

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

February 15, 2024

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre Lozano:

We are deeply concerned for the well-being of **José Abel López Perdomo**, a community spokesperson for land and environmental defense and member of the Remolino Cooperative of Campesinos in the Aguán Valley of northern Honduras, specifically Trujillo, Colón Department.

In the morning hours of January 30, José Abel López Perdomo and other members of the cooperative were transporting palm fruit when their vehicle was intercepted by hooded men carrying heavy caliber weapons. At gunpoint, they forced him into another vehicle (a red Ford Escape) and headed in the direction of Saba. His whereabouts are still unknown.

Since December 2022, criminal groups operating in the region (suspected to be allied with agroindustrial companies) have been trying to extort campesino families. José Abel López Perdomo has been outspoken in denouncing their activities and encouraging the families to resist their demands. He has also been the victim of false criminalization by the Agroindustrial Company Oleopalma and the head of security of the company Grupo Litoral, hired by Oleopalma, who accuse him of usurpation of the Remolino farm. The campesino families of Remolino have been occupying the farm for two years, asserting that the land was to be given to them under an agrarian reform program. They claim that they were deprived of the farm by way of deception, persecution, criminalization and murders. So they moved onto the land and began farming.

Because of the continued violence against campesinos in the region, the Remolino Cooperative, 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.

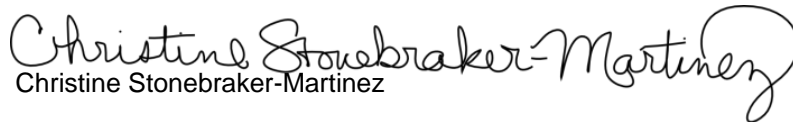
The kidnapping of José Abel López Perdomo occurred just three days after the assassination attempt on **Franklin Izaguirre**, president of the Camarones Farmers Agricultural Cooperative and the attack on leaders of the Brisas del Aguán Agricultural Cooperative (cf our letter 14 FEB 2024).

We urge that authorities in Honduras

- carry out an exhaustive and transparent investigation into the kidnapping of José Abel López Perdomo, 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:**