

URGENT ACTION

The Committee of the Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared in Honduras (COFADEH) expresses its total repudiation of and concern for the violent eviction that was carried out on Thursday July 3, 2014 by members of the Joint Task Force Xatruch III of approximately 350 families of the "Gregorio Chavez" Movement from the Paso Aguán farm, located on the left bank of the Aguán River in the municipality of Trujillo, Colón, according to the following facts:

1. The action took place at about 11:00 A.M., when approximately 300 police and military members of JTF Xatruch III violently invaded the farm, and indiscriminately fired tear gas and live bullets at those present, including children and elderly people.
2. As a result of this operation, campesinos José Sánchez Méndez and David Ponce were seriously wounded and transferred to the hospital in Tocoa, where they are receiving medical care. Mariano Baquedano and Roger Rodríguez were also injured with a blunt weapon. They were also transferred to this hospital to receive medical attention.
3. Moreover, seven people were arrested during the eviction, including among them a minor, a woman, an elderly person, and a member of the Permanent Observatory of Human Rights in the Bajo Aguán. Although they were arrested at 11:00 A.M. the army did not turn them over to police custody until 4 P.M. exceeding the time allowed by law for a report to be issued to the Fiscal.
4. Those detained are: Jorge Meléndez (46); Moisés Meléndez (56); Gloria Enamorado; Jeremías Cruz; José Chavez (60); Hernán Ricardo Omar Ocampos and Ricardo Rodas (16). According to available information, these people will be prosecuted and charged with the crime of usurpation.

BACKGROUND:

The Panamá Finca had been occupied by the "Gregorio Chavez" campesino group since July 4, 2012, after DINANT Corporation private security guards disappeared the independent campesino Gregorio Chávez Aranda, who was later found buried on the farm of industrial farm magnate Miguel Facussé Barjum.

The campesinos were evicted in May 2013, after an exhumation was conducted by forensic anthropologists on April 25, 2013, during which the body of independent campesino José Antonio López Lara was also found.

Since then the families of the town of Panamá have been repeatedly evicted. On one such occasion four soldiers and twenty security guards illegally entered the parcel of José Chávez Aranda's , brother of Gregorio Chávez, and stole a large part of the crops he had on his land. José Chávez is one of the seven arrested on July 3.

It is also known that Deputy Comissioner Santos Núñez, member of the JTF Xatruch III, has previously intimidated the Coordinator of the Permanent Observatory of Human Rights in the Bajo Aguán, (OPDHA), Martha Arnold, asking her who they thought they were to document facts, and that although they are supported by international and national human rights organizations, "*that doesn't mean anything.*" He also required them to submit documents related to their legal status, not taking into account the International Conventions and Treaties for the Defense and Protection of Human Rights.

Similarly, intimidation from members of the JTF Xatruch III, headed by Jovel Martínez, is directed at campesino leaders in the department of Colón, like the case of Agrarian Platform in the Bajo Aguán coordinator Jaime Cárcamo, who stated that soldiers have singled him out and on some occasions have pointed him out as a "*land invader.*"

PETITION:

We ask the national and international community to request that the Stat of Honduras take the necessary steps to ensure and protect the integrity and life of the campesinos in the Bajo Aguán, who are active in the defense of the struggle for land. We ask that they perform proper investigations, identifying those responsible for the events described above.

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