

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

November 22, 2025

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre Lozano:

We are writing to express our grave concern regarding the recent escalation of violence, intimidation, and racist defamation targeting Garífuna communities and their human rights defenders along the Atlantic coast of Honduras, including leadership of OFRANEH (Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras).

According to multiple reports, on October 27 armed men carried out an attack in the Garífuna community of Vallecito, Colón Department, apparently aimed at **Miriam Miranda**, coordinator of OFRANEH, despite existing protective measures granted to her by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. That same day, Garífuna defender **Melissa Martínez**, community leader from Punta Gorda (Islas de la Bahía), received a death threat explicitly directed at her and her family. The message—using racist slurs and warning her to “watch her steps”—also referenced the enforced disappearance of four young men from Triunfo de la Cruz, Atlántida Department, in July 2020. (The disappeared men have never been located.)

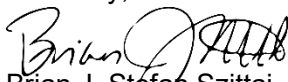
Another violent incident preceded this on October 23 when two armored vehicles carrying at least fifteen masked and heavily armed men surrounded the Garífuna reoccupation site of Barauda in Barranco Blanco, Trujillo, Colón Department. They fired weapons, threatened to kill Garífuna residents (including children and elders), and interrogated community members at gunpoint while police failed to respond to repeated emergency calls. On October 26, the media outlet *La Prensa* published a defamatory and false article accusing the Garífuna communities of illegally occupying tourist condominiums in Trujillo. This is part of a broader racist media campaign that has fueled hostility and preceded armed attacks.

The Garífuna, descendants of Indigenous peoples from the Caribbean and formerly enslaved Africans, have lived on the Bay Islands and Atlantic coast since 1797. The State of Honduras has already been condemned three times by the Inter-American Court on Human Rights for violating the Garífuna people's right to collective land ownership in three separate communities: (1) Triunfo de la Cruz, Atlántida Department (2015); (2) Punta Piedra, Colón Department (2015); and (3) San Juan, Atlántida Department (2023).

We strongly urge that you:

- (1) ensure immediate, effective protection measures for Garífuna leaders and communities, including Melissa Martínez, Miriam Miranda, and residents of Vallecito and Barauda, with full consultation to guarantee cultural relevance and appropriateness
- (2) conduct thorough and impartial investigations into the armed attacks, threats, and the failure of police to respond, and hold accountable both the direct perpetrators and those who instigate violence through defamatory or racist media content
- (3) take concrete steps to guarantee the collective land rights of Garífuna communities (as ordered by the Inter-American Court on Human Rights in 2015 and 2023), halt the ongoing processes of dispossession, and hold accountable public officials and private investors who fail to respect their ancestral land rights
- (4) publicly reaffirm the State's obligation to combat racism and protect the Garífuna's right to defend their territories

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-coordinator

copies: Embassy of Honduras in Washington, DC ~ via email and US mail
Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR): Andrea Pochak (Rapporteur for Honduras) and Gloria Monique de Mees (Rapporteur on the Rights of Afro-descendants) ~ via email
Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OACNUDH): Isabel Albaladejo Escribano (Representative to Honduras), Alice Shackelford (UN Resident Coordinator in Honduras) ~ via email
US State Department: Honduras Desk Officer (Washington, DC) ~ via email
US Embassy in Tegucigalpa: Roy Perrin (Chargé d'Affaires ad interim) and Human Rights Officer ~ via email
US Congress: Senators from Ohio (Husted and Moreno) and US Representatives from Ohio (Beatty, Brown, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Miller, Rulli, Sykes) ~ via email

29 OCT 2025_IM_Defensoras_Honduras

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