

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

September 22, 2024

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre Lozano:

We are writing to express our profound concern and indignation regarding the assassination of **Olman García Ortiz**, coordinator of the Campesino Movement of Ceibita Way. On the afternoon of August 4, hitmen shot him multiple times while he was riding his motorcycle in the village of Ceibita Way, municipality of Esparta, Atlántida Department. His murder highlights the risks that land defenders continue to face in Honduras.

Olman García Ortiz was dedicated to promoting access to land and land tenure for small farmers. His local organization was affiliated with the CNTC (National Union of Rural Workers), which was created in 1985 as a small-scale farming and trade union organization. The CNTC advocates and organizes for land redistribution in Honduras, where fewer than 5% of landowners control 60% of the fertile terrain. The CNTC is affiliated with the Unified Confederation of Honduran Workers (CUTH) which in turn is affiliated with the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), along with more than 150 national and international organizations.

The state has failed to protect land defenders at risk from large landholders, agricultural corporations (such as Dinant), and their accomplices. We understand from CNTC that the Protection Mechanism denied Olman García's request for a protection scheme. CNTC has also stated that there is collusion between powerful economic interests and the National Preventive Police and the Cobras Special Forces. Those state security forces have a record of culpability in a series of acts of violence and serious violations of human rights against peasant families fighting for their right to land and food.

We strongly urge that officials in Honduras

- conduct a thorough and transparent investigation into the assassination of Olman García Ortiz, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- investigate any alliances in illegal activities (including human rights violations) among large landholders, agricultural corporations, public prosecutors, and state security forces
- offer protection schemes to land defenders at risk, in strict accordance with their wishes

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-coordinators



Christine Stonebraker Martínez

copies: Javier Efraín Bú Soto, Ambassador of Honduras in Washington, DC ~ via email and US mail
Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR): Rapporteur 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 (OACNUDH) ~ via email
CNTC: Central Nacional de Trabajadores del Campo / National Union of Rural Workers ~ 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: