail
Isabel Albaladejo Escibano, 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 Ariel Jahner ~ 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

13 APR 2023_CriterioHN_Honduras

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