

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

August 25, 2023

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre Lozano:

We are deeply concerned about the continued violence against land and water defenders in Honduras, including the recent illegal detention of **Arnold Alemán** in Guapinol, Tocoa, Colón Department, on August 15. This incident adds to the growing list of human rights defenders who have already been threatened, intimidated, or lost their lives in the Aguán Valley in northern Honduras this year alone.

Arnold Alemán and his spouse and daughter were returning from a doctor's appointment at 9pm on August 15 when police illegally detained him. After being arrested, he was transferred to Tela and then San Pedro Sula because of a supposed arrest warrant that in reality was related to a legal case that has since been resolved and closed. He was later released from detention.


Arnold Alemán was one of the eight defenders from Guapinol who were released from prison in February of 2022 after having spent 29 months incarcerated without just cause. The Guapinol water defenders have been systematically persecuted by the Honduran State through criminalization and the victim of smear and defamation campaigns. Five years of persecution points to an illegal iron oxide mine owned by Inversiones Los Pinares/Ecotek, located in a carved out slice of the Montaña de Botaderos National Park "Carlos Escaleras." The Municipal Committee in Defense of the Common and Public Goods (CMDBCPT) of Tocoa has denounced since August 2022 a hate and smear campaign that has escalated to surveillance, harassment, and threats against the lives of leaders who oppose the destruction of the park for the installation of two open-pit mining concessions. CMDBCPT warned that agribusiness corporations like Dinant were surveilling and planning to assassinate peasant leadership because of the farmers' efforts to reclaim lands stolen from them (cf our letter of 23 NOV 2022). Indeed, two of the Guapinol defenders were assassinated this year (cf our letters 24 JAN 2023, 21 JUN 2023). Inversiones Los Pinares/Ecotek is co-owned by the politically powerful Lenir Pérez and his wife Ana Facussé, daughter of the deceased oligarch and land baron Miguel Facussé, who was also the owner of Dinant.

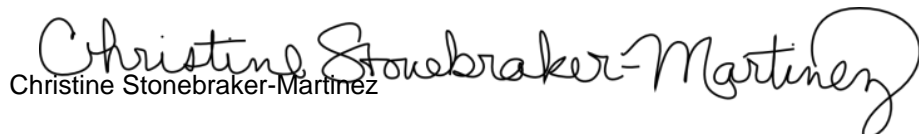
In the case of Arnold Alemán, although he was acquitted of all criminal charges, the police stated that an arrest warrant was still in force. The Guapinol water defenders are frustrated that there is no protocol among the judiciary, the police and the Public Ministry when a person is released from prison. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Honduras (OHCHR) also expressed concern about this detention on August 15.

We condemn the Honduran state for continuing to persecute Arnold Alemán and his family, who after years of imprisonment, still cannot return to having a normal life. We strongly urge you to:

- cancel the illegal mining concessions given to Inversiones Los Pinares
- demilitarize the Guapinol community as a first step in distancing the government from protecting the interests of Inversiones Los Pinares over those of local residents
- establish protocols to expunge arrest warrants for defenders who have been granted their freedom, and create protocol to share the records across the judiciary, Public Ministry, and police
- employ any measures needed to protect land and water defenders in the Aguán Valley from any further violence or persecution, in strict accordance with their wishes

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  
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 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

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