

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

June 26, 2026

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre Lozano:

We are deeply distressed over the **massacre of 20 campesinos** that occurred early in the morning of May 21 in the community of **Rigores in the Bajo Aguán Valley** in Colón Department. Gathered in prayer on a palm plantation to begin their workday, the farm workers were met by several heavily armed men wearing Honduran police uniforms (although it is unclear whether the perpetrators were actually state security forces or private actors). They opened fire, killing all 20 (including five who were minor children of some of the workers). This inhumane act of violence is just one manifestation of structural violence perpetrated against rural communities defending their right to land.

The struggle of campesinos to secure land in that area has historically resulted in violence from armed groups. In the past decade, there have been more than 200 victims of armed conflicts arising from movements to reclaim farmworkers' land in the Bajo Aguán region. This area became the capital of agrarian reform beginning in the 1970s when hundreds of families relocated to these fertile lands under the promise of economic opportunity. Its vast size and high value for agricultural production also made it a highly coveted place for various agro-industrial actors. In the 1990s, legislation (Decree 93-2021) facilitated the mass purchase of land by agro-industrial entrepreneurs.

Today, campesinos in the Bajo Aguán live in the reality created by these state-sanctioned actions: land dispossession and ongoing violent turmoil with the palm oil corporations. Their vulnerability is further heightened by extreme poverty; 80 percent experience limited access to land, food, essential resources, and markets. Additionally, Decree 93-2021 legalized "preventive eviction" that enables evictions without proper safeguards or human rights considerations. Taken together, this longstanding history of systemic oppression limits the ability of campesinos to exercise meaningful control over the lands that they cultivate, while simultaneously creating an environment in which they are vulnerable to human rights abuses and exploitation.

No one should die defending their right to land, water, and life. Therefore, in light of the horrific massacre of the 20 campesinos in Rigores, we ask the following of the Honduran government:

- a thorough, independent, and impartial investigation to hold accountable those materially and intellectually responsible for the massacre
- robust security measures for the families of the victims, in strict accordance with their wishes
- preventative institutional presence in territories where agrarian conflicts are endemic
- termination of legislation that criminalizes the defense of campesino and Indigenous lands
- public recognition of the link between the systemic violence suffered by Honduran rural communities and the concentration of land in the hands of agribusiness

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-coordinator

copies: Roberto Flores Bermúdez, Embassy of Honduras in Washington, DC ~ via email and US mail
Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR): Andrea Pochak (Rapporteur for Honduras) ~ via email
Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OACNUDH): Juan Carlos Monge (Representative to Honduras)
UN Team in Honduras: Alejandro Alvarez (Resident Coordinator) ~ via email
US State Department: Honduras Desk Officer (Washington, DC) ~ via email
US Embassy in Tegucigalpa: Colleen Hoey (Chargé d'Affaires) and Human Rights Officer ~ via email
US Senators from Ohio (Husted and Moreno) and US Representatives from Ohio (Beatty, Brown, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Miller, Rulli, Sykes) ~ via email

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