

## **AUG 2021: Rapid Response Network**

Please see below a summary of the letters we sent to heads of state and other high-level officials in Colombia, Guatemala, 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/r rn> , or ask us to mail you hard copies.

### **Rapid Response Network (RRN) letters this month**

**AUG 1 2021**

**HONDURAS**

**Intimidated: Olga Velázquez , environmental defender, victim of home intrusion by men dressed as police**

Members of the Environmental Committee of the Siria Valley live with constant threat. In 2019, during an in-country visit by delegates of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), environmentalist **Olga Velázquez** gave testimony that she was being subjected to intimidation and surveillance by strange men at night. Flash forward two years later. At approximately 8:00pm on July 28, five men dressed in Preventive Police uniforms arrived at her house in Cedros municipality, Francisco Morazán Department. They did not arrive in a police patrol car. Olga recognized the civilian car as one similar to one parked in front of her house a few days prior. In an act of intimidation, three of the men entered her house without justification or confirming their identities.

We demand that authorities in Honduras: (1) conduct a thorough and transparent investigation into the invasion of the home of Olga Velázquez, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice, and (2) provide any protection measures requested by Olga Velázquez and other members of the Environmental Committee of the Siria Valley, in strict accordance with their wishes

**AUG 2 2021**

**HONDURAS**

**Guapinol**

**arrested: environmental defender Reynaldo Domínguez**

The government of Honduras—in collusion with mining companies—continues to harass and criminalize environmental defenders. On July 23 the National Police unjustly detained (and, fortunately, later released) **Reynaldo Domínguez**. Reynaldo is one of many environmental defenders in the northern coastal departments of Honduras who continue to defend the Guapinol River and advocate for the release of the Guapinol 8—eight environmental defenders who have been in pre-trial detention since September 2019. He is active with the Committee Pro-Defense for the Common Good, which is working to get the government to cancel the environmental license granted to the Honduran company Inversiones Los Pinares to operate an iron oxide mine within the Montaña de Botaderos National Park. It is widely understood that the extraction of iron oxide is intended for the production of steel by Nucor Corporation, which is based in Charlotte, North Carolina, in the United States.

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**AUG 3 2021**

**HONDURAS**

**assaulted by police: journalist Henry Fiallos**

Police in Honduras routinely use violence to repress freedom of expression. On August 1, while reporting for TVC Corporation, police officers in Intibucá shoved journalist **Henry Fiallos** to the ground and broke his mobile phone. Henry Fiallos had been receiving death threats (threatening to kill his children) because of his reporting on the case of

Keyla Martínez (cf IRTF RRN letter February 15, 2021), who was killed in police custody in February.

This is not the first time that police attacked Henry Fiallos. In July 2020, while the journalist and his cameraman were covering an attempted escape of inmates from La Esperanza prison, a police officer was recorded on video hitting the cameraman on his right arm to prevent him from recording the unfolding news events.

We demand an immediate investigation and disciplinary action against the police who assaulted journalist Henry Fiallos.

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**AUG 4 2021**

**GUATEMALA**

**assassinated: 16-year-old Indigenous land rights leader Regilson Choc Cac**

IRTF members wrote to the attorney general of Guatemala regarding the assassination of Campesino Committee of the Highlands (CCDA) member **Regilson Choc Cac**, a Q'eqchi Mayan sixteen-year-old land rights defender. He was murdered on July 20 at 10:30pm in San Juan Tres Ríos, Cobán, Alta Verapaz. Regilson Choc Cac was a community leader who had participated in dialogues related to a land dispute that has been ongoing in his community for the past ten years. He is the third leader of CCDA in San Juan Tres Ríos murdered in recent years.

We are urging that the government of Guatemala:

- (1) carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the assassination of Regilson Choc Cac, publish the results, capture both the material and intellectual actors, and bring them to justice, in accordance with international standards;
- (2) implement the necessary measures to guarantee the physical safety and psychological integrity of all the members of CCDA, in strict accordance with their wishes;
- (3) guarantee that all human rights defenders, in particular Indigenous and environmental rights defenders, are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of restrictions or reprisals in Guatemala.

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**AUG 15 2021**

**HONDURAS**

**assassinations and criminalization of land defenders in Bajo Aguán Valley**

Campesino organizers in the Bajo Aguán Valley of Honduras persist in their struggle for access to land to grow food for their families. The challenges are daunting: false criminalization of their leaders and continued assassinations. Long-standing land conflicts between campesinos and businesspersons in the Bajo Aguán have placed campesino leaders at serious risk for many years. Despite the granting of precautionary protective measures to 123 leaders in the region by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the killings continue. Assassinated in recent weeks were: **Santos Marcelo Torres**, former member of the campesino organization *Movimiento Campesino Fundación Gregorio Chávez* (MCRCG, also known as "Gregorio Chávez") (June 26, 2021) and **Juan Manuel Moncada**, a recent leader of "Gregorio Chávez" (July 6, 2021). Falsely criminalized are two current leaders of "Gregorio Chávez": **Jaime Adali Cabrera del Cid** and **Hipólito Rivas**. We demand that the Honduran Council of Private Enterprise (COHEP) stop making statements that stigmatize and falsely accuse the land defenders in the Bajo Aguán. We demand that the government of Honduras fully implement precautionary protective measures for land defenders in the Bajo Aguán Valley.

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**AUG 16 2021**

**COLOMBIA**

**assassinated: ex-FARC combatant and signer of Peace Accords, Jesús Danilo Mora Londoño**

Social leaders and ex-combatants who are working to forge peace in Colombia do so at their own peril. Since 2016, at least 278 signatories of the Peace Agreement have been assassinated. One of those is **Jesús Danilo Mora Londoño**, who was assassinated on July 21 in Puerto Leguízamo, Putumayo Department. He was traveling with his wife on a motorcycle taxi when two men wearing dark clothes and balaclavas (ski masks) forced him off the vehicle and killed him. As an ex-FARC combatant, Jesús Danilo Mora Londoño had been enrolled in the reincorporation process.

We are urging authorities in Colombia to

- (1) conduct a thorough and transparent investigation into the killing of Jesús Danilo Mora Londoño, publish the results, and bring the perpetrators to justice
- (2) take immediate steps to implement the peace process that includes security guarantees for social leaders and demobilized FARC combatants
- (3) implement the Strategic Security and Protection Plan for ex-combatants, previously urged by the UN Security Council
- (4) take decisive action to dismantle paramilitary groups that are operating in Putumayo

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