

Blanca Sarahí Izaguirre Lozano

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

August 23, 2023

Dear Commissioner:

We are deeply distressed that on August 9, 2023 in the Guanchías sector of Yoro Department, police evicted around 700 campesino families totaling 3,000 people, united in at least 30 cooperatives affiliated with the **National Federation of Rural Workers of Honduras (FENACH)**, the **National Center of Field Workers (CNTC)** and the **Movement of Landless Peasants of Yoro (MCCSTDY)**. Crops and homes were burned in this egregious act of illegal state violence.

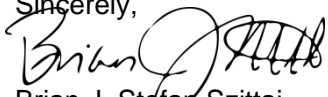
More than 100 police officers arrived on August 9 with tanks and other armored vehicles to force the campesino families to leave within two hours. Just one day before, the campesino organizations had signed an agreement with the Honduran Institute of Agricultural Marketing (IHMA) to sell their corn. But on August 9, police burned about 865 acres of corn, which would have yielded approximately 626,000 pounds of corn in a nation the United Nations declared has 4.9 million suffering from moderate to mild food insecurity.

Recently, the government of President Xiomara Castro installed the Commission for Agrarian Security and Access to Land (Comisión de Seguridad Agraria y Acceso a la Tierra). Although the Commission has the objective of settling disputes over land titles, violent evictions have increased since its inception. In the case of the campesino farms in Guanchías, a private sugar company is making claim to the land. Azucarera del Norte SA (Azunosa), a company controlled by the Honduran group Caña de Azúcar Holdings and Inversiones Azucareras del Valle, has filed a civil lawsuit against the peasant organizations, but no legal resolution has been determined. The forced displacement and destruction of property that occurred on August 9 is a violation of legal due process sponsored by the state to support the aims of Azunosa.

Because of the repeated violation of human rights Azunosa has committed against peasants and our concern for the now destitute peasants, we call upon your integrity to:

- carry out a thorough and impartial investigation into the Commission for Agrarian Security and Access to Land, including the fraudulent and violent ways in which agro-industrial companies have seized lands granted to campesinos under programs of agrarian reform
- instruct the Commission to stop executing new evictions against campesino farm lands in favor of companies, and allow the disputes to proceed through judicial processes
- investigate the possible complicity of judges from the judiciary of El Progreso, Yoro, in the forced displacement of August 9
- follow the normal course of judicial due process with the lawsuit filed by Azunosa, including past fraudulent means to take these lands in the 1990s

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator


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 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
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

09 AUG 2023_IM-Defensoras_Honduras

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