

JAN 2022: Rapid Response Network

Please see below a summary of the letters we sent to heads of state and other high-level officials in Colombia and Honduras, urging their swift action in response to human rights abuses occurring in their countries. We join with civil society groups in Latin America to:

- protect people living under threat
- demand investigations into human rights crimes
- bring human rights criminals to justice

IRTF's Rapid Response Network (RRN) volunteers write six letters in response to urgent human rights cases each month. We send copies of these letters to US ambassadors, embassy human rights officers, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, regional representatives of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and desk officers at the US State Department. To read the letters, see <https://www.irtfcleveland.org/content/rrn> , or ask us to mail you hard copies.

Rapid Response Network (RRN) letters this month

JAN 11 2022

COLOMBIA

brutal police crackdown on transit equity protests

The National Police and its Anti-Riot Mobile Squad (ESMAD) carried out brutal repression against residents who are protesting against fare increases in Bogota's TransMilenio transportation system. On January 5, ESMAD agents arrived with two military tanks at the Molinos neighborhood of Bogotá. They threw stun grenades at demonstrators and fired tear gas indiscriminately. ESMAD detained a young journalist and kicked him. As many as 2,500 National Police and ESMAD officers were deployed around the city on January 11, when the fare increase went into effect. Many demonstrators have been arrested.

You can read the full letter at <https://www.irtfcleveland.org/content/rrn/2022-01-11-000000>

JAN 12 2022

HONDURAS

assassinated: Pablo Isabel Hernández, Lenca Indigenous leader

Pablo was the second oldest of eight siblings. His father, Natividad Hernández, tells the reporter that Pablo had received many threats over the past few years because of all the injustices he called out on his radio program.

On Sunday, January 9, Pablo and his father were walking together to church in their village of Tierra Colorada. Natividad stopped to chat with a neighbor while Pablo headed on alone. Natividad followed about two blocks behind his son as they made their way toward the church. Natividad heard gunshots. One of Pablo's brothers ran to Natividad and cried, "Dad, hurry up! They got my brother!" When Natividad arrived at the spot where Pablo lay, he was already dead. The assassins had gotten away.

They killed Pablo Hernández with nine gunshots just five blocks from his home.

"That day he was walking with nothing except the holy scriptures in his bag, a small hat, his eyeglasses," said his father.

<https://contracorriente.red/2022/01/28/pablo-hernandez-lider-indigena-asesinado-denunciaba-redes-de-corrupcion-en-el-occidente-de-honduras/>

JAN 13 2022

COLOMBIA

military allows paramilitaries to gain control in South of Bolívar

In our RRN letter of January 13, 2022, we expressed deep concern to officials in Colombia about the lack of government response to the paramilitary invasion of campesino townships and villages in the South of Bolívar Department (Sur de Bolívar) which began during the last week of December, despite a large presence of the Colombian Armed Forces. The Armed Forces are allowing paramilitaries to take control. We are worried that massive displacement of villagers might result.

We are urging authorities in Colombia to (1) consult with local leadership in the Montecristo region to devise a plan to protect the local population from further violence and displacement by paramilitary forces, (2) reevaluate the mission the Colombian Armed Forces in the region, and (3) take decisive actions to dismantle paramilitary groups that are operating in the South of Bolívar.

You can read the full letter at <https://www.irtfcleveland.org/content/rrn/2022-01-13-000000>

JAN 24 2022

HONDURAS

police detain, beat Garífuna territorial defenders Leonard Brown and Luis Alberto Gutierrez

We wrote to officials in Honduras to express our outrage at the constant persecution of Garífuna defenders of their ancestral territories along the northern coast of Honduras. On January 13, police arrested Leonard Brown and Luis Alberto Gutierrez, two Garífuna territorial defenders from the Waba To community in Colón Department. The following day, OFRANEH (Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras) denounced that both men had been "savagely beaten inside the cell" of the local police center. The state has been pressuring Garífuna residents to abandon Waba To at the behest of foreign investors.

We demand that authorities: (1) drop criminal charges against Leonard Brown and Luis Alberto Gutierrez; (2) investigate any physical harm inflicted on the men during their arrest and make accountable police agents who are responsible for those injuries; (3) comply with judgments of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to protect Garífuna communities against hostility and pressure from intruders and criminal groups; and (4) work with Garífuna leaders to demarcate and register land titles.

You can read the full letter at <https://www.irtfcleveland.org/content/rrn/2022-01-24-000000>

JAN 25 2022

HONDURAS

continued militarization of 200-year-old cemetery at behest of Aura Minerals gold mining

During the final weeks of President Hernández's term, Miami-based Aura Minerals seemed eager to move full steam ahead with its desecration of a 200-year-old Maya Chortí cemetery in Azacualpa. The military and National Police were deployed to facilitate Aura's exhumation of graves so that they can get their hands on gold reserves underneath. Community residents trying to protect their deceased relatives' final resting place are threatened, detained, and beaten.

We echo the demands of the residents of Azacualpa to (1) order a suspension of the exhumations of graves in the cemetery, (2) order a retreat of the military and police from the cemetery hill, and (3) reassure the community's access to the cemetery.

You can read the full letter at <https://www.irtfcleveland.org/content/rrn/2022-01-25-000000>

JAN 26 2022

HONDURAS

assassination of trans community leader Thalía Rodríguez

Impunity runs rampant in crimes against LGBTI persons in Honduras. Shot in the head at her home in Tegucigalpa on January 10, Thalía Rodríguez became the first transwoman murdered in Honduras this year and the 400th trans person killed in Honduras since 2009. A local

businesswoman who ran a neighborhood store for 30 years, Thalía Rodríguez, age 58, was known and respected in the LGBTI rights movement. She was an advocate for discrimination-free living for those diagnosed with HIV. She led the trans rights group Asociación Cozumel Trans and was a member of Red Lésbica Cattrachas.

We are urging that authorities in Honduras carry out an investigation into the killing of Thalía Rodríguez, in accordance with a 2021 ruling by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights re the state's culpability (in the 2009 killing of well-known trans activist Vicky Hernández) and failure to investigate crimes against members of the trans community.

You can read the full letter at <https://www.irtfcleveland.org/content/rrn/2022-01-26-000000>