

Blanca Sarahí Izaguirre Lozano

National Commissioner for Human Rights of Honduras (CONADEH)

via email

September 21, 2023

Dear Commissioner:

We strongly condemn the criminal attack against Afro-indigenous Garífuna leader **Miriam Miranda**, the widely respected coordinator of the Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras (OFRANEH). On September 19 in the early morning, four armed men entered her home in the Garífuna community of Vallecito, Colón, with the apparent intent of causing her physical harm.

For many years, the list of attacks on Miriam has grown to be quite extensive, while the list of those punished for such attacks is non-existent. In February 2022, Miriam received death threats by telephone. Months later in August 2022, the Attorney General's (AG) office announced they were opening a criminal investigation against Miriam and other defenders for protesting in front of the AG's office demanding justice and action related to the forced disappearance of four Garífuna land defenders from the community of Trío de la Cruz. Years ago, Miriam was also abducted by armed men in Vallecito, despite having protective measures from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights since 2011.

The recent attack on Miriam Miranda exemplifies the danger facing Garífuna community leaders who are defending their lands across the north coast of Honduras. The violence and attacks against the Garífuna people are perpetuated by actors with names, faces, and significant economic interests. Foreign and Honduran tourist interests, mining and energy companies, developers of the Zones of Economic Development and Employment (ZEDEs), African palm, banana, and other agro-industrial companies operate in full complicity with many elements of the military, police, local authorities, and organized criminal groups within this and past governments. Many of the projects linked to these interests operate in total impunity and with tremendous violence that seeks to displace the Garífuna peoples from their beautiful ancestral lands. This must stop.

In defense of Garífuna communities and leaders, we urge that your government:

- investigate the attack on Miriam Miranda, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- consult with Miriam Miranda to additional forms of protection
- work to end all attacks, threats, criminalization, kidnapping, forced disappearances, land theft, and murders of Garífuna land defenders
- create a plan to implement the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) rulings of 2015 condemning Honduras for their violations of Garífuna land and cultural rights, ordering restitution of stolen lands, and to cease all current and future efforts that displace Garífuna communities

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
Margarette May Macaulay, Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons of African Descent, 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: