

Honduras – Afro-Honduran Garifuna community makes progress in protecting their native lands

RRN letters: Jun 21 2005, Dec 11 2005, Aug 16 2006

RRN members have written several letters on behalf the Garifuna (Afro-Honduran) people on the Atlantic coast of Honduras, especially those connected to OFRANEH (Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras). OFRANEH has been defending Garifuna communal territory from the advances of mega-tourist projects, large landowners, and other initiatives such as PATH, the Honduras Land Administration Project, financed by the World Bank. These projects threaten the community existence of the Garifuna people.

March 25, 2005: state authorities illegally entered and searched the house of OFRANEH activist Miriam Miranda, supposedly looking for weapons. The government has not clarified this and other acts of political persecution against Garifuna community leaders. (RRN letter June 21 2005)

May 20, 2005, Gregoria Flores, General Coordinator of OFRANEH and an important Garifuna leader people, was shot in the arm through her vehicle in La Ceiba, Department of Atlántida, by an unknown gunman while she was traveling to collect testimonies of human rights violations to present to the Inter-American Human Rights Commission. (RRN letter June 21 2005)

Nov 7, 2005: The home of Garifuna community leader Wilfredo Guerrero in San Juan Tela, Atlántida, was burned, destroying documents related to the San Juan Community Lands Defense Committee, which is trying to hold back tourist developers in the Tela Bay. (RRN letter Dec 11 2005)

June 22 2006: An unidentified man threatened to kill Jessica García, a Garifuna leader in San Juan Tela, and her children when she refused to sign over community land to a the owner of PROMOTUR, a tourist developer. (RRN letter Aug 16 2006)

Aug 6, 2006: Mirna Isabel Santos Thomas, a 19 year-old Garifuna member of San Juan Tela was kidnapped from her home and murdered by a group of masked men. (RRN letter Aug 16 2006)

GOOD NEWS! September 20, 2006: hundreds of members of the Garifuna community and OFRANEH gathered in front of the national congress demanding collective rights for their people. Finally, they got together with several state institutions and developed a letter of understanding, containing **approval of a budget for the “healing of the community.”** Another achievement was the **dissolution of PATH, the Honduras Land Administration Project, which had been misrepresenting the community** and causing divisions between community leaders.