

Blanca Saraí Izaguirre Lozano  
National Commissioner for Human Rights (CONADEH)  
Tegucigalpa, Honduras

February 14, 2024

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre Lozano:

We write to reiterate our call that the State of Honduras work to end the persecution of land, environmental, and human rights defenders in the Aguán Valley of northern Honduras.

**Franklin Izaguirre**, president of the Camarones Farmers Agricultural Cooperative, was almost assassinated the on January 27. At 11:30 a.m., he left his work at the cooperative and was driving toward his home in Colonia Suyapa, Tocoa, Colón Department. He was surprised by two heavily armed men aboard a motorcycle who shot him repeatedly. Although he was injured in the neck, hand and right side, he still managed to reach an area to ask for help, and he was taken to a medical center for treatment. His vehicle had received at least 12 gunshots.

In a similar event the same morning, **leaders of the Brisas del Aguán Farmers' Agricultural Cooperative** including the president, treasurer, and vice president, were attacked. While they were driving on the detour of the CA13 highway towards their cooperative farm, four heavily armed hooded men emerged from inside palm trees adjacent to the farm. The hooded men began to shoot repeatedly, leaving gunshot holes in the rear window of the vehicle. They approached the vehicle and subdued the cooperative leaders with their weapons. Then they fled with the victims' mobile telephones and an amount of 330,000.00 lempiras (more than \$13,000 in US dollars) that was intended for the payroll of the 200 families that make up the cooperative. Fortunately, the cooperative leaders were not physically harmed, and they were able to file a formal complaint with the Police Investigation Directorate (DPI) about the attack and theft.

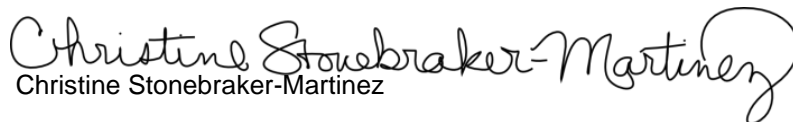
Under an agrarian reform policy, the families of the Brisas del Aguán Agricultural Cooperative have occupied the farm (in the community of San José del Cinco, Bonito Oriental municipality) since July 25, 2022. Because of the continued violence against campesinos in the region, they, along with leaders of other campesino agricultural cooperatives, signed an agreement with the current national government on February 22, 2022 to establish a Tripartite Commission, mandated to investigate human rights violations (including assassinations) of campesino leaders in the Aguán. According to campesino leaders, agroindustrialists are employing criminal organizations to wage violence against the campesinos. The large private landholders are fearful because of the government's recent announcements of the pre-installation and financing for the Tripartite Commission.

We urge that authorities in Honduras

- carry out an exhaustive and transparent investigation into the assassination attempt on Franklin Izaguirre and the leaders of Las Brisas Cooperative, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- activate a true protection plan for land defenders in the Aguán Valley, in consultation with cooperative leadership
- reevaluate, reimplement and fully fund protection measures granted to land defenders in the Aguán Valley by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights; order MC50-14 was granted to protect 12 land defenders in 2014 and was extended to 32 defenders in 2016

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  
Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR): Rapporteurs Andrea Pochak (for Honduras) ~ 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 Tegucigalpa: Laura F. Dogu (ambassador) and Joe Duran, Human Rights Officer ~ via email  
US State Department: Bryan Schell, Honduras Desk Officer (Washington, DC)  
US Senators Brown & Vance ~ via email  
US Representatives Beatty, Brown, 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:**