

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

August 21, 2026

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre Lozano:

We are writing once again to express our deep concern over the criminalization and detention of the five members of the Honduran Black Fraternal Organization (OFRANEH) in the violent and unjust eviction of the Garifuna community of San Juan, Tela in Honduras.

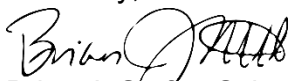
On July 6, over 200 police officers, with the use of tear gas, threats, and live ammunition, invaded the Garifuna community of San Juan, Tela Bay, Atlántida Department, to execute an eviction. In the process, **Deinor Osmany Mejía Arzu, Irbin Rene López Cortes, Carlos Enrique Fernández Guzmán, Onil Riboberto Hernández Zelaya, and Sara Abigail Acosta** were detained on a wrongful account of aggravated usurpation of their ancestral territory. These events were performed under the pretext of the Law for the Strengthening and Protection of the Agro-industrial Sector, Energy Projects, Tourism, Livestock, and Small Agro-industrial Producers of Honduras.

Since August 10, members of OFRANEH, including residents of the San Juan Tela community, have been holding a legal protest encampment ("Por la Vida del Pueblo Garífuna") in front of the Supreme Court in Tegucigalpa. They point to the 2023 judgment by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights that recognizes the Garifuna people's ancestral rights to the territory of San Juan. They demand that the Supreme Court order a dismissal of all charges because the criminalization of the five residents of San Juan Tela is illegal.

We strongly urge that the authorities of the Honduran government:

- drop all charges against San Juan community members: Deinor Osmany Mejía Arzube, Irbin Rene Lopez Cortes, Carlos Enrique Fernández Guzmán, Onil Rigoberto Hernandez Zelaya, and Sara Abigail Acosta
- allow the OFRANEH encampment to continue without harassment or threats from authorities, until OFRANEH decides to end the encampment
- immediately implement the rulings of the InterAmerican Court of Human Rights court that recognize and protect the rights of the Garifuna communities of San Juan, Triunfo de la Cruz, Punto Piedra, and Cayos Cochinos
- stop all violent violations of the territorial, civil, and human rights of the Garífuna people
- prevent any further criminalization of defenders of land collectively owned by the Garífuna people.

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) and Gloria Monique de Mees (Rapporteur on the Rights of Afro-descendant Persons) ~ 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: