

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

October 26, 2023

Dear Commissioner:

We strongly condemn ongoing attacks against Afro-indigenous Garífuna leaders and community members along the Atlantic coast of Honduras. Community leader **Norma Lino** was injured in an armed attack on September 26 in the Garífuna community of Puerto Castilla, Colón Department. Armed men entered reclaimed ancestral property and began shooting.


Norma Lino and others who were injured, including a minor, received treatment at a nearby hospital. They proceeded to file a complaint at the National Police office in Trujillo, about 20 km south of Puerto Castilla. The police told the injured Garífuna community members that the type of ammunition used in the attack was for killing pigeons, not people, and that the aggressor was not going to be held for long. Norma Lino and the others responded that they were not registering a legal complaint for attempted murder but for a number of threats and incidents with the perpetrator that they had previously experienced. The police in Trujillo were dismissive and racist in their remarks with the community members who had just suffered this attack.

The attack on Puerto Castilla on September 26, like the attack on Miriam Miranda, general coordinator of OFRANEH (Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras) on September 19 (cf our letter 21 SEP 2023), exemplifies the dangers facing Garífuna community members and leaders who are defending their lands across the north coast of Honduras. The violent attacks against the Garífuna people are a systematic process perpetuated by powerful economic interests with the collusion of the State. Foreign and Honduran tourist interests, mining and energy companies, developers of the Zones of Economic Development and Employment (ZEDEs), and agro-industrial companies operate in full complicity with elements of the military, police, local authorities, and organized criminal groups.

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

- investigate the attack on the Garífuna residents of Puerto Castilla, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- consult with residents of Puerto Castilla to implement 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-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
 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

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