

Blanca Sarahí Izaguirre Lozano
National Commissioner for Human Rights of Honduras (CONADEH)
via email

June 26, 2023

Dear Commissioner:

We are writing to you *again* about the threats and violence aimed at the Tolupán Indigenous people by extraction industries (loggers and miners) in the Department of Yoro. For many years, Tolupán communities (whose 26 tribes are organized in the Federation of Xicaques of Yoro Tribes, or FETRIXY), have been defending their ancestral lands from the economic interests of outsiders. In recent months, the tribes of San Francisco de Locomapa, Las Vegas de Tepemechín and Mina Honda have all elected new boards of directors with clear leadership that seek the liberation of Tolupán territories, the defense of the common goods, and the vindication of their rights. However, these transitions have angered the logging and mining companies and landowners, accustomed for years to dispossession and imposing their will with impunity.

Estefany Contreras, a lawyer for the Broad Movement for Dignity and Justice (MADJ) in Yoro, asserts that the changes in the boards of directors of the three tribes have led to an increase in violence, threats and persecution of the Tolupán people. On May 9 in San Francisco de Locomapa, Indigenous defender **Amilcar Vieda** was viciously murdered, alongside community member **Naún Ismael Chacón**; they were shot to death, and then their bodies were burned. In the same Tolupán community, **Ramon Santiago Matute** the new president of the board of directors, and **José María Pineda**, coordinator of the Tolupán Tribal Preventive Council of San Francisco de Locomapa (and his daughters) received death threats (cf our letter 26 May 2023). In Las Vegas de Tepemechín, some of the Indigenous leaders have been forced to flee from their homes because of threats made against them and their families, and the previous president of the board of directors, **Reynaldo Barahona**, suffered several physical attacks against him. And in Mina Honda a similar situation is playing out involving the newly elected president of the board of directors, **Santos Lucas**, due to the fact that he opposes the extraction of minerals, felling of trees and contamination of water sources in the area.


These people are organizing to defend their ancestral lands and resources that make it possible for them to continue their way of life and pass down their cultural heritage and territories to their children. The logging and mining groups in power obviously don't like any activities that interrupt their profits, and they have no qualms about resorting to violence to continue their extortive practices, and they encounter almost no obstacles or consequences from the authorities. This unjust situation is in direct conflict with the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights, which has urged the protection of the leaders and members of the Tolupán tribes.

We strongly urge that the government of Honduras:

- comply with the United Nations recommendation to take necessary measures so that Tolupán leaders and tribal members can carry out their work in defense of their territories and cultural heritage in a propitious and safe environment
- investigate ALL reports of threats and violence against Toulpán leaders—including the assassinations of Amilcar Vieda and Naún Ismael Chacón—and hold accountable those responsible

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 Escobano, 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
MADJ: Broad Movement for Dignity and Justice / Movimiento Amplio por la Dignidad y la Justicia ~ 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 Beatty, Brown, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Miller, Sykes ~ via email

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