

DEC 2021: Rapid Response Network

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

Rapid Response Network (RRN) letters this month

DEC 01 2021

HONDURAS

unjust detention: human rights defender Lucía Enamorado and journalist Nancy García

In the early hours of the morning of November 14, officers of the National Police in Comayagüela, Francisco Morazán Department, arbitrarily stopped a vehicle, arrested the occupants, and beat one of them to the point where she had to be stitched up at the hospital. The victims: **Lucía Enamorado**, a local leader of the National Network of Human Rights Defenders, her partner **Junior Oyuela**, and journalist **Nancy Paola García**, a columnist for the feminist publication Tinta Verde. With understandable worry after being stopped, Junior Oyuela expressed verbal concern that "the police in Honduras disappeared people." The police arrested him. When Lucía Enamorado questioned why they were being detained, the police took her into the patrol car and beat her. She had to be taken to a hospital to receive stitches for her wounds. Despite her injuries, they held her in detention for several hours in the Fourth District Police Station in the Belén neighborhood of Comayagüela. They were released at 12:00pm after a social media campaign that pressured the National Police.

You can read the full letter at <https://www.irtfcleveland.org/content/rrn/2021-12-01-000000>

DEC 02 2021

HONDURAS

militarization: Maya-Chortí cemetery in Azacualpa

We wrote to officials in Honduras expressing our concerns about the **militarization of the 200-year-old Azacualpa community cemetery** in La Unión, Copán Department, by members of the Armed Forces and the National Police. The security forces have been deployed to ensure the exhumations of graves, to facilitate expansion of the San Andrés gold mine, which is owned by US- and Canada-based Aura Minerals and operated by its Honduran subsidiary MINOSA (Minerales de Occidente SA).

Exhumations of the mostly indigenous Maya-Chortí graves have occurred off and on for several years. But one year ago the Supreme Court of Justice issued an order to stop the exhumations. Despite that order, in October of this year a judge in Santa Rosa de Copán issued an “urgent order” to exhume, transfer and rebury the skeletal remains.

The removal of the cemetery is clearly due to the ever-increasing expansion of MINOSA’s mining operations, backed by government authorities and security forces. Those who oppose mining operations are spied on and threatened. Many opponents (at least 35) have been criminalized. You can read the full letter at <https://www.irtfcleveland.org/content/rmn/2021-12-02-000000>

DEC 13 2021

HONDURAS

intimidation and harassment: human rights lawyer Nidia Castillo

We wrote to officials in Honduras about acts of intimidation against Nidia Castillo, staff attorney with the National Network of Women Human Rights Lawyers in Choluteca. Unknown actors damaged her car, and a man on a motorcycle followed her when she left home to run errands on December 2. This was the same day she had attended a press conference to oppose the ZEDE Orquídea (Employment and Economic Development Zone); construction commenced in the village of Las Tapias in January. Due to the vast biological diversity of flora and fauna of this area situated near the border of Nicaragua, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) declared it a biosphere reserve in 2017. Opponents have concerns that the ZEDE’s industrial agriculture projects, designed to produce exports to the U.S., will create severe negative environmental destruction, disrupting communities and threatening the biosphere of the region.

You can read the full letter at <https://www.irtfcleveland.org/content/rmn/2021-12-13-000000>

DEC 14 2021

GUATEMALA

illegitimate consultation process with Maya Q'eqchi communities

We wrote to officials in the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM) of Guatemala to express our disappointment that it has not resolved the 15-year controversy surrounding the El Fénix nickel mine in El Estor, Izabal Department.

On December 10, the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM) announced that the community consultation process on the mine was officially completed and that mining operations could resume in January 2022. This is preposterous. The consultation—a process which normally takes at least a year to complete—was conducted in just over three months, during the majority of which the community of El Estor was under a state of siege (cf our letter of November 21, 2021).

The Xinka Parliament, the Q'eqchi' Ancestral Council, the Defensoría Q'eqchi', and the El Estor Fisherman's Guild have all refused to recognize the rushed and inadequate consultation process.

We are urging that MEM suspend the mining license until there is a new consultation process that includes the legitimate ancestral authorities who have been elected by their communities and representatives of the Fishermen's Guild.

You can read the full letter at <https://www.irtfcleveland.org/content/rrn/2021-12-14-000000>

DEC 15 2021

HONDURAS

eviction orders: campesino cooperatives in three departments

We wrote to officials in Honduras to protest the illegal eviction orders against several campesino cooperatives issued by three judges in three departments. Several private interests, among them the Honduran Council of Private Enterprise (COHEP), the Dinant Corporation, and the Agropalma company, have persuaded judges to issue the orders, which, we anticipate, will be backed up by military and police.

The families of the campesino cooperatives San Isidro, Trinidad, Despertar, Remolino, Camarones, Laureles, Tranvio, Paso Aguán and Plantel are facing imminent threat of eviction, even though the cooperatives are in possession of definitive titles that the National Agrarian Institute (INA) maintains in its archives. Although these cooperatives have filed numerous complaints with the government for the crime of usurpation against Dinant, Agropalma and Ceibeña investments for many years, the investigations have never advanced.

We strongly urge that government authorities take swift action to prevent any acts of violence against the campesino families who are making use of their legitimate right to access these lands.

You can read the full letter at <https://www.irtfcleveland.org/content/rrn/2021-12-15-000000>

DEC 16 2021

HONDURAS

forced eviction: campesino cooperative San Isidro

We wrote to officials in Honduras expressing our dismay about a court-ordered eviction of the San Isidro Campesino Cooperative which commenced today (Dec 16 2021) when 150 policemen arrived and forcibly evicted 80 families from the cooperative farm.

This is an illegal eviction that benefits wealthy private landowners and extractive companies in Honduras. In 2012, the San Isidro Cooperative recovered their lands after an arduous legal process. In 2019, a first eviction was carried out in a context of extreme violence. Yesterday, the San Isidro Cooperative tried to stop this eviction by presenting an appeal in the national jurisdiction court of Francisco Morazán. Although the appeal was accepted, two hours later the judge ordered the eviction of the community.

We are urging that authorities in Honduras order an investigation of the judges who are issuing these eviction orders as to whether there has been collusion between the court and private economic interests. Land rights groups are suspecting corruption, influence peddling, and bribery.

You can read the full letter at <https://www.irtfcleveland.org/content/rrn/2021-12-16-000000>