



ALERT: ARMED ASSAULT OF PRIESTS WITH PROTECTIVE MEASURES AND INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ACCOMPANIERERS (PROAH)

The Honduras Accompaniment Project/*Proyecto de Acompañamiento internacional en Honduras* (PROAH) expresses its grave concern regarding the **armed assault and abduction carried out against Father César Augusto Espinoza Muñoz and Father Abel Carbajal, priests of the parish of Arizona, Atlántida and three international human rights accompaniers with PROAH (Two Swiss and one French citizens).**

The armed assault occurred on **July 3rd** at approximately 7 pm near Siguatepeque when the parish vehicle they were traveling in was intercepted by a white medium-size car (similar to typical Honduran cab). Three armed men jumped out of the white vehicle, pointing their guns and forcing the priests and PROAH team members to get into the back seat of their vehicle while a fourth assailant drove away in the parish vehicle. The assailants forcibly abducted the priests and PROAH team members, driving them around for approximately 45 minutes, issuing death threats and then left them in Siguatepeque.

Fathers César and Abel, as well as 16 members of the Nueva Esperanza community in the parish of Arizona and human rights defenders supporting them, are beneficiaries of protective measures issued by the Inter American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). [Protective measures](#) were issued because of [death threats](#) and violence from representatives of the Minerales Victoria mining company, other mining interests and the National Police in response to the community's peaceful and legitimate opposition to the mine.

While accompanying this community, on July 25 2013, [two international human rights accompaniers](#) with PROAH (one French citizen Orlane Vidal and one Swiss citizen Daniel Langmeier) were abducted and held captive for 2.5 hours by seven armed men guarding the mining operations of Minerales Victoria.

The July 3rd armed assault and abduction of beneficiaries of protective measures and international human accompaniers underscores the extreme state of insecurity in Honduras which people throughout the country face on a daily basis. The assault also underscores the striking

lack of protection for recipients of IACHR precautionary measures and high level of risk for national and international human rights defenders in Honduras.

The severity of the illustrated security deficit for human rights defenders and beneficiaries of protective measures is reflected in many cases accompanied by PROAH; of particular concern the Locomapa community and the *Committee of Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared in Honduras*, COFADEH, in light of threats and targeted violence in recent weeks.

In Locomapa, 38 people were issued protective measures by the IACHR following [the murder of three indigenous Tolupanes on August 24, 2013](#) for participating in a peaceful protest by the community in rejection of mining activity and illegal logging on their tribal lands. However, the alleged perpetrators of the August 2013 massacre, who have warrants for their arrest, remain free in the community, intimidating those in opposition of the mining project. One exiled community member still has not returned to Locomapa. On June 9, 2014 a beneficiary of protective measures not only suffered new threats from an ex-general but also his crops and property were damaged. Four months after the State of Honduras pledged to implement IACHR precautionary measures, the [threats and vulnerability of the community still continue](#).

In June 2014, *The Committee of the Families of the Detained and Disappeared of Honduras*, COFADEH, also a beneficiary of protective measures, issued an [Urgent Action](#) stating that the **State of Honduras has not adopted effective measures to dissuade insecurity and implement protective measures**. The Urgent Action was issued in response to “*series of events that have occurred systematically in recent weeks; immediately after COFADEH registered formal complaints.*” These events include surveillance and assault, temporary abduction, beating and torture of a COFADEH member.

PROAH expresses grave concern regarding extreme levels of insecurity, impunity and the lack of effective and appropriate protection for beneficiaries of protective measures and human rights defenders.

The Honduras Accompaniment Project/Proyecto de Acompañamiento internacional en Honduras (PROAH) provides international accompaniment to human rights defenders, including human rights and social movement organizations and individuals who find themselves under threat or harassment due to their individual and collective human rights work.

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