

HONDURAS: CAMPESSINO LEADER KILLED, OTHERS COULD BE AT RISK

A community and campesino (peasant farmer) leader has been killed in northern Honduras on 11 November. The fatal incident follows the recent murder of another campesino leader in August. The safety of his family and other leaders may be at risk.

On 11 November, **Juan Ángel López Miralda** (also known as Juan Galindo) was shot dead by two unknown individuals riding a motorcycle in the Rigores Community, Trujillo Municipality, Colón department. He received several bullet impacts in his back. Juan Ángel López Miralda was cycling home after leaving a meeting in a nearby church.

Juan Ángel López Miralda was a campesino leader and until the end of 2013 had been a member of the Unified Peasant Movement of Aguán (Movimiento unificado Campesino del Aguán, MUCA), an organization that fights for the rights to land of campesinos in the Aguán area. In November 2013, Juan Ángel López Miralda had to relocate abroad due to death threats received, but he had recently returned home for family reasons.

In November 2013 Juan Ángel López Miralda reported to the human rights organization Committee of Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared in Honduras (Comité de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos en Honduras, COFADEH) about two attempts on his life -- one of them in April 2013, when men wearing balaclavas tried to kill him and another in October 2013, just days after police officers had visited his father's home.

Please send a fax, email, tweet or letter without delay. (Postage is \$2.50.)

- * Urge the authorities to protect the family members of Juan Ángel López Miralda in accordance with their wishes.
- * Call on them to carry out a swift and independent investigation into the killing of Juan Ángel López Miralda, to make the results public, and to bring those found responsible to justice,
- * Insist that the authorities adopt, and fully implement, a mechanism to protect those who are at risk of reprisal for their work in defence of human rights.
- * Remind them of their responsibilities as established in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

Direct your messages to

Sr. Juan Orlando Hernández
President of Honduras
Casa Presidencial, Barrio Las Lomas
Boulevard Juan Pablo II
Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Email: ygarcia@presidencia.gob.hn
Fax: 011 504 2290 5088
Salutation: Dear President / Señor Presidente

Attorney General:

Sr. Oscar Chinchilla Banegas
Ministerio Público
Lomas del Guijarro
Avenida República Dominicana
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Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Fax: 011 504 2221 5667
Twitter: @MP_Honduras
Salutation: Dear Attorney General / Señor Fiscal General

Please send a copy to

Her Excellency Sofía Lastenia Cerrato Rodríguez
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Via website: www.embassyhonduras.ca (at the icon *Escribanos* in the left panel)

Honourable John Baird
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Additional information

Long-standing disputes over land between peasant communities and powerful landowners are one of the underlying causes of the high levels of violence faced by peasant communities. Local organizations in the Bajo Aguán region claim that in the last five years there have been over 120 killings related to land disputes.

The campesino communities in Honduras have long struggled to claim their rights and a fair distribution of lands, in many cases at the cost of their own lives. The National Federation of Campesinos of Honduras, among others, has also been campaigning for a comprehensive agrarian law that includes a gender focus and addresses the different needs of campesino communities. On 27 August, campesino leader Margarita Murillo was shot dead in the community of El Planón, north-western Honduras after she had reported being under surveillance and receiving threats in previous days (See UA: 219/14 Index: AMR 37/010/2014, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AMR37/010/2014/en/1b5eeb12-6be4-41d8-8a28-847b518b91d6/amr370102014en.html>)

In June 2014 the Honduran Congress discussed a first draft of a Law to Protect Journalists, Human Rights Defenders and Justice System workers (Ley de Protección para los Defensores de Derechos Humanos, Periodistas, Comunicadores Sociales y Operadores de Justicia). This draft has now been shared with civil society organizations with the intention of gathering their suggestions and recommendations but further discussions are pending. Given the context of violence against human rights defenders, journalists and justice system workers, it is absolutely crucial that the law is soon approved and implemented, and that adequate resources (including financial and human) are devoted to the task of establishing an effective protection mechanism.

Human rights defenders face high levels of risk in Honduras. According to the National Commissioner for Human Rights, 30 journalists and 70 lawyers have been killed in Honduras since January 2010. Among the dozens of cases of human rights violations and abuses committed against human rights defenders in the last five years, according to the information Amnesty International has received, in only one case were those responsible prosecuted, convicted and sentenced. For more information, see Amnesty International's Open letter to the presidential candidates of the Republic of Honduras (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR37/014/2013/en>).